

**KENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
ON-LINE e-BOOK**

**For the Good of This Town:
The Jurats of Maidstone, 1549 -1660**



Judy Buckley

**Photograph of 1640 memorial in All Saints Church by the Author
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Foreword

*You shall True Faith bear to our Sovereign Lady, the Queen's Majesty that now is, Her Heirs and Successors, Kings and Queens of this realm.
You shall have that regard and respect unto the Mayor that governeth this Town and Parish for the time being as is fit.
And the lawful Franchises, Usages and Customs of the same Town and Parish, advance and maintain to the utmost of your power.
And the same (as much as in you is) from unlawful grievance and damage shall keep.
And as a Freeman of this Town and Parish, you shall bear yourself for the good of this Town, as it is fit and convenient. So help you God. Amen*

The freeman's oath, *anciently* administered in Maidstone. (Gilbert, *Antiquities*, 1865, p.126)

This book is about the mayors and other jurats (aldermen) who led Maidstone from the granting of the first Borough Charter by Edward VI in 1549 until the end of the Commonwealth and the Restoration of Charles I in 1660. The period has been chosen to match Chapter III of *The History of Maidstone* (1995) by Peter Clark and Lynn Murfin. In that chapter they covered all aspects of Maidstone life, but this study will focus on the closely knit group of ninety seven men chosen by the common council - a traditional Tudor oligarchy - who influenced Maidstone during those years. Seventy six of them took office as mayor, but all ninety seven will be studied in this article. They, collectively, had the greatest influence over the character of the town as it doubled its size from just under 2,000 to nearly 4,000 people, emerging from a small but flourishing river port to become the leading administrative town of West Kent. (Clark and Murfin, 1995, pp.42, 72)

Kent as a county, with sporadic references to Maidstone, has been thoroughly explored over this period in *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion* (1961) by Alan Everitt, *Seventeenth Century Kent* (1965) by Christopher Chalklin, *English Provincial Society 1500-1640* (1977) by Peter Clark and *Early Modern Kent* (2000) edited by Michael Zell. Zell defined the century 1540 -1640 as being the era when Kentish people began to see themselves as having a county identity, which was imposed from outside, in addition to regarding themselves as *English* and *Protestant*. The events he cites as shaping this image began with reactions of horror to the prospect of England being controlled by Spain after Queen Mary's marriage, continued as protest against excessive taxation and over-strict religious control over the county clergy. All of which was neatly summed up as *Kent, the first Christian, last conquered ... one of the most ... fruitful provinces of England*, with a spirit of independence expressed in the county motto *Invicta*. (Zell, *EMK*, 2000 pp. 2-3)

In this setting, Maidstone was the largest town in West Kent, with roughly two-thirds the population of Canterbury, threatened in size, temporarily, only by Sandwich and Dover. (Bower, *EM*, 2000, p.160) The power of the Cinque Ports was declining simultaneously with an expansion in litigation, which swelled the ranks of the legal profession in Kent. (Prest, 1972) Maidstone, only forty miles from London, on the Roman road from the Weald to the river Medway and operating four wharves for shipping goods via the Thames, was in an excellent geographical position to compete as a venue for the assizes, and become a significant county centre for both merchants and lawyers. This book aims to give a more cohesive and detailed view of Maidstone's chief citizens with the power to steer the town's destiny.

When quoting from original sources I have spelled surnames consistently to aid alphabetical sorting. I have modernised spelling, capitalisation and punctuation, expanding abbreviations to clarify the sense of a passage. Dates are given in the old (Julian) style, but with the year beginning on 1st January. Abbreviations are incorporated in the bibliography, and an alphabetical list of jurats is also provided.

I dedicate this book to the memory of my neighbour Mrs Aileen Newman, whose love of Maidstone, where she lived all her life, was most infectious. It is based on my dissertation for an MA by Research at Greenwich University in 2008. I am especially grateful for help from Dr Jackie Bower (my first tutor in Kent history), Dr Rivkah Zim and Dr Stephen Yuille, who gave me invaluable encouragement. Also to staff at the Centre for Kentish Studies, especially Miss Elizabeth Finn and Mrs Deborah Saunders. Also to Mr Denis Anstey, Mrs Margaret Lawrence, Dr Robert Spain, Mr Ian Wallace and Mr Michael Perring of the Kent Archaeological Society, my sister Mrs Sarah Roberts, my daughter Mrs Kate Gould and my neighbour Mrs Margaret Yates, who helped me with proof reading, and last but not least, my husband, Sir Michael Buckley, for unstinting support and helpful discussions.

Chapter One: The Origins and Occupations of the Jurats

Thomas Beale ... maior villae ... cuius pater William Beale ... bis Portreevius ... atavus Williamus sua etate etiam portreevius et unus de primis fratribus domus fraternitatis huius villae ...

Thomas Beale ... mayor of this town ... [whose] father William ... [was] twice Portreeve ... and [whose] ancestor William ... was one of the first brothers of the [Corpus Christi] fraternity of this town. This extract is taken from the Latin inscription at the base of the lovely brass family tree in All Saints Church, Maidstone, showing six generations of Beale family before 1600. The family, who supplied Maidstone with a portreeve and three jurats, rose to prominence as wine-coopers. Their descendants included Sir John Beale Baronet (1621-84) and Colonel Thomas Beale (born 1619) who emigrated to Virginia.

A shop was sold in Maidstone in 1248 and mention of a charter granted to Archbishop Boniface (who owned the manor) survives from 1261, so by 1549 it was possible for the same family, if their descent had continued that long, to have been trading there for 300 years. (HM, 1995, p.22) By the mid sixteenth century the town, with a population of just under 2,000, was the largest in West Kent, with a weekly market and three fairs every year. (HM, 1995, p.44) Before the granting of Maidstone's first borough charter in 1549, the affairs of the town, with its wharves on the Medway, had been conducted by a Portreeve responsible to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who owned Maidstone manor until the Reformation, when it had reverted to the Crown. (HM, 1995, p.38) The first charter replaced the title of portreeve with that of mayor, and made provision for 12 more jurats, who served for life, and a common council of 24. (James, 1825 pp.1-26) On 2nd November each year the mayor was chosen from two jurat nominees to serve for a year. 76 of the 97 jurats who held office in Maidstone between 1549 and 1660 served at least one year as mayor. Although 21 of the 97 jurats were never mayor, all thirteen of them, at any one time, represented the borough, accompanying the mayor to All Saints Church in their gowns, and supporting him in administrative duties, some of them being sworn in as magistrates to sit in the borough courts. Once a year four jurats accompanied the mayor on a boat trip up the Medway to Farleigh Bridge to claim the liberties granted to Maidstone by the Queen's letters patent. (Martin, 1926 p.20)

The list of mayors appears in histories of the town, and is engraved in the council chamber of the town hall. (Russell, 1881, pp.410-411) Other jurats have been identified using the borough charters, surviving chamberlain's accounts and entries in the burghmote records. (James, 1825; CKS Md/FCa/1; Md/ACm/1, 1561-85; Md Acm/2, 1586-1643; Md ACm/3 1644-94) Of the 76 jurats who did become mayor, fifteen were mayor twice, usually with a gap of about ten years between appointments. Among them was the oldest jurat, James Franklin, who lived to be 92. (CKS PAR241/1/E1, 1618, Folio 217) Five others managed to be mayor three times, with similar gaps. They were Walter Fisher, who served 31 years; Gabriel Green, 44 years; Stephen Heeley, 35 years, and two Maplesdens (Edward, who served 40 years and Gervase II, 30 years) all of whom lived to be over 60, in fact probably over 70. (Russell 1881, pp.410-411)

Assessment of the jurats' geographical origins depends on tracing surnames and reconstructing their families, and some had ancestry in the town for over 200 years. The earliest surviving list for Maidstone parish, of men assessed for a lay subsidy in 1335, includes Fishers, Franklins and Halls. (Hanley and Chalklin, 1964) According to the Beale brass pictured above, Beales were in the town before 1399, and the surnames of Basse, Brook, Down, Goar, Reeve, and Tilden appear on a 1474 list of townsmen attending a Portmote meeting. (Martin, 1921, p.6) Those ten families, who can surely be regarded as well-established Maidstone stock, supplied 14% of the jurats who served during the whole period of this study.

As Professor Peter Clark has already said, *early modern England was a highly mobile society with a great deal of migration from the countryside to towns*, and one reason for this was the Kent tradition of gavelkind, which split land among brothers when their father died. (Clark, EPS,1977, p.7) The Maidstone branches of established Kent families, like the Besbeechs, Courthopes, Eppes, Lambs and Maplesdens, had contemporary cousins in Wealden villages like Cranbrook. (de Launay, 1984) Families were large, and distinctive Christian names were rare, so, in the case of more universal surnames such as Smythe, Reeve, Taylor and Wood, it is impossible to make valid connections even where wills have survived. The more unusual the surname, the surer one can be, especially if those families had strong contingents in Maidstone. And in spite of the fact that the Smythe family (still spelt thus, not as Smith) remained as timber merchants in the town until 1970, exact relationships can only be surmised. (www.travisperkins.co.uk, 2008)

All Saints baptism and burial registers survive back to 1559 in the form of copies made c.1598, now available on microfilm, and they have proved more helpful than one might expect. (CKS PAR241/1/A1, CKS PAR241/1/E1) This was because it was important for freemen to be able to prove that their children were Maidstone born, and All Saints

was a prestigious place to be married. The parish clerks at All Saints Church almost always mentioned that a man was a jurat when they recorded events in his immediate family, and the more important the family position in the town, the surer one can be that families have been reconstructed correctly. However, a man was not likely to become a jurat until he was about forty, so early baptism registers only include men elected after about 1600. This rules out finding Maidstone births for half of the jurats under review, and the first provable entries of baptisms of future jurats were for Ambrose Beale in 1575 and Gervase Maplesden II in 1583.

On average over the ten decades, each year saw about one new jurat elected. Sixteenth century borough records (CKS Md/ACm/1 Burghmote Minutes 1561-1585 and CKS Md AcM/2 Burghmote Minutes 1586-1643) do not provide exact dates of elections of all new jurats, but it has been possible to construct a chart marking the years when a man became a freeman, a jurat, a chamberlain, the mayor, or was mentioned in some other records, like borough chamberlains' accounts. (CKS CKS Md/FCa/1)

Bearing in mind that jurats served for life, that a new jurat had to be elected after every death, and that the total number should add up to 13, it is possible to arrive at an estimated election date for each man, in order to sort them by election date and look for trends. It has been found that almost all the jurats who were elected before 1600 had families who appear in the All Saints Registers from at least 1550, and some of them, like Richard Basse, John and Thomas Beale, Thomas and Robert Goar, Robert Gosling, William Reeve, William Tilden, John Beale, Richard Lee, Thomas Franklin, Walter Fisher and Edmund Hall had ancestors in Maidstone in 1474. (Martin, 1921, p.6)

Before 1600, almost all the jurats came from families with proven Kentish origins. A few of them have been hard to trace, like James Catlet (elected 1551) and John Bateman (elected 1576) Robert Tinley (elected 1584) John Romney (elected 1591) and James Spencer (elected 1580), but even they will probably eventually be linked to families in other parts of the county. There were Catlets in Sittingbourne, Bapchild and Teynham. (Cowper, Vol.1, 1892, p.81; Vol.2 1894, pp.183-4) There were Spencers in Sandwich and Cranbrook. (Visitation of Kent 1574, p.111-112) The Warden of St Bartholomew's Hospital in Rochester, who confessed to Lutheran beliefs in 1524 was a Thomas Bateman. (Zell, EMK, 2000, p.181)

Some of the traceable jurats, like the Maplesdens and William Plomer, had roots in Marden, which had earlier been part of Maidstone parish. Some, like the Ippenburys and Mowshursts of Yalding, had origins in the upper Medway valley, and some owned land in the parishes immediately adjacent to Maidstone, like the Barhams of Teston, Edward Heron of Barming, and the John Fremlin of Linton. (Hasted, 1798) John Eppes, (elected 1582) from Ashford, had travelled further, but the only Elizabethan jurat who might remotely have been regarded as an incomer was George Manningham (elected in 1593) a cousin of Manninghams from Cambridgeshire who bought Bradbourne manor in East Malling, and who had long been married into the Reeve family. (Cave-Browne, 1901, p.1)

After 1600 the proportion of jurats elected from the old Maidstone families was declining, but still included Thomas Brook, Ambrose Beale, Walter Fisher, James Franklin and Thomas Reeve. Some of the old families were inevitably dying out, but there was also a tendency in the seventeenth century (not surprising considering the growth and increasing affluence of the town) for promising and able freemen to move in from further afield than hitherto. Significant among them were the Banks family from Ashford, the Cromps, possibly from Leeds, and the Swinnocks, whose origins have yet to be established, but who possibly also came from the Ashford area. (Cave-Browne, 1901, p.41; Ruderman, 2009) Some served apprenticeships to older jurats, like John Bigge, who was born in Cranbrook. (CKS P11/1/15; de Launay, 1984) Bigge and Robert Swinnock both married jurats' daughters, Robert Withinbrook married a jurat's sister, and James Ruse's mother was a jurat's daughter. (Cowper Vol.1, 1892, p.403; Cowper Vol.2, 1894 p.98; Cave-Browne, 1901 pp.37; CKS PRC32/43/25, 1618)

So, for 1549, when Edward VI granted the town's first charter, it is possible to say only that, out of thirteen jurats, one had a family which had been taxed in Maidstone Hundred in 1335 and at least four had ancestors who attended a Maidstone Portmote held in 1474. At least nine were members of the ad hoc committee of reformers (some of whose signatures are illegible) formed to sell the vestments and plate of All Saints Church in 1547, two years before the charter was granted, to fund a Grammar School. (Gilbert Antiquities, 1866, p.42) At least four of them were tenants of Sir Thomas Wyatt, whose failed uprising against Queen Mary's marriage to Philip of Spain in 1554 caused them all to suffer personally. Peter Maplesden was probably hanged, John Denley died in prison, and the others were heavily fined. Without doubt all of them were fiercely Protestant, but their religion, and the resulting loss of the town's first charter, will be discussed in Chapter Three. (Russell, 1881, p.50-69)

When Queen Elizabeth granted Maidstone its second charter in 1559, four of the Edwardian jurats, William Green, Thomas Goar, Richard Hooker and William Tilden, still fit and active, were re-instated. (James, 1825, p.31) Of the new men, John Beale was descended from a Portreeve, and Ambrose Ippenbury and William Mowshurst were both

related to Edwardian jurats. They were joined by at least four other men who are known to have been involved in the 1547 sale (Nicholas Austen, James Busbridge, Clement Lutwick and William Smythe) and the other two (William Collett and James Catlet) could well have been two of the illegible entries on that list. Collett was married at All Saints in 1545, where he was serving as Sexton in 1547. (Russell, 1881, p.101) Catlet bought a house in Maidstone in 1551. (Beale Post Notebooks, c.1830)

So most of the 13 Elizabethan jurats were men whose roots were in Maidstone and the immediately surrounding parishes. The Tudor idea of oligarchies as *small knots of trusted men* relied heavily on family ties to guarantee trustworthiness and, typically, this group formed the nucleus of the borough elite, stood as overseers or witnesses for each others' wills (Lutwick for Basse, Ippenbury for Mowshurst) married their daughters to each other's sons, and were in a position to watch out for suitable replacement jurats to elect, when one of their number died. The *cursum honorum* or progress to becoming a jurat will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. (Tittler, 1997, p.196)

The origins of most of the jurats who were born outside the town stretched east as far as Ashford (17 miles), west to Mereworth (6 miles), south to Romney Marsh (30 miles) and north just to Boxley (1 mile) enclosing an area of the parishes within a 12 mile radius which might be expected to send apprentices into their nearest town, but extending a good deal further to the south than to the north. This was because the movement tended to be towards, rather than away from, London, and many apprentices and tradesmen came into the town from the Wealden areas around Cranbrook (13 miles via Linton) and Tenterden (16 miles via Headcorn) that made the luxury broadcloths which were traded at the Maidstone fairs. The large cloth-making parishes at the height of the Kent industry from around 1500 to 1600, like Cranbrook and Marden, provided a vast pool of lucrative employment. Wealden families, like the Maplesdens, who made their fortunes in broadcloth manufacture probably found it advantageous to apprentice their sons in Maidstone, where they could keep in pretty close contact with their cousins living in the Weald. And although Kent cloth making declined gradually from around 1620, it lingered on past the Restoration. (Andrewes, 2000, pp.110-115; Md/FCa1/1577; Md/FCa1/1579)

Maidstone jurats' wills also show ownership of land over quite wide areas. The Maplesdens, who originated in Goudhurst and Marden, spread to Maidstone and Rochester. The Ippenburys, with roots in Twyford Hundred in 1335, lived in Hadlow, Yalding and East Peckham in the fifteenth century, and Maidstone in the sixteenth century, owned land in Sevenoaks; the Mowshursts who originated in East Sussex and moved to Yalding, where they owned Beltring and other property as well as a house in Stone Street. (CKS U282 T60, 1549 Quitclaim; NA PROB11/49, 1566); the Greens who owned Newerk in Maidstone, also held land in Stockbury, Bicknor and Marden; the Downs had land in East Peckham, Yalding, Brenchley, Tudely and Wateringbury; and the Bank's who came from Ashford, owned land on Romney Marsh. (Beale Post Notebooks Vol.4; KAS Gordon Ward Notebooks Sevenoaks VI p.38; PRC32/31/374)

Which of these families formed the hub of town government? Six in particular are notable for providing several long-serving jurats. All of them had periods when two members (but never more than two) were serving at the same time, and it has been possible to establish, using the All Saints registers and wills, how closely they were related within each family. In the period under study, by far the most prominent family in Maidstone were the Maplesdens, who supplied seven jurats giving 149 years of service to the town between them. When Susan Maplesden, the widow of jurat Gervase I died in 1603, she left *five sons and six daughters, whereof three sons and four daughters were married and had issue, so that they and their children were four score and ten [90] souls before her death.* (Russell, 1881, p.139)

Next came the Green, Beale and Franklin families who provided three jurats each, giving 79, 77 and 74 years of service respectively. Equally influential, but not until the seventeenth century, were the incoming families of Banks and Swinnock, both of whom gave 70 years service, by two and three jurats respectively.

The seven Maplesdens covered the years 1549-54, 1575-85, 1586-1626, 1590-96, 1604-31, 1617-47 and 1644-65. Thus, apart from a 16-year gap in the 1660s and 1670s, there was at least one Maplesden jurat throughout the whole period. And at least nine other jurats were closely connected with them. Those nine were William Mowshurst (whose sister married a Maplesden), John Eppes (whose wife's mother was a Maplesden), Thomas Barham (brother-in-law to Edward Maplesden), Robert Swinnock, John Bigge and George Ongley (who all married Maplesdens), John Crompton and John Sanders (the former a cousin, the latter a *loving neighbour* to Maplesdens).

The Barhams, Beales and Franklins were also closely interwoven. Some of the Beales, having been involved in Maidstone affairs from the early 1400s, had moved by 1650 to London, although they still owned substantial land in the town. The Barhams, of Digons in Knighttrider Street who also owned Christian's Mill on the river Len in the town centre, were a significant Maidstone family in their own right and Richard Barham's sisters married Beales and Franklins. (Cave-Brown, 1902; Goodsall, 1957 on www.millarchive.com/Kent/Home/mapofkentmills.html, 2009) James Ruse (elected 1642) was the grandson of jurat James Franklin the elder (elected 1580).

The Fisher family, who owned Week Mansion House in Maidstone from at least 1511 until 1617, were also related to several other jurat families. (Russell, 1881, p.222; Lilly, Map of Week Estate, 1619). Henry Fisher was Town Clerk and Recorder from 1559 until his death in 1584 and MP for Maidstone in 1562. Alexander Fisher of Detling, a Bencher of Gray's Inn, who had acted professionally for the town in 1583 and probably at other times, succeeded him as Recorder in 1584. Two of Alexander's daughters were married to jurats; Thomasine married John Epps and Mary married John Banks, who paid £13 6s 8d for his Maidstone freedom in 1612, although he traded in London as well. Henry Fisher's widow married jurat Guy Hunt in 1640, and Samuel Marshall (elected 1631) referred to the Fishers in his will as *cousins*. The Swinnocks also seem to have arrived in the town because of their family connections with both Maplesdens and Fishers, and after the Maplesdens, the Banks and Swinnocks gave the longest service among the early seventeenth-century jurats. They became the centre of the group influencing the Puritan rule in the town, which will be discussed in Chapter Four.

What of the occupations of these Maidstone jurats? John Beale and his son Robert who died in 1461 and 1490 respectively (recorded on the family brass shown at the beginning of this chapter), were wine merchants in the days when the Archbishop of Canterbury and his College dominated the town, but by 1600 their descendants had become either *merchants* or *gentlemen*. Maidstone apprenticeship records for the sixteenth century are patchy. The other main source for trades (jurat's wills) mostly stated merely that the testator was *of Maidstone*, and either a jurat or a gentleman, leaving too few known trades from which to draw any conclusions. Trades have been established so far for only 35 of the 97 jurats. Before 1590, 9 jurats were in the cloth trade (2 mercers, 4 drapers, 1 fuller, 1 weaver) compared with two in the building trade (a mason and a glazier) a pewterer, and one yeoman farmer. One of the Elizabethan jurats (John Eppes) was a lawyer. Between 1590 and 1630 the town elected 7 jurats from the cloth trade (4 mercers, 3 drapers) one merchant, a brewer, a baker, a tanner and, in 1626, another lawyer, James Franklin. Between 1630 and 1660 new jurats included two drapers, two in the beer trade (a brewer and a maltster), a cutler, two pewterers and another lawyer, Andrew Broughton.

The relative status of trades can be seen from a list made in 1603 of Maidstone's four trade companies, which added helpfully (since dyers somehow managed to get listed twice) *if any question hereafter happens about this division the mayor ... hath the deciding thereof*.

The Company of Mercers; such as sell mercery or grocery [wholesale] wares, linen cloth ... weavers of linen fustians or new stuff ... fustian dressers, dyers, thread-makers, goldsmiths, physicians, surgeons and petty chapmen.

The Company of Drapers; drapers, tailors, shearmen, dyers, woollen weavers, hatters and fullers.

The Company of Cordwainers; shoemakers, tanners, sadlers, curriers, collar-makers and others working in leather, smiths, joiners, carpenters, cutlers and other like artificers.

The Company of Victuallers; maltsters, innkeepers ... victuallers, badgers or buyers and sellers of corn, bakers, brewers, butchers, millers, husbandmen and common labourers not being artificers. (Martin, 1926, p.63)

If a man described himself as a mercer, it is he was not necessarily in the cloth industry, but could actually be making his living in a variety of different ways. The mercers were clearly the most prestigious company, including physicians and goldsmiths as well as grocers (luxury wholesale merchants) and as such included prominent citizens. However, in the seventeenth century when Quarter Sessions or Assizes were increasingly held in the town which was *full of inns*, brewers and maltsters were also influential. (Bower, EMK, 2000, p.166) On the somewhat flimsy evidence that has survived, it seems that Maidstone's corporation was no exception to Peter Clark's description of the Kent urban oligarchies as *almost invariably made up ... of craftsmen and increasing numbers of merchants with a few lawyers*. (EPS, 1977, p.140)

It is perhaps surprising, in view of the importance of the Kent cloth industry, that there seem to be no clothiers amongst the jurats, but Jane Andrewes has explained the way that the broadcloth industry was organised. The clothier lived in the Weald close to his workforce. He had to be on the spot, to buy wool from the farmers and organise its progress from one independent craftsman to another, through the processes of washing, dyeing, spinning, weaving, fulling and dressing. He came to Maidstone only to buy special imported fleeces and to sell the finished cloth. In 1524 the clothier Alexander Courthope's *principle messuage wherein I now dwell* was in Cranbrook, with the *dyehouse and all manner of implements thereto belonging*, but he also owned a *messuage and lands in Maidstone which I bought from Margaret Brode*. Furthermore, he left a significant bequest of 5 marks in his will for the repair of the highway between Cranbrook and Linton, which would have improved access to Maidstone. Another Cranbrook clothier, John Bigg, in addition to considerable property in the Weald, owned a house in Maidstone and land in Linton. These were left in 1605 to his elder son Smallhope, but intended for his much younger son John, when he reached majority, provide that

John waived his right to the family home in Cranbrook. (de Launey, 1984) And that is what happened. John was apprenticed to a Maidstone mercer, became a freeman of Maidstone in 1625 aged 27, married a Maplesden and later became a jurat. (Cowper Vol.2, 1894, p.98)

Ashford and Cranbrook were not the only sizeable places where jurats had family connections. From the 1580s a link with Tenterden was provided by the Curtis family, who served as jurats there, but not in Maidstone until after the Restoration. (Russell, p.411) In 1582 Dorothy Curtis, whose brother Stephen was mayor of Tenterden, married Edward Maplesden. In 1616 her much younger brother George Curtis married Bridget Knatchbull, granddaughter of Sir John Astley. (Cowper Vol.1, 1892, p.117; Visitation of Kent, 1619 p.89; CKS P241/1/A1) Links to Rochester were provided by the Lee and the Maplesden families. When he died in 1573 Richard Lee (of Earl's Place in Maidstone and Great Delce in Rochester) requested his *loving friend* Gervase Maplesden of St Margaret's Rochester (mayor of Rochester in 1583) to be guardian of his children if his widow should remarry. (CKS PRC32/32/61; Smith, 1928, p.495)

Surviving All Saints Registers record the burials of only 60% of the 97 jurats, but this figure is probably misleadingly low. (CKS PAR241/1/E1) This is partly because Maidstone registers have not survived before 1559, so burials for John Basse, Robert Gosling, William Reeve, Peter Maplesden, Richard Amey, Richard Heeley, James Barrett and John Mowshurst are missing, although Richard Heeley, for one, requested burial at All Saints in his will (NA PROB11/04, 1558) Peter Maplesden was probably executed after Wyatt's rebellion, and John Denley died in prison at Uxbridge in 1555. (Russell, 1881, pp.105-6) The numerous Maplesden family clearly had a family plot in All Saints churchyard, since in 1575 John Maplesden left directions for his burial in All Saints churchyard *on the south side thereof, nigh unto the burial of his ancestors*. But in 1596 jurat George Maplesden wished to be buried simply *in the parish church of Maidstone*. (Russell, 1881, p.138) Legally jurats never retired, but burghmote minutes show that their attendance at meetings declined in old age, and a few did move away. John Fremlin was buried at Linton, Nicholas Coveney was buried at Ash near Wrotham, John Eppes left Maidstone for his home parish at Brookland in Romney Marsh, Andrew Broughton who signed the death warrant of Charles I, fled to Switzerland at the Restoration and died there, Thomas Stanley was buried at West Peckham. Searches in other parishes for jurats whose burials cannot be found in All Saints registers may reveal more retirements, and some may have died away from the town while on business trips.

Almost all the 97 jurats in the Maidstone oligarchy throughout the period came from families who originated in Maidstone, neighbouring parishes, the upper Medway valley or the western Weald as far east as Ashford. The earliest had truly Maidstone roots, and the core of the oligarchy was closely connected by marriage, with the Maplesden, Beale, Fisher, and Franklin families at the centre. It survived relatively seamlessly from the accession of Queen Elizabeth throughout the early Stuart reigns and Commonwealth, right up to the Restoration. The Maplesdens, the largest clan, were not only influential in a dozen or more Kent villages, but provided an Alderman in Rochester, and marriage links with Cranbrook and Tenterden, which helped to keep Maidstone closely in touch with quite a large area.

Maidstone enjoyed a reliable clean water supply from the borough conduit, probably built in the early sixteenth century, and certainly well before 1562. (Russell, 1881, p.227) The conduit piped spring water from Rocky Hill across the Medway to a cistern in the High Street by the Star Inn, and it was maintained by the corporation. (Grove and Spain 1650 map, 1977) In 1577 the borough chamberlains paid 12s 2d to *Squier for mending of the conduit 8th May*, and in 1595 *all the charges of the conduit this year* amounted to £5 10s 2d. (CKS Md/FCa/1, 1577 and 1595) Sevenoaks inhabitants, by comparison, were still fetching water from springs in buckets in 1640. (Fox, 2002, Appendix 17) The attractiveness of the town amongst Kent gentry has already been mentioned, and favourable comments made by visitors have been quoted in all the existing histories, using phrases like *well-builded*, *sweet*, *large and populous*, and *very pretty*. (HM, 1995, p.1) The medieval town plan provided spacious streets with some fine large houses, and the river Len with its mills joined the Medway near the Palace (HM, 1995 p.23, Grove and Spain 1650 map, 1977) Some jurats' families, like the Beales, Bankses and Ongleys, move on to London but they seem to have retained strong Maidstone links. There was, after all, no reason for successful merchants, in a period of economic expansion in Kent, not to support several generations of their families with flourishing businesses and a very acceptable lifestyle in their home town. The wealth of the Maidstone jurats will be the subject of Chapter Two.

Chapter Two: The Wealth of the Jurats

To Fremlin Willoughby ... my daughter's eldest son ... my chain of gold weighing almost seven ounces ... my dial of gold with a pendant cluster of pearls to the same, my brooch of gold with an agate and four rubies, my seal ring of gold wherein my coat of arms are graven, together with my gold ring wherein is set a small pointed diamond, and my ring of gold made to the similitude of a serpent with an amethyst stone in the head and a pearl in the mouth thereof, and all my plate viz. three tankards of silver with covers to them, three bowls of silver, three salts of silver with covers to every of them, and a pepper box ... fifteen silver spoons ... and to my daughter I give all my English books ... and to her husband ... all my other books, and my best apparel.

Extract from the will of jurat John Fremlin Esquire, written on 1st March 1600. He left bequests of over £1,000, a house in Maidstone, another in Loddington and land at the Bower, and was buried in Linton in March 1605.

(CKS PRC34/41/069; P229/1/21 1558-1694) A dial was a watch, rather unusual at the time. In 1600

Shakespeare wrote *and then he drew a dial from his poke, and ... says very wisely, it is ten o'clock.*

(Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act II Scene 7) Small watches, driven by a spring, with hour hands only, and designed to hang on a chain, were made in London from the mid sixteenth century. (<http://antiquatch.com>, 2009)

John Fremlin, mayor in 1590, was an example of an educated and wealthy jurat who possessed a coat of arms. More research needs to be done into how Fremlin acquired his wealth, and indeed he may have inherited it, since he referred to his brother Thomas as a gentleman. John bought 80 acres at the Bower in West Borough in 1561, at which time he was described as *of Newington, Sittingbourne*. (Russell, 1881, p.170) In the mid 1580s his only daughter Joan married a lawyer, Thomas Willoughby, son of the Dean of Rochester who had already left him *all my Latin, Greek and Hebrew books* in 1581, *on condition that he does not give them away, but uses them to the increase of his learning and study*. (NA PROB11/64)

How wealthy were other jurats in the period under review? Financial information has only survived for 61 of them, about two-thirds, so any attempt to derive averages would be pointless. It is likely that the wealthier the man, the more likely he was to make a will, unless he died unexpectedly. At least five jurats died intestate, but will or no will, a probate inventory would have been made, although they have not survived in any great numbers. Where they do exist they provide a valuation for goods (comparable with a tax assessment made on goods). Wills are capable of giving insight not only into the value of possessions, but also into the levels of marriage portions for daughters and the provision of annuities for widows and under-age children. They also itemised land in considerable detail, sometimes indicating the income that could be expected from it (compared with a tax assessment made on income from land).

Kent, with good agricultural land, woodland and waterways, had long been famous as one of the richest counties in England, and there had always been a flourishing local land market in the county, which increased after the dissolution of the monasteries. This was mainly due to Gavelkind, a law, specific to Kent, which determined that land was equally divided between all surviving adult sons upon the death of their father. Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Kent landowners who wanted to leave their estates whole could not *Disgavel* them without a specific, and expensive, Act of Parliament. (www.hereshistorykent.org.uk 2008) Kent, being close to London, supplied the capital with food, so land well farmed by a tenant could provide excellent returns. (Zell, *EMK* pp.40-41, 48-49, 74) The result was that it was easy to buy quite small parcels of land, which, in a period of inflation, allowed investors a better place for their spare cash than a strong chest under their bed, since the land could be sold again equally easily when cash was needed again.

Michael Zell quotes figures from F.J. Fisher's *The Development of the London Food Market 1540-1640* which indicate that the quantity of grain shipped to London from Kent nearly trebled between 1580 and 1615 and more than doubled again between 1615 and 1638. This was a tremendous investment opportunity for Kent landowners. Not only that, but grain prices more than doubled over the period. Grazing land and market gardens were in demand as well. Kent farmers were able to increase their standard of living, buying imported luxuries from the grocers. (Zell, *EMK*, 2000, p.73) Londoners themselves were also investing in Kentish land; the Merchant Taylors' Company bought 243 acres of the Week Manor Estate in Maidstone from the Fisher family in 1617. (Lilly, 1619, Week Estate Map)

Given the survival of the right documents, a jurat's capital assets, of which examples are given below, are easier to establish than his annual income. Nevertheless a rough idea can be given of income compared with that of his much as his servants. National taxation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was low and only affected the very rich, although local rates were paid by a larger section of the population. Servants wages at the beginning of the period, set by statute in 1563, were proclaimed in Maidstone on Market Day, Thursday 23 September, because *the scarcity and dearth of ... victuals and other necessities ... at this instance ... [is] so dear*; (Woodruff, *AC*, 1897, pp.316-319) They

were specified both with and without livery (the cost of board or *meat, drink and cloth*) and the difference between the two was about 20%. The lower rate, paid to living-in servants, compares better with annuities for widows, if they were living with their grown-up children, although the wealthier ones often kept their own homes. The higher rate, paid to more senior servants who lived out with their own families, compares best with the annual earnings of craftsmen or the stipends of the clergy. The lowest earners were boys (aged 14-18) who commanded 20s a year without livery or 6d a quarter (2s) with livery. The *best* manservant earned about double that, at 46s 8d without livery, or 40s with livery, and the *best* female servant had 26s 8d without livery. Foremen for bakers, brewers or clothiers earned 60s 8d and the annual stipend for the Minister of All Saints Church from 1577-1618 was five times that of a servant at 200s. The Grammar School Master received £10 from the Borough plus 4s each from 14 pupils, totalling 256s, and a Master Mason is estimated to have earned about 300s a year around the same date. In 1589 John Heron of Teston, Gentleman, left his widow an annuity of 100s, and in 1595 jurat John Balsler left his widow an annuity four times larger at 400s. There were, of course, even richer people elsewhere. An Exeter alderman's widow or a London attorney could enjoy incomes of £100 (2,000s) or more, while one of the wealthiest men in England, Sir Nicholas Bacon, who earned £1,200 a year plus gratuities when he was appointed Lord Keeper in 1558, was commanding an income of £5,500 by the time he died in 1579. (Burnett, 1968, p.101)

Subsidies also throw some light on incomes. Subsidies were countrywide taxes levied at a given rate (specified by statute) on the value of an individual's income from land (or his movable goods) whichever was the greater. Liability for payment of subsidies started at annual income from land of over £1 or goods worth over £3. Parliaments were held by Tudor and Stuart monarchs only when they needed MPs to vote them money in the form of subsidies for specific purposes. Queen Elizabeth summoned Parliament twelve times, in her 1st, 5th, 8th, 13th, 14th, 18th, 23rd, 27th, 29th, 35th, 39th and 43rd years of her reign. (d'Ewes, 1682, 2008) Unfortunately searches of the lay subsidy rolls at the National Archives produced only the totals collected in the town, without any taxpayers' names. And even during the reigns of James I and Charles I, only two documents can be found which actually mention individuals. The first is for 1605, a certificate of non-distrain for Eyehorne, Maidstone and Calehill of the second payment (third instalment) of the second of four subsidies granted in 1601 which does not include any jurats. The second is an auditor's book page from 1628 which will be mentioned in Chapter 4. (NA E179/127/487 & NA E179/127/497, 1589; NA E179/127/498 & NA E179/127/540, 1605; NA E179/266/7, 1628)

A local copy of a lay subsidy assessment for Week Borough, which survived in borough records and has been published by K S Martin, throws light on the finances of part of the town in 1585, allowing a comparison of the wealth of some of the jurats with other Maidstone citizens, including the Dutch clothworkers who had arrived 18 years earlier in 1567. The Parliament of 1584-85 had granted the Queen a subsidy to pay for building naval ships. Week was probably the largest area of the town, with over 130 households, and the list of taxable residents there includes several jurats. 47 households in Week Borough were assessed on land, another 47 on goods, and a further 39 *stranger* [Dutch] households paid a special poll tax.

Week Borough residents assessed on land included a jurat's son and two current jurats. The largest income from land in 1585 was that of Richard Lee, eldest son of the jurat Richard Lee, who had left him Earl's Place and substantial other land holdings twelve years earlier. Lee was assessed at £10 a year from land, but he was descended from a Lord Mayor of London, and his father had been the first large landowner with a claim to be gentry who was elected a Maidstone jurat, a fact that will be further discussed in Chapter 4. Two more jurats, John Bateman and John Eppes, were both assessed at £8 a year. Four future jurats were also assessed on land; Edward Maplesden, the son of jurat Gervase Maplesden who died in April 1585, who was elected a jurat himself in 1586, was assessed at £5; Edward Heron, the great-grandson of Henry VII's Master of Jewels, to be elected in 1589, was assessed at £4. Robert Goar (elected 1593) and Walter Fisher (elected 1600) were assessed at £1. Milliner William Swinnoek, the elder brother of future jurat Thomas (elected 1609) was also assessed at £1. For comparison, four other residents who were never jurats, Edmund Ellis, Francis Kelsham, Richard Reeve and John Smythe, were assessed on land worth £8 a year, and all the other incomes were lower.

In 1585 the mayor, the mercer James Franklin, was assessed on goods valued at £8. Also assessed on goods were five men who became jurats later, William Simmons (elected 1587) at £8, Robert Emmott (elected 1595) at £7, John Romney (elected 1591) at £10, and William Plomer (elected 1595) at £6, Thomas Greenfield (elected 1603) at £3. Maidstone lawyer John Cavell was assessed on goods worth £10, but no other assessments on goods exceeded £5. Six Dutch cloth-makers were assessed on goods, the wealthiest being Anthony St Cecilia at £5, with Jacob van den Busch at £4 and four other men at £3. The pattern that emerges from the 1585 Week borough assessment is that several jurats were at least as wealthy as local gentry. H.R. French has described wealth as a *minimum definition* of social standing at that time and since, in addition to goods, some jurats owned significant acreages of land, they satisfied two of the basic requirements to *be* gentry. (French, 2000, p.283)

The best that can be done is to provide a list (Appendix 2) of the assets of 61 of the 97 jurats, which highlights a selection of interesting cases. The first of these is James Barrett, owner of The Swan Inn who died in 1559, who must have been wealthy, since he required his eldest son to pay his two brothers the large sum of £600 each when he came into his inheritance. One crucial feature in the Maidstone story which must not be forgotten is that some early jurats, among them Peter Maplesden and William Tilden, had property confiscated or were heavily fined after Wyatt's rebellion in 1554 (when Maplesden's three sons were forced to sell Chillington Manor). That may also have been the reason why Nicholas Austen was forced to mortgage his home and sell land during his mayoral year in 1567, leaving bequests of only £37 in 1582.

A rough overall estimate will be attempted for the last two decades of the sixteenth century, when the average total value of moveable goods or bequests left by 14 jurats of the 16 who died 1580-1600 was just under £340. Wealthiest of these was Thomas Beale, who left bequests of £865 in 1594 with property in Maidstone and Linton and land at Fant in West Borough and on the Isle of Sheppey, all to be divided among six sons. Beale, who described himself as *yeoman*, owned at least one shop. His youngest two sons by his second wife were not out of their apprenticeships when he died, but he left them each £300 to be paid to them at the age of 26. Hardly less rich was the draper Robert Emmott who died in 1596 leaving goods worth £782 including cloth worth £360 in a newly built shop.

Robert Tinley, another draper, who had also been fined after Wyatt's rebellion in 1554 but survived another 37 years, had long enough to rebuild his fortune and left an inventory valued at £444 in 1591. From 1600 the number of significantly wealthy jurats increased. Unfortunately no probate records can be found for John Mills, Thomas Franklin (who owned land at Buckland in West Borough) Thomas Swinnock or James Spencer. However, the average total value of moveable goods or bequests left by the 10 wealthiest jurats of the 16 who died in the first two decades of the seventeenth century was £670. Richest of these ten was the Brewer John Sanders who left goods worth £2,349 in 1612 and John Fremlin who left bequests of over £1,000, houses in Maidstone and Loddington and land at the Bower. Fremlin acquired arms in the 1598 visitation and married his daughter to the Dean of Rochester's son. Less wealthy were two mercers, John Romney and Thomas Greenfield. Romney left bequests of £33 in 1607 plus an annuity of £20 for life to his younger son. Greenfield left bequests of £12 in 1608, having been *at great charges* in sending his eldest son to university.

In the seventeenth century Robert Tittler found that the period between 1590 and 1640 was *a particularly fertile patch for the incursion of oligarchic rule* when no fewer than 65 English boroughs sought incorporation. Peter Clark called the early years of the seventeenth century Kent's *years of prosperity* which began when James I made peace with Spain in 1604, enabling the re-establishment of traditional English markets in northern Europe. He says that the Kentish economy was buoyant after 1604, and by 1608 nearly a third of the county's resident Justices had invested in one or more of the great Jacobean trading companies. They were joined by the Sandwich and Dover corporations, both of which took up shares in the Virginia Company. Although there is no evidence that Maidstone did the same, Sir Edwin Sandes, who took over as Treasurer of the Virginia Company in 1617, was sworn a freeman of Maidstone in 1625. Another connection between Maidstone and Virginia was Sir Francis Wyatt of Boxley, who was Governor of Virginia 1621-39. At least five Kentish families which produced Maidstone jurats, the Banks, Bigges, Fishers, Halls, and Greens, had relations among the early settlers in Virginia. (Tittler, 1999, p.188; Clark, EPS, 1977, p.300)

In the seventeenth century Maidstone jurats were equally wealthy. The accounts of Thomas Henman and Thomas Highwood, surveyors of the highways drawn up in April 1620, showed work costing £45 15s 7d completed in 1619, for which £41 3d had been collected. 290 householders were assessed in the town; 22 in Westree and 5 in Loddington. The only people who had not paid (either in cash, in stones or the loan of a cart) were Mr Thomas Philpot, Mr Johnson, Mr Turner and the two surveyors themselves. The lowest amount paid seems to have been 6d, with a few people listed but paying nothing, perhaps exempted. The mayor and jurats were, as might be expected, among the highest rate payers between a maximum of 6s and 3s with jurat John Banks paying 8s for his own paving outside his house. (CKS P241/20, 1620)

In 1630 when commissioners visited Kent to investigate the value of land held by wealthy men who had not presented themselves for knighthood at the coronation of Charles I on 2 February 1626 that six Maidstone inhabitants were questioned, of whom two were jurats. The fine known as *dstraint of knighthood* was based on a 13th Century custom which prescribed that all freeholders with land worth more than £40 p.a. must give knight's service to the crown. The cost of buying a knighthood, and future liability for taxation resulting from increased social status was not popular, and many wealthy tradesmen tried to keep a low profile to avoid extra expense. Richard Maplesden, mayor at the time, made the excuse that he owned land worth only £32 2s and that his wife owed £90. She was his second wife, and shortly afterwards he bequeathed her £6 6s if she made no claim on his executor (his son George currently on a sea voyage, or in his absence son John) because he had left her a jointure of £10 a year for life. (CKS PRC32/49/49) The other jurat, Robert Swinnock replied that he had not owned £40 in land until 8 months after the Coronation. Other

excuses came from Gervase Maplesden, the son of jurat Edward, who said that he had not inherited his land from his father until six months after the coronation. Shoemaker John Wall admitted that he had £40 at the coronation, but said that he had sold it soon afterwards. George Curtis said that at the time of the coronation he had been living in the Cinque Ports and did his service there. Henry Maplesden of Marden merely denied having such land at that time. If one calculates the capital value of land on the basis of *twenty years' purchase*, then income of £40 from land made a man worth about £800. (Davies, 1936, p.83; NA SP16/180/25; Habakkuk, 1952, pp. 26-45)

The result of the commissioners visit, was probably that all the men involved were fined, as follows; Richard Maplesden £2:10s, Gervase Maplesden £4 (with a marginal note that *Gervase Maplesden was returned to us out of the Exchequer*) John Wall £1:0s, Robert Swinnock £5, George Curtis £5. It is a pity that Thomas Stanley was not amongst those Maidstone names, probably because he was living in West Peckham at the time, and neglecting his Maidstone duties (a subject for Chapter 4) but in 1635, casting his accounts, he reckoned that he was worth £10,655 (including Earl's Place which he valued at £640 and a brewery in Rochester worth £1,800) Stanley was seriously wealthy, and unfortunately his excuses for not taking up knighthood are so far unknown. (NA SP16/180/25; Robertson, 1887, p.354)

How did the Maidstone jurats deploy their wealth? First, to provide for their families, arranging annuities for widows and support for children who had not yet attained their full age of 21. Dowries for daughters, usually payable at age 21 or marriage (whichever came first) were left only by the younger men, since married daughters had already been settled. Maidstone jurats left generous dowries. In 1573 Richard Lee left his daughters £100 each, a year later James Busbridge left his £30, and in 1609 Thomas Barham left his daughter £250. In 1643 John Bigge, who admittedly could afford it since he left total bequests of around £800, gave £100 as a marriage portion to Damaris, the eldest daughter of the popular Revd. Thomas Wilson, of whom more in Chapter Three. On that occasion there must have been some delay in payment, since *a little before the insurrection in Kent in the year 1648, one hundred pound was brought into Mr. Wilson's house (being a legacy given to his eldest daughter, by a gracious man Mr. John Bigge, one of the jurats of Maidstone, and I believe the greatest portion any of his children had) which money in the time of the insurrection was by the soldiers (when they searched the house for arms) discovered and taken away (though quickly restored again) Mr. Wilson being then at London.* In 1649 the well-endowed Damaris married John Chowning. In 1650 George Gilliat left dowries of £100 for his daughters. In 1659 Robert Swinnock left £200 for his granddaughter, and John Sanders II left dowries of £200 to his daughters. Sons needed to be educated and then set up in business. In 1588 William Down left his eldest son (then aged 20) three instalments of £20 during his apprenticeship as well as two pieces of land in Maidstone. Thomas Beale left his youngest son £300 at age 26 *but £50 of his portion when he hath served his apprenticeship.* In 1643 John Bigge left £20 for his widowed sister Johnson to put her son *out to apprentice at 14.* In 1649 Pewterer Samuel Marshall left his godson *all the working tools in the shop* including clamps, a pair of pliers, casting blocks, and moulds of various sizes.

Several jurats sent their sons to university, which was a fairly costly enterprise. Although one undergraduate managed to spend a year at Cambridge for a total cost of £9, he must have done it on a shoestring. Thomas Greenfield son of Jurat Thomas also went to Magdalen Hall as a plebian in 1596. In 1608 his jurat father bequeathed him only his *best cloak and best gown* because *I have already been at great charges in bringing him up to learning in the university.* Robert Mowshurst, eldest son of jurat William, who was born around 1550, was sent to Oxford where he graduated, became a Fellow of All Souls, and left to marry. When he died childless in 1586 aged about 36 he referred in his will to £150 *laid out for him* in books by the Puritan stationer Garbrand Hawkes (1539-90) which he intended to repay, after his wife's death, by leaving Hawkes his house. Later in the century Tobias Tinley and Thomas Baseden, went to Magdalen Hall, and jurat Robert Tinley's son James attended university then returned to Maidstone as a schoolmaster. William Simonson (probably the son of the Master, and aged about 7 when his father came to Maidstone) went to Merton College, Oxford aged 16 in 1594. Richard Emmott, son of jurat Robert went to Magdalen Hall Oxford in 1596 and took his BA in 1599, but was back in Maidstone in April 1602, when he died, aged 23. And in 1600 Gervase Maplesden, eldest son of jurat Edward matriculated as a plebian (commoner) at St Alban Hall, Oxford. (Burnett, 1967, p.92; Foster, 1892; Venn, 1954)

Jurats also used their wealth to control the parish church. The Puritanism of the Maidstone jurats will be the subject of Chapter Three, but mention may be made here of the willingness of jurats to spend money on educating the poor. In 1596 Maidstone yeoman Thomas Ayerst (father of the attorney mentioned above) bequeathed *so much money as will buy Mr Calvin's Institutes in English of the fairest and plainest letter together with a chain to be fastened to a desk at the lower end of the parish church ... for the better instruction of the poor and simple there.*

Several jurats lent or gave money to the Borough, particularly after the expense of the new charter in 1619. In the 1620s Ambrose Beale, Caleb Banks, Thomas Stanley, Thomas and Robert Swinnock, all lent the town money, and Robert Swinnock not only waived his interest, but purchased a town farm for £185, which covered the current debts. £10 towards a new mace for the corporation of Maidstone was bequeathed by John Bigge in 1643. (Martin, 1927, pp. 90-91)

In 1643 John Bigge left his mother, sister and brother-in-law £20, £20 and £10 a year respectively out of his land in New England, where the latter clearly lived, with the proviso that if the land failed to yield £70 then his mother was to have her annuity paid from Cranbrook holdings. Income from the New World cannot have been reliable, but £70 would have been the equivalent of nearly £9,500 today. (Cresswell, 2008, p.9; www.famousamericans.net/sirfranciswyatt, 2008; <http://members.tripod.com/~DAllen1989/Virginia-Settlers>, 2008, NA PROB11/191)

Luxuries could be bought in Maidstone as well as in London. Jacqueline Bower found that Robert Tinley stocked nearly 100 different fabrics in his shop in 1590, while Robert Sadler at the same time was selling Latin books as well as English ones. (Bower, 2000, p.170) Most jurats left silver, at a time when ordinary people usually possessed only pewter. In 1559 James Barrett left a silver goblet to each of his three sons, and, since he was the purchaser of the base of the silver gilt cross from All Saints in 1547, it is quite possible that he had them made from it. (CKS PRC32/28/50b, 1559) Other luxuries which were mentioned in jurats' wills included (in addition to the Fremlin bequests already described at the beginning this chapter) a Karadagh rug from Persia (Robert Balser in 1577) silver trenchers, bowls, salt cellars and spoons (Gervase Maplesden in 1585, Thomas Basden in 1592, Thomas Beale in 1594, James Franklin in 1641), stone pots with silver covers (William Simmons in 1590, George Maplesden in 1596) and maps (Robert Tinley in 1591). It was also common for mourning gowns and rings to be left to numerous friends and family. In 1611 John Green left gold rings each worth 20s to three close friends and their wives. In 1669 Caleb Banks left gowns worth £10 to his three unmarried sisters, £30 for mourning clothes to his daughter-in-law's parents, and gold rings worth 12s to about twenty other close friends. And a most endearingly frivolous bequest was made in 1643, when jurat John Bigge bequeathed 20s *for a sugar loaf* to his friend Mrs Mary Duke. (CKS PRC32/33/44, 1577; CKS PRC32/35/166, 1585; CKS PRC21/12/146, 1592; NA PROB 11/83, 1594; NA PROB11/187, 1641; NA PROB 11/75, 1590; CKS PRC32/38/113, 1596; CKS PRC32/37/3, 1591; CKS PRC32/42/1, 1611; NA PROB11/331, 1669; NA PROB11/191, 1643)

Four years after 1660 a Maidstone Hearth Tax list showed five jurats living in conspicuously large houses. Caleb Banks, Michael Beaver, Thomas Fletcher, Richard Bills and James Ruse, were listed amongst forty householders who were taxed on 8-10 hearths. (Harrington, 2000, pp.180-191) The Hearth Tax was introduced in England by the government of Charles II in 1662. Liable householders (people whose house was worth more than 20s a year, whose income was not more than £100 a year, and who contributed to local church and poor rates) were to pay one shilling for each hearth within their property for each collection of the tax. Payments were due twice annually, at Michaelmas (29 September) and Lady Day (25 March). (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk, 2008) In Maidstone the largest houses were owned by Sir John Tufton (who lived at The Mote and was assessed on 24 hearths in Stone Borough) Sir John Beale (19 hearths in the Bullock Lane area) and Dame Ann Astley (18 hearths at Maidstone Palace in High Town). Fifteen other householders were taxed on more than ten hearths, and they probably included the tenant (possibly Lady Culpeper) of jurat Thomas Stanley who owned and let Earls Place, but lived himself at West Peckham. (Robertson, 1887, pp.353-354)

Which brings us to the fact that towards the end of the period Maidstone wealth was the foundation of much greater prosperity for two jurat's sons. The first was John, the eldest son of jurat Caleb Banks, who was born in Maidstone in 1627, almost certainly educated at Maidstone Grammar School, and admitted to Emmanuel College, Cambridge in 1644. Soon afterwards his wealthy father set him up as a merchant, since, by 1652 when he was only 25, he was already a member of a syndicate engaged in victualling the Navy. In 1654 he married the daughter of Alderman John Dethick, Lord Mayor of London in 1655, and after that he moved ahead rapidly in trade and finance, becoming a shareholder in the East India Company and a member of the Levant Company. John Banks served as MP for Maidstone from the year of his marriage throughout the Commonwealth, and followed a moderate royalist line at the Restoration, buying Aylesford Priory and becoming a baronet in 1662. Samuel Pepys followed his advice and regarded him as a very wise man, and they became close friends. (Latham & Matthews, 1972, Vol.6 p.265; Vol 7 p.24; Vol.9 p.496) He died in 1699 worth about £180,000, and founded the almshouses in St Faith's Street which are still standing today. (ODNB, 2004) The second was Samuel Ongley, the younger son of jurat George Ongley, who was born in 1647, the year before his father was elected a jurat. His father died in 1670 when he was 23 and newly out of his apprenticeship in London. His elder brother George inherited the family property in Maidstone, and Samuel and his three married sisters received bequests of £5 each. Presumably by that time his father had already set him up in business, since he later became a very wealthy man, a Director of the East India Company and the South Sea Company. He bought an estate in Bedfordshire at Old Warden, where he died in 1726, leaving bequests to his relations the Troughton and Edmonds families back in Maidstone. (CKS PRC32/54/177; PROB11/61; Sperling, 1961, pp. 191-202; www.bedscc.gov.uk/CommunityAndLiving/ArchivesAndRecordOffice, 2008)

From the early jurats who left considerable estates and paid heavy fines after Wyatt's rebellion in 1554, to the substantial merchants trading in the town in 1660, this story is one of men who not only made large fortunes, but spent

them in ways which enhanced the town. Jurats' wealth increased significantly during a period of great opportunity, being at least equal to that of surrounding Kentish landowners, and it enabled them to buy land themselves, marry their daughters into the landowning class and send their sons to university or set them up in businesses in London. The Maidstone elite were happy to stay in the town, since opportunities for becoming very wealthy and enjoying a comfortable lifestyle were available at home.

Chapter Three: The Prestige and Influence of the Jurats

We the mayor, jurats and commonalty of this town do hereby declare and solemnly protest that it is our earnest desire to live in peace and to have amity and good correspondency with ... all ... gentlemen which now dwell and hereafter shall dwell within the limits and liberties of the said corporation ... and shall most willingly assent to any proposition tending thereunto ... consonant to equity and reason ...

Extract from a resolution recorded in the Burghmote Minutes for 1624 in the mayoralty of Gervase Maplesden (Martin, 1926, p.88)

When the Mayor and other jurats made their customary summer survey of the Medway from the quay in Maidstone to Hawkwood, *it pleased Sir Francis Barnham of his love of the town with his lady and my Lady Onslow her sister, and my Lady Sackville and James Franklin Esq. ... to meet them on the water.*

Burghmote minutes for 1629 (Martin, 1927 p.94) The Barn hams lived at Hollingbourne. Sir Francis' wife was Elizabeth (nee Lennard) and her sister was Mary, widow of Thomas Onslow of Knowle, Surrey, who had died of smallpox in 1616. She may have made her home with her sister. Lady Sackville lived at Stone House.

Maidstone jurats were responsible for town and the parish, and there is little doubt that they were respected and accorded due reverence by most of the town's ordinary inhabitants, as they accompanied the mayor on important occasions *in their gowns* (albeit on pain of a fine). Their shared responsibility included acting as assessors for lay subsidies, and in 1585, for the subsidy described in Chapter Two, the assessors for Week Borough included four jurats, John Balser, Thomas Beale, William Down and Robert Tinley, who must all have lived in other areas of the parish; (Stone Borough, East Lane, Maidstone or West Borough) (Martin, 1927, pp. 227-231; Russell, 1881, p.218; Morant, 1951, pp.210-214) They were also called upon to stand surety for local people who were summoned to court and needed bail. In 1603 jurats William Plomer and Richard Maplesden, stood £10 each as surety for a recognizance taken at the Quarter Sessions in Maidstone on 3rd May, for Thomas Pattenden of Borden to appear at the next session at Canterbury Castle. (CKS-Q/S/R/4/m.2) Every mayor dispensed charity on behalf of the town, being afterwards refunded by the chamberlains, and Robert Tinley, while mayor, sponsored a conspicuous success. First the local surgeon, John Bennett, who must have been very skilful, was paid £3 for amputating both the legs of a young girl and *curing her*. The reason for the amputation is unknown, but the maiden seems to have had no family in the town, so perhaps she suffered an accident at one of the fairs. Her keep was then paid while she convalesced for 29 weeks, living with Alice Northern. Finally she was provided with a wooden leg, a pair of *stilts* [crutches, OED] and a frieze petticoat. All of which cost £7 11s, which was fairly expensive, but an amazing recovery for 1587. (CKS Md/FCa/1 1587) The minister of All Saints and the parish clerks recorded births, marriages and deaths in their families with special dignity, and all the wills which have survived for jurats included bequests to the Maidstone poor. Examples include Stephen Heeley, who left 6d each to no less than 100 poor people in Maidstone in 1628, and Samuel Marshall who left 40s for 40 poor people in Maidstone in 1649. (CKS PR32/48/239; PROB11/210). Mention has already been made in Chapter Two of jurats who made special bequests to the church or the town, and several paid for edifying sermons to be preached to the assembled townspeople at their funerals. In 1585 Gervase Maplesden left 6s 8d for a sermon *by some learned man in the truth of God's word*. In 1588 William Down left 10s to Mr Carr for a sermon at his funeral. In 1600 George Manningham left 20s to Mr Carr for a sermon in 1600, £5 for the poor and 20s for the repair of All Saints. (CKS PRC32/35/166, 1585; NA PROB 11/073,1588; CKS PRC32/38/280, 1600)

Chapter One showed that some of the jurats were born into families who bore arms, and Chapter Two showed that many jurats were as rich, if not richer than Kent county gentry. How much influence did the jurats have in their dealings with the noblemen and gentlemen responsible for the administration of the county? From 1558 county affairs throughout England were led by the Lord Lieutenant, usually a peer and often a privy councillor, and in 1595 there were seventeen of them for twenty nine counties. (Rowse, 1950, p.383) Sir William Brooke, Lord Cobham, was the first Lord Lieutenant of Kent, and his son Henry, Lord Cobham, succeeded him in 1598. Lord Cobham was granted 400 acres at Buckland in Maidstone Parish, but borough records do not reveal any direct contact between him or his son and the corporation, and they lived, when not in London, at Cobham Hall, which was 14 miles north west of Maidstone. The Brooke families in the town, one of whom, Thomas Brooke, was a Royalist jurat in 1643, may have been cousins, but they seems to have been less important to Maidstone than the Wyatts, also Brooke cousins, who were much closer at Allington and had tenants in the town. Sir Thomas Wyatt the elder and Sir Thomas the younger sat in the Commons as knights for the shire in 1542 in 1547 respectively. (EMK 2000, p.36) The Wyatt influence will be described again in Chapter Four, but politically it ceased in 1554 before Queen Elizabeth came to the throne. Sir George Blague, the Maidstone Steward was also a Brooke cousin, but he died in 1551. More influential in Maidstone were the Wotton

family of Boughton Malherbe. Sir Thomas Wotton, Sheriff of Kent in 1559 and 1579, was noted by Clark and Murfin for his especially beneficial patronage of the town, and Edward, Lord Wotton was Lord Lieutenant in 1609. (ODNB, 2004; Hasted, 1797, pp. 231-234; HM 1995, p.60) Both the Wottons sent the town gifts of venison for ceremonial occasions, and so did Sir Thomas Fane one of the two deputy lieutenants who undertook the day to day administration of the county. Sir Thomas and Sir John Leveson, another deputy lieutenant both had strong links with the corporation, who sent reciprocal presents of capons to him and other *worshipfuls*. (ODNB, 2004; CKS Md/FCa1/1586, 1589) In 1577 the chamberlains paid the beadle, Richard Kennet (whose official fee was 20s) and extra 23s for *capons and feeding of them for town's use*. (CKS Md/FCa1, 1577) Such exchanges have been described by urban historian Robert Tittler as *the common coin* of relationships between corporations and county landowners, and although they indicated goodwill between the corporation and their gentlemen neighbours, the very term *worshipful* indicates a considerably lower status given to the jurats. (Tittler, 1998, p.168)

Sir John Leveson, who lived downstream on the Medway at Halling, and actively promoted the navigation of the river, was MP for Maidstone in 1596. (ODNB, 2004) Sir Thomas, Lieutenant of Dover Castle, lived eight miles from Maidstone at Buston in Hunton. His nephew, Francis Fane (born in 1560 at Badsell in Tudeley), was educated at Maidstone Grammar School, but Sir Thomas's only child was a daughter. Deputy lieutenants in their turn were supported by local landowners who acted as Justices of the Peace, in Petty Sessions and Quarter Sessions, and it was these men who were nearest to the jurats in prestige. The number of J.P.s in Kent rose from roughly 40 in 1550 to about 90 in 1600, and the Maidstone jurats, whose senior members sat as magistrates themselves in the borough courts, were on an equal legal footing. (Zell, J.P.s, 1999, p.4) Michael Zell described the close knit groups among the Elizabethan J.P.s where families had several members on the bench at the same time, as well as recruiting their sons to give continuity. (Zell, J.P.s, 1999 p.10) Alan Everitt, writing about the Kent gentry community from the Civil War to the Restoration, described the county in 1640 as dominated by *a knot of closely related families of comparable standing*. His estimation that around Maidstone more than half those families were of Kentish origin, is borne out by the fact that the jurats shared those same origins. (Everitt, 1966, p.35-37) Indeed some, if not all of them probably enjoyed the same standing, although there were local families whose support for the town was not given by service in any of the borough offices.

Magistrates who lived nearest to Maidstone, but whose families do not seem to have provided junior members as jurats for the town, were the Barnhams of Hollingbourne (Visitation of Kent 1619 p.168) Bufkins of Gore Court in Otham (Visitation of Kent, 1592, pp.86-7) Fanes of Buston in Hunton (Visitation of Kent, 1574, p.43) Filmers of East Sutton (Visitation of Kent 1619 p.167) Fludds of Bearsted (Visitation of Kent 1574 p.51) Hendlys of Otham (Visitation of Kent 1619 p.95) William Lambard of Halling (Visitation of Kent 1619 p.167) Robert Rudstone of Boughton Monchelsea (Visitation of Kent 1574, p.27) Thomas Randolph and Laurence Washington of Maidstone. (Clark, EPS, 1977, p.130; ; ODNB; Russell, 1881, p.342) Some of them, like Sir Nicholas St. Leger of Ulcombe (Russell, 1881, p.409) and William Gull, from Ightham and Sandwich (Visitation of Kent 1619 p.134) served the town in the capacity of Recorder or MP, which offices, as Robert Tittler has stated, had to be held by local gentry, and when they did, they were usually granted honorary freedom. Sir Francis Fane, born at Mereworth and educated at Maidstone Grammar School, and whose family were strong supporters of the town, served as MP for the town when he was only 21. (HM 1995 p.60; Russell 1881 p.342; Gilbert, 1866, *Antiquities* p.63) In May 1625 Sir Edwin Sands took his oath as a freeman, and the earlier oaths of the Earl of Westmorland and Lord Burghersh and Sir George Fane were recorded at the same time. The oath they took began with due allegiance to the King *You shall true faith bear to our sovereign Lord the King's Majesty* but continued with proper civic dignity *you shall have that regard and respect unto the mayor that governeth this town ... and the lawful franchises usages and customs of the same, advance and maintain to your power ... and bear yourself for the good of this town ... so help you God*. Such an oath, placing the good of the borough above that of the gentlemen taking it, might give a reasonable expectation that town rates and some service to the town might be counted upon. But that was not always the case. Sir Humphrey Tufton of the Mote in Maidstone who swore his oath *gratis* when he was chosen MP in 1640, regularly refused to pay his rates. (Martin, 1926, p.86-89; Hasted, 1798)

Sir Francis Barnham served as MP for Maidstone between 1614 and 1640. (Everitt, 1966 p.38; HM, 1995, p.60; ODNB, 2004) Sir Levin Bufkin of Gore Court in Otham, also a JP, married his daughter to jurat John Balser. (Cave-Brown 1902, p.10; Visitation of Kent, 1592, pp.86-87) The Fanes, who had estates nearby at Hunton and Mereworth, as well as at Badsell, were loyal supporters of the town who served as borough MPs. (REF) The Fishers supplied the town with a Recorder and other legal assistance. (Martin, 1927, p.271); Visitation of Kent 1574, p.51) Sir Thomas Fludd of Milgate in Bearsted was MP for Maidstone in the 1590s. (Russell, 1881, p.409) The Hendlys of Otham, originally clothiers from Cranbrook, had important business ties with the town. (HM, 1995, p.51) Lawrence Washington, who bought The Priory in Knighttrider Street in the late 1580s, was elected MP for the town in 1603 with the young Sir Francis Fane. (Martin, 1926, pp.85,89) Washington was then in his late forties, a Kent JP since 1590 and a Maidstone freeman since 1600. (Zell, Kent J.P.s) On the other hand, the presence of the Astley family at Maidstone

Palace, Sir John the elder, Master of the Jewels to Queen Elizabeth and Sir John the younger, Master of Revels to James I, capable of providing useful direct connections to the Court, seems to have been less helpful. (ODNB, 2004; Memorial in All Saints Church) Other Kent gentry who kept houses in the town and christened their children at All Saints, but made no obvious contribution to town government the Willoughbys (descendants of the Dean of Rochester, one of whom married a Fremlin), Blounts, Codds, Darcys, Fords, Gellibrands, Kelshams, Lakes and Violets. (CKS P241/1/A1 All Saints Baptism Register; PROB11/64; PRC32/41/69)

In spite of the proximity of a fair number of influential gentlemen, Maidstone's independent spirit shows in the arms chosen at the College of Herald's Visitation of Kent in 1619. Whereas the Gravesend arms incorporated the hedgehog of the Sidney family, Maidstone's showed the three red roundels of Archbishop Courtney and a wavy fess representing the River Medway, surmounted by the lion of England. (www.civicheraldry.co.uk) The Corporation, not forgetting their historic links with a long-dead Archbishop, nor the strategic geographic position to which they owed their prosperity, and abandoning the device on their Elizabethan seal showing a maiden standing on a stone, were clearly stating that they owed their allegiance direct to the Crown. (Martin, 1927, frontispiece) And they had reason to be grateful to the King. Only nine years earlier, in December 1610, the tradesmen of Maidstone had collectively taken a case direct to King James against the mayor, Walter Fisher, who was trying to move the corn market to a position that they disliked. Judging from subsequent entries in the Burghmote Book, the royal decision was made in their favour. (Martin, 1926, pp.66-67; Registers of Petitions to James I 1603-1616, 2006)

In 1549 Maidstone's first charter stipulated that the corporation, *the mayor, jurats and commonalty of the town* had to be elected from *the inhabitants* of the town. (Martin, 1926, p.8) It is nowhere made exactly clear, but the commonalty seems to have consisted of the freemen augmented by freeholders of parish land, and only those two groups could attend Burghmote meetings. Principal inhabitants of the town who might be chosen jurats were very likely to be freeholders, or to have bought their freedom, but neither of these were strictly necessary. As more gentlemen moved into the town this ambiguity caused confusion, and finally, in July 1619, the fourth charter clarified the situation by stating that any inhabitant of the town and parish could be chosen, but only a freeman could be fined if he refused to take office. This effectively meant that a gentleman inhabitant who neither owned freehold land nor needed freedom in order to trade, could refuse to accept office with impunity. In Chapter Two it has been shown that many of Maidstone's jurats were as wealthy or wealthier than the local gentry, and some of them owned significant acreages of land, although it is hard to gauge the value of it. Chapter One showed that some of the town's Elizabethan jurats came from the county gentry. So what was the social status of the jurats, and how did they deal with increasing numbers of county gentry coming into the town?

H.R. French has described the difficulties that historians have experienced in defining social categories in the early modern period, quoting some categories of *the middle sort* based on occupations. He quoted V. Brodsky-Elliott's four social categories within *the middle sort* of citizens in the social band between the gentry (in which he included physicians, lawyers and overseas merchants) and *the poorer sort*. :-

1. *Large-scale shop-keepers, wholesalers and innkeepers.*
2. *Tanners, butchers, skilled metal and woodworkers.*
3. *Weavers, tailors, shoemakers and petty retailers.* (French, 2000, pp.277-293)

The Maidstone trade companies described in Chapter One do not seem to have been especially hierarchical. All four supplied jurats, but if a man was a successful wholesale merchant or large innkeeper he probably had more hope of being chosen than a man in groups 2 or 3 above. William Harrison, a contemporary country parson, held that the gentry in 1577 included the clergy, students of the arts and sciences and lawyers, whoever their fathers had been, and indeed in All Saints parish registers members of that group were given the title *Master*. In 1609 the author Barnabas Rich held that *Master* might apply to lawyers, university men and physicians as well as esquires and gentlemen, thus embracing anyone who could afford to live without manual labour, whether or not he had a coat of arms. A coat of arms was merely the confirmation of gentle status, enhanced by a pedigree, since the heralds on their county visitations required proof of the right to bear one. And with that recognition, as we have seen in Chapter Two, might come the unwelcome financial burden of higher national taxation. (Campbell, 1942 pp.34-35)

Only three of the jurats whose wills have survived described *themselves* as yeomen. All of them died before 1600, and thereafter the term *Gentleman* [shortened to *Gent*] became more popular. *Yeoman* was used in two senses, and might indicate occupation (as a worker of the land who was senior to a husbandman, and thus addressed as *Goodman*) or social status (marginally below the gentry) and the latter, in Kent, was used especially proudly. One of the three yeoman, Clement Lutwick (chosen jurat in 1559) who was running a sizeable farm growing malt for local breweries, may actually have been describing his trade, but Thomas Beale (chosen 1569) who was a very wealthy man, descended from a family of Maidstone Portreeves, was almost certainly using the term as a mark of proud Kentish independence.

Beale requested *My good friend Master John Smythe, Gentleman* to be his overseer, conferring on him the title which he himself was accorded by other people. Less is known about Nicholas Coveney (chosen 1567) except that his grandmother was a Culpeper. (NA Catalogue Chancery Papers, 1558, C2Eliz/C4/50) The Culpeper family had been appointed to the county commission for the peace before the reformation, and were well-established Kent Gentry, although Maidstone borough records do not include many references to them. (Zell, J.P.s, 1999; Everitt, 1966, p.36) Coveney died childless in 1593 at Ash near Wrotham where he founded a charity, leaving his house there to his widow, with reversion to a nephew, who also inherited his land in Boxley. (NA PROB/85)

Thomas Fuller's concept of upward mobility that *a yeoman is a gentleman in ore, whom the next age may see refined*, was particularly apt when applied to Maidstone, where two of the three essentials for gentility (wealth and education) could be and were available to the jurats who fitted into the social category of *the middling sort* identified by Brodsky Elliott. (Campbell, 1967, pp.35-36) But as increasing numbers of the gentry visited the town, for the assizes and quarter sessions, to consult physicians, to bring their sons to the Grammar School, to buy luxury goods from (and apprentice their younger sons to) the increasingly wealthy local merchants, jurats were able to meet them on more equal terms and be addressed as *Master* instead of *Goodman*. (Campbell, 1967, pp.35, 50) By the time he was chosen a jurat, his shop, if he still had one, was probably run by his sons or apprentices, and he had time for town administration and politics.

Senior Maidstone jurats acted as magistrates in the Borough Courts, and as Michael Zell has noted, being a JP was a public recognition of one's superior status in the community and a valuable accretion of practical power. The dignity of office, acting as magistrate in the borough court and attending the mayor in his gown to church and at civic functions, combined with his wealth, gave a jurat contact with and standing among other Kent J.P.s. And he could consolidate his social advancement by marrying his children well. Into this category came the families of Balser, Beale, Bigge, Coveney, Crompe, Emmott, Greenfield, Gosling, Haselam, Hunt, Ippenbury, Jeffery, Lutwick, Maplesden, Marshall, Ongley, Ruse, Sanders, Simmons, Startout, Swinnock and Tinley. Some of them, as will be seen below, had descendants who moved on to London, others purchased country estates, but many remained loyal to Maidstone. They had started as tradesmen, but worked their way up through the traditional system of borough preferment, universally popular among the freemen, likened by Robert Tittler to the Roman *cursus honorum*. (Tittler, 1998 pp.196-7)

A prospective jurat needed first to be a freeholder or become a freeman. Regular attendance at official town meetings would exhibit suitability for junior office, and only freeholders or freemen of the town could be present at Burghmote Courts, Common Council meetings, or the election of the Mayor. No one could have freedom by apprenticeship unless he himself had been born in the town and served seven years apprenticeship with a freeman master. A boy's age at apprenticeship was normally fourteen, so he became a journeyman (paid by the day by his master) around 21. He could compound for his freedom later in his twenties if he became established independently of his master and wanted to take his own apprentices. Once a freeman he could become a common council member and be appointed to junior office as constable or freemen's chamberlain.

Unfortunately, dates for freedom have survived for only 32 of the 97 jurats, mainly in the later part of the period under study. For them the training process, before being chosen a jurat, varied quite widely, and possible reasons for those variations need to be found. The longest training periods were those of Thomas Taylor, Thomas Brooke and Guy Hunt, who were all freemen for over 30 years before being chosen jurats in the early 1640s. It is likely that these men were either less able, or less popular, or somewhat reluctant jurats. In the middle range were 23 men (72%) eight of whom waited 20 years or more, nine waited between 10 and 20 years, and six waited between five and ten years, which was the expected training that might be expected if a freeman in his late twenties became a jurat in his forties. Bearing in mind that lives tended to be shorter then, it is surprising that the Oxford City Council in 1585 boasted respective average ages of 50 for common councillors, and slightly over 60 for aldermen, but it must be remembered that a few very old alderman could pull the average up in a fairly small group. (Hammer, 1978, pp.1-27) In Maidstone averages cannot even be guessed at, but the oldest known jurat in 1618 was James Franklin who that year aged 92, and Ambrose Beale and Thomas Swinnock lived to be 80 and 79 respectively. (Martin, 1927, pp.18-19; CKS P241/1/A1 and CKS P241/1/E1)

Some examples of the majority group who followed the *cursus honorum* after serving apprenticeships in Maidstone were Nicholas Austen, of Loose, given permission in 1566 to go abroad with his master, the mercer and jurat Edmund Hall, Thomas Swinnock who was apprenticed in 1577 to his brother William a Petty Chapman or Milliner, James Spencer apprenticed in 1571 to Baker Austen Bull, Martin Jeffery apprenticed in 1622 to jurat and mercer Stephen Heeley and Jonathan Troughton who served his apprenticeship with grocer and jurat James Ruse. Thomas Greenfield, constable in 1584 was chosen a jurat in 1604. (CKS Md/FCa/1 1568) Robert Tinley, who served as warden of the drapers' company in 1568, was chosen a jurat in 1584, but the other three wardens that year, Richard Kennet, William Gonsley and William Lee never became jurats. (CKS Md/ACm/1, 2 and 3)

Acting as the freemen's chamberlain was important but not obligatory training for a jurat, but several men who served as freemen's chamberlain once or even as many as four times never became jurats. Examples of such chamberlains are Roger Ball (freemen's chamberlain in 1593) John Barefoot, Thomas Besbeeck (1636 and 1637 respectively) Ellis Bingham (1585) Henry Cooper (1606, 1607, 1608) William Dabbs (1612) William Emmott (1604, 1605) Richard Fenner (1570) John Fowle (1611) James Jackson (1610) Francis Lamb (1644) Robert Marshall (1616, 1617, 1622, 1623) John Nicholson (1570) Robert Nynn (1604) Gilbert Pearce (1579) John Taylor (1587) Richard Osborne (1649) never became jurats. (Chamberlains' Accounts CKS Md/FCa/1) All these men may have been potential jurats, whose promotion never happened, and Gilbert Pearce for one died two years after serving as Freemen's Chamberlain. (NA PROB11/69) In 1613 William Acton, possibly a member of a clothier family in Leeds and Sutton Valence, or possibly from Yalding, served as Freemen's Chamberlain, was chosen jurat the following year, but mysteriously disappeared from records in 1615. (Cowper Vol.1 1892, p.1)

The six jurats who trained for less than three years between becoming freemen and being chosen jurats, are likely to have been members of the gentry, or relations of jurats. Thomas Franklin of Buckland on the west bank of the Medway (chosen 1589) about whom, unfortunately, little can be found, was a landowning nephew of jurat James Franklin. (Visitation of Kent, 1592, p.100) John Banks (chosen 1613), was a draper who had recently arrived in the town from Ashford, the son-in-law of the Recorder, Alexander Fisher. (Visitation of Kent 1574, p.98) Robert Golding (chosen 1617) was probably related to the Goldings of Sevington near Ashford, and is known to have held the lease of Allington Castle when he died in 1623, and probably already had it when he was chosen. (Visitation of Kent CKS PRC32/45/319b) Less is certain about James Allen and Robert Heath, who were both chosen jurats after less than a year during the upheavals of the Commonwealth. Allen was possibly a relation of Christopher Allen from Borden, Sittingbourne, who married an Astley granddaughter in 1621. (Visitation of Kent 1619 p.16) Heath, a grocer, seems, from a surviving letter, to have been a distant cousin of Sir Robert Heath of Brasted. (NA Catalogue DR98/1652/46) More information is needed about all five.

Robert Tittler found that the election of gentlemen as jurats was generally uncommon throughout England, and when it did happen it was always because the ruling clique wished to make a temporary sacrifice of the traditional *custos rotorum* to strengthen their control. The reason might come from *outside* the town, as it did in the Duchy of Lancaster where the great northern magnates, the Earls of Derby, wished to control expanding towns such as Liverpool, or from *inside* for a specific local reason. (Tittler, 1999, p.198) In contrast, Wallace MacCaffrey argued that the social origins of Exeter mayors 1540-1640 were *almost as diverse as their geographical provenance*. (MacCaffrey, 1958, p.257) In Maidstone, which was not controlled by a great local magnate, the motive for electing gentlemen probably came from inside, perhaps because the ruling tradesmen needed supportive gentlemen to pull *with* them instead of *against* them. Kent was an notably egalitarian county, and the Maidstone practice of choosing gentlemen jurats was established almost from the second charter, if not from the first. In the 1570s Richard Lee, a landowning descendant of his namesake, Sheriff of Kent in 1479, was chosen a jurat, accepted the position, and served as mayor a year later. The Lee family owned the manor of Great Delce in Rochester as well as Earl's Place in Maidstone. (Hasted, 1798) Another early gentleman jurat was Edward Heron, descended from Sir John Heron, Master of Jewels to Henry VIII, who was made free in 1588 and chosen a jurat in 1589 (when he served as chamberlain) but who died in 1590. (Visitation of Kent, 1574 p.64) William Mowshurst (chosen 1559) was the grandson of Richard Fane Esq., of Badsell by his mother, Susan Fane. (Visitation of Kent, 1574, p.43)

In January 1619, using a clause in the new charter which allowed the choice of jurats who were inhabitants, but not freemen, and following the death of three jurats in the preceding two years, the Common Council proposed the election of no less than three gentlemen, whose consent does not appear to have been requested. The motion, passed in their absence, included this hopeful (rather convoluted) rider; *... with this respect had to them, as to other jurats formerly chosen, for clearing of all pretences and question, that by these their elections they be neither in places nor estimations which they now hold among us any way prejudiced, as we take it the place being of government doth rather grace than lessen the esteem of any.* (Martin, 1926 p.73)

The first of the three was the younger brother of Sir Edward of Cossington in Aylesford, Richard Duke, who had married around 1612, as his second wife, Mary the daughter of William Curtis of Tenterden. (Visitation of Kent 1592 p.98) In September 1618 he had accompanied the mayor [Stephen Heeley] and three other jurats on a postponed river trip to East Farleigh bridge to *view the weirs and other nuisances of the river and take order for the amendment of them*. The postponement occurred because a *great tempest* in August which *did endanger the town by lightning breaking through a house in the middle of it*. But *God delivered us from the same as likewise from divers fires that year ... his name be always praised*. (Martin, 1926, p.73) The second gentleman chosen was William Horspool, son-in-law of Lawrence Washington. He was a Londoner of Leicestershire origins, whose mother was the sister of Sir John Customer Smythe of Westenhanger, and he had married Mary Washington at Maidstone in 1602. (Visitation of Kent 1619 p.143) Soon afterwards he had bought Great Buckland on the western side of the Medway, and their children were baptised at

All Saints from 1606. Washington had introduced Horspool to local government at a Burghmote meeting in 1612. (Martin, 1927, p.67) The third was Thomas Knatchbull, second son of Richard of Mersham Hatch near Ashford. His elder brother Sir Norton, knighted in 1603, a *loquacious lay theologian* who lived at Mersham, had married Bridget, daughter of Sir John Astley. (EPS p.217 Shaw, 1971, p.131 Memorial in All Saints) Thomas, who had spent time at the Middle Temple under Henry Hall of Digons in Maidstone in 1588, married Bridget Astley's younger sister Eleanor in the early 1590s, and had children christened at All Saints 1595-1613. (CKS P241/1/A1 EPS 1977, p.276) All three refused to serve. (Martin, 1927, p.72) The Burghmote decided to press the point, and impasse was not resolved for five years, during which time the number of jurats was reduced to ten.

In April 1620, in the mayoralty of Robert Swinnock, the jurats, acting on their own, decided that *the gentlemen chosen jurats and not sworn, shall not be sued ... for refusing their oaths, nor be urged to take their oaths without their liking, until such time as a new choice of jurats shall be propounded*, because they had been chosen *in love and hope of their willing acceptance for the good of the town*. (Martin, 1927, p. 77, HM 1995, p.60) In July 1620 it was agreed by the mayor and jurats that Knatchbull, Horspool and Duke should be discharged, if the Common Council assented, but it didn't. (HM, 1995, p.60) In May 1621 when Robert Golding was mayor, after disagreement between lawyers about the legality of the election of the three gentlemen, the situation was still unresolved, so the Burghmote referred the problem to the mediation of Sir Francis Fane and Sir Francis Barnham. They sent their decision from Mereworth Castle on 8 June 1621, that: *for maintaining and increase of the ancient love and mutual peace and for quieting of all future questions about this business ... those gentlemen be from henceforth forever absolutely and freely discharged from the said election*. (Martin, 1927, p. 78)

In April 1624, in the mayoralty of Gervase Maplesden, further proceedings were taken against Richard Duke and new ones against Mr Thomas Carkarede, who, although living in Maidstone, had also refused to serve as a jurat. He was the 57 year old son of Gervase Carkarede, of Godmersham, and a cousin and close friend of James Franklin II (chosen a jurat two years later in 1626 and afterwards Recorder) whose sister Anne he had married before 1619. Anne, daughter of Arthur Franklin of Wye, was the niece of James Franklin I, Maidstone's oldest jurat, who had died in 1618. (Visitation of Kent 1619 p.57; Hasted, 1798, pp. 340-368) Carkarede's family connections were probably the reason why his service as a jurat was sought, and then, it is odd that he was not willing to comply. However he produced the valid excuse, which was confirmed by the Warden of the Cinque Ports, Lord Zouche, that he held the post of gunner at Sandgate Castle. (ODNB, 2004) Sandgate, a very small fort, was garrisoned in 1651 (only 25 years later) merely by a *governor, two corporals, one gunner, one mate, two matrosses [artillerymen] with twenty private soldiers*. Since there was only one gunner, the post was unlikely to be a part-time one, although it is odd that it did not require a younger man. (Journal of the House of Commons: Vol.7: 1651-1660 (1802), pp. 15-18.) Whatever his real reason for refusal to serve as a jurat, and whether or not he paid the fine of 20 marks at 4 marks a year imposed on him if he continued to live in the parish, (he had estates at Godmersham and Wye), he was buried at All Saints when he died in 1639 aged 72, and his monument can be seen in the North Aisle. (Martin, 1927 pp.81-83; Hasted, 1798, Volume 7 pp. 340-368) Cave-Brown, in his history of All Saints, thought that Carkarede's effigy, kneeling at a desk opposite his wife, was dressed in a *black civic gown*, but in fact he never did take civic office. (Cave Brown, 1890, p.178)

The disappointed corporation persisted in their attempts far enough to check both refusals, not only (in the case of Carkarede) with Lord Zouche, but also with the Privy Council, who finally responded with an order dated 11 June 1624 which was copied into the Burghmote book. The Privy Council informed the Burghmote that after *long debate* and the discovery that Richard Duke would *rather quit his dwelling in the town than be charged [burdened]with the place of jurat* they ordered that he should be *given convenient time for his removal without any let or hindrance*. They further advised the Burghmote to be *very wary* that they did not elect any other inhabitants as jurats who were of *a quality evidently superior to the [post of jurat] or otherwise unable to bear the burden thereof*. In July Duke was ordered by the Burghmote to leave his home in the town by Michaelmas or else accept his election as a jurat. The three gentlemen who refused to be jurats in 1619 do not seem to have taken their removal orders very seriously. Knatchbull was still in Maidstone in 1623 when he died. He left seven sons, one of whom, Thomas Knatchbull of Hollingbourne was taxed by the Cromwellian County Commission in 1655. (Broomhill, 1983, p. 25) Horspool was still a renting borough property for 26s 8d in 1626, although his main residence was slightly out of the town (but still within the parish) at Great Buckland. He eventually sold Buckland, probably during the 1630s, to Thomas English of Sussex, and moved to Buckinghamshire where he died in 1642 at Great Marlow. (Md FCa 1/1626) Duke died in 1626, but was not buried in Maidstone (most of his family were buried at Aylesford) His widow, who survived him for eleven years, retained a house in Maidstone until she died, in 1637, at the home of her married daughter in West Malling. (NA PROB11/174) In 1626 two more Kent gentlemen, Arthur Honeywood and William Rayner (about whom nothing can be found) were chosen jurats. Honeywood seems to have refused and moved away, and Rayner served less than two years. (Tittler, 1998, p.198; Zell J.P.s 1999, pp.129-133)

In 1623 the town successfully recruited another gentleman, when Thomas Stanley was sworn a freeman. In this case no training was needed because he had previously served as a most assiduous and efficient jurat in Gravesend for 14 years. Thomas Stanley's three marriages gave him a complicated network of relations, including landowners and tradesmen, whom he loyally supported, including step-daughters for whom he arranged marriages and a step-nephew whom he sent to university. (Robertson, 1887 pp.353-371) Born eight miles west of Maidstone in West Peckham, he was the eldest son of John Stanley, a distant relation of the earls of Derby, who came from Wilmington in Lancashire and bought Hamptons in West Peckham in 1570. (HM, 1995, p.48; Zell, J.P.s, 1999, p.36) His mother was Dorothy daughter of Thomas Tuttesham of West Peckham, sometime Portreeve of Gravesend. (Visitation of Kent 1574, p.39) It seems that his grandfather may have set the younger Thomas up in business as a brewer there, since by 1605 he had paid his fee of £3 6s 8d and been sworn a freeman of Gravesend. In 1607 he married Margery (or Margaret), the widow of Gravesend brewer and jurat William Leiston, who died in 1606. The marriage was probably influenced by Thomas Tuttesham, who had married Cecily, widow of Robert Leiston sometime Portreeve of Gravesend, as his second wife. William was Robert's son, and hence the stepson of Thomas Tuttesham, and a year later a third alliance between the two families occurred when Thomas Stanley's younger brother William, a Maidstone Mercer, married Audrey Leiston. The Leistons were shipwrights with significant property in London, Kent and Essex, including the Cross Keys in Gracechurch Street and the Cock in Gravesend. By 1609 Thomas Stanley was a jurat in Gravesend himself, elected Portreeve in 1611 and 1617. During his second year as Portreeve his father died, but Thomas remained a jurat in Gravesend until 1623, when he was sworn a freeman in Maidstone at the age of 42. (CKS Gr/Ac1 Folios 123-300) Two years later in 1625 he was chosen a jurat, and in 1626-1627 he was both mayor and MP for the town. His presence was clearly valued, as in 1628, when he had been a jurat for 4 years, he was officially thanked for his "love, pains and travail" on behalf of the town. (Martin, 1927, p.90)

Why did Thomas Stanley regard borough office as acceptable when other gentlemen did not? It may have been family tradition. On his father's side members of the Stanley family, his distant cousins, including the Earl of Derby himself, served as mayors in Liverpool five times between 1568 and 1640. (Tittler, 1998 p.198) His mother's father, descended from the Tutteshams of Tuttesham Hall in West Farleigh, was a Gravesend jurat. (Hasted, 1798, pp. 136-145). His surviving letters show him to have been an extremely energetic and organised man, who served for 14 years in the militia, owned breweries in Gravesend, Rochester and Maidstone for which he personally bought malt, acted as churchwarden for West Peckham Church, writing the parish registers in his own hand.

After what seems to have been a sort of honeymoon period, Stanley's relationship with the other Maidstone jurats deteriorated. In those early days he probably lived at Earl's Place, but by 1631 he was spending more time at West Peckham, and the corporation understandably wanted to discharge him as a jurat for living outside the town, and missing too many Burghmote meetings. They may have been sympathetic, since his neglect of his duties were probably caused by his family situation. His first wife died childless in 1633 after 26 years of marriage, and his second wife died in 1634 after six months marriage, very likely during a much wanted pregnancy. In 1635 his third wife presented him with a daughter, and he resigned from his juracy in 1636. Four years later in 1640, however, he came back and took a fresh oath as a jurat, serving a second term as mayor in 1642. (Robertson, 1887, pp.356; Martin, 1926 pp.109-220)

The Astleys, whose closeness to the royal court has already been mentioned, had extended family who bought homes in Maidstone, but do not seem to have made much beneficial contribution to the town, Sir John the younger (1572-1640) who owned the Palace from 1596 to 1640 disliked paying borough taxes and his name headed a 1621 list of people who had not paid the local tax for the water conduit; *Sir John Astley 20s, Lady Sackville 10s [crossed out, so presumably she paid late] Mr Thomas Knatchbull Esquire, 10s.* (Md FCa 1/1621) He also complained about fishing and the public use of a cart-way under his palace walls, and defence of his legal actions cost the town dearly. In October 1629 in the mayoralty of James Franklin, it was recorded that, of the £170 bill for defending the men who had been accused by Sir John of illegal fishing, only £73 6s 8d had actually been paid. An order therefore had to be made that £20 would be paid out of the chamber for 5 years to discharge the rest. (Martin, 1927, p.96) In the 1620s the jurats expended time trying to resolve arguments between the town and Sir John, while William Horspool, Thomas Carkareidge and Mr Lamb seemed to have aligned themselves with him. Sir Humphrey Tufton of the Mote, was also a member of the he seems to have earned the town's gratitude as a peacemaker. In August 1625 they recorded their conclusions in the Burghmote Book.

These were that the town would not in future condone fishing under the palace walls on either side of the Medway, if Sir John agreed not to prosecute the poor men he had caught doing it any further. The ancient customary causeway under the cliff would be marked by stakes so that horses passing did not undermine the foundations of the palace by going too close to the walls. The gentlemen would not be assessed for payments for the conduit or any law suit undertaken by the town. Furthermore the gentlemen would be excused the current double assessment for the poor, if they agreed to help the poor in future according to their own ability and the poor's necessity. Finally, no gentleman living in the town would be asked to serve the town as Constable, Churchwarden, Overseer of the Poor or in any other

meaner office. But the problems were not fully resolved. Five years later, in 1630, Sir John Astley and Sir Humphrey Tufton were both claiming that they should not be taxed for the repair of Maidstone Bridge. As before Sir Humphrey was the more conciliatory, offering to *abide by the order of an indifferent learned counsel* and the Burghmote wisely decided to defer any action until after the next County Sessions. (Martin, 1927, pp. 234, 237) The eventual outcome is not known.

Alan Everitt and Jacqueline Eales have described the Civil Wars in Kent, and J.M. Russell and Hilary Watson have covered Maidstone's part in them, which need not be repeated here. (Everitt, 1966; Eales, 2001; Russell 1881, pp.245-274 Watson, 1981, pp.61-66;) Jacqueline Eales linked opposition to the Crown with religious dissent, both being strongest in urban centres such as Maidstone. She considered that, because of the geographical, strategic and administrative importance of Kent, a broad spectrum of opinion existed among local people in the 1640s and 1650s, some of it strongly held. She doubts that the county was as strongly Royalist as some historians have suggested, even if some ordinary people followed conservative gentry in the three uprisings against Parliament. (Eales, KECW, p.1, p.8, p.48) Maidstone itself escaped direct involvement until 1648, although Everitt lists Maplesdens and *the Biggses of Maidstone* among a group including the Dukes of Cossington, also supported by *all the vain company* in [Maidstone] who gathered against Parliament at Aylesford in 1643. He considered them to be moderates rather than Cavaliers, and it is questionable who the *Biggses* were, since the jurat John Bigge, whose Puritan family lived in Cranbrook, died in January 1643 leaving no children. (Everitt, 1966, p.191-192; NA PROB11/191) Possibly it was the Bills family were involved. Two men named George Bills, a brewer and a clothier, appear in All Saints registers in the 1620s, and Richard Bills, sworn a freeman in 1641, served as mayor in 1656 and, being a Royalist, again at the Restoration. (CKS P241/1/A1; CKS MdACm/3)

Most of the Maidstone jurats seem to have had very little direct or willing involvement in the Civil Wars. They were most probably very desirous of peace in which to pursue their businesses. Thomas Stanley, certainly the jurat who suffered most, estimated his financial loss at £1,780 over the six years to 1649. (Robertson, 1887, p.356) Stanley was removed from the corporation again in 1644 for allegedly usurping the office of mayor two years earlier, and causing divisions between the jurats and the common council. (Martin, 1927, p.99) His contribution had been appreciated, but what really finished him in the eyes of the Puritan jurats was his suspected royalist stance in the Civil War. But in this opinion they were mistaken. During the Commonwealth the county Commission (who mistakenly listed his home as Plaxtol, a parish adjacent to West Peckham very close to Hamptons) suspected him of anti-Parliament activities, but perhaps they were unaware that, when the Royalists took up arms in 1643, Stanley had tried hard to persuade them to come to terms with the Parliamentary leaders, acting as peacemaker to prevent any Royalist resistance to the Parliamentary capture of Tonbridge. (Bloomfield, 1983, p. 27; Robertson, 1887, pp.353-371) The Puritan jurats also ousted suspected Royalists Guy Hunt and Thomas Brook with Stanley in the mid-1640s. (Martin, 1927, pp.115,119)

The Cromwellian County Commission held nearly all their meetings between 1655 and 1657 in Maidstone, and the local lawyer Andrew Broughton (chosen a jurat in 1647) was a member. The Committee were empowered to curtail any anti-Parliament activities of suspected Royalists, disarm them, and sequester their estates if necessary. In 1655 William Polhill of Maidstone was responsible for collecting a tax from *malignants* (on payment of 3d in the pound collected) but the resulting list included only four Maidstone men; John Bode, Daniel Bickman of Stone borough, (descended from Dutch immigrants), Richard Duke (the son of Richard Duke who had refused to serve as a jurat) and William Gobbeere. Also included was John Maplesden of Boxley, who was probably the son of jurat Gervase II. (Broomhill, 1983, pp.12, 21, 22-27; Grove and Spain 1650 Map, 1975)

In 1648, when Maidstone, temporarily manned by Royalist troops who did not know the area, was the site of a brief but bloody battle won by Lord Fairfax for Parliament, the town's *leading families*, including the Minister, Thomas Wilson, had time to evacuate the town leaving houses in the centre empty. Royalist soldiers shot at the Parliamentary army from the windows of house in Gabriel's Hill as they stormed the town from the South. The Royalists who were not able to escape, were quickly overcome and taken prisoners at St Faiths. Two days later the Parliamentary Army had also left Maidstone, and that was, no doubt, the signal for the evacuees to return and repair the damage to their homes. (Russell, 1881, pp.259-264) As Clark and Murfin have already said, even through the political uncertainties of the Commonwealth, there is no evidence of an economic or social crisis in the town. On the eve of Charles II's restoration in 1660 the corporation was firmly in charge of the leading town in West Kent. (HM, 1995, pp.68-69)

The Restoration of Charles II in 1662 led to a purge of Parliamentarian jurats. Six jurats and sixteen common councillors were dismissed for refusing the Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy. (HM, 1995, p.96) The six jurats were James Allen, Robert Heath, Gervase Maplesden III, George Ongley, James Ruse and Jonathan Troughton, all of whom were almost certainly Puritans. Andrew Broughton, who had been the lawyer to the commission for the death warrant Charles I, and was succeeded in a hurry by Richard Bills as mayor, had already fled England for Vevay on Lake Geneva, where he died in 1688, aged 85. (Martin, 1927, pp.145-9; Boorman, 1965 p.51; Russell, 1881, p.197)

Robert Tittler found that conflicts with local landowners occurred in many other towns after incorporation, because the new boroughs were able to control town affairs independently of county duties. (Tittler, 1998, pp.166-68) Maidstone was perhaps unusual in this respect, because no such conflicts occurred until the second decade of the seventeenth century. This was probably due to the uniquely egalitarian nature of Kent society which meant that junior members of the minor gentry had always served as jurats side by side with substantial tradesmen of *the middling sort*. When conflict did occur it was because the common council assumed that no able inhabitant would refuse a duty that others had accepted before them. They were disappointed when increasing numbers of gentry wished to benefit from the good facilities in the town without contributing in any way. Perhaps the irresponsible refusal in the 1620s of the Astleys and their relations to serve as jurats (and to pay their town rates) was a local example of the sort of Royalist arrogance which contributed to the Civil War. Furthermore, some of the gentlemen who failed to contribute to town government were incomers. Further study is needed to assess the prestige and influence of the jurats who served after 1660, but it might be predicted that the proportion of Kent gentry among them continued to decline.

Chapter Four: Godly Rule

*Where pride doth hold the helm in hand, the ship to rule by wilful will,
Oft-times we see on rock or sand, both ship and goods do jointly spill.*

*The like thing may be seen each day, in ship of public governance
Where only pride and will bear sway, seeking all discord to advance.*

*Wherefore if I might counsel give, when as the matter lies in choice,
Blind ignorance should not achieve, to win to rule by common voice.*

*Have this therefore before your eyes; whom henceforth ye do choose or take,
Virtue embrace, and vice despise. A right good choice so shall ye make.*

A ditty published in *The Court of Virtue (1562)* by John Hall of Maidstone (1530-68)

He that is ever trading and thriving in godliness, need not fear that he shall prove bankrupt.

The Revd. George Swinnock, (1627-73), son of Maidstone merchant Thomas Swinnock (died 1641) and Dorothy (nee Maplesden), who was brought up by his uncle, the jurat Robert Swinnock, from the age of 15.

Religion in Kent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been discussed by Professor Peter Clark (EPS, 1976) Dr Michael Zell (EMK, 2000, pp.207-241) and Jacqueline Eales (EMK, 2000, pp.279-313). Peter Clark and Lynn Murfin (HM, 1995, pp.26, 37-39, 62-66) have also discussed the effect of the Reformation on Maidstone and the subsequent religious life in the town during the period. But as well as focussing on the Maidstone jurats in particular, this chapter adds evidence from wills and other sources hitherto unused.

It is not easy to find surviving evidence for the worship of middle class people, but in the 1440s, when anyone caught reading the Bible in English would be severely punished, there was an worshipping sect established by Lollards in Maidstone, (HOM p.38) which means that 100 years before the Reformation some independent townspeople were doing just that. They were reading handwritten copies of the bible in English in their own homes. In 1506 William Grocyn, a leading English Renaissance scholar, was appointed Master of the College of All Saints by Archbishop Warham, (ODNB 2004); and his presence there for 13 years may have had a modernising influence on education in the town. The Roman Catholic litany was still, of course, unaltered, in the parish church of All Saints. (Patston, 1966) In 1511, when Archbishop Warham launched a sudden and fierce campaign against Lollardy in the Canterbury diocese, and thirty-nine people were accused of it within the county, sects still existed in Maidstone, Tenterden and Ashford. (ODNB, 2004; Hasted, 1798) By 1526 they could have been reading printed copies of Tyndale's English New Testament from Geneva which could be bought in England for only 3 shillings. (Patston, 1966) And it wasn't just the laity who were showing independent tendencies; in 1530 Thomas Hinton, sometime curate of Maidstone, was burnt for spreading *continental heresy*. (HOM, 1995 p.38) However, the tide began to turn towards official protestantism England in 1534 after the Act of Supremacy declared the King supreme head of the Church of England, and the following year over 700 monasteries in England were dissolved. (Patston, 1996) In 1537 Archbishop Cranmer surrendered his palace at Maidstone to the Crown. (HM, 1995 p.58) In the same year, part of the shrine at Boxley was exhibited in Maidstone town centre, where it was shown to be a mechanical fraud. (Gilbert, 1866) By 1541 townspeople were complaining openly about the high church liturgy of John Leffe, the Master of All Saint's College. (HOM, 1995 p.38) The College survived until 1547, and when it was dissolved only eight Maidstone inhabitants, as will be seen later, objected to the sale of assets to pay for the new Grammar School. (Gilbert, 1865, p.42)

Meanwhile, a significant shift towards Protestant preambles in the wills of Kentish gentry from the 1530s through King Edward's reign (1547-53), which even persisted into Queen Mary's reign, has been noted by both Peter Clark and Michael Zell. (EPS p.58-9; EMK p. 200-201) The gentry particularly connected with Maidstone were notably Protestant. George Brooke, Lord Cobham, who owned 400 acres of the demesne land from All Saints College at Buckland in Maidstone Parish from 1549, (ODNB, 2004; Russell, 1881, pp.91-92) employed Protestant tutors for his sons. When those sons joined their cousin Sir Thomas Wyatt in his rebellion against Queen Mary's Spanish marriage in 1554, and their father was embarrassingly commanded by the Duke of Norfolk to quell the uprising, he managed to put up a mere token resistance. (Russell, 1881, p.59) Lord Cobham's brother-in-law Sir Thomas Wyatt the elder of Allington Castle was a also a Protestant (albeit a moderate one) who reflected in later life that he thought he should *have more ado [trouble] ... to purge myself of suspect of a Lutheran then of a Papist*. (ODNB, 2004) Sir Thomas Wotton of Boughton Malherbe, a notable patron of Maidstone (HOM, p.60), was imprisoned in Queen Mary's reign;

(ODNB, 2004) The courtier Sir John Astley, of Maidstone Palace was close to Queen Elizabeth, and married her governess. (ODNB, 2004) Robert Rudstone of Boughton Monchelsea was involved in Wyatt's rebellion against Queen Mary and Sir John Leveson of Whorne's in Halling supported Puritan clergy in 1584. (EMK, 2000. pp.221, 300)

But during the reign of Henry VIII extreme Protestant affirmations were still unacceptable, and the Six Articles of 1539 had reaffirmed Roman Catholic doctrines including transubstantiation (i.e. that the sacrament was actually Christ's body and blood). Defaulters risked the death penalty, and the Steward of Maidstone Manor was one of them. George Blague (c.1512-1551) cousin of Sir Thomas Wyatt the elder (1503-42) and grandson of John Brooke, seventh Baron Cobham, a courtier attached to Henry VIII's Privy Chamber, exhibited his Protestant beliefs so publicly that he nearly died for them. In 1542 he became involved in an attempt to free the Protestant agitator John Porter from prison, and in 1546 he walked to the stake with convicted Protestants Anne Askew and John Lassells, risking charges that could have led him to his own death. In the same year he was accused of denouncing the mass in the hearing of two of his fellow MPs. On that occasion he had allegedly posed the trick question of the validity of the consecrated host which is eaten by a mouse, and added that in his opinion *it were well done that the mouse were taken and put in the pix*, that is, held up for adoration. This was going too far. He was arrested, and despite his denials and legal manoeuvres, condemned to death. (ODNB, 2004) In prison he wrote a poem, blaming the bishops for his troubles;

*But otherwise, alas, now hath it hap't
Our guides have erred and walked out of the way
And we, by them, full craftily are trapped
Whom they would lead, they drive out of array.* (Muir, 1963)

Happily the King, who liked him, and nicknamed him his *pig*, personally intervened to pardon him. Afterwards the grateful Blague was reported as saying; *if your Majesty had not been better to me than your bishops were, your pig had been roasted ere this time*. Blague had been appointed chief steward and bailiff of Maidstone Manor in 1544, and although, as a courtier, he may have delegated most of his responsibilities for the manor, local people must have been aware of their steward's story. (Starkey, 1985, pp.116-17, 127)

Soon after Henry VIII's death in January 1547, Edward VI repealed the Six Articles, and accelerated Protestant reform, which according to Michael Zell, was, on the whole, welcome in Kent. (EMK pp.207-209) It seems Maidstone was no exception, since, when the College of all Saints was finally suppressed, about 90% of influential Maidstone inhabitants immediately seized the opportunity to annex the College lands to found a Grammar School, and wrote to the Privy Council for permission. (Gilbert, 1866, p.42) Unfortunately, they were required to raise enough money to buy the land by selling church possessions, and this did not meet with unanimous approval. As Clark and Murfin have acknowledged, the sacrilegious sale of crosses, candlesticks and censers, and the dissolution of the Guild of Corpus Christi, which had played a major role in the town, may have induced mixed feelings. (HOM 1995 p.38) However, the dissidents were soon silenced. In September 1548 Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, the Lord Protector, a sincere Protestant himself, wrote encouragingly to his *loving friends the inhabitants of Maidstone*. *We understand that being purposed amongst you to do some things that may tend to a common benefit and a charitable act a few of you, to the number of eight persons, should not be so well bent to it as the rest, but that the Privy Council, having a desire that things of charity and good acts might proceed universally in the realm ... be loath to hear that a few should be hinderers ... when the greater number upon honest considerations, determine anything ... for the ... advancement of God's honour ... and things laudable in a common (or town's) wealth.* (Gilbert, Antiquities 1865 p.43)

As part of the charter provisions in 1549, the corporation secured control of the parish church, and at last there was no longer any need for independent worshipping sects, since both the English Bible and Cranmer's first English Book of Common Prayer were legally kept in all churches. (Patston, 1966, p.34) But after only six years King Edward died, the nine-day *reign* of Jane Grey was quashed, and Queen Mary began her fervent restoration of the Roman Catholic religion.

In Kent she met with resistance, and Maidstone inhabitants even sent a request to London, asking to be allowed to continue their Protestant services. Jurat William Smith, who delivered the petition, was imprisoned for a week, but eventually released, probably on payment of fines. By December 1553, the prospect of the Queen's Spanish marriage was known, and Maidstone men, including jurats, were ready to join Sir Thomas Wyatt in his rebellion against it early in 1554. Michael Zell considers that the importance of Maidstone as a recruiting ground for Wyatt should not be underestimated, and that the religious factor in the rebellion was significant. The rebellion began with a proclamation in Maidstone town centre, and several of the jurats were heavily involved. (Russell, 1881 p.52) They included John Denley, condemned in Essex, who died in jail at Uxbridge in 1555, Peter Maplesden who forfeited his estates, William Green, William Smythe and William Tilden, who all paid heavy fines. (Russell, 1881, pp.66-69) Wyatt himself afterwards insisted that he had not intended treason, saying at his trial; *mine whole intent and stir was against the*

coming in of strangers and Spaniards and to abolish them out of this realm, and his popularity was undiminished. Onlookers at his execution dipped their handkerchiefs in his blood, and within a few days his head had been taken down as a martyr's relic. (Russell, 1881, p.68)

Wyatt's failure is considered by Michael Zell to have been caused by tactical mistakes rather than lack of support. (Zell, EMK, 200, pp.218-9, 221) As a result of the insurrection, Maidstone's Borough Charter was forfeited, and townspeople must have become even more anti-Papist and determined to support the Protestant cause. And there was more misery to come in the next four years. In August 1555 John Newman, a Protestant Maidstone pewterer, who had become a freeman of the Artificers' Company four years earlier, was burnt at the stake at Saffron Walden. (Russell, 1881, p.105) In 1557 seven Protestants including Maidstone inhabitants, Walter and Petronella Appleby (who were married at All Saints in April 1547) Joan Manning and a blind girl called Elizabeth Lewis were burnt, in the Fairmeadow, in July. On that occasion the sermon was preached by John Day, curate of Maidstone since 1553, and he was reported later, in a letter to Foxe by Maidstone surgeon John Hall, to have exclaimed; *good people, ye ought not in any wise to pray for these obstinate heretics, for looke, how ye shall see their bodies burnt with material fire, so shall their damnable souls burn in unquenchable fire of hell everlastingly*. Which words, according to Hall, he repeated in All Saints on the following Sunday. Last but not least, in 1558, about six days before the Queen Mary's own death, two of the last five Marian martyrs were Christopher Brown of Maidstone and Katherine Knight alias Tinley of Thurnham, were burnt at Canterbury. (Gilbert, All Saints, 1865, pp.78-81)

Katherine Tinley was by then an *aged woman*. (Foxe, 1583, Book 12, p.2053) She was the widow of George Tinley of Boxley, who died in 1547, and had presumably afterwards married, as her second husband, a Mr Knight of Thurnham. George Tinley's will mentions three sons and two daughters, among them Robert, a Maidstone draper, who had supported Sir Thomas Wyatt's rebellion in 1554. (CKS PRC17/26/115) Robert, who was Warden of the Draper's Company in 1568 and chosen a jurat in 1584, had, according to Foxe, been *in trouble all Queen Mary's time*, presumably for his conspicuous protestantism. Foxe, whose informant may have been John Hall, recounted that Katherine, not hitherto particularly religious, found a passage in a prayer book which intrigued her and asked her son, who must then have been in his early thirties, to explain. The text was specified by Foxe, and comes from Acts Chapter 2 Verse 17; *I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy: your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants, and upon the maids in those days will I pour my spirit*. (Foxe, 1583, Book 12, p.2053) Katherine was not reading the bible, but a *prayer book* which, since it was in English, could have been published illegally either in 1549 or 1552. After Robert had explained the passage to her, Katherine began to *take hold on the Gospel, growing more and more in zeal and love thereof, and so continued unto her Martyrdom*. The official reason given for the burnings was that all five, on the authority of St Paul in the Bible, had refused to agree to the doctrine of transubstantiation. They also refused to pray to the Virgin and the saints, because they were not omnipotent, and insisted that, because St John had forbidden it, it was idolatry to creep to the cross. (Foxe, 1583, Book 12, p.2054)

Onlookers in Canterbury, just like those in Fairmeadow two years before, must have been struck forcibly that the martyrs, who had done no physical harm to anyone, and who were stating beliefs that had been legal a mere five years earlier, perished to the sound of such dreadful words; *We do give here into the hands of Satan, to be destroyed, the bodies of all those blasphemers & heretics ... so that by this thy just judgement ...thy true religion may be known ... to thy great glory, and our comfort*. Comfort cannot have been the chief feeling shared by Maidstone townspeople who had travelled to Canterbury to see their friends burn for publicly upholding beliefs of many. And it is understandable if they, who had seen their town flourish briefly under Edward VI, hated Papism even more than before.

Queen Elizabeth's accession so soon after those burnings in Canterbury must have been a relief, but with rather muted joy for the martyr's families. Maidstone inhabitants who had left the town for Europe in Queen Mary's reign returned home. Gilbert named Roger Newman, whose brother John had been martyred at Uxbridge, Matthew Mills, Peter Brown, Richard Crisp, and Thomas Stanley. None of these men ever became jurats (this Thomas Stanley is not to be confused with his probably unrelated namesake born in 1580), but they soon joined with others to petition the Archbishop for the removal of John Day from All Saints, which was finally achieved in 1563. (Gilbert, All Saints, 1866, pp.78-81) At last it was safe again to use the Edwardian Prayer Book at All Saints, and when Maidstone's Elizabethan Charter was granted in 1559 the Grammar School was re-opened. In the 1560s Archbishop Parker, who was actively organising the transformation of the county to Protestantism, found 70% of the county's Justices of the Peace and most of the clergy could be relied upon to conform. (Zell, EMK, 200, pp.235-240) Thus it was within a generally Protestant county that at least half of Maidstone's Elizabethan jurats are known to have been publicly Protestant. To the four Edwardian jurats who were reinstated (Thomas Goar, the Mayor, William Green, Richard Hooker and James Catlet.) were added two more Wyatt supporters (William Smythe and Clement Lutwick). The religious persuasions of the other seven jurats are not so easy to assess, but they included William Mowshurst, who was first cousin to the Wyatt supporter Sir Thomas Fane of Badsell. (Visitation of Kent, 1574, p.43)

Jurats were chosen by their fellow members of the Common Council. No personal papers survive to give any clue about the qualities they looked for in their leaders, so given that a jurat needed sufficient ability and willingness to do the job, how did the Council choose one man over another? This question can perhaps be answered, for Maidstone, in a book published by the aforementioned correspondent of Foxe, Protestant Maidstone surgeon John Hall, who had practised in the town since 1551, four years after the first charter. Hall was an able doctor, a member of the London Company of Barber Surgeons from 1555, and he must have treated many of Maidstone's prominent citizens. (ODNB, 2004; CKS Md/Rf3/1 Register of Freemen 1551; Barber Surgeons Admission Registers Ref: C/4/1 folio 5) He had a circle of Protestant friends, some of whom had been deeply involved in Wyatt's rebellion, and strong opinions about how towns should *choose their governors for virtue wisdom and learning ... by all means laudable, to keep from rule the proud envious and wilful wicked men: lest the prince be dishonoured, and they themselves abused and oppressed*. The book was not published until 1565, but Hall's *Court of Virtue* described by R.A Fraser as *a sequence of descriptions in verse, delineating man's life, and the virtues and vices that compound it*, included a whole section on choosing good governors, beginning with the verses quoted at the heading of this chapter. (Fraser, 1961, pp.240-241)

Dr Rivkah Zim was the first to notice and investigate thirteen acrostic verses in the book, hiding the names of Hall himself and twelve of his Maidstone acquaintances. Acrostics were popular in the mid sixteenth century and Hall, who may well have been inspired by the poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sir George Blague, was modest about his own poetic skill. (Zim, 1986 pp.320-327)

*My wit is rude, and small my skill,
To stand and supply such a place.
Yet must I needs walk in the trace [harness]
That virtue did assign me in;
Therefore in her praise I begin.*

But however modest Hall was about his poetic skills, *The Court of Virtue* was written for a local audience of the *middling sort*, and throws light on the careful choosing of the Maidstone oligarchy of his day. Dr Zim believes that nine of the people whose names he used seem to have earned his approval as *right good choices*, but that the remaining three have poems which indicate Hall's disapproval. (Zim, 1986, p.321, 324) Richard Hooker, who had been elected a jurat in 1549, served as chamberlain 1560-63. Henry Fisher, Town Clerk and Recorder 1560-1584 was MP for the town in 1562. Two more were elected jurats in 1570; Hall's cousin, Edmund Hall, later to be overseer of his will, and Richard Barham. And his friend John Nicholson, later to be his executor, served as freemen's chamberlain in 1570, although he was never a jurat. Robert Tinley was elected a jurat 1584. John Clark, a freeman from 1562, was never a jurat, but he married Margery, daughter of Portreeve William Beale, sister of jurat Thomas Beale, and cousin of Richard Barham. He was later the second overseer for Hall's will. Richard Tanner who lived in the Town House and kept the jail, appeared often in Burghmote minutes, but was never a jurat, although he lived to be 92 and died in 1608. (Gilbert, Antiquities, 1867, p.153) Edmund Hall and John Nicholson were witnesses to the will of Maidstone's first mayor, William Green. (PRC32/31/374, 1569) The only woman included was Mary, widow of Thomas Isley of Mann's in Bredgar, who was executed and attainted after Wyatt's rebellion in 1554 leaving her with five daughters and scant possessions. (Hasted, 1798) The Isley family came from Sundridge, and owned land closer to Maidstone including, at various times, Gore Court in Otham and Pimp's Court and the manor of Half Yoke in East Farleigh. (Kent Visitation 1574; Kent Visitation, 1619, Hasted; 1798) Mary Isley must have known Maidstone well, and before her land was returned to her in 1556, she was probably supported by loyal friends there, including Robert Tinley, to whom she bequeathed £5 when she died in 1583. (NA PROB 11/65, 1583)

Very little can be discovered about the remaining three acrostic names. William Jordan must have been a member of an old local family who once owned Jordan's Hall in Stone Street, and a Thomas Jordan had been the master of Newerk Hospital in West Borough in 1312 (Hasted, 1798; Russell, 1881, p.23) Robert Bedingfield married in Maidstone in 1542 and died there intestate in 1563. (CKS PAR242/1/E1) Thomas Woodman has not yet been identified, although a Margery Woodman was buried at All Saints in November 1565. (CKS PAR242/1/E1) John Hall himself died in 1568, aged only 41. (NA PROB11/83) The Court of Virtue appears to have been written for a Kentish audience who would recognise and appreciate the acrostics, and it most probably reflected a predominant local desire, at least among the literate, for upright Protestant governance.

Two years after the Court of Virtue was published, Queen Elizabeth acceded to a petition from the mayor, jurats and commonalty of Maidstone for a licence to allow sixty Protestant households from the Netherlands skilled in making cloth (and other products not made locally) to live and work in the town, for the purpose of training local people in their skills. Lord Burleigh, whose letter accompanied the licence, thought that Maidstone would provide a suitable place for *divers especial considerations*, and 30 households (each fewer than 12 people) were allowed to settle on several

conditions, one being that they would be given freedom of worship. Valerie Morant thought that the *special considerations* he cited included the town's (futile) petition to Queen Mary to be allowed to continue Protestant services, indicating that Maidstone people might be suitable tolerant of an independent church in their midst. As we have seen in Chapter Two, the Dutch, as they were called locally, although not initially allowed any part in town government, made substantial financial contributions to its welfare. In 1572 they were given the church of St Faiths for their worship, and eighteen years later in 1585 there were 43 family groups in Week Borough. (Morant, 1951 pp.211-212) Their enduring contribution to Maidstone was the skill of thread-twisting, which flourished until the mid seventeenth century. (HM, 1995, p.81)

Like the wills of the Kent gentry, preambles to the wills of some prominent Maidstone inhabitants have produced eloquent examples of Puritan beliefs, which are here emphasized by italics. In 1577 the Town Clerk, Queen's Sergeant Nicholas Barham of Digons in Knightrider Street, who built five pews in All Saints Church in the 1560s, died at Oxford from jail fever contracted at a trial. (ODNB, 2004) Barham, who clearly believed in justification by faith alone, asked for burial *without all vain and frivolous pomp of the earthly which profiteth nothing*. His will was written the day before he died *visited with infirmity and sickness* and the preamble is Calvinist in its references to Total Depravity:-

I commit my soul to God most humbly by and through Christ; assuring myself, by the merits and passion of the same Christ only, to obtain clear remission of all my offences ... acknowledging myself nothing towards the satisfaction of any of them, but all my works whatsoever to be unprofitable and merely [purely] insufficient to all respect in judgment and justice of God; and therefore, with an humble and penitent heart, do crave from the bottom of my heart, and firmly do believe and trust to obtain, through full faith, had concerning my justification in and by Christ only, my only advocate and peacemaker before God the Father, and by his promises; my corrupted flesh always bent to wickedness and never being able to do any good thing nor not so much as to think any good thought, of myself, not being drawn thereto by God the Father, and directed by his Holy Spirit, but always repugning the same Spirit with froward and willful disobedience. (NA PROB 11/05, 1577)

The preamble to Robert Tinley's will is the most vehement and lengthy of them all. It is of a Calvinist persuasion, believing in irresistible grace and limited atonement, and poignantly phrased by a man whose mother was one of the last Marian martyrs, burnt for her public adherence to a faith acquired late in life, in which her son had encouraged her. Tinley wrote it himself; *this is my will and by myself perused, confirmed and avowed again the 23 day of October 1583 ... with mine own hand written.*

In the name of God, Amen. My soul I bequeath unto god my Saviour Jesus Christ, and my body to the earth, for earth it was and to earth it shall return again, until such time as it shall please my blessed Christ to restore this my soul unto this my body again, at the latter day; beseeching my blessed Saviour Jesus Christ to put this my soul and body unto God his father, as one of his poor sheep, whom he hath with his obedience, righteousness, virtue and holy passion, redeemed to be of his holy fold flock and everlasting kingdom for ever, and time without end. And this do I trust shall as verily come to pass, through the goodness of God, now become my father by the means only of Christ my Saviour, and [the] working of the Holy Comforter, as I am sure that this my earthly body must die and sleep in earth till Christ shall it call and me, most lovingly, awake, to meet with his most glorious majesty above the clouds; and with his servants, the perfect saints and angels, to see his glorious majesty gloriously and triumphantly divide his sheep, whom he did bring home out of the wilderness upon his bloody shoulders, and the stinking goats asunder; and with him and by him only do I hope to go into glory for ever, and there to see god our father by means of this Christ my Saviour, to whom with the Holy Comforter I trust to sing praises forever and ever Amen. Amen. O Lord grant it me, who hath said ask and you shall receive, and again whatsoever you ask the father in my name he will give it you, and whom he loveth, he loveth to the end, and by him we live move and have our being. To him again and again be glory for ever and ever; so be it. (CKS PRC32/37/3)

Two other members of the group to whom John Hall's acrostics were dedicated, Richard Barham and Mary Isley, left wills with less notable preambles, and wills have unfortunately not yet been found for the rest. (NA PROB11/64, 1582; PROB 11/65, 1583) Jurats were not the only Maidstone inhabitants who left wills indicating strong Protestant leanings. In 1596 Maidstone Yeoman Thomas Ayerst bequeathed *as much money as will buy Mr Calvin's Institutes in English of the fairest and plainest letter together with a chain to be fastened to a desk at the lower end of the parish church in Maidstone for the better instruction of the poor and simple there*. He also willed *as sermon to be preached before my burial that the people may be the better admonished of their mortality*. (CKS PRC32/38/65)

Robert Tittler held that the quest for godly rule was ... part of the fall-out of the Reformation on the provincial urban scene, and this was certainly the case in Maidstone. (Tittler, 1998, p.207) Peter Clark has described the gradual increase of control over All Saints, from the Elizabethan charter onwards, with a trend towards Puritanism. (HM, 1995,

pp.62-63) In 1568 the borough chamberlains paid local lawyer Mr Stephen Austen for *twice writing a supplication to my Lord of Canterbury for a preacher*. (CKS Md/FCa/1, 1568) In 1575 the corporation took charge of the payment of the Minister, Richard Storer, in quarterly instalments *for his peace and ease*. (Martin, 1926, p.27) Storer was admitted a freeman in 1578, and during his seven year ministry from 1574 to 1581, and the thirty-seven year ministry of Robert Carr from 1581 to 1618 relations between corporation and church seem to have been excellent.

In 1618 however, Carr was succeeded by Robert Barrell, whom Russell understood to be a nominee of the Protestant Archbishop Abbott, to whom Barrell had dedicated a pamphlet referring to the *sandy foundations of the Papistical faith*. (Russell, 1881, p.112) Barrell began well, but before very long his increasingly high-church leanings alienated the more Puritan members of the corporation. In 1627 their power was strengthened by the election of the wealthy, energetic Robert Swinnock (son of jurat Thomas Swinnock) who had married Margaret the daughter of jurat Edward Maplesden. Robert's piety was described, years later, by his nephew, George Swinnock, as follows:- (ODNB)

His manner was to pray twice a day by himself, once or twice a day with his wife, and twice a day with his family [household] besides singing psalms, reading, and expounding scriptures, which morning and evening were minded. The Sabbath he dedicated wholly to God's service, and did not only himself, but took care that all within his gate should spend the day in secret and private duties, and in attendance on public ordinances; of their proficiency by the last, he would take account upon their return from the assembly. (Yuille, 2008, pp.2-3)

In August 1629 a long-running battle between Robert Barrell and the jurats about the choice of parish clerks came to a head. An entry in the Burghmote book recorded; *the appointing of a clerk ... hath been anciently by the mayor and jurats with the assent of the parishioners ... Mr Barrell hath lately claimed to himself alone the election and displacing of clerks ... without the consent of the parish*. Since the clerk was empowered to begin a suit against a parishioner in the ecclesiastical court for parish dues, the corporation naturally wanted to choose him. Such independent actions by the parish minister were not at all what Maidstone jurats were accustomed to, and a decision was made to defend freemen from any such suits, if necessary at the expense of the town (to be paid by assessments on all freemen). (Martin, pp.95-96) In 1631, when Robert Swinnock succeeded the elderly moderate Richard Maplesden as mayor, much stronger initiatives were taken for the replacement of Barrell. The story of them was recounted forty years later by George Swinnock in his biography of Wilson, written in 1672:-

There were many serious understanding Christians in Maidstone, much troubled ... at the deadness and dullness of that Ministry under which they lived. Alas, the children asked bread, and their spiritual father ... [Barrell] gave them stones, that their souls were ready to famish for want of food. Whereupon Mr. Robert Swinnock an active godly person, one of the ... jurats of the town, got the presentation of Otham, upon the death of the incumbent, and consulted with his friends and Christian neighbours, how he might procure an able minister for that place, aiming herein not only at the benefit of that parish, but also of the Christians at Maidstone, who might with a little trouble and travail reap the fruit of his labours. In pursuance of this ... they heard ... Mr. Wilson ... preach at Dorking in Surrey, to their great satisfaction. After Sermon they acquainted him with the cause of their coming ... and desired him to accept the presentation of Otham. He who was never hasty, especially in matters of such weight, asked the judgement of his neighbour ministers in the country, and others of the City of London, who did concur and agree in this, that in regard of the necessities of those that feared God about Maidstone, and the great opportunity he should enjoy there of doing good to many souls, he ought to embrace the Call. Upon the declaration of their opinion he was presented to Otham. (Swinnock, 1672, p.9)

After that, Maidstone Puritans who disliked Barrell's ministry chose to travel four miles to attend Wilson's services at Otham, despite censure in the church courts. Meanwhile, further efforts were made to dislodge Barrell and get Wilson to Maidstone. In January 1632 in the mayoralty of Robert Wood, the Burghmote agreed to Barrell's suggestion that the weekly lecture, *late ceased*, apparently for lack of funds, should be renewed and that they should be given by six ministers, namely Barrell himself, Mr [Edmund] Henshaw [of Sutton Valence] Mr Whittle, Mr [Thomas] Wilson of Otham, Mr [Freegift] Tilden [of Langley] and Mr John Swinnock [Robert's brother]; paid for *by voluntary contribution of the inhabitants of ability*. (Swinnock, 1672)

In 1633 William Laud was consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1634 his Act of Uniformity ordered all English born aliens to worship according to the rites of the Church of England. This made some descendants of the Maidstone Dutch settlers return to the continent. (Morant, 1951, p.214) Two other events in Maidstone were direct results of Archbishop Laud's policies. First, it was because of his opposition to Papists that the only reference so far found to a recusant in the Maidstone Burghmote Book can be found. It ran; *William Hardy, Gent., suspected a recusant, took the oath of allegiance before Robert Wood, Mayor and William Gull Recorder, 14th September*. Second, because he had, in 1633, persuaded the King to re-issue his father's 1617 Book of Sports, in which he declared that he wished that his subjects, having first done their Sunday duty to God by attending church, to be free afterwards to take part in lawful

games and recreations. Clergy were required by law to read the book in church, and many strict Puritans refused, including Thomas Wilson at Otham, were deprived of their livings. Wilson had to leave Otham in 1635, and his Maidstone supporters seized the opportunity to offer him accommodation in the town, where *to the Christians ... he was a great help ... and from them he received some supply and support for himself and his family*. This was indeed trading and thriving in godliness. The jurats were both wealthy and Puritan and they were determined to make Wilson their minister whatever the cost. (Swinnock, p.99)

In these endeavours Robert Swinnock enlisted the help of his wife's sister's widower, John Bigge, a wealthy Maidstone draper from a Puritan Cranbrook family. Bigge, who had recently married his second wife, Sybil Beacon from Otham, was another Wilson follower, and in 1635 he was elected a jurat. Two other new jurats that year, Martin Jeffery and Robert Withinbrook, who both married sisters of jurat Robert Marshall, further strengthened the Puritan faction in the group. The March Burghmote record included the fact that *Mr Barrell the curate of this town hath of late refused to publish the court of Burghmote in the church, contrary to ancient custom*, and decreed that notices should be posted around the town and horns blown at seven in the morning eight days in advance of court days instead. (Martin, 1926, p.101) An official petition against Robert Barrell was eventually organised in 1641, but he was not immediately removed. On 23 August 1641 John Reading (1588-1667), a severe Calvinist *very much resorted to for his frequent and edifying sermons*, delivered an assize sermon at Maidstone which condemned the *state-threatening schismatics*, and took as its motto Romans 16:17, *I beseech you brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine ye have learned, and avoid them*. (ODNB, 2004) The address seems to have caused offence to many of those who heard it and Reading subsequently claimed that his only desire had been to *persuade to an holy unity in Christ*. Reading may have been aiming his sermon at Catholic recusants visiting in Maidstone for the assizes, for it is unlikely that many of the townspeople were Catholics. But unfortunately the Protestation returns collected in 1641-42 for Maidstone parish, which would have named them, have not survived to bear out this opinion.

In February 1642 at the beginning of the Civil War, Sir Edward Partridge, the anti-papist, anti-court MP for Sandwich, successfully proposed in Parliament that Thomas Wilson (the popular Puritan minister of Otham) should be appointed town lecturer in Maidstone. (EMK 2000 p.295) At the end of that year Wilson was also chosen as one of the Kent representatives to the Westminster assembly of divines appointed to advise parliament on reform of the church. Despite being a member of the Westminster assembly, he did not neglect his duties in Maidstone and he also preached regularly at the assizes, although none of his local sermons were printed. (ODNB) In April 1643 Robert Barrell was imprisoned by the House of Commons, and his living sequestrated. In June 1644 Thomas Wilson testified about his suspension at the Archbishop Laud's treason trial, and in the same year Robert Barrell was finally ejected by the Burghmote, which left the Maidstone ministry vacant for Wilson:-

As soon as the way was opened to his induction into Maidstone, (through the ejection of the old incumbent, by the Committee of Plundered Ministers) his old hearers there, whose hearts were close knit to him, longed for his settlement among them. But the Parliament ordering that Plundered Ministers should first be provided for, where any Livings were vacant, they could not at present obtain their desire; for one Master Smith, an able holy man, of the number of the aforesaid Ministers, was by the Committee of Plundered Ministers sent down to Maidstone. Mr. Smith had not been long in Maidstone, but a rumour was spread, that eminent persons should be removed to great towns and cities, that they might be capable of doing the more good, and that Mr. Wilson should be removed from Otham, to some considerable place. At which news the people of Maidstone were much startled, fearing they should lose their beloved pastor: To prevent which, they applied themselves to Mr. Smith, desiring him to accept of some other living, that Maidstone might be free for Mr. Wilson. Mr. Smith considering the vehement desires of the good people after Mr. Wilson, yielded to refer the business to six judicious ministers of the Assembly, whereof three to be chosen by himself, and three by the Christians of Maidstone. The Ministers met accordingly, and having heard what could be said on both sides, and weighed the matter thoroughly, gave their advice that it would be best for Mr. Smith to resign the place to Mr. Wilson, which also he did, and having a considerable place, some six or seven miles from Maidstone provided for him, viz. Harrietsham, he took his own time to remove thither.

Once in post as perpetual curate at Maidstone, Wilson so reformed the town that one of the assize judges observed that *in all his circuit, he never came to a town where the Lord's Day was so strictly observed*. After Divine service the Minister used to go to Robert Swinnock's house for supper, and the scene was afterwards described by his nephew George:-

By that time he had supped, there would be hundred or more gathered together to Mr. Swinnock's house, to join with him in the conclusion of the day. Many times to my comfort, I have seen two rooms, one considerable for largeness, through which persons of all ranks (the mayor, jurats and their wives by their patterns encouraging others) to worship the great God. After supper [Wilson] came among them, begun with a short prayer; then

would read the verses he had expounded in that day, ask what observations were raised from such a verse, then proceed to the next, so through all the verses he had expounded forenoon and afternoon, then enquire what the text were, the doctrines, the explications, reasons, uses, all in order as preached, seldom named one head himself, but still heartened them to speak, and assisted them when they were at a loss, then they sung a psalm, and he ended the day with prayer about ten a clock at night. (Swinnock, 1672, p.29)

George Swinnock, who was born in Maidstone and lived in his uncle's household after his father's death in 1642, graduated BA at Cambridge and MA at Oxford, and was installed as Vicar of Rickmansworth in 1650. His beliefs about the duty of magistrates, learnt in Maidstone where his grandfather and uncle were jurats, were strong. He was an eloquent preacher, whose sermons are widely read today, and the text of his sermon at Hertford Assizes in August 1653, on the Dignity of Magistracy and the Duty of Magistrates, was admired so much that it was printed. (Hall and Swinnock, 1653, pp.275, 278, 279) Sermons in those days were very long, and this one amounted to ninety pages of biblical references applied to all aspects of magisterial duties. An excerpt from the final paragraphs will serve to show the high standards to which the godly magistrates in Maidstone aspired :-

Consider the Day of Judgement, God will then search and sentence you, discover and reward you according to your works. Ye that examine and try others, shall then be examined and tried your selves, and ye that acquit and condemn others shall then be acquitted and condemned your selves ... How wary shouldst thou be in thy deeds, believing that thou shalt appear at the Judgement Seat of Christ to give an account of everything done in the body of flesh, whether it be good or whether it be evil! ... O think of that day, and let it move thee to a faithful zealous discharge of thy duty. (Hall and Swinnock, 1653, pp.275, 278, 279)

In 1653 Minister Thomas Wilson, becoming ill with a fever, and realising that he might not recover, was *exceeding solicitous for the Town and Parish and called some of the town (who were wise and gracious) to him, and advised them to consider of some able good minister to succeed him, and he commended Mr. John Crump a worthy minister to them as the fittest that he knew to be their pastor.* (Swinnock, 1672, EEBO 2008, p.60) John Crompe of Loose, a Presbyterian, was closely connected to the corporation. He was the nephew of jurat John Crompe who bequeathed him £2,000 in his will. (CKS PRC32/46/114) In July 1654 the Burghmote passed an order; *Upon a motion now made at the desire of Mr Crompe, the minister of this parish, that the liberty may be granted unto him of the schoolhouse any Lord's days in the evening for the repetition of the sermons preached in the public place upon Lord's days, and unto those as shall from time to time desire to partake thereof and of other duties of piety at the said times - It is ordered that the said liberty be allowed for the purposes aforesaid.* Crompe, who married Anne, the daughter of the Puritan lawyer Henry Hall of Chillington House in 1654, almost certainly continued Wilson's perfectionism, and his evening conventicle in the School lasted until the Restoration. (Martin, 1927, pp.129-132)

Having highlighted non-conformity over the period under review, it is perhaps necessary to compare some more of the shorter preambles among wills of the Maplesden family, who, as shown in Chapter One, provided seven jurats with 145 years service between them. No will has survived for Peter Maplesden who died, presumably intestate, after Wyatt's rebellion, but he was clearly a strong Protestant. Four other Maplesden jurats wills survive, of which George Maplesden's is the only one to have particularly Calvinist wording; *First I commend my soul into the hands of Almighty God my only maker redeemer and saviour through and by whose precious blood shedding I hope to be saved and numbered amongst his elect and chosen.* (CKS PRC32/38/113, 1596) Gervase I, Richard and Gervase II had brief, conventional preambles, and Richard's will appears to have been a nuncupative one (CKS PRC32/35/166, 1585; CKS PRC22/16/123, 1626; CKS PRC32/49/49, 1631; NA PROB11/203, 1647)

During the reign of Queen Mary, during which several inhabitants left England for Europe and several perished for publicising their staunchly anti-Catholic beliefs, the town suffered badly. The accession of Queen Elizabeth began a hundred years of unhindered Puritan worship. But the Maplesdens, however strong their personal beliefs, had seen and suffered the penalties of extremism, and fully understood the importance of discretion and diplomatic conformity.

The last word on godly rule here, should be given to George Swinnock, who published *The Christian Man's Calling* in 1663. In his writing about godliness at work he said:-

When thou art called to the Lord, thou art not called from thy labour, nay ... thou art bound to be serviceable to thy country, in some mental or manual calling; but thy diligence therein must proceed from conscience, not from covetousness - from subjection to God's word, not from affection to thy wealth ... Godliness must be the key to open the shop ... the whip to drive the cart ... the clock to call thee off from thy work ...the principle, the rule and the end if thy work. Holiness to the Lord was written upon the bridles of the horses. (Yuille, 2008, p.101)

The evidence collected here confirms that Maidstone, which had included independent sects long before the Reformation, and with few if any Roman Catholic inhabitants, whole-heartedly welcomed the reforms of Edward VI. Jurats strongly believed they were answerable to God, not merely satisfying a personal desire for power and wealth, and governed in an admirable way, to the great benefit of the majority of inhabitants. But it is also true that no sacrifices were necessary, since the advantageous position of the town allowed them to prosper financially at the same time as leading upright lives. In fact Puritans believed that God rewarded their devotion to Him on earth by allowing them to prosper. As George Swinnock put it, *He that is ever trading and thriving in godliness, need not fear that he shall prove bankrupt.* And indeed some Maidstone jurats were so exceedingly far from bankruptcy that the next generation produced, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, two of the England's wealthiest financiers, Sir John Banks (friend of Samuel Pepys) and Sir Samuel Ongley. Maidstone's period of prosperity certainly benefited jurats families, but their godly rule laid solid foundations for the establishment of the future county town of Kent.

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Name	Residence	Free	Jurat	Service	Died	Will reference
Allen, James	East Lane	1652	1653	27	1680	PRC32/55/107
Amey Richard			1549	6	1555	
Austen, Nicholas	High St		1559	23	1582	PRC32/35/025a
Balser, John	Stone St and the Chequer		1577	18	1595	PROB 11/086
Balser, Robert	Stone St		1561	16	1577	PRC32/33/044
Banks, Caleb	High St, Week St, Bullock Lane	1622	1628	41	1669	PROB11/331
Banks, John	Week St	1611	1613	29	1642	PROB11/190
Barham, Richard	Christians Mill		1570	12	1582	PROB 11/064
Barham, Thomas	Waterside		1601	8	1609	PRC32/41/233
Barrett, James	Star Inn, High St		1549	10	1559	PRC32/28/50b
Basden, Thomas			1569	23	1592	PRC Admon
Basse, John			1549	1	1550	PRC32/23/6
Bateman, John	Week St		1576	14	1590	PRC32/36/183
Beale, Ambrose	East Lane	1598	1617	38	1655	PROB 11/248
Beale, John			1560	13	1573	
Beale, Thomas	Bournegate, High Steet		1569	25	1594	PROB 11/083
Bigge, John		1625	1635	8	1643	PROB 11/191
Bills, Richard	Week St	1620	1650	20	1670	
Brooke, Thomas	High St	1600	1643	4	1647	
Broughton, Andrew	Bullock Lane [Earl St]	1630	1645	43	1688	Died abroad
Busbridge, James			1559	15	1574	PRC32/32/080b
Catlet, James			1551	10	1561	
Collet, William			1559	18	1577	PRC Admon
Collins, John	Week St	1600	1627	17	1644	PROB11/192
Coveney, Nicholas	Week St		1567	26	1593	PROB 11/85
Crompe, John	Stone St, near Tovil Lane	1604	1610	14	1624	PRC32/46/114
Crompe, Thomas		1618	1644	1	1645	
Denley, John			1549	6	1555	
Down, William	NOT Week St		1571	17	1588	PROB 11/073
Edmonds, Thomas	Pudding Lane		1562	30	1592	PRC32/37/053b
Emmott, Robert	Pudding Lane		1595	1	1596	PRC32/38/132
Eppes, John	Week St		1582	45	1627	
Fisher, Walter	Week Manor, then East Lane		1600	31	1631	PRC32/49/048
Franklin, James I	Week St		1580	38	1618	PRC32/43/25
Franklin, James II	Week St	1619	1626	15	1641	PROB11/187
Franklin, Thomas	Buckland in West Borough	1589	1589	21	1610	
Fremlin, John	The Bower and Loddington		1589	16	1605	PRC32/41/069
Gilliatt, George	Week St, East side		1630	20	1650	Get reference
Goar, Robert	Week St		1593	6	1599	PCC Admon
Goar, Thomas			1549	20	1569	PRC22/6 1569
Golding, Robert	Westree	1617	1617	6	1623	PRC32/45/319b
Gosling, Robert			1549	3	1552	
Green, Gabriel	Stone Borough		1583	44	1627	PRC Admon
Green, John			1592	19	1611	PRC32/42/001b
Green, William			1549	21	1570	PRC32/31/374
Greenfield, Thomas	Week St		1603	5	1608	PRC32/41/240
Hall, Edmund			1570	19	1589	No will found
Haselam, Thomas	Stone St		1574	7	1581	PRC32/34/112b
Heath, Robert II		1652	1653	12	1665	
Heeley, Richard			1549	9	1558	PROB 11/040
Heeley, Stephen	High St		1593	35	1628	PRC32/48/237
Heron, Edward			1589	1	1590	PRC32/36/204b
Highwood, Richard	West Borough?		1600	17	1617	PRC32/43/274
Hooker, Richard			1549	21	1570	
Hunt, Guy	High St and Rose & Crown	1608	1642	2	1644	PROB 11/208

Ippenbury, Ambrose			1559	11	1570	PCC Admon
Ippenbury, John			1549	6	1555	
Jeffery, Martin	High St	1616	1636	8	1644	
Lee, Richard	Earls Place		1572	1	1573	PRC32/32/061
Lutwick, Clement			1559	12	1571	PRC32/31/311
Manningham, George	Mansion in Detling		1593	7	1600	PRC32/38/280
Maplesden, Edward, MP	High St and East Lane		1586	40	1626	PRC22/16/123r
Maplesden, George	Mill Lane		1590	6	1596	PRC32/38/113
Maplesden, Gervase I			1575	10	1585	PRC32/35/166
Maplesden, Gervase II	High St	1604	1617	30	1647	PROB 11/203
Maplesden, Gervase III		1636	1644	21	1665	
Maplesden, Peter	Chillington House		1549	5	1554	
Maplesden, Richard			1604	27	1631	PRC32/49/049
Marshall, Samuel	High St and Sun Tavern	1604	1631	18	1649	PROB 11/210
Mills, John			1578	22	1600	
Mowshurst, John			1549	10	1559	
Mowshurst, William	Stone St		1559	7	1566	PROB 11/49
Ongley, George	East Lane (High Town)	1628	1648	28	1676	PRC32/54/177b
Plomer, William	Week St		1595	12	1607	PROB 11/110
Rayner, William			1626	24	1650	
Reeve, Thomas I			1607	9	1616	PRC32/43/262
Reeve, Thomas II	High St	1605	1624	1	1625	
Reeve, William			1549	4	1553	PRC22/2/24
Romney, John	Pudding Lane corner		1591	16	1607	PRC32/40/198
Ruse, James	High St North side	1622	1642	23	1665	
Sanders, John I	Brewhouse on River Len		1610	2	1612	PRC32/41/154
Sanders, John II	Black Bull	1636	1652	7	1659	PROB 11/295
Simmons, William	Week St, Black Bull		1587	3	1590	PROB 11/075
Smyth, Richard	Bullock Lane [Earl St]		1590	12	1602	PRC32/39/052b
Smyth, William	Dynes, Black Bull		1559	9	1568	PRC32/31/155
Spencer, James		1580	1597	23	1620	
Stanley, Thomas, MP	Hamptons and Earl's Place	1623	1625	43	1668	
Startout, John			1568	11	1579	PROB 12
Swinnock, Robert	High St, North side	1622	1627	23	1650	PROB 11/212
Swinnock, Thomas I			1603	12	1615	
Swinnock, Thomas II	High St	1600	1609	33	1642	PRC19/25/595
Taylor, Thomas	Middle Row	1600	1645	15	1660	
Tilden, William			1549	11	1560	
Tinley, Robert	NOT Week St		1584	7	1591	PRC32/37/3
Troughton, Jonathan	Week St	1639	1652	31	1683	PRC32/55/82
Withinbroke, Robert	High St South side	1625	1637	23	1660	
Wood, Robert	Middle Row	1604	1627	8	1635	