

## SUMMARY OF THESIS

The subject of this thesis is the gentry of Essex during the years 1381-1450, with particular reference to their lifestyle.

The thesis may be divided into seven sections. The first puts the gentry into context; it discusses the history, geology, geography, economy and population of the county and the effect that landscapes or *pays* may have had on gentry societies. The following terms are devised to describe the county's topography: Essex Highlands, Lowlands, Heathlands and Marshlands. The second section deals with the origins and development of the Essex gentry and employs the following terms to describe them: principal (regional), greater (county) and lesser (parish) gentry.

Section three considers the county community controversy and analyses the work of scholars who have worked in this field: it also describes the complex organisation of gentry communities within county society as a whole. The fourth section is a case study that observes the career of Clement Spice and his entry into gentry society by means of a successful career as a lawyer.

Section five focuses on the home and religious life of the gentry with particular reference to Richard Baynard of Messing and the chantry tomb of Sir John Hawkwood of Sible Hedingham. The sixth section considers the wealth of the Essex gentry through an analysis of the subsidy of 1412; it also discusses the acquisition of wealth with reference to the Tyrell family of Heron Hall, East Horndon between *c.*1250 and *c.*1450. The conclusion attempts to describe the particularity of the Essex gentry and to focus on gentry as individuals.





**THE ESSEX GENTRY 1381 – 1450**

Thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
at the University of Leicester

by

Christopher Starr  
Department of English Local History  
University of Leicester

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As it is dayly seen that tyme (Destroyer and Consumer of all thinges) throwes down and extinguishes many auntient and honorable families, or by altering and translating their houses and habitations, obscures their worthy races and extractions that thereby God's justice may be felt and man's patience tryed. So comes it to passe as often that the same tyme (mother of truthe) bringeth to light and discovereth to be gentlemen of Longe and Auntient contynuanee dyvers whose auncestors (sondry years beffore) were not reputed of such Antiquitie, that thereby the same God's mercie may be sene and his bountie praysed.

Robert Cooke, Clarenceaux 1583.

## CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.	<i>page</i> iv
List of figures.	v
List of plates.	vi
List of tables.	viii
List of abbreviations.	ix
Conventions.	x
1 Essex 1381-1450.	1
2 The evolution of the Essex gentry.	48
3 Essex gentry society.	102
4 Clement Spice: a case study.	163
5 Lifestyle: home and religion.	223
6 Lifestyle: wealth and the acquisition of estates.	332
7 Conclusion.	384
Appendices.	
1 Essex armorial.	420
2 Principal county offices.	426
3 Taxpayers in 1412.	432
Bibliography.	438

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To the many kind incumbents of parish churches, owners of manor houses, especially Mr & Mrs John Hill of Hawkwood Manor, Sible Hedingham, guides and guardians of monuments encountered during my visits, my particular thanks are due.

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In conclusion, I dedicate my thesis to the memory of my father Walter Daniel Starr.

## FIGURES

1.1	Essex: Distribution of gentry & magnates.	<i>page</i>	2
1.2	Essex: Hundreds and parishes.		9
1.3	Essex <i>pays</i> : Roding valley & Dengie peninsular.		19
1.4	Proximity of: Ancient demesne, Minster, Hundred moot.		25
1.5	Essex: Markets (after Britnell).		39
1.6	Essex: Distribution of manors.		47
2.1	Distribution of principal gentry.		84
3.1	Essex county society.		122
3.2	Connections: Edward Tyrell.		127
3.3	Sible Hedingham and Gosfield.		133
4.1	Willingale Spain, Black Notley and White Notley.		172
5.1	Messing.		243
5.2	Messing Hall c.1650.		245
5.3	Essex parks (after Cantor).		260
6.1	Parishes included in 1412 taxation.		339
6.2	Taxation 1412 : Magnates and knights.		355
6.3	The Tyrell estates.		362
7.1	Completed medieval county gentry studies.		386
7.2	Essex advowsons 1381-1450. Magnates, gentry, church.		398

## PLATES

1.1	Essex/Suffolk border: Dedham.	<i>page</i> 6
1.2	Church and Hall : Little Chesterford.	10
1.3	Church and Hall : Ovington.	11
1.4	London clay : Little Braxted.	14
1.5	Champion countryside : Arkesden.	21
1.6	Deserted manor : Birch.	29
1.7	Coppicing : Shenfield.	37
2.1	Church/hall complex : Mount Bures.	64
2.2	Wooden effigy : Danbury.	79
2.3	Wooden effigy : Little Horkesley	80
3.1	Heraldic font : Shalford.	113
3.2	Font : Chrishall.	124
3.3	Sir William Marney : Layer Marney.	128
3.4	Hawkwood's Farm : Gosfield.	138
4.1	Great Wenham Church, Suffolk.	167
4.2	Willingale Spain Hall.	176
4.3	Willingale Spain Church.	182
4.4	Powers Hall, Witham.	184
4.5	Black Notley Hall.	190
4.6	Black Notley Church.	219
5.1	Fyfield Hall.	226
5.2	Priors Barn : Widdington.	227
5.3	Faulkbourne Hall.	230
5.4	Moot Hall staircase : Maldon.	231
5.5	Tiptofts : Wimbish.	235
5.6	St Helen's Chapel : Wicken Bonhunt.	250
5.7	Portable altar : Newport.	256
5.8	Portable altar : North Ockendon.	257
5.9	Sir John & Lady de la Pole : Chrishall.	278
5.10	Sir Robert Swinburne : Little Horkesley.	280
5.11	Christina Bray : Felsted.	282
5.12	John & Isabel Doreward : Bocking	284
5.13	Thomas Rolf : Gosfield.	286
5.14	Richard de Vere, earl of Oxford : Bures, Suffolk.	289
5.15	Walter, Lord Fitzwalter : Little Dunmow.	290
5.16	John, Lord Bourgchier : Halstead.	291
5.17	Bartholomew, Lord Bourgchier : Halstead.	292
5.18	Darcy chantry : Maldon.	295
5.19	Hawkwood Manor : Sible Hedingham.	302

## PLATES

5.20	South aisle : Sible Hedingham.	317
5.21	Hawkwood tomb (after Dyson) : Sible Hedingham.	324
5.22	Hawkwood tomb : Sible Hedingham.	328
5.23	Hawkwood tomb (detail) : Sible Hedingham.	329
6.1	Boxted Hall.	358
6.2	White Tyrrells : Buttsbury.	366
6.3	Lady Alice Tyrell : East Horndon.	374
6.4	Moat, Heron Hall : East Horndon.	377
6.5	Curtain wall, Heron Hall : East Horndon.	378
6.6	East Horndon Church.	382
7.1	Bendish monument : Steeple Bumpstead.	406
7.2	Pointz monument : North Ockendon.	407
7.3	Thomas Coggeshall : Springfield.	411
7.4	Thomas Torell : Willingale Doe.	412
7.5	Lady from Park Farm : St Osyth.	413
7.6	Lady Elizabeth Tyrell : Long Melford, Suffolk.	414
7.7	Roof boss : Wivenhoe.	415
7.8	Gerard Braybrooke monument : Danbury.	416
7.9	Richard Fox : Arkesden.	419



## TABLES.

2.1	Essex knights : Parliamentary Roll of Arms c. 1308.	<i>page</i>	71
2.2	Essex knights and esquires 1322-1324.		73
2.3	Attrition of Essex knights 1381-1450.		82
2.4	Multiple office holders in Essex 1381-1450.		87
2.5	Immigrant Essex gentry.		91
2.6	Essex gentry lawyers.		95
2.7	Essex gentry & others taking the 'Peace Oath' 1434.		96
3.1	Essex gentry wills.		109
5.1	Essex gentry seeking papal indults.		253
5.2	Essex gentry surviving monumental figure brasses 1348-1479.		276
6.1	1412 taxation : gentry in order of wealth.		336
6.2	Income tax 1436 : Essex taxpayers.		349
6.3	Income tax 1436 : gentry in order of wealth.		351

## ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the footnotes. The full title is given only for the first reference in each chapter, and thereafter short titles are used.

Ag.Hist.Rev.	Agricultural History Review
Arch.Cant.	<i>Archaeologia Cantiana</i>
B.I.H.R.	Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research.
B.L	British Library, London.
C.C.L.	Commissary Court of London
Cal.Charter Rolls	Calendar of Charter Rolls
Cal.Close Rolls	Calendar of Close Rolls
Cal.Fine Rolls	Calendar of Fine Rolls
Cal.I.P.M.	Calendar of Inquisitions <i>post mortem</i>
Cal.Pat. Rolls	Calendar of Patent Rolls
Cat.Anc. Deeds	Catalogue of Ancient Deeds.
E.A.H.	Essex Archaeology and History (Transactions of the Essex Society for Archaeology and History)
E.E.T.S.	Early English Text Society
E.H.R.	English Historical Review
Ec.H.R.	Economic History Review
E.R.O.	Essex Record Office, Chelmsford/Colchester/Southend
G.L.	Guildhall Library
H.R.	Historical Research
J.E.L.H.	Journal of English Literary History
Med. Arch.	Medieval Archaeology
M.L.N.	Modern Language Notes
P.C.C.	Prerogative Court of Canterbury
P & P	Past and Present
PH	Parliamentary History
P.R.O.	Public Record Office, London
R.C.H.M.	Royal Commission on Historical Monuments.
Suff.Inst.Arch.& Nat.Hist.	Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History.
T.E.A.S.	Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society
Trans. M.B.S.	Transactions of the Monumental Brass Society
T.R.H.S.	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society
V.C.H.	Victoria County History.

## CONVENTIONS

### Surnames

In most cases the convention of using the modern spelling of surnames (particularly locative names) has been adopted, thus *Cogeshale* is replaced by Coggeshall and *Haukewode* by Hawkwood. The use of the prefix 'de' is generally restricted to the de Vere family.

### Classification of gentry

The term 'principal' gentry has been devised for the elite group with a regional focus; the 'greater' and 'lesser' gentry have a county and parish focus respectively.

### Essex Topography

The terms 'Essex Uplands', 'Essex Lowlands', 'Essex Heathlands' and 'Essex Marshlands' have been devised to describe the main topographical features of the county. The spelling of place-names is generally in accordance with current Ordnance Survey practice. All places named are in Essex unless otherwise stated.

## CHAPTER ONE

### ESSEX 1381 – 1450

‘This shire is well planted with noblem[en] and gent[lemen] as also not a few sufficient and able yeomen.’

John Norden(1594)<sup>1</sup>

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The subject of this thesis is the gentry of Essex during the years 1381-1450, with particular reference to their lifestyle.

The thesis may be divided into seven sections. The first puts the gentry into context; it discusses the history, geology, geography, economy and population of the county and the effect that landscapes or *pays* may have had on gentry societies. The following terms are devised to describe the county’s topography: Essex Highlands, Lowlands, Heathlands and Marshlands. The second section deals with the origins and development of the Essex gentry and employs the following terms to describe them: principal (regional), greater (county) and lesser (parish) gentry. Fig. 1.1 shows the distribution of the county’s leading gentry families and resident magnates.

Section three considers the county community controversy and analyses the work of scholars who have worked in this field: it also describes the complex organisation of

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<sup>1</sup> J.Norden, *Speculi Britanniae Pars: An Historical and Chorographical Description of the County of Essex*, Camden Society 9 (1840),p.12.



gentry communities within county society as a whole. The fourth section is a case study which observes the career of Clement Spice and his entry into gentry society by means of a successful career as a lawyer.

Section five focuses on the home and religious life of the gentry with particular reference to Richard Baynard of Messing and the chantry tomb of Sir John Hawkwood of Sible Hedingham. The sixth section considers the wealth of the Essex gentry through an analysis of the subsidy of 1412, it also discusses the acquisition of wealth with reference to the Tyrell family of Heron Hall, East Horndon between c.1250 and c.1450. The conclusion attempts to describe the particularity of the Essex gentry and to focus on gentry as individuals.<sup>2</sup>

## 1.2 ESSEX CONTEXT

The medieval county of Essex was the surviving heartland of what had been the kingdom of the East Saxons that had variously included the counties of Essex, Middlesex, Surrey, most of Hertfordshire, and London. Essex became a shire in the late Saxon period and was defined by boundaries which have changed little to the present day.<sup>3</sup> Occupying some 1529 square miles (3960 square hectares) and comprising about one million acres (405,000 hectares), late medieval Essex was similar in size, but not in

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<sup>2</sup> Historians 'have, in general, avoided those counties closest to London, where social elites were less stable and more susceptible to outsiders.' P.Morgan, review article in The Local Historian November 1992, p.123.

<sup>3</sup> C.Hart, 'The Tribal Hidage', T.R.H.S. 5<sup>th</sup> ser. 21 (1971), p.140. At an even remoter date the River Lea was the border between the Belgae and the Trinovantes, D.Corke, The Nature of Essex (1984), p.13.

physical geography to Kent, Hampshire and Somerset. 'A fair county, bearing the full proportion of five and thirty miles square, plentifully affording all things necessary to man's subsistence'.<sup>4</sup> Like Suffolk, rivers and the sea largely defined the parameters of the county: to the north the Stour separated it from Suffolk, to the south the Thames was a 'notorious division' between it and Kent, whilst to the east the 'mayne Ocean' provided 'an infallable bounde'.<sup>5</sup> The rivers Lea and Stort separated Essex from Middlesex and Hertfordshire respectively and provided the county's western boundary. It was only in the north-west that the county border (with Cambridgeshire) was not defined by a river or the sea for here the Stort bisects a number of parishes and the Stour flows at right angles to the county boundary.<sup>6</sup> As with other English counties 'the pattern of land ownership may have changed radically across the centuries, but the general stability of administrative territories has often preserved ancient boundaries intact'.<sup>7</sup>

Although the shire boundaries were clearly defined, Essex was not isolated from its neighbours in the north and west.<sup>8</sup> Much of the countryside of Essex was virtually indistinguishable from the borderlands of Suffolk, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire that formed with Essex a number of *pays* which ignored man-made administrative

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<sup>4</sup> T.Fuller, Worthies of England (3 vols., 1840 edn.), p.492.

<sup>5</sup> Norden, Speculi, p.7.

<sup>6</sup> The natural boundaries of Essex contrast sharply with those of other counties. Warwickshire, for example, was 'a wholly artificial creation'. C.Carpenter, Locality and Polity: A study of Warwickshire Landed Society 1401-1499 (1992), p.25.

<sup>7</sup> A.J.L.Winchester, Landscape and Society in Medieval Cumbria (1987),p.13.

<sup>8</sup> Despite the antiquity of the boundaries there was at least one area where they were disputed locally as late as the sixteenth century. 'Hartfordshire men say that the kinges stream at Waltham partith Herthfordshire and Etsax. But Etsax men by forest charter claime shire grounde of Etsax to Smaulley Bridge'. L.Toulmin Smith ed., The Itinerary of John Leland 4 (5 vols, 1909), p.113.

boundaries.<sup>9</sup> This continuity of landscape is shown in Plate 1.1, the river Stour near Dedham, the Essex/Suffolk boundary. This overlapping of countrysides occurred not only in a geographical sense but also in political and social terms.<sup>10</sup> It is also important to see Essex in the medieval period as part of a wider region comprising Kent, Middlesex, Surrey, Hertfordshire and Essex, which was bound together 'by a common proximity to London and to the Continent'.<sup>11</sup> During our period the county of Essex was slightly larger than it is now. It then included the parishes of Heydon, Great and Little Chishill which in 1895 were transferred to Cambridgeshire, together with the parishes of Ballingdon and Brundon and part of Sudbury which went to Suffolk in 1914.<sup>12</sup> A small number of Essex parishes have disappeared since 1450 most of them as a result of depopulation and then amalgamation. The parish of Belchamp St Ethelbert was absorbed by Ovington, Thunderley by Wimbish, Morrell Roding by White Roding and Bollington by Ugley. A number of small villages simply combined with larger neighbours and lost their identity, Beaumont with Moze, Latchington with Snoreham, Sutton with Shopland and Great with Little Wenden. Whilst many manors and farmsteads have been in continuous occupation since the Conquest or longer, a number

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<sup>9</sup> For example the Essex boulder clay plateau extends into Hertfordshire and Suffolk. 'It is the exceptionally diverse physical structure of this island that lies behind this regional variation. That is why these contrasting types of countryside are rarely delimited by county boundaries, but regularly stretch across the borders of one shire into the next, and in their essential characteristics are often echoed on similar landforms elsewhere.' A. Everitt, 'Country, county and town: patterns of regional evolution in England' *T.R.H.S.* 5<sup>th</sup> Ser. 29 (1979), pp 82-83.

<sup>10</sup> The principal gentry of Essex, Hertfordshire, Suffolk and Cambridge formed a community in which they married, were domiciled, and socialised with little apparent regard for county boundaries. This theme is developed in chapter 3 below.

<sup>11</sup> I.M.W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450* (1991), p.1. This view has been developed in C. Phythian-Adams ed., *Societies, Cultures and Kinship, 1580-1850* (Paperback edition 1993), pp.1-23 who identifies 'cultural provinces' based on river drainage patterns.

<sup>12</sup> For the purpose of this thesis these transferred parishes together with the 18 parishes absorbed into Greater London in 1964 are treated as part of the county of Essex which indeed they were in the late medieval period.





have disappeared leaving little trace – an example being Stebbingford farm in Felsted brought to light as the result of an archaeological excavation.<sup>13</sup> Whereas some villages have vanished a number of parishes such as Chappel, Mayland and Pattiswick were created during the late medieval period, part of a process which had gone since the ninth or tenth century.<sup>14</sup>

The internal administrative divisions of the county in our period were numerous and varied, they tended to result in overlapping jurisdictions.<sup>15</sup> Not only were there hundreds, tithings, baronial and comital honors, archdeaconries, deaconries and chartered boroughs but also vills, parishes and manors, virtually none of them co-terminous. A man riding from Saffron Walden to Chelmsford in 1381, a distance of about 25 miles (40 kilometres), would cross three hundreds, three archdeaconries, three deaconries, four chartered boroughs, nine villages and more than twenty manors. At the beginning of our period there were twenty hundreds and half-hundreds (Tendring was occasionally referred to as a double hundred) varying greatly in size and in the number of component vills. Hinckford, the largest hundred contained fifty-two vills and Waltham, the smallest half-hundred, contained five. These hundreds are thought to have originated in the tenth century or earlier when they may have represented a

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<sup>13</sup> M.M.Medlycott, 'A medieval farm and its landscape: Excavations at Stebbingford, Felsted 1993' *E.A.H.* 27 (1996), pp.102-181.

<sup>14</sup> There were approximately 400 parishes in 1381 and by 1550 this number had risen to about 415. For a discussion of the origins of Essex parishes see W.R.Powell, 'The making of Essex parishes' *Essex Review* 62 (1953),pp.6-18 and 32-41. See Appendix 6 for a list of parishes 1381-1450.

<sup>15</sup> One jurisdiction which covered the whole county in the early medieval period was the Forest of Essex. 'As is pretty well known, the whole county of Essex was once, virtually forest... A forest, strictly speaking, was a district subject to forest law, it could therefore be extended or diminished by mere act of the Crown, wholly irrespective of the character of the land.' J.H.Round, 'The Forest of Essex' *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* n. s. 3 (1897), pp.36-42

hundred hides of land.<sup>16</sup> Whereas the county's external boundaries were defined by rivers and the sea, Miller Christy noted that hundredal boundaries tended to be defined by contours.<sup>17</sup> The map at Fig. 1.2 shows parish and hundred boundaries.

The majority of Essex parishes appear to have been created during the late Saxon period following the break-up of minster territories, many of them as the result of a grant by manorial proprietors of land on which to build a church or chapel and establish a burial ground.<sup>18</sup> This gave rise to the hall/church complex, an arrangement that is still visible in most Essex villages.<sup>19</sup> At Berners Roding the hall and church are side-by-side but separately moated, at Little Chesterford both the hall and church (Plate 1.2) retain much of their thirteenth-century construction. At Ovington and North Fambridge the church is still enclosed within the grounds of the hall whilst at Great Canfield and Mount Bures the hall, castle mound and hall form a closely integrated group. Plate 1.3 shows that even today the manor can have an almost proprietorial relationship with a parish church. The compilers of Domesday clearly recognised the relationship between church and manor because in the rare instances where specific Essex churches are

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<sup>16</sup> A number of hundreds were privately owned during the medieval period. In 1414 Margaret, widow of Sir John Peyton of Easthorpe, had a life interest in the hundred of Lexden (with successive remainders to her children and daughter-in-law) and in 1416 the hundred of Barstable, together with the sheriff's tourn and the hundred court (annual value £106 6d.) was held of the king as tenant-in-chief by countess Alice, widow of Thomas, earl of Kent. *Cal.I.P.M.* 20, 1413-1418, pp.66 & 192-193.

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of hundredal boundaries see M.Christy, 'The Essex hundred moots' *T.E.A.S.* 18 (1925-28), pp.172-97. Half hundreds occur in the east of the county and represent a division of territory between Essex and Hertfordshire. See M.Christy, 'Essex rivers and their names' *Essex Naturalist* 21 (1926-1927), pp.275-302.

<sup>18</sup> 'I have been led to the conclusion that our parishes, as we see them on the map today, owe their origin and their existing names to the building of a parish church'. J.H.Round, 'The origin of Essex parishes' in W.Page ed., *Family Origins* (1930), pp.266-274.

<sup>19</sup> In his archaeological survey of churches in the Colchester Archdeaconry W.J.Rodwell discusses church/hall complexes in Essex and suggests that 'The need to investigate, on a large scale, a series of typical church/hall complexes is long overdue.' W.J.Rodwell, *Historic Churches – a Wasting Asset* C.B.A. Research Report No.19 (1977), p.92.







**PLATE 1.2 CHURCH AND HALL : LITTLE CHESTERFORD.**



PLATE 1.3 CHURCH AND HALL : OVINGTON.

recorded in Domesday, they are described as 'of the manor' not 'of the parish'.<sup>20</sup> A characteristic of many Essex parishes that was noted by Round as confirming their manorial origin is their distinguishing suffixes, for example Norton Mandeville, Layer Marney, Layer Breton, Layer de la Haye, Stondon Massey, Theydon Garmon. Rather dramatically, Round saw these suffixes as 'the names of alien lords, stamped on a conquered land.'<sup>21</sup> It is clear that the division of the Roding Valley a minor *pays*, into sixteen manors before 1086, preceded its grouping into nine parishes.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Round, 'Essex Parishes', p 268

<sup>21</sup> For a less dramatic view see H C Darby 'The distribution of Domesday names is fairly uniform over the face of the county. They are, it is true, least numerous in the south-western parts of the county, and it is in this region that the Forests of Epping and Hainault lay. There are, too, some empty tracts along the coast, but these are the alluvial areas which must have been very marshy in the eleventh century.'

H C Darby, The Domesday Geography of Eastern England (1952), p.218.

<sup>22</sup> S Rippon, 'Early planned landscapes in south-east Essex', E.A.H. 22 (1991), pp.46-60.

### 1.3 GEOLOGY<sup>23</sup>

Crucial to the understanding of the Essex landscape and its influence on the social and economic development of the county is an acquaintance with its geology.<sup>24</sup> Alan Everitt has drawn attention to the often profound influence of a countryside or *pays* on the evolution of provincial societies and it will be shown how the varied *pays* of Essex exerted an influence on the life of the resident gentry.<sup>25</sup> Before considering the variations of the Essex landscape let us consider its basic structure. Put simply, Essex is a 'large shallow chalk bowl' filled with sedimentary deposits, notably clay and sand.<sup>26</sup> H.C.Darby identified three principal geological regions in Essex. The first of these is a boulder clay plateau in the north-west, most of it over 200 feet (60 metres) and rising to 400 feet (120 metres), sloping from north-west to south-east, traversed by a number of river valleys. This boulder clay is easy to work and therefore attractive not only to early settlers in the area but also to their medieval gentry successors. Secondly, to the south, lies the area of London clay, heavy and resistant to the plough; this soil is difficult to deal with, particularly when wet. Plate 1.4 shows freshly-ploughed London clay at Little Braxted which illustrates this point. This area rarely rises above 300 feet (90 metres) and the summits of its hills are often capped with Bagshot sands. Other

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<sup>23</sup> J Hunter, 'The historic landscape of Cressing Temple and its environs' in D.D.Andrews ed., Cressing Temple. A Templar and Hospitaller Manor in Essex (1993),p.25 makes the point that the geology of Essex is in places extremely complex. 'The parish of Cressing is on the southern limits of the Essex Till, that bouillabaisse of surface geology : chalky clays, gravels and loess, riddled with spring lines and soils which may change their immediate nature and pH in a distance of a few yards. Settlements and their attendant field systems reflect this stew....'

<sup>24</sup> Like Suffolk, Essex has several 'distinct regions and landscapes, which are largely the product of different soils'. E.Martin, 'The soil regions of Suffolk', in eds.D.Dymond & E.Martin, An Historical Atlas of Suffolk (2<sup>nd</sup> edn 1989),p.14

<sup>25</sup> Everitt, 'Country, county and town',p.81.

<sup>26</sup> M.Crouch, Essex (1969),p.14. R.Coles, 'The past history of the Forest of Essex', Essex Naturalist 24 (1933-34),p.116 gives an expanded view of this theme.





**PLATE 1.4 LONDON CLAY : LITTLE BRAXTED.**

features of the London clay zone include the gravel terraces of the Thames estuary and coastal alluvium along the estuaries of other rivers. Thirdly there is the Tendring and Colchester loam area, where there is much London clay but here it is lighter and better drained than the clay of southern Essex.<sup>27</sup>

R.H.Allen and R.G.Sturdy in their study of the Essex landscape took a different view and identified six geological landscape regions : coastal marshland (east), river terraces (mainly north-west and south-east) London clay lowland (south and south-east), Bagshots Hills (central south), Dessicated boulder clay plateau (north-central and north-west), and chalk dipslopes (two small outcrops).<sup>28</sup> Like Darby they describe London clay as heavy and difficult to work, prone to water-logging and resistant to the plough. Where Bagshot Hills rise above this clay the soils are easily worked but acid. As for the boulder clay plateau, they see it as altogether more suitable for agriculture, particularly along well-drained river valleys. They also show that reclaimed marshland on the east coast is suitable for wheat and barley whilst the river terraces of the south provide the best agricultural land in the county.<sup>29</sup> In his recent book John Hunter describes three Essex regions: coastal or maritime Essex (with Thames Terraces, South Essex Hills and the Tendring Plain as subregions); the Mid-Essex Zone and the Essex Till (with Chalk Uplands and Copped Hall Hills as subregions).<sup>30</sup> For the purpose of this thesis however, the following regions or *pays* have been adopted to describe the

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<sup>27</sup> Darby, Domesday Geography of Eastern England, pp.231 & 259.

<sup>28</sup> R H Allen & R G Sturdy, 'The environmental background', in D.G Buckley ed., Archaeology in Essex to 1500 A D , C.B.A. Research Report No.34 (1980).p.6.

<sup>29</sup> Allen & Sturdy 'Environmental background' pp.1-7.

<sup>30</sup> J Hunter, The Essex Landscape ERO Publication No.140 (1999).

county : the Essex Uplands, Essex Lowlands, Essex Heathlands and Essex Marshlands.

## 1.4 GEOGRAPHY AND LANDSCAPE

The earliest description we have of medieval Essex is William Worcester's account of his Essex journey in 1477-78 in which he refers to the islands of Foulness, Mersea and Brightlingsea (the latter not usually being described as an island).<sup>31</sup>

'Foulness Island lies in the water of Thames off Hadleigh Castle in Essex; it is about 6 miles round. In the island is a chapel of St Thomas the Martyr; the island is most rich in oxen, cows, and sheep, but is not inhabited. It belongs to James Ormond the earl of Wiltshire. Around this island are oysters, mussels and many other sorts of fish in great abundance.

Mersea Island            } lie together near the town of St Osyth,  
Brightlingsea Island } and each island is about 3 miles long from north to south and [2] miles wide. They are 8 miles beyond Colchester and both islands are inhabited and stocked with cattle; in one island, Mersea, the inhabitants are fishermen, while in Brightlingsea they are merchants and sailors'.<sup>32</sup>

Little more is to be found until John Norden's flattering but probably traditional view of the county's proverbial productivity was written in 1594 but not published until 1840.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> J H Harvey, ed., *William Worcester Itineraries* (1969), p. 145.

<sup>32</sup> Clearly William Worcester has confused the islands of Canvey (near Hadleigh) and Foulness as in describing Foulness he includes features of both.

<sup>33</sup> Norden, *Speculi*, p. 7.

This shire is moste fatt, frutefull, and full of profitable thinges, exceding (as farr as I can finde) anie other shire, for the generall comodeties, and the plentie. Thowgh Suffolke be more highlie comended of some wherwith I am not yet acquaynted ; But this shire seemeth to me to deserve the title of the englishe Goshen, the fattest of the Lande : comparable to Palestina, that flowed with milke and hunnye.<sup>34</sup>

From his personal knowledge of Essex, which he modestly disclaims ‘craving pardon for the defectes, being a straunger and of so small travayle in the countrey’ (he was in Essex long enough to catch ‘a moste cruell quarterne fever’), Norden anticipates twentieth-century geographers and identifies four distinct landscapes or *pays*.<sup>35</sup> He thought the county could be ‘as it were, quartered out’ the south-eastern hundreds of Essex yielding ‘milke, butter and...great and huge cheeses...wondered at for their massivenes and thicknes’, the northern hundreds with their ‘many good feedinges, and come in reasonable measure’, the central and western hundreds ‘reasonable apt for come...much enterlaced with woodes and rugged groundes’ and finally the south western hundreds ‘for most parte woodes and wooddie groundes, and foreste’.<sup>36</sup> Norden’s view is of course coloured by land use in his own day but as a general description of Essex it is valid four hundred years later and was probably valid one hundred and fifty years before his time. *Pays* other than those recognised by Norden had long existed in the county. The Rodings district for example, had its own distinctive character; it was traditionally considered to be ‘very fruitful, but

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<sup>34</sup> This view of Essex is echoed by a succession of writers who dwell on the fertility and productivity of the county W Camden, *Britannia* (1610) p. 405; M Drayton, *Poly-Olbion* (1622); J Brome, *Travels over England, Scotland and Wales* (1707), p. 108 ‘Essex... The gentry generally are courtly and affable; and the commonalty for the most part pretty well refined’.

<sup>35</sup> Norden, *Speculi*, p. 42.

<sup>36</sup> Norden, *Speculi* pp. 8-9.

proverbially distinguished for the badness of its roads, and the uncouth manners of its inhabitants : in both these respects, however, it is much improved, and with regards to the cultivation of the land, is not inferior to most places in Essex'. (Fig. 1.3)<sup>37</sup>

Philip Morant reminds us of both the strategic location of Essex: it is 'one of the best situated in this Kingdom, on account of its Nearness to the Capital, Conveniency of Water- carriage, good Roads in general, and other great Advantages' and its pleasant character: 'The County is not fill'd with light Sands, apt to be blown about with every high Wind, nor is it covered with barren Rocks, or dreary Mountains; but the Surface of it is in general level. However it is not a dead Flat, but diversified with agreeable Eminences and fruitful Dales, the latter watered in general with Brooks, or Rills of Water.... The marshes and parts adjoining to the Thames and Sea afford rich pastures, from whence great store of cattle are sent up to the London markets.'<sup>38</sup>

Yet another geographical division of the county, this time on climatic lines, is proposed by Rupert Coles: 'Coastal rainfall is very low indeed...varying climatic factors broadly divide the county into two regions – a western inland region with heavier rainfall and less violent winds, an eastern coastal zone with lighter rainfall and greater windiness - the latter region being more inimical to woodland growth.'<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Anon, *Beauties of England and Wales* 5. (1804), Vol. 1. p.423.

<sup>38</sup> P Morant, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex*' (2 vols. 1763-68), p.i.

<sup>39</sup> R. Coles, 'The past history of the Forest of Essex' *Essex Naturalist* 24 (1933-1934), p.117.



## ESSEX

SCALE  
0 4 8 12 16 20 MILES

*Reproduced by permission of the Essex Record Office.*



**FIGURE 1.3 ESSEX PAYS : RODING VALLEY & DENGIE PENINSULA.**

Open fields were not characteristic of the Essex countryside except in parts of the west and north-west of the county. (Plate 1.5)<sup>40</sup> Morant recognised this aspect of Essex when he wrote: 'the county being inclosed makes it much more comfortable to live and travel in, than such as is quite open, exposed without the least shelter to all the Inclemencies of Wind and Weather: And it also makes every man's Property, whether great or little, much securer, and more his own, than where it is unfenced, and liable to the encroachments of every joint-commoner, or greedy neighbour'.<sup>41</sup> Oliver Rackham identifies the surviving trees and woods, together with the coastal marshes, as the most stable part of the countryside and through them, we come closest to seeing what the medieval landscape of Essex looked like.<sup>42</sup> To his observation it should be added that the many church/hall complexes in Essex are a vivid reminder of the past, most particularly of the medieval gentry and their local influence.

Rackham describes present day Essex as an 'Ancient Countryside' county, its unplanned landscape having evolved by: 'the gradual simplification of a medieval landscape' rather than by the 'sudden' and therefore planned, 'reorganisation through Enclosure Acts' experienced in some other parts of England. He sees Essex in terms of 'small towns, hamlets, greens and tyes'. It is clear from the work of Williamson and others that in Essex, as in Suffolk, 'when features of medieval and post medieval date are removed, many areas can be seen to have been planned and their irregular

<sup>40</sup> On some manors however, as at Writtle, the demesne was divided into great fields whilst the tenants' holdings were made up of small enclosures. Newton, *Manor of Writtle* p.31. The 'early development of consolidated holdings contributed to the relative strength of the peasantry'. F Hull, 'Agriculture and rural society in Essex 1560-1640' Unpubl. Ph.D. Thesis, University of London (1950), p. 527.

<sup>41</sup> Morant, *History of Essex*, p.1.

<sup>42</sup> O Rackham, 'The medieval landscape of Essex' in R.H. Allen & R.G. Sturdy eds. *Archaeology in Essex to AD 1500* CBA Research Report No 34 (1980), pp. 103-107.





**PLATE 1.5 CHAMPION COUNTRYSIDE : ARKESDEN.**



appearance results from subsequent piecemeal alteration'.<sup>43</sup> In contradiction of Rackham's view, it has been known for more than a century that in Essex and in other areas of non-open field countryside, large areas were planned for agriculture in the late Iron Age and Roman periods.<sup>44</sup> This planning is characterised by extensive areas of countryside regularly laid out, roads and fields in many cases consisting of 'coaxial' or parallel and perpendicular field boundaries, which run great distances across country.<sup>45</sup> Several of these planned landscapes have been dated to the pre-Roman period by Rodwell and others.<sup>46</sup> Stephen Rippon takes issue with some of Rodwell's conclusions and suggests that the so-called Iron Age/Roman landscapes may in fact be of early medieval origin (perhaps between the eighth and tenth centuries) resulting from a major reorganisation of the landscape between the fifth and twelfth centuries.<sup>47</sup> Rippon believes that the planning occurred prior to the late Saxon fragmentation of estates in Essex and draws our attention to Williamson's work on the identification of planned landscapes in East Anglia which illustrates that 'Characteristic features of the medieval landscape -greens, lanes, estate boundaries and settlements- always appear to have been introduced into organised field systems, rather than being integral to, and contemporary with, them'.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> T Williamson, 'Ancient landscapes', in D.Dymond & E.Martin eds, An Historical Atlas of Suffolk (2<sup>nd</sup> edn 1989), p 40

<sup>44</sup> H Laver, 'The roads of Dengie Hundred' T.E.A.S. 2<sup>nd</sup> ser. 5 (1889), pp.33-38.

<sup>45</sup> S.Rippon, 'Early planned landscapes in south-east Essex' E.A.H. 22 (1991), pp.46-60.

<sup>46</sup> W Rodwell, 'Relict landscapes in Essex' in H.C.Bowen & P.J.Fowle eds, Early Land Allotment in the British Isles, B.A.R. 48, (1978), pp.89-98.

<sup>47</sup> Rippon, 'Early planned landscapes', pp.46-60.

<sup>48</sup> Williamson, 'Ancient landscapes' p.40.

Despite the reorganisation of the Essex landscape envisaged by Rippon, neither nucleated villages nor open-fields developed significantly in Essex, the Ancient (but unplanned) Countryside described by Rackham is what evolved instead.<sup>49</sup> Christopher Dyer points out that the: 'people working the land in the period 400-1000 inherited from Roman Britain not untamed forests and abandoned fields but a developed and functioning agrarian system, although there may have been some regeneration of woods in the post-Roman period'.<sup>50</sup> It is likely that in Essex a number of Roman British estates or *regiones* were taken over as going concerns by incoming Saxon settlers and that these districts for example *Deningei* (Dengie), *Gegingas* (Wid Valley) and *Hrothingas* (Rodings) coalesced to form the kingdom of the East Saxons at the end of the sixth century, administered through a series of royal vills such as Havering, Witham and Colchester.<sup>51</sup> Such estates were, according to Christopher Dyer, 'large and complex organisations, with specialised functions assigned to different parts of a federated structure' which between the ninth and eleventh centuries broke down into manorial units.<sup>52</sup> This dissolution of the great estates involved a transition from a tribute-collecting regime to one based on demesne and labour service. Much of late Saxon Essex was still thickly wooded but there was considerable arable land: the open marsh

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<sup>49</sup> For an earlier view of the centuriation question in Essex see: R.Coles, 'Enclosures: Essex agriculture, 1500-1900' *Essex Naturalist* 26 (1937-1938), R.Coles, 'Centuriation in Essex. An account of Roman agriculture in the county' *Essex Naturalist* 26 (1939).

<sup>50</sup> C Dyer, 'The past, the present and the future in medieval rural history' *Rural History* 1 (1990), p. 38.

<sup>51</sup> For a discussion of this early settlement period see S.Pewsey and A.Brooks eds, *East Saxon Heritage* (1993), S.Rippon 'Essex c. 700-1066' in O.Bedwin ed., *The Archaeology of Essex* (1996), pp.117-128. and D.Hooke, *The Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England* (1998).

<sup>52</sup> Dyer, 'Past, present and future' pp.39-41.

pasture must have been particularly highly prized.<sup>53</sup> Fig. 1.4 shows the proximity of ancient demesne, minsters and hundred moots in Essex.

By 1086, instead of the 'nucleated village clustered round a church and manor surrounded by open fields' of the Midland type, settlement in Essex was 'more dispersed, often occurring as loose nucleations in the valleys, with several other manors and small hamlets scattered throughout the rest of the parish, each with its own fields.'<sup>54</sup> Clearly such arrangement favoured independence rather than interdependence, a trend emphasised by early enclosure of small fields and pastures.<sup>55</sup> Settlements had been expanding largely through assarting since the late Saxon period and the process continued, often accelerated, between the Conquest and Domesday as evidenced by the large number of vills with less woodland in 1086 than in 1066. In Essex as elsewhere, settlements showed a 'marked tendency to occur on the margins of geological and topographical zones in order to exploit a variety of environments.'<sup>56</sup> Certain zones of the county were, however, exploited through inter-commoning and these included the coast, marsh, upland heath and woodland. It is clear that the latter was not merely waste land 'waiting to be converted to arable' but a valued asset.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> B E Cracknell, Canvey Island. The History of a Marshland Community Leicester University Occasional Paper 12 (1959), p 10

<sup>54</sup> S Rippon, 'Essex c. 700-1066' p. 123

<sup>55</sup> Three landscape types for Essex have been defined by John Hunter. 'Direct Enclosure: irregular ad hoc assart from woodland and waste; Early Enclosure: slow enclosure of common fields and commons; Late enclosure: post - 1600 field patterns with the straight lines of surveyors' T-squares.' Hunter, 'Historic landscape of Cressing Temple', p. 25.

<sup>56</sup> S Rippon, 'Essex c. 700-1066' p. 124.

<sup>57</sup> S Rippon, 'Essex c. 700-1066' p. 125.



FIGURE 1.4 PROXIMITY OF : ANCIENT DEMESNE

- MINSTER
- HUNDRED MOOT
- HUNDRED MOOT

Another feature of the Essex landscape in 1381 was the large number of ecclesiastical buildings. The most impressive of these were undoubtedly the abbeys and priories founded mainly in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and successively endowed by the higher nobility and gentry. Principal among these were St John's and St Botolph's in Colchester, Coggeshall, St Osyth's, Stratford, Waltham Holy Cross, Walden (founded by and containing the mausoleum of the Bohun family), Little Dunmow and Colne founded by the Fitzwalters and De Veres respectively and used as their burial places for many generations, also Barking founded in c.666. In all there were fifty religious foundations in late medieval Essex. Much more widely dispersed but generally less impressive were the four hundred or more parish churches and about seventy chapels which had been built in Essex by c.1250, approximately half of which had been completed by c.1150.<sup>58</sup> Some parish churches originated as minsters in the seventh century and, if it is correct that there was only one minster per hundred (which minsters predate) this may give a clue as to the origins of hundreds in Essex.<sup>59</sup> It has been estimated that by c.1100 there were one hundred and twenty or more parish churches in Essex or about one church to 11.5 manors; the ratio had fallen to one church to 3.5 manors (400:1400) by 1381.<sup>60</sup>

In terms of non-ecclesiastical buildings military fortifications would have been the most impressive. There were approximately twenty-five maintained castles in Essex in

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<sup>58</sup> Powell, 'Essex Parishes', pp 6-18

<sup>59</sup> W Rodwell & K Rodwell, Historic Churches. A Wasting Asset C.B.A. Research Report No.19 (1977) All the minsters so far identified (with the possible exception of Hadstock) were located in the south east of the county, mostly on the coast. Some 200 of the 415 parish churches built before 1750 now remain as substantially medieval buildings, the remainder have either been demolished, fallen into ruin or have been rebuilt.

<sup>60</sup> Powell, 'Essex Parishes', pp 32-41.

1381 and several more which had been abandoned.<sup>61</sup> Most significant of the castles in 1381 were Colchester, Hedingham, Pleshey, Hadleigh, Walden, Clavering, Stansted and Rayleigh. Strategically, it is curious that neither Chelmsford nor Maldon had a castle and that only Hadleigh and Rayleigh are sited close to the coast.

Next in architectural importance would have been the many manor houses and their ancillary buildings such as barns and kitchens, which would have been visible in the landscape in 1381. Although there were approximately fourteen hundred manors at the time it is unlikely that there was a manor house for every manor. It is probable that there was at least one manor house in each vill however and a considerable number of them have survived at least in part to the present day. Modern research is constantly bringing to light early features of existing buildings and where, as in the case of Tiptofts manor, the documentary evidence complements the architectural evidence, there are excellent opportunities to arrive at precise dates for early structures. Manor houses are discussed in chapter five below.

Two features that are associated with manor houses and have survived in large numbers (or can otherwise be identified) are moats and parks. According to E. Martin and P. Aitkins some seven hundred and seventy moats have been identified in Essex, the majority of which were constructed between 1200 and 1325. Most moats surrounded a raised platform of approximately one acre (0.405 hectares). Their shape is generally

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<sup>61</sup> Several 'adulterine' castles such as Purleigh were amongst those which had fallen out of use by 1381.

rectangular, with the axis of the house at right angles to the long axis of the moat.<sup>62</sup> Not all moated houses were manorial, for example Marvels Garden in Pebmarsh and not all moats enclose houses – Berners Roding church is moated. A very large number of existing moats still enclose houses such as Broadoaks in Wimbish and Mole Hall, Debden, whilst others enclose deserted sites – such as Heron Hall, East Horndon (Plates 6.4 and 6.5) or Birch Holt, Messing. Very few moated sites in Essex have as yet been fully investigated, Plate 1.6 shows the well-preserved moat at Birch Holt, a small manor belonging to Richard Baynard of Messing. In south-east England only Suffolk has a similar number of moats to Essex; Hertfordshire for example, has only about one third the number. Within Essex there occurs what has been described as a ‘phenomenal concentration’ of moats in the triangular area formed by Chelmsford, Harlow and Bishops Stortford where some sixty-one (about twelve and a half per cent of the total) moats have been listed. The greatest density of moats is to be found in ‘woodland’ areas where colonization was late.<sup>63</sup> The majority of moats in Essex lie to the north-west of the A12 road.<sup>64</sup> Despite the very substantial evidence provided by the presence of these moats it is by no means clear why they were constructed in ‘woodland’ rather than ‘open’ countryside and why there should be fewer moats in areas of early cultivation cannot be explained.

<sup>62</sup> E.Martin and P.Aitkens, ‘Medieval moats’ in D.Dymond and E.Martin eds, An Historical Atlas of Suffolk (2<sup>nd</sup> edn. 1989), p.16.

<sup>63</sup> H.E.J.Le Patourel & B.K.Roberts ‘The significance of moated sites’ in F.A.Aberg ed., Medieval Moated Sites C.B.A. Research Report No.17 (1978),p.49.

<sup>64</sup> J.Hedges, ‘Essex Moats’ in Aberg ed. Medieval Moated Sites, p.65.





**PLATE 1.6 DESERTED MANOR : BIRCH.**



As for parks, Essex was very well supplied during the late medieval period. The earliest known park was at Ongar; established c.1045 (it was destroyed as recently as 1950). One of the earliest Essex grants by the king is of 1264, granting Sir William Marney of Layer Marney the right to enclose his wood at Layer Marney with a ditch and hedge so as to make it a park.<sup>65</sup> Leonard Cantor has shown that there were approximately one hundred and eight medieval parks in Essex and that they were distributed relatively evenly across the county but with fewest in the east. Their origin had been mainly as a means of retaining deer for hunting but in a number of cases this proved to be too expensive and several parks were, like Finchingfield, put to the plough along with the rest of the demesne.<sup>66</sup>

## 1.5 AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY

The picture of Domesday Essex painted by Darby is of a north-west region characterised by a boulder clay plateau, well wooded, densely populated, prosperous and given to agriculture; a south-east region as London clay based, less attractive for farming, much wood but little meadow, fringed by marshland; a third region, the Tendring district, as low-lying, largely glacial loam, moderately supplied with woodland but little meadow. Darby shows that woodland was most dense in the south-west whilst meadow is densest in the centre of the county and in the north-west. Pasture for sheep was concentrated along the coast and river estuary region. Domesday records

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<sup>65</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1258-1266, p. 354.

<sup>66</sup> L. Cantor, The Medieval Parks of England: A Gazetteer (1983), pp 3-5 and 29-31. Oliver Rackham identifies at least 160 parks in Essex between 1086 and 1530', Rackham, 'Medieval Landscape' p.103. He considers this to be a 'remarkably high density' compared with other counties and explains it as 'due perhaps to better record keeping in view of potential conflict with Forest Law.'

woodland for three-quarters of the settlements in Essex, more than any other county except Hertfordshire; some six hundred and thirty-five woods produced fodder for 94,000 pigs (235 pigs per parish). Essex was about four times as wooded as neighbouring Suffolk, having a total woodland and wood pasture of between 120,000 and 200,000 acres (486,000 and 810,000 hectares). In total about fifty percent of the county was arable, twenty percent woodland, thirty percent meadow, heath, pasture, gardens and marsh. The chief difference between Essex in 1086 and in the late medieval period was that late assarting further reduced the amount of wood-pasture in the county.

Much Domesday woodland was contained within six Royal Forests (themselves within the Forest of Essex): Writtle, Epping, Hainault, Wintry (Epping), Hatfield Broad Oak and Kingswood (Colchester).<sup>67</sup> Rackham says that recent research goes far to discredit the traditional belief that much of Essex was wildwood, little touched by the hand of man until well into the medieval period.<sup>68</sup> The London clay of the south western part of Essex was greatly resistant to the medieval plough and the area remained densely wooded until the seventeenth century. Further north the soil was more easily worked and the coastal marshlands were extremely fertile.

By 1250 most of Essex was agricultural land; in the north-west of the county there were some open fields, but elsewhere in Essex these were rare. Meadows (permanent grassland cut for hay) occupied the valley floors, an aspect of medieval Essex which

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<sup>67</sup> Rackham, 'Medieval landscape' p.103.

<sup>68</sup> Rackham, 'Medieval landscape' p.106.

has now almost entirely vanished.<sup>69</sup> By the fourteenth century there had been a considerable growth in population, expansion of farming, development of local trade, markets, fairs and the establishment of small towns some of which were chartered boroughs.<sup>70</sup> Throughout our period there was an active land market where manors, arable, meadow, woodland, pasture, marsh, rent and advowsons changed hands in large numbers.<sup>71</sup> Interest in prime Essex land no doubt attracted speculators but it also brought in families and individuals who settled in the county.

The Romans may have brought fifty percent of Essex under cultivation but the Saxons soon expanded their homesteads beyond these margins carving out *ley* settlements in the wooded ribbons. Saxon settlers had early taken up the partially cleared eastern London clay and light soil areas, and part of the main boulder clay was also cleared by 1066. Much of the Essex countryside as it can be seen today had already taken shape by 1086, the chief difference being the prevalence of wood-pasture.<sup>72</sup> The extent of twelfth- and thirteenth-century colonization has yet to be determined. The rural economy of northern and central Essex in the late medieval period was a mixture of farming, crafts, industry and trading, the base unit of production in the economy being the household.<sup>73</sup> Essex, along with certain portions of East Anglia, had an unusually high proportion of wage labourers and rural craftsmen residing in its late

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<sup>69</sup> Rackham, 'Medieval landscape', p. 103

<sup>70</sup> There were 15 chartered boroughs in Essex by 1381: Berden, Chelmsford, Colchester, Great Bardfield, Harlow, Harwich, Hatfield Regis, Maldon, Manningtree, Newport, Pleshey, Thaxted, Waltham, Witham and Writtle. M.W. Beresford and H.P.R. Finberg, English Medieval Boroughs: A Handlist (1973), pp. 108-111.

<sup>71</sup> This is clear from the hundreds of transactions recorded in the Essex Fines.

<sup>72</sup> Rackham, 'Medieval Landscape', p. 106.

<sup>73</sup> Poos, Rural Society, p. 11.

medieval countryside compared with other regions of England.<sup>74</sup> Agriculture was characterised by long-established enclosure; only in the north west of the county was there significant open-field farming.

It has been said that the early field systems of few English counties are so difficult to describe as those of Essex, particularly as when it was first recorded much of the county was already enclosed.<sup>75</sup> The leasing of demesnes increased from the 1350s until by 1400 this had become the normal mode of management for large estates and many small ones; and downward movement of demesne cultivation ran parallel to a decline in the cultivation of tenant lands.<sup>76</sup> Abandonment of direct management of arable farming in 1380-1420 can in simple terms be attributed to crises caused by the effect of rising labour costs and falling grain prices. Direct management of demesnes continued throughout the fifteenth century on gentry estates and the same century saw falling rents.<sup>77</sup> Many Essex manors fell into a pattern of dwindling production in the late fourteenth century; on lords' demesne lands hired labour grew increasingly expensive and grain prices fell. Customary services were now no longer reliable as a significant portion of labour input. Lords had begun to commute labour services to cash on a piecemeal basis to meet their own needs and those of a work force increasingly resistant to labour services; lords were also prepared to consider leasing tenements for

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<sup>74</sup> Poos, Rural Society, p 21.

<sup>75</sup> H L. Gray, English Field Systems (1959), p.387.

<sup>76</sup> Miller, Agrarian History, p 614; Britnell., Growth and Decline, p.144.

<sup>77</sup> Miller, Agrarian History, pp.530 & 582.

terms of years on a wider basis than before. The strategy and chronology of these activities varied widely within the county.<sup>78</sup>

On boulder clay plough teams were four horses and four oxen or six horses and two oxen; on London clay there would be six horses and three or four oxen.<sup>79</sup> The 'surprisingly popular' use of horses on heavy soils in Essex may have arisen because relatively small enclosures encouraged the use of horse plough teams which were able to work more easily in confined space than cumbersome oxen.<sup>80</sup> However, Essex only departed from the mixed plough team pattern when all-horse farms began to appear after the Black Death in the south-eastern part of the county.<sup>81</sup> The plough itself varied from region to region and from season to season but in Essex the wheeled plough was not used on clay land.

During our period the main commercial crop in Essex was wheat and this was cultivated with oats. Arable husbandry was responsive to local differences of soil and climate and therefore varies considerably across the county. Oats, peas, beans and rye were grown alongside the more commercially valuable crops of wheat and barley.<sup>82</sup> Lawrence Poos demonstrates from his analysis of Inquisition post mortem data that the pressure of people on resources which Essex experienced around 1300 meant that land use was tilted toward: 'calorific-efficient grain production and away from grazing'. In the late fourteenth century these pressures eased and pasture began to be enhanced at

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<sup>78</sup> Poos, *Rural Society*, p. 242.

<sup>79</sup> Miller, *Agrarian History*, p. 205.

<sup>80</sup> J Langdon, *Horses, Oxen and Technological Innovation* (1986), p. 256.

<sup>81</sup> Langdon, *Innovation*, p. 263n.

<sup>82</sup> Miller, *Agrarian History*, p. 53. and 61

the expense of arable; there followed a notable decline in arable land values.<sup>83</sup> Heathland was used as pasture; heather and furze were cut for fuel, mostly on common land.<sup>84</sup> There were large areas of natural pasture like Tiptree Heath and: 'along the coast demesne pasture greatly exceeded the arable area'. In some parts heathland and marshland lay adjacent to one another thus ensuring a high proportion of pasture, as in Thurstable and Winstree.<sup>85</sup>

Little is known of dairy management in our period as manorial dairies were usually leased out even when the demesne was directly managed. As to sheep, the main object of rearing them was to produce wool. Essex wool, however, was 'amongst the poorest in England'.<sup>86</sup> Sheep were the 'most numerous of all the different livestock' in the South East and were 'kept rather less for their mutton than as dairy animals and wool producers, and for their use in manuring arable lands'.<sup>87</sup> Sheep dairies on the coast were known as *wicks* and their names have survived to the present day on many coastal farms. Essex was proverbially well known for its bacon, the Dunmow Flitch is mentioned by Chaucer, and for its ewe milk cheese.<sup>88</sup> This 'whitemeat' was made until the eighteenth century but was gradually regarded as unpalatable, its only commendation being that it kept well and was therefore suitable 'to those embarking on

<sup>83</sup> Poos, *Rural Society*, p 10

<sup>84</sup> Rackham, 'Medieval Landscape', p 103

<sup>85</sup> Miller, *Agrarian History*, p 53-54 and 613.

<sup>86</sup> Miller, *Agrarian History*, p 206 and 209.

<sup>87</sup> Harvey, *Jack Cade*, p 6 The sheep was a multi-purpose animal producing not only wool but also meat and milk. Its manure was invaluable for arable land.

<sup>88</sup> In 1173 Essex 'great cheeses' sold at 6d. each and ordinary cheeses at 2d. In 1424 a wey of Essex cheese sold at 11s (a wey in 1512 being 336 pounds). J.R. Smith, *Foulness: A History of an Essex Island Parish* E R O. Publication No 55 (1970), p. 12.

long voyages'.<sup>89</sup> In the seventeenth century Essex was 'renowned as a supplier of meat, poultry, eggs and dairy produce to the capital' – there is little doubt that the same was true in the fourteenth century.<sup>90</sup>

Beyond the villages and cultivated land of late medieval Essex lay woodland. These woods are characterised by Rackham as follows : in the north-west, ash, maple, hazel; in the south, hornbeams; in the mid-north elm and lime; in the east sweet chestnut.<sup>91</sup> With rare exceptions, the woods of Essex were not oakwoods; only the timber trees were oak. The underwood was a variety of other species. Essex woodland has been dominated since the mid thirteenth century by coppice woods intensively managed for underwood, with timber as a by-product.<sup>92</sup> Plate 1.7 shows recent coppicing activities in Shenfield which vary little from medieval practice. The coppiced woodland was compartmented and sub-divided by temporary fences to keep animals away from the regrowth; where animals had free access to wood pasture the trees were pollarded to prevent destructive browsing.<sup>93</sup>

The principal non-agricultural industry of Essex in the late medieval period was the production of cloth. Along the Stour there were many fulling mills, a number of which were owned by the gentry.<sup>94</sup> In some places more recent mill buildings still occupy the original medieval mill sites and teasles growing along the banks of rivers and streams

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<sup>89</sup> Cracknell, *Canvey Island*, p. 12.

<sup>90</sup> J.A. Sharpe, *Crime in Seventeenth-Century England* (1983), p. 15.

<sup>91</sup> Rackham, 'Medieval Landscape', p. 103.

<sup>92</sup> O. Rackham, 'Medieval timber economy as illustrated by the Cressing Temple Barns' in D.D. Andrews ed., *Cressing Temple: A Templar and Hospitaller Manor in Essex* (1993), p. 85.

<sup>93</sup> Rackham, 'Medieval Landscape', p. 103.

<sup>94</sup> Harvey, *Jack Cade*, p. 18.



**PLATE 1.7 COPPICING : SHENFIELD**



are a reminder of their use in the process of cloth manufacturing.<sup>95</sup> Much of the cloth produced in Essex was exported to Italy via London and in the 1380s Florentine trade companies were buying Essex cloth for sale in Spain and Italy. Between 1387 and 1402, twenty-four percent by value of all cloth sold by Datini the celebrated merchant of Prato in Tuscany was from Essex.<sup>96</sup> It is probable that the Essex born *condottiere* Sir John Hawkwood, who lived in Florence during this period, was able to use his influence in Florence and London to facilitate the wool trade for his native county. Other significant industries in Essex were fishing (including oysters) and salt production along the east coast, cutlery manufacture in Thaxted, together with pottery, tile and brick production. There were in excess of eighty markets in Essex in our period (Fig. 1.5).

## 1.6 POPULATION.<sup>97</sup>

The Domesday population of Essex is shown by Darby to have been at its most dense towards the north-west of the county where a density of thirteen recorded people

<sup>95</sup> A number of Essex water mills were constructed in the thirteenth century and they made possible 'the mechanisation of the fulling trade'. H Benham, *Some Essex Water Mills* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn. 1983), p. 1. Poos, *Rural Society* pp 306-307 lists 28 medieval fulling mills in Essex with details mainly extracted from I.P.M. extents. M Gervers cites thirteen places that are frequently referred to as the hub of the Essex cloth industry in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. They are Bocking, Braintree, Coggeshall, Colchester, Dedham, Dunmow, Halstead, Castle Hedingham, Kelvedon, Maldon, Shalford, Thaxted and Witham. M Gervers, 'The textile industry in Essex in the late 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries: a study based on occupational names in charter sources' *E.A.&H.* 20 (1989), p.41.

<sup>96</sup> R.H. Britnell, *Growth and Decline in Colchester* (1986), pp 65-66.

<sup>97</sup> D. Corke, *The Nature of Essex* (1984), p. 13. 'If the old "kingdom" of Essex had retained its independence, it would rank as far and away the most densely populated country in western Europe, with a density of 65% above that of the Netherlands'.



FIG. 1.5 ESSEX : MARKETS (AFTER BRITNELL).

per square mile (2.59 square kilometres) in Uttlesford hundred, compares with for example, 6 in Waltham hundred in the south west. The total recorded number of households for the county was some 14,600 representing a population of approximately 66,000 (using a multiplier of 4.5) or about 165 people per vill.<sup>98</sup>

Poos's analysis of tithingpenny data in fifty Essex communities shows that by about 1300 the population had risen to the: 'apogee of high-medieval expansion' (to be followed by more than a century of 'demographic stagnation and agrarian contraction').<sup>99</sup> The effects of famine between 1315-17 brought the first serious decline – about 15 per cent and the tax returns of 1327 suggest that the population of Essex was still double that of 1086.<sup>100</sup> In terms of density of taxpayers per square mile (2.59 square kilometre) the county average was 5.5. The highest density was in the hundreds of Dunmow, Chelmsford and Rochford at 6.8, 6.6 and 6.6 respectively. The lowest density was in Winstree, Ongar and Barstable at 4.6 and Thurstable at 4.1 per square mile. There were also wide variations within the hundreds : in Chelmsford hundred, Chelmsford and Moulsham together had 16.3 taxpayers per square mile whilst Rettendon (always a poor vill) a mere 2.3.<sup>101</sup> Poos shows evidence of a massive decline in the rural population during the three decades between the Black Death and the earlier famine. His estimate of mortality from plague (which arrived in Essex by February or March 1348 and reached its peak between May and July following) was that the

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<sup>98</sup> Darby, *Domesday Geography*, pp 216-229. See also R. Smith, 'Human resources' in G. Astill & A. Grant eds, *The Countryside of Medieval England* (1988), pp. 188-212 where the multiplier for the calculation of the Domesday population is 4.5-5.0.

<sup>99</sup> Poos, *Rural Society*, p. 2.

<sup>100</sup> The estimate for 1086 being 66,000 and 1327 being 130,000.

<sup>101</sup> J. C. Ward, ed., *The Medieval Essex Community: The Lay Subsidy of 1327* Essex Record Office Publication No. 88 (1983), p. iv.

population of the county was reduced by perhaps 45-50 per cent.<sup>102</sup> The post Black Death population of Essex may therefore have fallen to about 75,000 or 185 per vill. The decline and subsequent disappearance of a small number of Essex villages is probably due to the demographic disasters of the fourteenth century. Even by 1428 the recovery of the population was so slow that thirty-six villages were recorded as having a population of less than ten people and it is clear that the majority of people still lived in parish communities with less than two hundred inhabitants.<sup>103</sup> Poos identifies a slight recovery of the population in the 1360s despite major recurrences of plague in 1360-62, 1369 and 1375.<sup>104</sup> The Poll Tax returns of 1377 quoted by Poos show that northern and central Essex were still the most populous part of the county; the same returns also show that 60-70 per cent of women over fourteen years of age were married.<sup>105</sup> Essex was roughly at the median of English counties regarding population density in 1377.<sup>106</sup> The returns show a relatively low population in the south east coastal marshes and heavy clay land areas of the south with a total of 47,692 taxpayers in Essex. Using the standard multiplier of 1.5 the total population would have been about 70,000 but these figures are (due partly to the unknown level of tax evasion) necessarily estimates and may indeed be far from accurate.

It is reasonably clear that following the Black Death the population of England (including Essex) had hardly begun to recover by the early sixteenth century. Richard

<sup>102</sup> Poos, *Rural Society*, p.106. See also P.Ziegler, *The Black Death* (1982 edn.), pp.170-173. Christopher Dyer also draws attention to the decline in the Essex population prior to the Black Death in 'Past, present and Future' p.43.

<sup>103</sup> *Feudal Aids 1284-1431* 2 pp.180-233.

<sup>104</sup> Poos, *Rural Society*, p.106.

<sup>105</sup> Smith, 'Human resources', pp.188-212.

<sup>106</sup> Poos, *Rural Society*, p.32.

Britnell has shown that a decline in the population of Colchester took place in the early fifteenth century probably on account of the epidemics which occurred there in 1412/13, 1420/21, 1426/27, 1433/34 and it is possible that other parts of the county were similarly affected.<sup>107</sup> Poos's research, which has been much quoted here, has been subject to critical review by Mark Bailey who questions Poos's revisionist challenge to the conventional view that the country, including Essex, experienced a 'high pressure' demographic regime in the fourteenth century where marriage was early and fertility/birth rates were high, but the impact of death upon population levels was even greater. Poos's research is directed at proving that marriage took place relatively late and that consequently birth/fertility rates were lower than has been traditionally thought. Bailey considers Poos's case to remain unproven and suggests that as the middle ages were not a 'homogeneous period', birth/fertility rates could have fluctuated over time and could have varied on a regional basis.<sup>108</sup> According to Poos the average life expectancy of the rural population in Essex was forty years.<sup>109</sup> The gentry did somewhat better but this did not prevent them from being rather pessimistic, as when Henry Bedford was granted the keeping of land in Fyfield together with the marriage of Richard, son and heir of Thomas Enfield with the proviso that: 'if the said Richard die before he shall have attained full age, as it is possible that he will, if the leprosy or other sickness...',<sup>110</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Britnell, Growth and Decline, p.202.

<sup>108</sup> M.Bailey, 'Demographic decline in late medieval England: some thoughts on recent research' Ec.H.R. 49 (1996), pp.1-19.

<sup>109</sup> Poos, Rural Society, p.119.

<sup>110</sup> Cal.Fine Rolls 1430-1437, p.336.

## 1.7 WEALTH

Some evidence of the relative wealth of the regions within Essex in our period can be adduced from the 1327 taxation. Assuming that the effect of the recurrence of plague was a fall in absolute numbers and did not result in a major redistribution of the population there is no indication that the concentration of wealth indicated by the 1327 data had changed significantly by 1381. In 1327 the average tax for the county was 11.4 shillings per square mile, the lowest figure being 7.1 for the Thurstable hundred and the highest 14.2 for Chafford. The hundreds which bordered the North Sea were among the poorest with Tendring at 9.5 shillings per square mile, Winstree 8.1, Dengie 9.3 and Thurstable 7.1. Along the Thames estuary Rochford was assessed at 13.9 almost as wealthy as Chafford, but Barnstable lying between them, was assessed at only 9.9 shillings per square mile. In the north and centre of the county the wealthiest hundreds were Hinckford, Chelmsford and Clavering with 13.7, 13.3 and 13.0 shillings per square mile respectively. Witham and Lexden were 12.3 and 12.0, Dunmow 10.5 and Uttlesford and Freshwell in the north west were assessed at 9.6. In the west of the county there were considerable variations with Ongar, Waltham, Harlow and Becontree being assessed at 10.6, 12.3, 13.1 and 12.5 respectively. Jennifer Ward attempts to explain this difference by attributing it to the: 'combination of trading potential and Agricultural development together with fertile soil and good communications enjoyed

by the former and absent from the other'.<sup>111</sup>

It is possible to measure the wealth of the county in terms of its manors. The number, size, distribution and productivity of manors were an indicator of the county's general wealth and also the relative wealth of the various regions within the county.<sup>112</sup> Raymond Powell identified eight hundred and forty Domesday manors and by 1381 this number had increased to fourteen hundred manors or reputed manors.<sup>113</sup> Identification of manors is sometimes problematic particularly as their names tended to change when there was a change of ownership.<sup>114</sup> To give an example of this process: Cymays manor in Wimbish was subsequently known as, Enfields, Wantons and finally Tiptofts. This can be explained as follows: in 1236 Robert de Cymay (or Symay) held one tenth of a knight's fee in Wimbish having recently been enfeoffed by the Fitzwalter family, the tenants-in-chief.<sup>115</sup> Robert had probably been succeeded by John de Cymay (perhaps his son) by 1260 who may have sold it to Bartholomew de Enfield who held

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<sup>111</sup> Ward, *Essex Community*, pp. iv. Jennifer Ward also compares the amount of taxable wealth in Essex as between the twentieth of 1327 and the fifteenth and tenth of 1334 finding a 'remarkable correlation' between them. She also notes that the concentration of wealth in the county had shifted from the north west (in 1086) to the south east in 1327 and 1334. 'Peasants in Essex, c. 1200-c. 1340: the influence of landscape and lordship' *E.A.H.* 29 (1998), pp. 115-121.

<sup>112</sup> Following the Conquest the king held 28 manors in Essex. These were distributed widely across the county with one or two manors in each hundred except Maldon and Thurstable where there were none, Hinckford, Lexden and Chafford where there were three and Wibertsheerne where there were four.

<sup>113</sup> W.R. Powell, *Essex in Domesday Book* E.R.O. Publication No. 103. p.4.

<sup>114</sup> J.H. Round, 'The manor of Colne Engaine' *T.E.A.S.* 8 (n.s.) (1903), p. 192. 'Manorial descent, as I have often observed, is the backbone of county history. If a manor is rightly identified in Domesday and its devolution accurately traced, we can then, upon that secure foundation, proceed to write its history as part of the history of the county.' Also in 'The honour of Ongar' *T.E.A.S.* 7 (n.s.) (1900), p. 142. 'There is something repellent to many archaeologists and still more to "the general reader," in the process of tracing out the descent of manors and estates. And yet – in times, at least, for which we have written records – it gives us the backbone of county history. Until that process has been gradually accomplished, we cannot deal with the Domesday Survey, or fit into their place the fragments of topographical information which come to us, whether from records or from archaeological evidence.'

<sup>115</sup> *Book of Fees* 1198-1242, p.578.

the property in 1303.<sup>116</sup> By 1346 the property (described as a tenement rather than a manor) had been transferred to Sir John Wauton a former M.P. for Essex and sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire who held the manor of Wimbish from John, lord Fitzwalter.<sup>117</sup> On Sir John's death, the tenement (now known as Cymays) passed to his widow Elizabeth (she or his first wife Ellen may have been the daughter of Bartholomew de Enfield) who shortly after married John, lord Tiptoft. The tenement subsequently passed to Sir John's granddaughter Margaret who was then the wife of Roger Harleston. On the death of Ivo, son of Roger and Margaret Harleston in 1403 the tenement he held had been recognised as a manor and was now known as Wantons alias Tiptofts.<sup>118</sup> It has remained Tiptofts to the present day despite the many subsequent owners. There are other manors which had several semi-independent components, each with different names, some of which may have been sub manors or reputed manors. As an example, a rental of the manor of Fristling in Margaretting, c.1340 includes the minor manor of Sweetdrop whilst there were at least two sub manors of the manor of Canewdon in the late medieval period, Lostmans (or Loughtmans), and Shernewards.<sup>119</sup> This makes counting the total number of manors in the county particularly difficult.

On the basis of fourteen hundred manors in our period and four hundred parishes there was an average of 3.5 manors per parish (Fig. 1.6). The number of manors per parish varied greatly. The majority had one or two but Finchingfield had seventeen, Epping and Steeple Bumpstead nine; Chigwell, Arkesden, Elmdon and Stanford, Rivers

<sup>116</sup> Essex Fines 2, p. 70 and Feudal Aids 1284-1431 2 p.148.

<sup>117</sup> Feudal Aids 1284-1431 2 p.175.

<sup>118</sup> Cal.I.P.M. 18, pp.329-330.

<sup>119</sup> ERO D/DP M1411 (c.1340) and Morant, History of Essex 1, p.316.



eight; High Ongar twelve; Toppesfield, Ashdon, Barking, Bulmer and St Osyth ten. As to the distribution of manors, there is a concentration of parishes containing only one or two manors in the south-east and north-east hundreds, especially along the coast and river estuaries. There are similar concentrations in the valleys of the Roding, Blackwater, Stour and Colne. Riverside parishes were generally smaller than coastal parishes. Parishes with multiple manors are concentrated in the central and north western hundreds where large parishes have an average of five manors within them. It is not possible to determine the average size of a manor although this could probably be determined from an examination of manorial extents shown in IPMs. Based on a county of one million acres and fourteen hundred manors, the crude average size of an Essex manor would have been 714 acres (286 hectares). This figure is clearly distorted as it does not take account of woodland, common land, houses, gardens, rivers and ponds not forming part of a manor. The distribution of wealth in terms of taxable income, population and manors shows that there was a considerable disparity between the hundreds of the Upland region and the Lowland region a greater proportion of resources being concentrated in the south and south-east than in the north and north-west. The large number of manors in Essex may indicate that lordship was weak at village level.

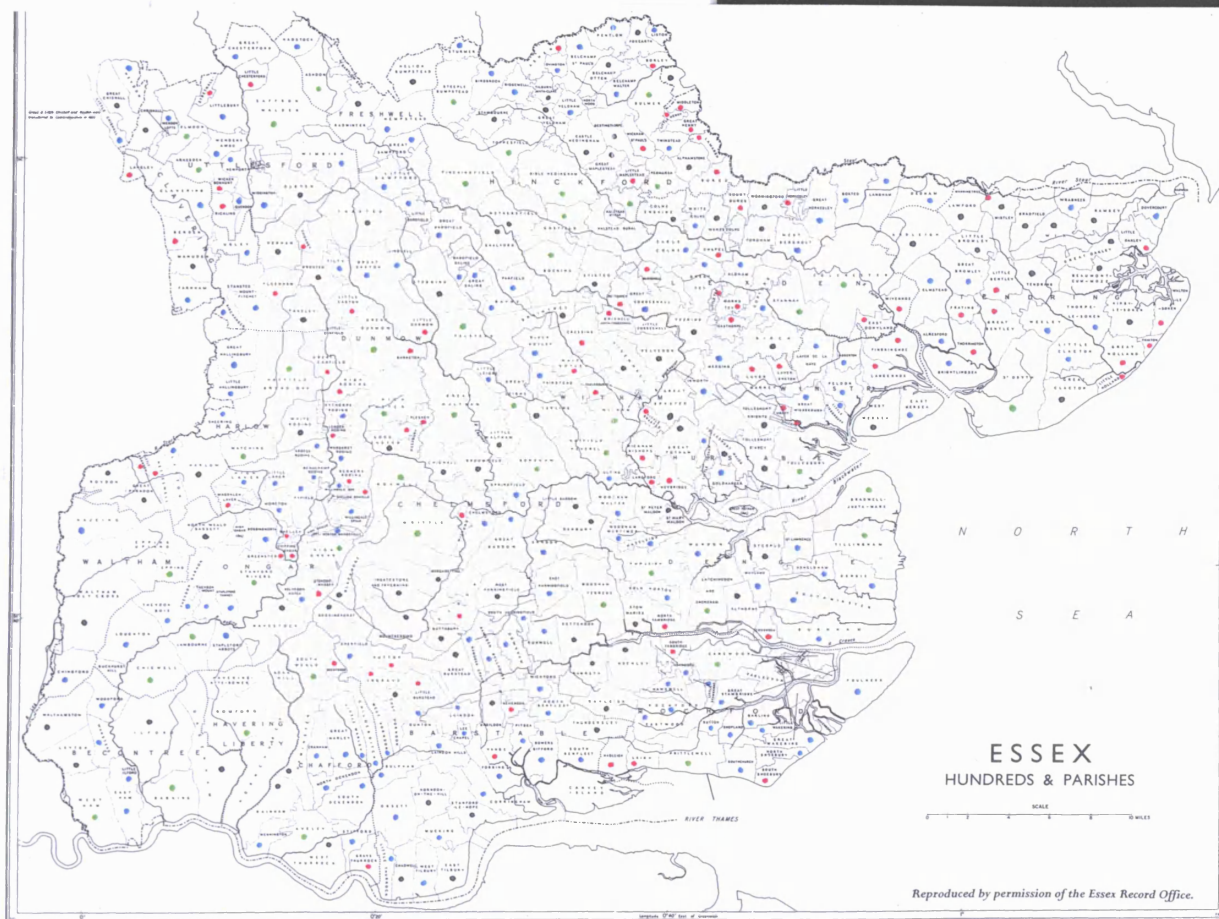


FIGURE 1.6 ESSEX : DISTRIBUTION OF MANORS  
NUMBER PER PARISH 1 ● 2-3 ● 4-6 ● 7+ ●

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE EVOLUTION OF THE ESSEX GENTRY

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The geographical and social world of the Essex gentry was a compact one. The more prosperous gentry families undoubtedly knew each other – indeed they were probably linked by ties of kinship and affinity. They would have met on business in London, at the shire court, the sheriff's tourn or at the sessions; they would have called on one another to witness documents or to accept the responsibility of being feoffee or executor. Occasionally too, there would have been weddings or funerals to attend (presence at baptisms would have been comparatively rare as these were usually arranged in great haste so that the child be baptised on the day it was born). None of the principal or greater gentry lived much more than a days' ride from one another in Essex.<sup>1</sup> As for the parochial gentry, their horizons were still narrower – they would have met their own sort at market or perhaps on their occasional visits to Chelmsford the county town. There would probably have been fewer calls on them to witness documents or to act as feoffee or executor, though no doubt purely social gatherings such as weddings are likely to have been just as frequent.

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<sup>1</sup> F M Stenton, 'The road system of medieval England' *Ec.H.R.* 9 (1936), p.16. The 'study of a long series of medieval accounts would probably give the impression that under ordinary conditions the normal daily ride, even of a man employed on the king's business, approximated much more closely to 20 than 30 miles.' Journey times across Essex by coach in the seventeenth century, were probably similar to fifteenth-century journey times, M.Exwood and H.L.Lohmann eds, 'Journal of William Shellink's travels in England 1661-1663' *Camden* 5<sup>th</sup> ser. 1 (1993).

Who were the Essex gentry in the years 1381-1450? Some individuals of whom perhaps fifty were alive in any one year comprised the principal gentry, another hundred the greater gentry whilst approximately two hundred more filled the ranks of the lesser gentry. The principal and greater gentry together (it is not possible to compute the precise number of the lesser gentry) controlled some sixty percent of the county's taxable income and, in the frequent absence of powerful resident lordship and strong magnate affinities, were able to exert major influence on the social, political and economic activity of the county.<sup>2</sup> The question inevitably arises as to whether these gentry formed a county community and it will be shown that rather than forming a cohesive county community they were part of what Nigel Saul called in relation to Sussex 'a county of communities'.<sup>3</sup> Chapter three below discusses the county community issue in detail.

The Essex gentry were, in general terms, the group of middling landowners (lordship over men was almost always a prerequisite for gentry status) initially comprising knights and esquires but later including gentlemen, between the higher nobility and the yeomanry or richer peasantry.<sup>4</sup> Most of the gentry maintained their lifestyle by means of income from their manors – the sale of produce, rent, fines and so on – but the more powerful, more active gentry who are here described as the principal

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<sup>2</sup> This estimate is based on the tax returns of 1412 *Feudal Aids 1284-1431* 6 pp.433-447.

<sup>3</sup> N.Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life : Knightly Families in Sussex 1280-1400* (1987),p.60. The question of county communities is discussed in chapter 3 below.

<sup>4</sup> As late as 1404 there were unfree tenants on Essex manors who, together with their families and personal property could be bought and sold by the gentry (and perhaps even the sub-gentry). In that year John Barry and his wife Joan sold Thomas son of John atte Felde, bondman, to the Essex lawyers Richard Waltham and Thomas Cays. *Essex Fines* 3, p.242.

gentry, were in receipt of a combination of retaining fees, annuities, corrodiess, professional fees and the profits of wardship, trade and war.<sup>5</sup>

The majority of gentry had no more than a single manor in Essex though others, like Sir William Coggeshall of Wethersfield (d.1426) and Sir John Tyrell of East Horndon (d.1437) had twelve and ten respectively, often with control over other manors whilst acting as feoffee for their friends and associates or when exercising wardship on behalf of a minor. The manor, or in some cases principal manor, was home for the lord, his family and servants; typically Essex manors were moated and about ten per cent were imparked. It was lordship and the possession of land that gave the gentry their local influence, their prestige and their power – what they would have called ‘worship’. This was augmented by their public lifestyle – as reflected in their ability to display their wealth, endow chantries, build or improve their manor houses, give to the poor, entertain lavishly and associate not only with their equals but also with their betters. These sustaining resources were their *livelode*. There is no contemporary description of gentry status for the concept of a gentry did not exist in the medieval period. Clearly however, a man knew when he had ‘arrived’

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<sup>5</sup> R.H.Tawney, ‘The rise of the gentry, 1558-1640’ *E.H.R.* 11 (1941),p.4. quotes Sir Thomas Smith as saying that: ‘a gentleman is a man who spends his money like a gentleman, and to be shorte, who can live idly and without manuall labour, and will bear the part, charge and countenance of a gentleman, he shall be...taken for a gentleman.’ L. Alston, ed., *De Republica Anglorum* (1906), pp.39-40.

## 2.2 DEFINITION AND CONTEXT.

For the purposes of this thesis, and lacking a contemporary definition, I have taken to be members of the Essex gentry between 1381-1450 those who met the first and one or more of the remaining criteria as follows: 1. Were principally resident in Essex or equally resident in Essex and another county. 2. Had attained knighthood or had been distrained. 3. Were referred to or referred to themselves as 'esquire' or 'gentleman' (or equivalent term in French or Latin). 4. Had lordship of one or more manors. 5. Served in a significant county office, that is: sheriff, shire knight, escheator or JP for Essex.<sup>6</sup>

Those members of the gentry who held manors in Essex but were normally resident elsewhere are not generally included, although they were in some respects part of the county community of Essex. In some cases it is difficult to judge where individuals and families were domiciled; for example, the Braybrokes of Danbury seemed equally at home in Essex and Bedfordshire. Some non-resident gentry such as Sir John Moigne who held the manor and advowson of Great Easton and Sir Thomas Morley (otherwise lord Morley) who held the manor of Great Hallingbury jointly with his wife Anne, took little part in county life.<sup>7</sup> It should also be noted that a high proportion of the principal

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<sup>6</sup> A list of some of the county offices to which the gentry were liable to be appointed is illustrated in the exemption for life from public office obtained by John Doreward of Bocking. In 1404 he was exempted from 'being put on assizes, juries, inquisitions, attainments or recognitions and from being made sheriff, escheator, coroner, mayor, bailiff, constable, justice of the peace or of labourers, knight of the shire, arrayer, trier or leader of men at arms, hobelars or archers, assessor, taxer, collector of tenth, fifteenth, quota, taxes, tallages or other subsidies or aids or other officer, commissioner or minister of the king against his will'. *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1401-1405* p. 467.

<sup>7</sup> *Cal. I.P.M.* 20, 1413-1418, pp. 30 and 185-186.

gentry in Essex and some of the greater gentry held land in adjacent counties as well as further afield. On the basis of criteria one to six above, there were approximately three hundred and fifty gentry in Essex at any one time (numbers fluctuated from year to year) of whom fifty were principal, one hundred were greater and about two hundred were lesser gentry.

Between 1381-1450, forty-six individuals from thirty-five families served as knight of the shire for Essex (some of these also represented other counties or like Sir John Tyrell represented an Essex borough, in his case Maldon, as well). Amongst this group of MPs the Tyrell family is predominant, having four representatives, the Coggeshalls and Swinburnes had three, the Darcy, Fitzlewis, Doreward and Marney families each had two. The office of JP for Essex was held by one hundred and fourteen individuals representing ninety families during our period; of these eighty-three were nominally resident in the county. These statistics tend to support the conclusion of some of the previous studies of county gentry. Nigel Saul estimates the county gentry of Gloucester (including those I have termed principal gentry) to be fifty *families* in the fourteenth century; Grenville Astill, Christine Carpenter and Susan Wright estimated the county gentry of Leicester in the fourteenth century, and the Warwickshire and Derbyshire gentry in the fifteenth century, at about fifty to seventy *families* whose knights and esquires were differentiated from the parochial gentry by their superior wealth and more active role in local politics and administration. This compares with the eighty-eight tenants-in-chief in Domesday Essex and approximately two hundred and fifty under tenants.

The interface between the parochial gentry and the yeomanry is a complex area and, as has been said above, the yeomanry provided a fertile ground for upwardly mobile peasant families to attain minor gentry status through the acquisition of manorial lordship by purchase or through marriage. Proverbially it was said that : 'It is better to be the head of the yeomanry than the tail of the gentry' and, as it was put rather more pungently in 1602 'A gentleman without monie is like a leane pudding without fatt.'<sup>8</sup>

What continued to distinguish the greater from the lesser gentry during our period was that in general the greater gentry tended to participate in and control the political community of the shire. They were therefore a more cohesive self-confident and self-conscious group. Clearly there would have been a pecking order in office holding and the three most important offices were the almost exclusive preserve of the most powerful families as they were partly determined by an individual's income per annum.<sup>9</sup> The office of sheriff was the most prized but it was also by far the most onerous, followed by MP and JP. Escheators were in general drawn from the less important gentry families, as were members of royal commissions. Beneath these offices in terms of status were the coroners, tax collectors and under sheriffs; candidates for which were generally found within the lesser gentry families.

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<sup>8</sup> M.Campell The English Yeoman: Under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts (1942), p.21 and R.P.Sorlien ed, Diary of John Manningham (1976), Folio 90b. 1602.

<sup>9</sup> Appendix 4 is a list of office holders for the years 1381-1450.



Exceptionally, escheators were subsequently appointed sheriff as in the case of Thomas Coggeshall and Robert Darcy, but the office of escheator was not compatible with knighthood and no Essex knight was so appointed, neither did a former escheator attain knighthood. It is to be noted that none of the four individuals who had held all four of the most important county offices ever attained knighthood. Significantly ten out of twelve of all those who served as sheriff, MP and JP; and ten out of eleven who served as MP and JP, were knights whilst four out of five of those who served as sheriff and JP were esquires.<sup>10</sup>

The principal and greater gentry of Essex tended to be endogamous, marrying within their own society either within or outside the county. Similarly they conducted mutually beneficial legal transactions, did military service (in France during our period) together and relied upon one another as feoffees, trustees, mainpernors and executors. The lesser gentry may have done much the same in terms of transactions but fewer records are available; they are, therefore, less prominent and less visible when we come to examine them as a group. It is probable that the lesser gentry confined their activities to their own locality, though a number whose home was close to the county border may have had business in Suffolk, Hertfordshire, Kent or beyond. Much of this activity is of course apparent from surviving deeds which often tell us not merely about transactions but about personal relationships, unlike many official records which may reveal status but are much less likely to describe relationships. 'A deed, on the other hand, touches upon a whole system of social relationships – land tenure, kinship, a passing need or simple friendship'.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Tab 2.4 for a list of multiple office holders in Essex 1381-1450.

<sup>11</sup> P.Morgan, War and Society in Medieval Cheshire 1277-1403 (1987), p.13.

The main distinction between the principal, greater and lesser gentry is exemplified by their relative wealth and pattern of land holding. The principal and greater gentry not only held more land than the parish gentry, but they were also likely to hold a portion of it in neighbouring shires or in London. They were also more likely to have interests in common with London merchants – whose daughters they married – and lawyers (who were often their neighbours in Essex) whose acquaintance they cultivated.<sup>12</sup>

The Coggeshalls were the richest, most powerful non-baronial family in Essex during the first half of our period and this accolade passed to their kinsmen, the Tyrells, in the second. Sir William Coggeshall, the last of his line at Codham Hall, Wethersfield held twelve manors and had a declared income in excess of eighty pounds per annum at the date of his death in 1426. This property was divided amongst his four daughters (John, his only son and heir, perhaps named after his own father Sir John Coggeshall or his father-in-law Sir John Hawkwood, had died young). The most powerful of Sir William's sons-in-law was Sir John Tyrell of Heron Hall, East Horndon who in 1436 was taxed on a declared income of £396 (probably an underestimate) which would have been sufficient for him to have been raised to baronial status like the Hotofts of Hertfordshire who were ennobled after service to the Crown similar to Sir John's and having a comparable income.<sup>13</sup> It is possible that but for his rather premature death in 1437 the family would have been raised to the peerage.

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<sup>12</sup> Amongst those who married the daughters of London merchants were Richard Baynard (d.1434) and Sir Robert Marney (d.1386).

<sup>13</sup> H.L.Gray, 'Incomes from land in England in 1436', *E.H.R.* 49 (1934), pp.607-639.

The pattern of magnate lordship will be briefly mentioned here and will be examined in greater detail in chapter three below. Some thirty members of the peerage were taxed on land held in Essex in 1412; in addition to this the king held seventeen manors as ancient demesne in the county, many of them important and productive, especially the manor of Writtle outside the county town of Chelmsford. For the majority of our period there were either four or five resident magnates in the county, the lords Bourghier and Fitzwalter, the earls of Oxford, the Duke of Gloucester (Thomas of Woodstock d.1397) and his mother-in-law Countess Joan (d.1419), widow of Humphrey (de Bohun) earl of Hereford, Essex and Northampton (d.1373). The earls of Oxford were among the poorest of the higher nobility and the Fitzwalters were poorer still, but the Bourghiers had accumulated great wealth during the fourteenth century as a result of fortunate marriages, royal favour and success in war.

Non-resident magnates were no doubt able to influence events in Essex through their local clients and adherents, most of whom were members of the gentry. However, many of the senior gentry families had their principal manors close to the *capita* of the de Veres at Hedingham, the Fitzwalters at Woodham and the Bourghiers at Halstead. Others, particularly those closest to London, lived far away from any resident magnate. Just how cohesive the Essex gentry were as a group is a matter for almost endless speculation. On the basis that there were never less than three and sometimes four overlapping (and to an extent) rival affinities in Essex during our period, De Vere, Fitzwalter, Bourghier and Buckingham/Bohun, the gentry appear to have operated politically and socially not as a county-wide group, but within smaller, localised groups. There were occasions when they came together as a whole, the county court at election time or during the sessions, but otherwise there seems to have been an ever-

changing group of alliances and affinities forming, dispersing and reforming with the passage of time. (See chapter three below for a more detailed discussion.) In the view of Astill, Carpenter and Wright it was not the geographical distribution of gentry estates but their proximity to the estates of the magnates that most influenced the political and social associations they formed. Nevertheless, the majority of the most powerful gentry families must have known each other well enough and there may have been, especially at times of crisis, greater cohesion amongst the Essex gentry as a group than is at present understood.

In the fourteenth century, Gloucester knights and esquires appear to have formed a county community, a self-consciously territorial and social group.<sup>14</sup> Warwickshire in the fifteenth century was dominated by a single magnate for long periods, the lord's affinity and not the county providing a focus for the gentry.<sup>15</sup> The Richmondshire gentry in the fifteenth century were united by the influence of lordship on what was already a cohesive elite bound by strong social relationships.<sup>16</sup> Fifteenth-century Derbyshire and fourteenth-century Leicestershire were connected in 'small interlocking groups', but in Derbyshire there was no coherent social group or community<sup>17</sup>. In both fifteenth-century Cheshire and Lancashire however, there was a network of

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<sup>14</sup> N. Saul, Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century (1981).

<sup>15</sup> C. Carpenter, 'The Beauchamp affinity: a study of bastard feudalism at work' E.H.R. 95 (1980), pp. 514-532.

<sup>16</sup> A. J. Pollard 'The Richmondshire community of gentry during the Wars of the Roses' in C. Ross ed., Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Late Medieval England (1979), pp. 37-59.

<sup>17</sup> S. M. Wright, The Derbyshire Gentry in the Fifteenth Century Derbyshire Rec. Soc. 8, (1983); G. G. Astill, 'The medieval gentry: a study in Leicestershire society, 1350-1399', unpubl. Ph.D. Thesis, University Birmingham, 1977 and E. Acheson, A Gentry Community: Leicestershire in the Fifteenth Century c. 1422-1485 (1992).

kinship and marriage which was reinforced by frequent meetings for political and social activities.<sup>18</sup>

The gentry looked to the magnates for financial remuneration; and they sought career advancement (impossible without patronage). Even the most powerful gentry appear to have sought membership of an elite group in order to maintain their position. Great lords (or their wives) when resident, clearly did act as the political focus for the gentry of their county, influencing local appointments and elections and offering opportunities for advancement. The amount of time magnates spent away from the county, or in the case of the de Veres and Fitzwalters during their minorities, should not be underestimated and this is discussed in chapter seven below.

The will of Edward Tyrell of Downham (brother of Sir John Tyrell of Heron Hall, East Horndon) who died in 1442 having held the four major county offices of sheriff, MP, JP and escheator reveals something of the nature of county society and gentry affiliations; in it he names three esquires, William Haute (his step-brother), Thomas Tyrell (his nephew) and Richard Alrede (a neighbour and lawyer), William Melreth (a citizen and alderman of London) and two minor members of the gentry as his executors, together with the earls of Stafford, Oxford and Eu, a clerk and two more esquires as overseers of the will.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> M.J. Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism: Cheshire and Lancashire Society in the Age of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (1983).

<sup>19</sup> Will of Edward Tyrell (d.1442). P.C.C. 16 Rous. See chapter three for a detailed examination of Edward Tyrell's connections.

It has been argued by Christopher Given-Wilson that the presence of powerful magnates lowered the status of the county gentry who were then overshadowed by them.<sup>20</sup> Where magnate estates were fewer, the gentry were correspondingly more wealthy and politically assertive as in Bedfordshire, Cheshire and Lancashire, in contrast with Warwickshire where the peerage was overwhelmingly involved in county affairs. In Essex the gentry seem to have been able to assert themselves with relatively little hindrance – despite the presence of powerful resident magnates in the county. Although, as has been said above, the resident magnates were often either absent from the county or too young to be involved in the county affairs, Saul, Astill and Wright have argued that the county gentry had very limited horizons, and that they were relatively uninterested in national politics. This does not seem to have been the case for Essex at this period where, perhaps because of its proximity to London, many of the gentry were drawn into politics at the highest level. There were for example, six Speakers of the House of Commons (Gildsborough, Doreward, Baynard, Tyrell, Thorpe and Green) from Essex, who lived during our period, a much higher figure than any other county. Men of the calibre of Sir John Tyrell, Thomas and Sir William Coggeshall, Richard Baynard and John Doreward operated at the very centre of government.

Contemporary descriptions of the gentry of Essex are rare. A clue to their pride in their wealth and status in a shire which Norton described as the ‘fattest of the land’ is to be found in a letter from William Paston to his brother John in 1487. He describes how

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<sup>20</sup> C. Given-Wilson, The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages: The Fourteenth Century Political Community (1987) and ‘The king and gentry in fourteenth-century England’ T.R.H.S. 5<sup>th</sup> ser. (1987), pp. 87-102.

the earl of Oxford boasted to the king of his determination to have his Essex men put on a good show when the king and his train came to Essex so 'that the Lankeshere men may see that ther be gentylmen of as grete sobestaunce that thei be able to bye all Lankeshere'.<sup>21</sup>

An attractive definition of what constituted the Essex gentry in our period is that it comprised the socio-economic class that occupied the ground between the higher nobility and the richest peasants. Edward Miller suggests that: 'the problem is to produce a definition of what lay between an important knight who occupied a dominant position in shire society and the peasant proprietor whose prosperity distinguished him from his fellow'.<sup>22</sup> One of the difficulties in defining gentry society in the medieval period is that there is no contemporary description, since the concept of a county gentry as a social class is a modern one. There was in any case no universal form or pattern of gentry society, the composition of this group not only varied from county to county – indeed from region to region within counties – but it was, particularly in counties near London, in a constant state of change. That the medieval gentry recognised a social hierarchy is often evidenced by wills : Sir Thomas III of East Horndon (d.1476) left instructions that his tomb in East Horndon church should be made: '...of tymber or of stone for me and my wyf according honestly for our degree...'.<sup>23</sup> The rules by which

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<sup>21</sup> N.Davies, *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century* (2 vols, 1971), p.654.

<sup>22</sup> E.Miller ed., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales* Vol 3. 1348-1500 (1991).

<sup>23</sup> H.W.King, 'Ancient Wills (No 3)', *T.E.A.S.* 3 (1865), p.80. The tomb of Sir Thomas and his wife Anne survives in East Horndon church though much damaged. There is a water-colour illustration by the Revd.D.Powell c.1845 of the tomb prior to its most serious damage. B.L.Add.Ms 17460.

This view of degree persisted until as late as the seventeenth century for the antiquary John Weever (who travelled widely in Essex) wrote in his *Ancient Funerall Monuments* (1767 edn.), p.xi 'Sepulchres should be made according to the degree of the person deceased, that by the tomb every one might be discerned of what rank he was living : for monuments answerable to men's worth, estates and places have always been allowed, and stately sepulchres for base fellows have always lain open to bitter jests'.

'degree' was established were, however, subject to constant change. The fact that ranks within society were described in contemporary speech and also written in either English, French or Latin simply adds to the complexity of the problem of definition. In developmental terms, gentry society in Essex was never static and evolved continuously through the medieval period; an examination of the evolution of gentry society is what now follows.

Any consideration of the Essex gentry should focus on what distinguishes them from their contemporaries in other English counties. In other words, what was special about them? The picture that will emerge is that they were untypical of other county gentry in some ways, the proximity of London making Essex gentry society unusually unstable and dynamic, attractive not only to its own members but also to those outside who wanted to join it. Unfortunately there have so far been few studies of the medieval gentry in the Home Counties and it is therefore difficult to assess and compare the influence on other gentry societies.<sup>24</sup>

It is still possible to enter the world of the Essex gentry of our period – not through the medium of a theme park, but by visiting their surviving manor houses, parks and the churches where they are buried. A feature of gentry society in our period is that we can identify residential clusters as occurring in several regions of the county which for convenience (rather than the areas having any historical identity – unlike, for example, the Rodings or the Dengie peninsula) have, for the purpose of this thesis, been called

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<sup>24</sup> Other published studies of the gentry of the Home Counties include : K.S.Naughton, The Gentry of Bedfordshire in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries Leicester University Dept. of Eng.Loc.Hist. Occasional Papers, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 2 (1976); P.W.Fleming, 'Charity, faith and the gentry of Kent 1422-1529', in A.J.Pollard, ed. Property and Politics : Essays in Late Medieval History (1984), pp.36-58; and Saul, Provincial Life.



the Essex Uplands (north-west Essex), the Essex Lowlands (south-east and south-west Essex) and the Essex Heathlands (north-east Essex).<sup>25</sup> We will take the Uplands as an example, an area bounded by the Lea at Bishops Stortford running north of Great Chesterford then east via Sturmer to Sudbury, south as far as Marks Tey, then west via Braintree and Great Dunmow back to the Lea. Here the surviving pattern of landscape and buildings is a visual reminder of the medieval gentry families which once populated the area. This was not only a rich and fertile region but it was, by coincidence, the area bounded by the *capita* of two of the county's four resident magnates – the de Veres at Hedingham Castle and the Bourghiers at Stanstead Hall, Halstead.

### **2.3. ESSEX PROTOGENTRY**

Whilst it is scarcely credible to identify as gentry the Romano-British estate owners whose villas have been found all over Essex, it is both accurate and realistic to point to the land-owning Anglo-Saxon thegns of the tenth and eleventh centuries – who were their successors – as the protogentry of Essex.<sup>26</sup> It is likely that with the break up of the very large Anglo-Saxon estates which characterised the first settlement period, a new class of middling landowners arose whose manors were often co-terminous with the parishes in which they were situated. It was these thegns who, giving permission to build churches next to their halls, established an enduring feature of the Essex countryside – the church/hall complex – which can still be seen in the majority of Essex

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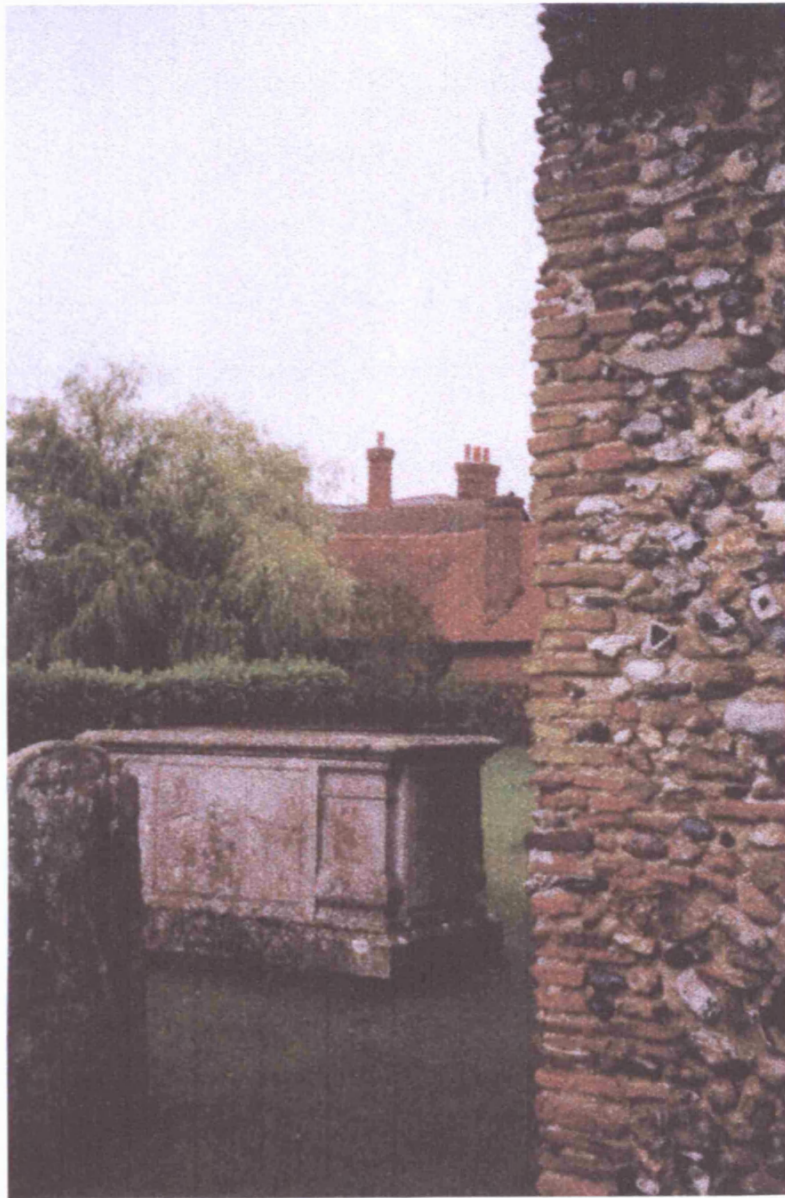
<sup>25</sup> There is a fourth Essex region which in this work has been called the Essex Marshlands but this was not an area where a significant number of Essex gentry chose to live.

<sup>26</sup> R.Fleming, 'Rural elites and urban communities in late-Saxon England' *Past and Present* 141, (1993), pp.3-37.

villages whether in the nucleated settlements of the north-west or the scattered settlements of the south. Plate 2.1 shows the church and manor house of Mount Bures which typifies the Essex church/hall complex. Territorial stability both in terms of hundredal boundaries and their component vills would have accelerated the establishment of a land-owning class, some of whom were knights, and such a society would, argues John Gillingham, have constituted a gentry.<sup>27</sup> Many of these thegns can be identified from Domesday, but as a society they were almost entirely displaced in 1066.

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<sup>27</sup> J.Gillingham, 'Thegns and knights in eleventh-century England : who was the gentleman?' T.R.H.S. 6<sup>th</sup> ser. 5 (1995), p.134.



**PLATE 2.1 CHURCH/HALL COMPLEX : MOUNT BURES.**

Raymond Powell has identified some eight hundred and forty Domesday manors in Essex comprising perhaps fourteen thousand six hundred households signifying a population of about 50,000. Clusters of these manors were held by fifty-three tenants-in-chief from whom some two hundred and fifty under-tenants, mostly of Norman origin, held one or more manors.<sup>28</sup> Clearly these individuals, as successors to the Anglo-Saxon thegns, constituted land-owning society in post-Conquest Essex. A number of medieval Essex gentry families were almost certainly descended from these early under-tenants and some of them were aware of and took pride in, their origins.

Horace Round who charted innumerable Essex manorial descents, has shown that the Helions of Helion Bumpstead (John Helion d.1450 was the last of his line) were the lineal descendants of Tihel the Breton who held the manor of Helions in 1086.<sup>29</sup> Other families with similar origins (the majority of them with locative surnames) were the Tyrells of East Horndon (descended from Walter Tirel who held the manor of Langham in 1086), the Mounteneys of Mountnessing, the Fitzralphs of Pebmarsh, the Teys of Marks Tey, the Martels of Ardleigh, the Ridgewells of Ridgewell, the Filiolls of Kelvedon, the Clovilles of West Hanningfield, the Engaines of Colne Engaine, the Baddows of Little Baddow, the Listons of Liston, the Boxteds of Boxted, the Horkesleys of Little Horkesley, the Markshalls of Markhall, the Sackvilles of West Bergholt and probably the Naylinghursts of Rayne and the Newlands of Roxwell. The Huntercombe family of Wanstead was descended in the female line from Hugh of Hesdin (of Wanstead) *fl.*1176 whose wife was the descendant of Ralph son of Brian who held Wanstead in 1086. The Legh family of Shelley held the manor of Shelley

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<sup>28</sup> W.R. Powell, *Essex in Domesday Book* E.R.O. Publication No.103 (1990), pp.6-7.

<sup>29</sup> J.H. Round, 'The Helions of Helion's Bumpstead' *T.E.A.S.* 8 n.s. (1903), pp.187-191.

from c.1280 through the marriage of Roger Legh and Aveline Luce whose ancestor Oger Fitz Oger had held the manor in the twelfth century. The Kempes of Finchingfield held land in the village acquired through the marriage of Nicholas Kempe and Margery Spain whose ancestor Hervey d'Espagne had held it in 1086. A smaller group of families appear to be descended from tenants-in-chief and these include the Baynards of Messing, the Mandevilles of Black Notley, the Bigods of great Dunmow and the Godmanstons of Little Bromley. Round has shown that despite appearances to the contrary the Gernons of Easthorpe were not related to the great Norman house of that name.<sup>30</sup> Uniquely, the Barringtons of Hatfield Broad Oak, despite their respectable Norman pedigree, claimed descent from a Saxon ancestor who had been granted forest privileges by King Ethelred before the Conquest.<sup>31</sup>

## 2.4 EARLY GENTRY

The knights of 1086 were according to Jean Scammell, a type of 'henchman' rather than a lordly class; neither does she see them as constituting a coherent class of middling landlords.<sup>32</sup> John Gillingham does however identify the 4,000 to 4,500

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<sup>30</sup> J.H. Round, 'Great Birch, Easthorpe, and the Gernons' *T.E.A.S.* 12 n.s. (1913).

<sup>31</sup> G.A. Lowndes, 'The history of the Barrington family', *T.E.A.S.* 1 n.s. (1878), pp.251-273. The author refers to a manuscript account of the Barrington family written c.1677 which states that 'there was lately seene in the Tower of London a record or memoriall that Adam of Barrington was baptised by him the sayd Augustine [St Augustine]'.

<sup>32</sup> J. Scammell, 'The formation of the English social structure : freedom, knights and gentry 1066-1300', *Speculum* 68 (1993), p. 597. S. Harvey, 'The knight and the knight's fee in England' *Past and Present* 49 (1970), p.43. 'By the thirteenth century the word knight did not denote simply a military function; it had also become a title with attendant civil duties.'

Domesday landowners as a primitive gentry.<sup>33</sup> Michael Prestwich reminds us that the term *milites* or knight was used of all mounted troops irrespective of their wealth or status – they could have been landless knights or mere peasants with a horse.<sup>34</sup> Rapid economic and demographic growth in Essex and elsewhere during the twelfth century meant an expanding class of knights. The families from which these knights were drawn Torel, Marney and Liston for example, are readily identifiable in the Pipe Rolls and cartularies of religious houses in Essex. The established gentry families of the late twelfth century had begun to form an elite within the county in terms of both status and wealth. John Gillingham has described what he considers to be three indicative criteria for the existence of a gentry at any particular period: firstly participation in local office, the existence of county solidarities, and participation in national assemblies.<sup>35</sup> Clearly by this definition there was now a gentry in Essex, its stability and the fact that it operated within prescribed administrative boundaries entitling it to be called a county gentry for the first time. However, for some administrative purpose some offices at this period and through the medieval period, were combined with the adjacent county of Hertfordshire. During much of the twelfth century the shrievalty was in the hands of the higher nobility but by 1170 the office could be said to have been effectively transferred to the gentry (with the appointment of Robert Mantel) from whose hands it was never wrested.<sup>36</sup>

By 1215 the office of sheriff was beginning to be transferred not simply between families but between members of the same family when Robert Mantel was appointed

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<sup>33</sup> Gillingham, 'Thegns and knights' p.134.

<sup>34</sup> M.Prestwich, '*Miles in armis strenuus*, the knight at war' *T.R.H.S.* 6<sup>th</sup> ser. 5 (1995), p.201.

<sup>35</sup> Gillingham, 'Thegns and knights' p.131.

<sup>36</sup> Lists and Indexes No.9 Sheriffs for England & Wales (1963 Reprint).

in succession to his brother Matthew. The hereditary element was to feature strongly in succeeding centuries when families such as Tany, Baud, Wauton, Boxted, Bassingbourne and Swinburne occupied the shrievalty from generation to generation.<sup>37</sup> The gentry were now highly visible not only at village level but also at county level where the more powerful families began to constitute an office-holding elite. At the same time inflationary pressures were beginning to result in a move towards more compact estates and the more intense exploitation of resources. Knights and mounted sergeants were differentiated for the first time as some of the less successful families dropped out of the social elite. By now a group of gentry families, many of them with toponyms eponymous with their manorial estates, had emerged as successors to the original Norman families (from whom they were almost certainly descended). Boreham, Sutton, Newland, Tolleshunt, Latton, Naylinghurst and many others filled the ranks of gentry society when vacancies occurred. David Crouch suggests that bastard feudalism from the thirteenth century or earlier was instrumental in the genesis of the gentry. He sees the political power of the gentry focused not so much on the honor or county where the individual found himself but on dominant magnates who sought to control power in a discreet region.<sup>38</sup>

A significant drop in the number of Essex knights by 1220 marks a dramatic phase in the stratification of the Essex gentry. It meant however that many of the knightly class lost their title but they retained their economic power and much of their previous status as knights. As the pool of belted knights dried up, the more their status increased

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<sup>37</sup> *Lists & Indexes* No.9.

<sup>38</sup> D.Crouch, 'From Stenton to McFarlane: models of societies of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries' *T.R.H.S.* 6<sup>th</sup> ser.5 (1995), pp.179-200.

and the fewer knights there were, the greater the demands of the survivors to participate in warfare and county administration. There was still no direct link between land and the status of a knight - we know for example that the landless Sir Thomas Filoll was summoned to a Great Council as a knight of Essex in 1324 despite his apparent poverty.<sup>39</sup> Many knights, probably the majority, held less than a knight's fee, while other landowners who held one or more knight's fee were not knights.

A number of Essex families moved out of knighthood in the course of the thirteenth century, in most cases never to return, and this decline in the number of Essex knights was never reversed. Baynard, Belhouse, Hanningfield, Boxted, Liston and Torrell produced knights early in the thirteenth century but did not do so again despite the long continuence of the families. Faulkner estimates the number of knights in 1215 to be c.5000.<sup>40</sup> According to Jean Scammell, between one third and a half of all English families who in the reign of king John produced knights, abandoned their knightly status within a generation. This, she says, was not the result of an economic crisis, but a change in the nature of knighthood.<sup>41</sup> The trend away from knighthood was not due to a reduction in the economic capacity of families but because knighthood had become a rank rather than a profession – knighthood was now taken up by a small fairly affluent elite. The king's summons to military service in 1301 lists fifty-three individuals under the heading of Essex and Hertfordshire, of whom at least twenty-seven were Essex residents.<sup>42</sup> The Parliamentary Roll of Arms of c.1308 (Tab. 2.1) lists fifty-seven knights under the heading of Essex; at least fourteen of these were not, however,

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<sup>39</sup> Parliamentary Writs 2.2, p.590.

<sup>40</sup> K.Faulkner, 'The transformation of knighthood in early thirteenth century England' E.H.R. 111 (1996). pp.1-23.

<sup>41</sup> Scammell, 'English Social Studies' pp.591-618.

<sup>42</sup> Parliamentary Writs, 1, pp.349-353.



resident in the county. In comparison with other counties there were twelve knights in Hertfordshire, twenty-one in Bedfordshire and sixty-two in Suffolk.<sup>43</sup> By 1322 the number of knights in England had fallen to c.1250 and the number of Essex knights fell proportionately.<sup>44</sup> The situation was further complicated by the emergence of a superior grade of knight – the banneret – whose status was somewhere between the higher nobility and the knights bachelor. In 1322, twelve bannerets were identified in Essex as being fit for military service.<sup>45</sup> Table 2.2 shows the number of Essex bannerets, knights and esquires in 1322 and 1324 respectively. The king's alarm at the sudden drop in the number of knights was reflected from 1224 onwards by distraints of knighthood. This had the effect of associating knighthood with a specific economic group – those with an annual income of forty pounds or more - and this began to define the knightly class. A further consequence of this economic basis for knighthood was to permit fairly easy passage into its ranks for suitably qualified aspirants. Ease of entry to gentry society was therefore to be one of its principal characteristics.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Parliamentary Writs, 1, pp.413-414.

<sup>44</sup> Parliamentary Writs 2.2, pp.651-652.

<sup>45</sup> Parliamentary Writs 2.2, pp.589-591.

<sup>46</sup> Scammell, 'English social structure' p.612.

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**TABLE 2.1 ESSEX KNIGHTS : PARLIAMENTARY ROLL OF ARMS c. 1308**

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Sir Nicholas de Barrington \*  
Sir Walter de Baud  
Sir John de Beauchamp (of Fyfield) \*  
Sir John de Beauchamp  
Sir John de Belhouse \*  
Sir William de Belhouse \*  
Sir Hugh le Blount \*  
Sir Ralph de Boxted \*  
Sir Robert de Bourne  
Sir John de Breton \*  
Sir William de Bumstead \*  
Sir Philip de Chaunceux \*  
Sir Alexander de Claving \*  
Sir [ John ] de Coggeshall \*  
Sir William de Den \*  
Sir William de Duresme  
Sir Nicholas de Engayne \*  
Sir John Filioll \*  
Sir John Filioll Jun \*  
Sir Thomas Filioll \*  
Sir Aucher Fitz Henry  
Sir Walter Fitz Humphrey  
Sir William Gernon \*  
Sir Nicholas de Grey \*  
Sir John de Grey \*  
Sir William Hanningfield \*  
Sir John Heron  
Sir William de Horksley \*  
Sir William de Lambourne \*  
Sir Richard Loveday  
Sir Thomas de Mandeville \*  
Sir John de la Mare  
Sir John de Mark \*  
Sir Ernulf de Mounteny \*  
Sir John de Mounteney \*  
Sir Adam de Newton  
Sir Adam de Nortoft \*  
Sir Nicholas de Ockendon \*  
Sir Thomas de Ockendon \*  
Sir John Passlow  
Sir Walter de Pateshull  
Sir Thomas de Piers  
Sir John de Prayers \*  
Sir John de Rochford \*

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**TABLE 2.1 (CONTINUED)**

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Sir Ralph de Rochford \*  
Sir Robert de Rochford \*  
Sir Guy de Shenfield \*  
Sir Hamo de Sutton \*  
Sir Richard Tany \*  
Sir John Tany \*  
Sir John Vascoil  
Sir Alphonse de Vere \*  
Sir Philip de Virley \*  
Sir John de Watervile \*  
Sir Robert de Watervile \*  
Sir Roger de Watervile \*  
Sir William de Wauton \*

Source: Parliamentary Writs, 1, pp.413-414. Spelling of surnames not modernised.

\* Indicates that knight was resident in Essex.

TABLE 2.2 ESSEX KNIGHTS AND ESQUIRES 1322-1324

	1322	1324	RESIDENT
John Abel	M	*	R
Robert de Bajocis	M	*	.
Ed[mund] Bacon	*	M	R
Henry Bacon	M	M	R
Thomas Bacon	*	A	R
Edmund de Baddow	A	*	R
Drogo de Barentyn	M	*	.
Richard de Barnton	*	A	R
Robert de Barking	*	A	R
John Barrington	A	*	R
Nicholas de Barrington	M	M	R
Nicholas de Barrington jun.	A	*	R
William de Barrow	A	A	.
Edmund Bataille	A	*	R
Thomas Baynard	A	*	R
William de la Beche	*	M	R
Nicholas de Belhouse	*	A	R
Walter Bigod	A	*	R
Hugh le Blount	M	M	R
Adam le Bloy	M	M	R
Robert de Bocking	A	*	R
John Botetourte	B	M	R
John Botetourte Jun.	*	M	R
William Botevyleyn	M	M	.
Robert de Bousser	*	A	R
Peter de Boxted	A	*	R
John de Boys	A	*	R
John de Brendish	A	*	R
William Breton	A	*	R
Giles de Brianzoun	*	M	R
John de Brigham	?	*	.
Henry de Broke	A	*	.
John de Brokenesford	A	*	.
John de Brokesbourne	M	M	R
Thomas de Brotherton	*	M	.
Maurice de Bruyn	M	M	R
Edmund Burgeloun	*	A	.
Geoffrey de Burnham	A	*	R

TABLE 2.2 (CONTINUED)

Stephen de Burnham	*	A	R
Richard de Casterton	*	M	.
Thomas de Caune	A	*	.
Martin le Chamberlain	*	A	R
John de Chaunceux	A	*	R
William de Chichester	A	*	.
William de Chishill	*	A	R
John de Claring	*	A	.
John de Claving	B	M	R
William de Claydon	*	M	.
Roger de Clifton	*	A	.
Osbert de Clinton	*	A	.
John son of John de Coggeshall	A	*	R
Benedict de Cockfield	M	M	.
Edmund de Cockfield	*	A	.
Thomas le Convers	A	*	.
George de Cornerath	*	A	.
Richard de Cornerath	*	M	.
Thomas de Cornerath	*	A	.
Geoffrey de Cornwall	*	M	.
William Cosyn	A	*	R
John de Dagworth	*	M	R
John Damoury	A	*	.
Gilbert de Dedham	A	*	R
Martin Doreward	*	A	R
Robert de Dorking	A	*	.
William de la Doune	A	*	R
John de Ducksworth	M	M	.
Edward de Dureme	A	A	.
John de Enfield	M	M	R
Hugh de Feering	A	*	R
John Filioll	M	M	R
Richard Filioll	A	*	R
Thomas Filioll	M	M	R
Edmund Fitz Alan	*	M	.
Aucher Fitz Henry	M	M	.
Walter Fitz Humphrey	M	M	.
Robert Fitz Ralph	A	*	R
William Fitz Ralph	M	M	R
Adam Fitz Simon	A	M	R
Hugh Fitz Simon	*	M	R
Robert Fitzwalter sen.	B	M	R
John Flambert	A	*	R
William Flambert	A	*	R

TABLE 2.2 (CONTINUED)

Adam de la Ford	A	*	.
William Gernon	M	M	R
William Gernon	*	A	R
John Giffard	A	A	R
John de Grey	B	*	R
Richard de Grey	B	*	R
William de Grey	*	M	R
Thomas Gobion	M	M	R
William le Gros	M	*	.
Richard Gossalin	A	*	.
John le Graas	*	M	R
Henry Griggs	A	*	.
John de Gynges	A	*	R
Robert de Hacham	*	M	.
----- de Haudlo	*	M	.
Nicholas de Havering	M	M	R
Robert son of William de Havering	A	*	R
John de Hemenhale	A	A	R
John de Heron	*	M	R
John de Heromy	M	*	.
William Horkesley	M	M	R
John Hubert	A	*	.
Thomas de Huntercombe	*	M	R
John de Inglesthorpe	A	A	.
John de Insula	M	M	.
John de Kellonden	*	A	.
Roger de Kelvedon	*	A	R
Simon de Kynardeske	M	M	.
Henry de Lacy	A	*	.
Hugh de Lalleford	A	A	R
James de Lambourne	M	*	R
John de Lambourne	*	M	R
John de Lancaster	B	M	.
John de la Lee	M	M	.
Edmund de Lenham	A	A	.
Robert Leweyse	A	*	.
John de Liston	M	M	R
Henry de Longchamp	A	A	.
Thomas de Lovayne	M	*	R
Thomas Lovell	*	M	.
Roger de Lye	*	A	R
William de Maldon	A	*	R
Thomas de Mandeville	M	M	R

TABLE 2.2 (CONTINUED)

Geoffrey de la Mare	*	M	
Alan de Markshall	A	*	R
Roland de Marlow	A	*	.
William de Marney	*	A	R
John de Martell	A	*	R
Adam de Mereworth	*	A	.
John de Mitford	*	M	.
Thomas de Moneys	A	*	.
Nicholas de Moulsham	A	A	R
William de la More	A	A	.
Ponsradus de Mount Martin	M	M	.
Hugh de Neville	B	M	R
John de Neville	*	A	R
John de Nortoft	M	M	R
John Oliver	A	*	R
Alexander Quinton	A	*	.
John de Paglesham	A	*	R
Thomas le Palmer	A	*	.
Walter de Pateshull	M	M	.
Giles Peche	*	A	R
Hamo Peverel	A	*	R
William Peyfre	A	*	.
Richard de Plays	M	*	R
Oliver Plunkenet	*	A	.
Elias de Poley	*	A	.
William Poncyn	M	*	.
Robert Power	A	*	R
John de Prayers	M	M	R
Thomas Priour	*	A	R
Nicholas Pychard	*	A	.
Ralph Pycot	A	*	.
Richard de Refham	*	M	R
Richard de Rivers	*	M	R
----- de Rochford	*	M	R
Robert de la Rokele	A	*	R
William de Roleston	A	*	.
Richard de Roos	*	M	.
Robert le Roos	M?	M	.
William le Roos	A	A	.
Robert Salyman	M	M	.
Robert de Scales	M	*	.
Frank de Scoland	A	*	R
Simon de Segrave	M	*	.
William de Sevaunces	M	*	.

TABLE 2.2 (CONTINUED)

Ralph de Shalford	A	*	R
Henry Spigurnel	*	M	.
Gilbert de Stanford	A	*	.
William de Stanford	A	*	.
Alfred de Stanton	A	*	.
John son of Nicholas de Stebbing	*	A	R
Nicholas de Stisted	A	*	R
Henry de Stonehall	*	A	.
John de Sutton	*	A	R
Richard son of John de Sutton	A	*	R
Richard de Taleworth	A	*	.
John de Tendring	*	M	R
William de Tilbury	*	A	R
John Torel	A	*	R
John de Ulting	A	*	R
Aymer de Valence	M	M	.
Alphonse de Vere	B	M	R
Robert de Vere	M	M	R
Thomas de Vere	B	M	R
Phillip de Virley	A	M	R
Thomas Wake	B	*	R
John Walram	A	A	.
John de Walton	A	*	R
William Waryn	*	A	.
John son of John Watville	*	A	R
John de Wauton	*	M	R
Robert de Wauton	A	A	R
Richard de Welleby	A	*	.
Phillip de Wells	*	M	.
William de Wendover	*	A	.
John de Wilby	A	*	.
Matthew de Woodham	A	*	R
Thomas de Woodham	A	*	R
William la Zouche	B	M	.

## KEY:

B : Banneret

M : Knight

A : Esquire

\* : Not listed

R : Resident

Source : Parliamentary Writs 2.2, pp.589-591; 651-652. Spelling of surnames not modernised.



## 2.5 GENTRY CLASSES

Out of the social and economic changes of the thirteenth century there emerged the knightly class which was to contribute the first gradation of the English gentry, and knights who were now what Peter Coss describes as 'territorial aristocracy' began to express their status in a self-conscious way.<sup>47</sup> Like their aristocratic contemporaries (George Duby calls this 'cultural diffusion'), knightly families arranged for increasingly elaborate funeral monuments to be placed in churches and chapels in their memory. The simple incised coffin covers depicting knightly figures such as survive at Faulkbourne and Toppesfield gave way c.1250 to more substantial effigies of knights in full armour.<sup>48</sup> The surviving gentry effigies are of oak; three members of the St.Clere family are commemorated at Danbury (Plate 2.2) and three members of the Horkesley family at Little Horkesley.(Plate 2.3) These monuments were a highly visible reminder of the knights' power and status for lesser men to note. The space created by the disappearance of perhaps seventy-five per cent of all knights was gradually filled by a new class in society, and what had previously been an undifferentiated group of lesser landowners now yielded to an ordered hierarchy. By about 1300, members of this group were variously termed *valettus*, *armiger* or *esquire* but there was no consistency, still less precision in the meaning of these terms. For linguistic and perhaps other reasons, the same term had different meanings in different parts of England. In 1300 *valletus* was synonymous with *gentil homme*, by 1363 it was someone below an esquire, by the 1379 poll tax the word had come to describe a mere

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<sup>47</sup> P.Coss, *Lordship, Knighthood and Locality* (1991), p.307.

<sup>48</sup> M.Christy, 'Some Essex coffin-slabs' *T.E.A.S.* n.s. (1900), pp.369-395 and A.Hills. 'Three military coffin lids in Essex : with notes on similar knight-effigies' *T.E.A.S.* n.s. (1942-45), pp.250-262.



**PLATE 2.2 WOODEN EFFIGY : DANBURY**





**PLATE 2.3 WOODEN EFFIGY : LITTLE HORKESLEY.**

yeoman. The terms *esquire* and *armiger* gradually increased in significance in describing the social group immediately below that of knight.<sup>49</sup> Even by 1322 the fighting men of Essex were classified as twelve *bannerets*, forty-four knights and eighty-one *armigeri et homines ad arma*.<sup>50</sup> Two years later the same group were summoned to a Great Council but as sixty-eight knights (bannerets not being distinguished) and fifty-three *homines ad arma* (which now included *armigeri*). Once the terms *armiger* and *valettus* had parted company, *armiger* came to mean *esquire*. In 1363 Sumptuary laws fixed the stature of an esquire at two different levels : those at the same economic level as a knight and thus deserving the same treatment and those below the estate of a knight. The poll tax of 1379 recognised three types of esquire : those who by estate ought to be a knight, esquires of lesser degree and esquires not in possession of lands or who are in service or who have not been armed. The arrival of the esquire as a distinct social class may have been delayed by the demographic catastrophes of the mid and late fourteenth century, but the viability of this new group was evident at a time of unprecedented social mobility. At this point the gentry were already a class defined by their separation from the higher nobility and rich peasant.<sup>51</sup> During the period 1381-1450 there were in total fifty resident knights in Essex (this figure excludes members of the higher nobility who were knights). Of this number, seventeen had died before 1400, thirty before 1430, and thirty-six before 1450. (Tab. 2.3) The distribution map of capital manors of Essex knights (Fig.2.1) and other principal gentry shows that their holdings were fairly evenly spread across the county.

<sup>49</sup> The foregoing description of the changes in the gentry hierarchy relies on Saul, *Knights and Esquires* pp.1-35 and Carpenter *Locality and Polity*, pp.35-95.

<sup>50</sup> On his monumental brass now in Sutton church but formerly in Shopland church (demolished 1957) Thomas Stapel d.1372, is described as *serjant d'armes*.

<sup>51</sup> Coss, 'Knights, esquires and origins' pp.155-178; and Coss, 'Formation of English gentry' pp.38-64.

TABLE 2.3 ATTRITION OF ESSEX KNIGHTS 1381-1450

KNIGHT	DATE OF DEATH
Sir John Mounteney of Mountnessing	<i>fl.</i> 1379
Sir Robert Tey of Marks Tey	<i>d.c.</i> 1380
Sir John Fitzsimon of North Shoebury	<i>fl.</i> 1381
Sir Thomas Tyrell of East Horndon	<i>d.c.</i> 1383
Sir John Gernon of Easthorpe	<i>d.</i> 1384
Sir William Berland of Prittlewell	<i>fl.</i> 1385
Sir Robert Marney of Layer Marney	<i>d.c.</i> 1386
Sir John Gildsborough of Wennington	<i>d.</i> 1389
Sir John Chaunceux of Canewdon	<i>d.</i> 1389
Sir William Langham of Panfield	<i>fl.</i> 1390
Sir Thomas Mandeville of Black Notley	<i>d.c.</i> 1391
Sir Robert Swinburne of Little Horkesley	<i>d.</i> 1391
Sir John Deyncourt of Upminster	<i>d.</i> 1393
Sir John Sutton of Wivenhoe	<i>d.</i> 1393
Sir William Wauton of Willingale Spain	<i>d.c.</i> 1393
Sir John Hawkwood of Sible Hedingham	<i>d.</i> 1394
Sir Richard Sutton of Wivenhoe	<i>d.</i> 1395
Sir Ingelram Bruyn of South Ockendon	<i>d.</i> 1400
Sir Alexander Walden of Rickling	<i>d.</i> 1401
Sir Robert Mounteny of Mountnessing	<i>fl.</i> 1406
Sir Alexander Goldingham of Chigwell	<i>d.</i> 1408
Sir Thomas Swinburne of Little Horkesley	<i>d.</i> 1412
Sir William Marney of Layer Marney	<i>d.</i> 1414
Sir Robert Litton of Wennington	<i>d.c.</i> 1415
Sir Thomas Marney of Layer Marney	<i>d.</i> 1417
Sir William Bourghier of Little Easton	<i>d.</i> 1420
Sir William Coggeshall of Wethersfield	<i>d.</i> 1426
Sir John Heveningham of Little Totham	<i>d.c.</i> 1426
Sir Robert Tey of Marks Tey	<i>d.</i> 1426
Sir Gerard Braybrooke of Danbury	<i>d.</i> 1429
Sir Walter Goldingham of Chigwell	<i>fl.</i> 1434
Sir John Tyrell of East Horndon	<i>d.</i> 1437
Sir John Hunt of Ashen	<i>d.c.</i> 1440
Sir Nicholas Thorley of Bobbingworth	<i>d.c.</i> 1442
Sir Lewis John of West Horndon	<i>d.</i> 1442
Sir John Montgomery of Faulkbourne	<i>d.</i> 1449

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**TABLE 2.3 (CONTINUED)**

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Sir Henry Bruyn of South Ockendon	d. 1461
Sir Thomas Flemming of Runwell	d. 1464
Sir Maurice Bruyn of South Ockendon	d. 1466
Sir Peter Arderne of Latton	d. 1467
Sir Robert Darcy of Maldon	d. 1470
Sir William Tyrell of Rawreth	d. 1471
Sir William Tyrell of East Horndon	d. 1471
Sir Lewis John of West Horndon	d. 1471
Sir Thomas Tyrell of South Ockendon	d. 1473
Sir John Skrene of Roxwell	d. 1475
Sir John Doreward of Bocking	d. 1476
Sir Thomas Tyrell of East Horndon	d. 1476
Sir Roger Ree of Woodham Ferrers	d. 1476
Sir Thomas Urswick of Dagenham	d. 1479

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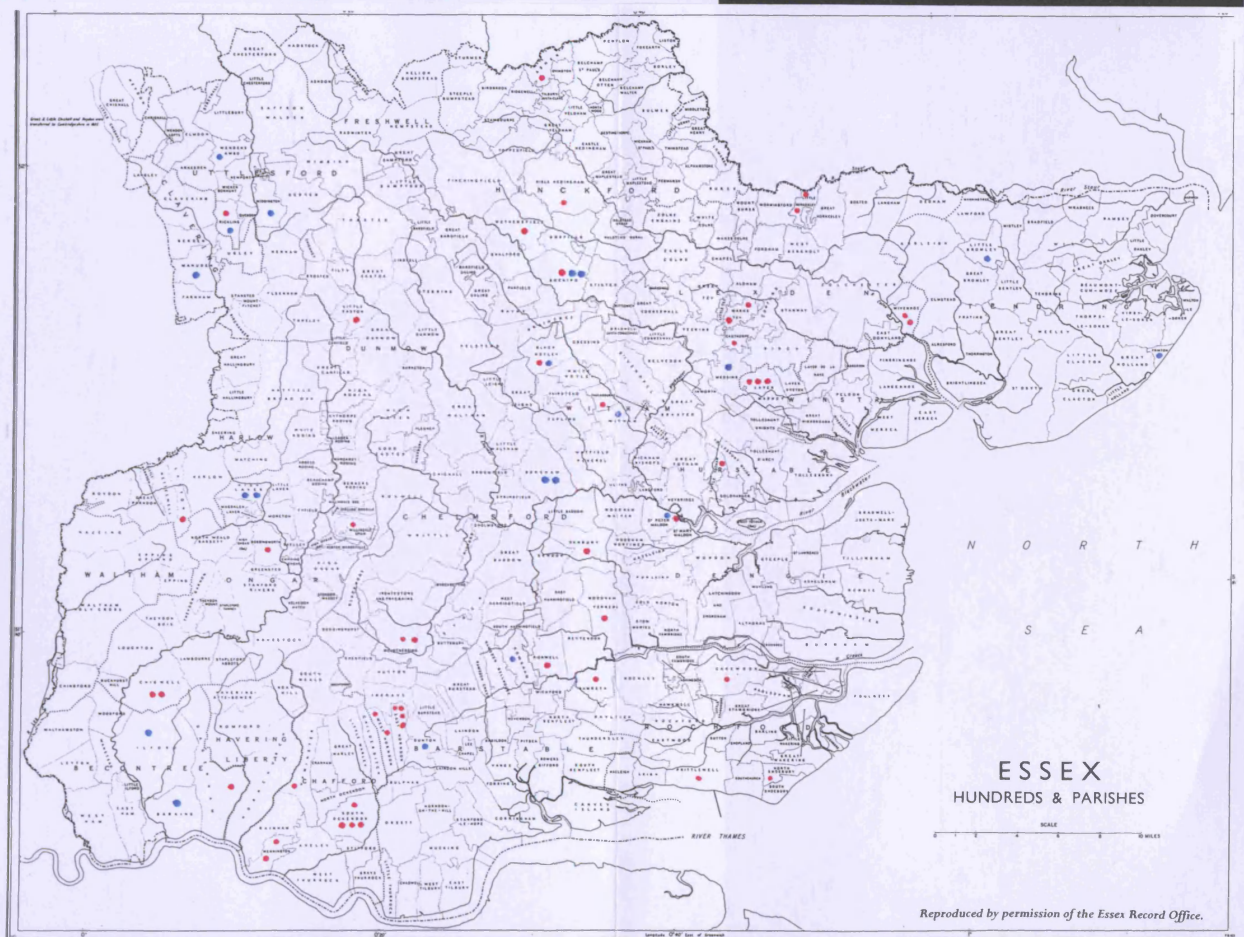


FIGURE 2.1 DISTRIBUTION OF PRINCIPAL GENTRY  
KNIGHT ● ESQUIRE ●

It is clear that coastal areas, the western boundary and north-west quadrant of the county were least favoured by this group, whilst the south-east quadrant was most favoured; the proximity of London may have influenced some knights to choose residence in the latter area. A similar computation for the number of esquires or greater gentry in this period gives a figure of approximately one hundred; there were perhaps two hundred lesser gentry.

The final gradation of the gentry emerged at the beginning of the fifteenth century with the Statute of Additions of 1413 which laid down that in all writs and appeals concerning personal actions the defendant's 'estate, degree or mystery' must be specified. From this point the term 'gentleman' begins to appear in common usage. It was found to be particularly useful as a description for those lawyers, administrators By 1420 the constituent gradation of the gentry had come to be associated with differential<sup>th</sup>.

By 1420 the constituent gradation of the gentry had come to be associated with differential incomes, forty pounds representing the landed income of a knight, twenty pounds an esquire and a notional ten pounds for a gentleman.<sup>52</sup> Whereas Essex knights were, from the thirteenth century, distinguished by that rank in the Feet of Fines, the term *esquire* is not employed therein until 1401 when William Geldrich esquire was so distinguished from his peers when he bought the manors of Petches and Dynes in Finchingfield.<sup>53</sup> It may be that he was described as an esquire because he was the current sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire for he was not so described in 1391, 1392 and 1394 in the same fines.<sup>54</sup> The term *gentleman* appears in the Essex Fines for the

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<sup>52</sup> E. Acheson, *A Gentry Community* (1992), pp.29-44.

<sup>53</sup> *Essex Fines* 3, p.234.

<sup>54</sup> *Essex Fines* 3 p.241. Only John Ewell listed among seven feoffees of John Hende who were entitled to be called esquire is actually given this designation.



first time in 1423 when John Godmanston gentleman, settled the manor of Aptonhall in Canewdon on his nephew William.<sup>55</sup> By 1436 the same man had become esquire when assessed for tax on his income of eighty pounds per annum.<sup>56</sup> The use of the term *armiger* was common on monumental brasses from 1400 in England, but the earliest surviving example in Essex is that of Thomas Coggeshall (d.1422) at Springfield. Like other Essex esquires, William Loveney at Wendens Ambo (d.1424) and Richard Fox at Arkesden (d.1439) he is depicted on his brass armed and in full armour yet it is unlikely that any of them struck a blow with his sword as they were never summoned for military service.

## 2.6 ESSEX COUNTY GENTRY

The principal and greater gentry in our period were the one hundred and fifty or so living individuals in whose hands the greater part of the county's wealth lay. The elite within this group (that I have termed the principal gentry) were the knights and the holders of the most important county offices, most of whom came from long established families whose manors in Essex and beyond gave them a regional rather than merely a county focus. Table 2.4 shows a list of the individual principal gentry and the offices they held in our period and Appendix 2 shows office holders year by year between 1381 and 1450. The composition of the group of principal gentry varied from year to year but the common factors were political, social and economic activity at a

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<sup>55</sup> *Essex Fines* 4. p.1.

<sup>56</sup> H.L.Gray, 'Incomes from land in England in 1436' *E.H.R.* 49 (1934), pp.607-639.

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**TABLE 2.4 MULTIPLE OFFICE HOLDERS IN ESSEX 1381-1450.**

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<b>OFFICES</b>	<b>DATE OF DEATH</b>
S.MP.JP.E.    Thomas Coggeshall of Boreham	1402
Robert Darcy of Maldon	1448
Elming Leget of Black Notley	1412
Edward Tyrell of Downham	1442
 S.MP.JP.        Sir Gerard Braybrooke of Danbury	 1429
Sir William Coggeshall of Wethersfield	1426
Sir Robert Darcy of Maldon	1469
*John Doreward of Bocking	1420
John Godmanston of Little Bromley	1459
Sir Lewis John of West Horndon	1442
Sir William Marney of Layer Marney	1414
Sir Robert Swinburne of Little Horkeley	1391
Sir Thomas Swinburne of Little Horkeley	1412
Sir Robert Tey of Marks Tey	1426
*Sir John Tyrell of East Horndon	1437
Sir Thomas Tyrell of East Horndon	1476
 S.MP.E.        Thomas Bataill of High Laver	 c.1396
 S.JP.E.        William Loveney of Great Wenden	 1424
Geoffrey Rokele of Frinton	fl.1458
 S.MP.         Sir Lewis John of West Horndon	 1471
 S.JP.         Richard Alrede of Boreham	 1447
Sir Maurice Bruyn of South Okendon	1461
John Doreward of Bocking	1463
Henry Langley of Rickling	1458
Thomas Samkyn of Barking	fl.1399
 S.E.          John Bataill of Manuden	 1385
Philip Inglefield of Dunton	fl.1431
 MP.JP.E.      *Richard Baynard of Messing	 1434
*Thomas Thorpe of Ilford	1461

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**TABLE 2.4 (CONTINUED)**

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MP.JP.	Sir William Berland of Prittlewell	fl.1385
	Sir John Doreward of Bocking	1476
	Sir John Fitzsimon of North Shoebury	fl.1381
	*Sir John Gildsborough of Wennington	1389
	Sir Alexander Goldingham of Chigwell	1408
	*John Green of Widdington	1473
	Sir Robert Litton of Wennington	c.1415
	Sir Thomas Mandeville of Black Notley	c.1391
	Sir Robert Marney of Layer Marney	c.1386
	Sir John Sutton of Wivenhoe	1393
	Sir Alexander Walden of Matching	1401
MP.E.	Thomas Bataill of High Laver	1439
JP.E.	Robert Rikedon of Witham	c.1425
	Clement Spice	c.1420.

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\* Speaker of the House of Commons.

high level, great prestige, a high income derived mainly from manorial profits, but sometimes augmented by annuities, professional fees, trade or the profits of war. The richest manors, the most sought-after heiresses and the most prestigious county offices invariably fell to the principal gentry.

At the beginning of our period this group was predominantly represented by knights: Sir John Fitzsimon (d.1381), Sir John Gildsborough (d.1389), Sir John Sutton (d.1393) are amongst those who best meet the principal gentry criteria. Such men not only enjoyed considerable power and prestige but were able virtually to monopolise certain aspects of county activity. Without doubt the most important of these early knights was Sir William Coggeshall, the son and grandson of knights, who was by far the richest of all the Essex gentry during his latter years. Not only rich, he held the three most powerful county offices – sheriff, M.P. and J.P. By no means all this group were powerful knights, however, even at the beginning of our period, and as it progressed the group began to contain an increasingly high proportion of esquires. By 1436 the knights had become a much less significant component of the principal gentry, their income and power (but not their prestige) having been eclipsed by a powerful coterie of esquires led the lawyer Robert Darcy of Maldon whose declared income in 1436 was three hundred and thirty-three pounds, and John Doreward of Bocking whose income was two hundred and fifty-five pounds. The exception to the pattern of knightly decline was Sir John Tyrell of East Horndon whose annual income of four hundred and ninety-six pounds in 1436 made him the richest man in the county outside the higher nobility. In general, whether represented by knights or esquires, the principal gentry families survived throughout our period. A further attribute of the principal gentry and one which also applied to the greater gentry is that their ranks could easily be entered from

outside the county by other gentry with suitable qualifications in terms of landed income.(Tab.2.5) The Bruyns from Hampshire, the Swinburne and the Darcys from Northumberland seemed to have had little trouble being assimilated into the Essex gentry community. In the case of Bruyn and Swinburne their arrival in the county resulted from marriage to an Essex heiress and in such cases the local prestige and status of the bride's father seems to have transferred to the grooms who were in any case of gentry descent in the counties of their birth. Approximately twenty percent of the Essex principal and greater gentry were recent migrants to the county.

Below the principal and greater gentry were the lesser men who are usually termed the parish gentry.<sup>57</sup> A number of these individuals would have been lord of a single manor and perhaps little richer than their tenants. At the beginning of our period some of this group may have enjoyed the title of esquire but from about 1420 they would generally have been styled gentlemen. It was lordship over other men together with even a modest income which differentiated the parish gentry from the yeomen and husbandmen whose fields joined with theirs. As has been said there were about 1400 manors or reputed manors in Essex by 1450 and the lordship of some of these would have been in the hands of very minor figures. Office holding at this level was generally confined to the more humdrum responsibilities of taxer, collector and juror.

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<sup>57</sup> One of the first to employ the term was P.W.Fleming, 'Charity, faith, and the gentry of Kent 1422-1529' in A.J.Pollard ed., Property and Politics :Essay in Late Medieval History (1984), pp.36-58.

TABLE 2.5 IMMIGRANT ESSEX GENTRY

	PLACE OF ORIGIN
Richard Alrede (d.1447)	Not known
Sir Peter Arderne (d.1467)	Surrey
Conan Aske (d.c.1436)	Yorkshire
Thomas Colt (d.1467)	Cumberland
Avery Cornburgh (d.1487)	Cornwall
John Cornwallis (d.1429)	London
Robert Darcy (d.1448)	Northumberland
Henry English (d.1391)	Cambridgeshire
Richard Fox (d.1439)	Northamptonshire
William Fynderne (d.1444)	Berkshire
Richard Galon (fl.1433)	Northumberland
Sir John Gildsborough (d.1389)	London ?
Thomas Godstone (d.1432)	Surrey
John Hende (d.1418)	London
Sir Lewis John (d.1442)	Wales
Elming Leget (d.1412)	Suffolk
Sir Robert Litton (d.c.1415)	Derbyshire
Richard Lyons (d.1381)	London
Sir John Montgomery (d.1449)	Wales
Thomas MacWilliam (fl.1407)	Ireland/London
John Pickenham (fl.1380)	London
Poncius Pointz (d.c.1412)	Gloucestershire
Thomas Rolf (d.1440)	London ?
Thomas Scargill (d.1476)	Yorkshire
William Skrene (d.c.1416)	Ireland
Clement Spice (d.c.1419)	Suffolk
Thomas Stockdale (fl.1439)	Yorkshire
Sir Robert Swinburne (d.1391)	Northumberland
Thomas Thorpe (d.1461)	Northamptonshire
Sir Thomas Urswick (d.1479)	Lancashire

This list does not include the many Londoners who bought land in Essex but did not become resident in the county

Some of the earliest immigrant entrants to gentry society were London merchants.<sup>58</sup> The Cornhill, Blund and Fulham families bought manors in south-east Essex during the twelfth century and within a generation or two their descendants were recognised as gentry. By the fourteenth century the Blunds had attained knighthood. Such families set a respectable precedent for a process which was to continue throughout our period. The rich jeweller and vintner Richard Lyons (of whose origins nothing is known) was, due to his unpopular political activities, murdered by the mob in 1381, but not before he had bought the manor of Nether Hall in Liston from the Liston family who had owned it for as long as two hundred years. Far away from London on the northern boundary of the county, the manor was held by grand serjeanty, the lord being responsible to the king for baking and serving him wafers on the day of his coronation.<sup>59</sup> In nearby Heydon, John Wiltshire (d.1393), a London citizen, was lord of the manor by service of providing the king with a basin and ewer at his coronation.<sup>60</sup> Were manors held by grand serjeanty particularly attractive to Londoners who wanted to participate at coronations?

Another London vintner who bought an estate in Essex was the Welshman Lewis John (d.1442). Despite his minor gentry origins he acquired an estate in Essex (which included the manor of West Horndon – once held by another London vintner), was knighted and married in succession two earls' daughters. Even humble birth was not necessarily a bar to gentry status for Richard Lyons was of unknown illegitimate origin.

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<sup>58</sup> J.Habakkuk, 'The rise and fall of English landed families, 1600-1800. III. Did the gentry rise? T.R.H.S. 5<sup>th</sup> ser. 31 (1981), p.214. 'A man of new wealth bought an estate primarily as a social base for a landed family; he was not indifferent to the return on his money but that was not his primary concern'.

<sup>59</sup> A.R.Myers, 'The wealth of Richard Lyons' in T.A.Sandquist & M.R.Powicke eds, Essays in Medieval History Presented to Bertie Wilkinson (1969), pp.301-329.

<sup>60</sup> Morant, History of Essex 2, p.600.

John Hende the rich London clothier who acted as personal banker for the king, was of undistinguished but possibly Essex origin, and served as Lord Mayor of London before buying the manor of Bradwell-juxta-Coggeshall (and several other Essex and Kent manors).<sup>61</sup> Hende married the widow of Thomas Baynard of Messing (d.1375), a member of a long established Essex family and descended from a cadet branch of the great Norman family of Baynard.<sup>62</sup> Through this marriage Hende would have been able to move smoothly into Essex gentry society helped later by his stepson Richard Baynard (d.1434) who was to serve as Speaker of the House of Commons, J.P. and escheator.<sup>63</sup> In due course Hende's two sons took their place amongst the Essex gentry and both were to serve as sheriff. Other Londoners who moved to Essex include Edward Mackwilliam, son of the Thomas Mackwilliam (citizen and grocer) who had come to London from Ireland. Edward's family money enabled him to become a member of the Essex gentry and to establish himself an estate at Stambourne, clearly in his case a background in trade was no bar to entering gentry society in the fifteenth century.<sup>64</sup>

As has been said above, some of the principal gentry were immigrants to the county, a number of lawyers who rose to county gentry status, also came to Essex having begun their careers elsewhere. Richard Galon of Maldon came from Northumberland;

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<sup>61</sup> Like his contemporary Adam Fraunceys, Hende 'rose to become one of the wealthiest and most influential members of the London merchant class of his generation yet of his background we know virtually nothing. S.J.O'Connor ed., A Calendar of the Cartularies of John Pyel and Adam Fraunceys Camden 5<sup>th</sup> ser. 2 (1993), p.3

<sup>62</sup> O'Connor, Cartularies p.12 'The war with France evidently provided business potential for merchant financiers, bringing them into close contact with members of the gentry and aristocracy'.

<sup>63</sup> The only other Essex man to hold the office of MP, JP and escheator in our period was Thomas Thorpe (d.1461) who was also Speaker.

<sup>64</sup> Habakkuk, 'Did the gentry rise?' p.215. 'few lawyers, government servants or merchants could in a single lifetime save enough to acquire properties as large as the larger existing estates which represented an accumulation of estates by marriage over a number of generations.'



Sir Thomas Urswick (d.1479) was from Lancashire, Richard Fox (d.1435) and Thomas Thorpe (d.1461) from Northamptonshire, Sir Peter Arderne (d.1467) from Surrey, Clement Spice (d.c.1420) from Suffolk and William Skrene (d.1416) from Ireland. The Sergeant-at-law Thomas Rolf of Gosfield (d.1440) was almost certainly a Londoner, his activities as a lawyer brought him into contact with the Essex gentry and then, either through the purchase of an extensive estate, or marriage to an Essex heiress, he became a member of the county gentry in his own right. It is likely that he married the daughter or granddaughter of the Essex *condottiere* Sir John Hawkwood of Sible Hedingham and this would have underwritten his claim to gentry status. Other men, unlike the lawyers, were from established gentry families, and they moved to Essex having married an Essex heiress. Thomas Scargill (d.1476) was from Yorkshire, Maurice Bruyn (d.1355) from Hampshire, Poncius Poyntz (d.1410) from Gloucester, Thomas Colt (d.1467) from Cumberland, and from Suffolk Elming Leget (d.1412), and Thomas Knevet (d.1458).

Evidently the lawyers formed a powerful and distinct group; perhaps between seventeen and twenty percent of the Essex principal and greater gentry. (Tab. 2.6) The majority of them entered the gentry through the purchase of an Essex estate (Darcy, Skrene and Alrede) or heiress marriage (Fox) but there were others who were born into gentry families of long standing in the county (Sir John Tyrell, John Kempe of Finchingfield, John Green of Widdington, John Doreward, Robert Rikedon of Witham and Richard Baynard). Although the status of the latter group was unambiguous – they were addressed as knight or esquire – matters were not so clear cut for the men who had risen from sub gentry origins. In the case of Thomas Rolf, sergeant-in-law of Gosfield,

**TABLE. 2.6 ESSEX GENTRY LAWYERS**

	<u>OFFICES HELD</u>			
	S.	MP.	JP.	E.
Richard Alrede of Boreham	*	.	*	.
Sir Peter Arderne of Latton	.	.	*	.
Richard Baynard of Messing	.	*	*	*
Thomas Birchleigh of Witham	.	.	.	.
Thomas Cays (residence unknown)	.	.	.	.
Thomas Colt of Roydon	.	.	.	.
Robert Darcy of Maldon (d.1448).	*	*	*	*
John Doreward of Bocking (d.1420).	*	*	*	.
Richard Fox of Arkesden	.	.	.	.
Richard Galon of Maldon	.	*	.	.
John Green of Widdington	.	*	*	.
John Kempe of Finchingfield	.	.	.	.
Robert Plomer of Sandon	.	.	.	.
Robert Rikedon of Witham	.	.	*	*
John Rokele of Arkesden	.	.	.	*
Thomas Rolf of Gosfield	.	.	*	.
William Skrene of Roxwell	.	.	*	.
Clement Spice of Willingale Spain	.	.	*	*
William Totham of Canewdon	.	.	.	.
Edward Tyrell of Downham	*	*	*	*
Sir John Tyrell of East Horndon	*	*	*	.
Sir Thomas Tyrell of East Horndon (d.c.1383).	.	*	*	.
Sir Thomas Tyrell of East Horndon (d.1476).	*	*	*	.
Sir Thomas Urswick of Dagenham	.	.	*	.
Richard Waltham of Little Waltham	.	.	.	.
Walter Writtle of White Roding	.	.	*	*

**TABLE 2.7 ESSEX GENTRY & OTHERS TAKING THE 'PEACE OATH' 1434.**

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John Tyrell 'chivaler'.  
John Moungomery, 'chivaler'.  
Nicholas Thorle, 'chivaler'.  
Maurice Bruyn, 'chivaler'.  
Edmund Benstede, 'chivaler'.  
John Fitz Symond, 'chivaler'.  
William Goldyngham, 'chivaler'.  
Lewis Johan, esquire.  
John Doreward, esquire.  
Robert Darcy, esquire.  
Thomas Terell, esquire.  
Edward Torell, esquire.  
William Loveney, esquire.  
Thomas Rolf.  
John Teye, esquire.  
Thomas Knevett, esquire.  
Henry Langley, esquire.  
George Langham, esquire.  
Richard Fox, esquire.  
John Helyon, esquire.  
Thomas Batayll, esquire.  
Thomas Hevenyngham, esquire.  
John Godmanston, esquire.  
Robert Hunte, esquire.  
John Leventhorp the younger, esquire.  
Thomas Baryngton, esquire.  
Thomas Pynchoun, esquire.  
John Pykenham, esquire.  
Geoffrey Rokell, esquire.  
Henry Chaterton, esquire.  
Thomas Stokdale, esquire.  
William Senklere, esquire.  
John Godeston, esquire.  
Roger Spyce, esquire.  
Thomas Bendyssh, esquire.  
Hugh Naillyngherst, esquire.  
Thomas Rygedoun.  
Richard Priour.  
John Grene.  
John Bassett.  
Roger Deyncourt.  
John Poynes.  
John Santon.  
John Malton.

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**TABLE 2.7 (CONTINUED)**

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Thomas Bassett.  
John Waldyff.  
Edmund Preston.  
Robert Sudbury.  
John Baryngton.  
William Ardale.  
Nicholas Mortemer.  
Henry Aleyn.  
Robert Weston.  
John Chambre.  
Thomas Chitterne.  
William Aleyn.  
John Beche.  
Robert Priour, bailiff of the borough of Colchester.  
Richard Beumond.  
William Gore, bailiff of the borough of Maldon.  
Robert Simond of Hatfeld.  
Thomas Hardekyn.  
Thomas Mullyng.  
John Gale of Farnham.  
John Stodehawe.  
Thomas Aldres.  
Giles Lucas.  
John Staunford.  
Robert Wade.  
Thomas Blosme.  
William Gatton.  
Robert Wryght of Thurrok.  
John Barowe.  
Robert Brook of Dedham.  
John Stephene of Elmestede.  
Thomas Andrewe.  
Richard Dykeleygh.  
William Cony.  
John Rouchestre.  
John Marlere.  
Robert de Bury.  
Thomas Stanes.  
John Debenham of Witham.  
Richard Jocep.  
John Berdefeld.  
Thomas Prentys.  
Thomas Selers.  
John Boreham.

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**TABLE 2.7 (CONTINUED)**

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Robert Seburgh.  
Henry Maldon.  
John Caweston.  
Thomas Marsshall of Dunmowe.  
John Hereward of Thaxstede.  
John son of William atte Fan of the same.  
Reginald Bienge of the same.  
Walter Goodmay.  
William Spaldyng.  
Hugh Dorsete.  
Richard atte More.  
Ralph Bonyngdon.  
Thomas Barette.  
Ralph de Uphaveryng.  
John Gobyon.  
William Scargoyll.  
John Shymmyng.  
William Higham.  
John Riche.  
John Veyse the elder.  
John Hicheman.  
Edmund Botere.  
John Westle.  
William Admond.  
John Campyon.  
Richard Sewale.  
Walter Tybenham.  
John Marchaunt of Peldon.  
Richard Gylotte.  
John Badecok.  
John Wayte of Branketre.  
John Parke of Gestmyngthorp.  
William Manwode.  
Henry Hoberd.  
Roger Passelewe.  
William atte Cherche.  
William Reynold.  
John Sailer.  
Richard Billyngburgh.  
Alan Busshe.  
John Wormele.  
John Olyve.

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**TABLE 2.7 (CONTINUED)**

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Robert Ferthyng.  
Martin Stamer.  
Robert Beteryche.  
Robert Smyth of Waltham

Source: Cal.Pat.Rolls 1429-36, pp.400-402. Spelling of surnames not modernised.

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he was included in the list of Essex men who took the Peace Oath in 1434 (Tab. 2.7) but he is not designated as an esquire; he merely heads the list of those with no designation.<sup>65</sup> As far as is known, he never held public office in Essex other than as JP. Clement Spice was designated esquire in a document of 1397 but like William Geldrich this may have been because he was the current escheator. As far as is known Rolf never held significant county office.

Despite military service being the profession of generations of Essex knights it was not generally a means of entry to the gentry. Of all the soldiers of sub gentry origin who fought in the Hundred Years War or other military campaigns only one is known to have been raised to gentry status on account of his marshal prowess. Sir John Hawkwood, whose father was of lesser gentry origin, was knighted before he left France to begin his long career as a mercenary in Italy. His son-in-law, Sir William Coggeshall of Wethersfield was for some years Hawkwood's second-in-command in Italy but his knighthood was conferred on account of his wealth and status in Essex.<sup>66</sup>

There are few examples of urban gentry in Essex. Many of the new and long-established families had connections with London, particularly the lawyers and those with trading interests but their principal residence would have been their Essex estate. Robert Darcy and Richard Galon, both lawyers, made their home in Maldon, and both of them served as MP – Darcy as knight of the shire of Essex and Galon as burgess of Maldon. Thomas Godstone of Colchester was MP for the town between 1399 and 1427 and he also served as escheator in 1415. His brother John was a citizen and mercer of

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<sup>65</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1429-1436 p.401.

<sup>66</sup> Coggeshall's father and grandfather were also knights.

London and may have settled in Essex. The status of the urban gentry is slightly ambiguous for, apart from Robert Darcy (who may have been the son and grandson of minor Essex gentry who maintained a Northumberland connection) they seem rarely to have fully participated in county society – as reflected in their absence from witness, feoffee and executor lists for their fellow gentry.

For the purpose of this study the gentry of neighbouring counties who held extensive landed or other interests in Essex have mostly been excluded. It should be emphasised here however that many of them, particularly such men as Sir Richard Waldegrave of Suffolk, Sir John Howard of Norfolk and Sir Thomas Lee of Hertfordshire were in many ways participating members of Essex gentry society and would therefore have some influence on county life. The county border was no barrier to their inclusion in county affairs not did it prevent the formation of kinship and affinity ties.



## CHAPTER 3

### ESSEX GENTRY SOCIETY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

As any analysis of county gentry studies will show, probably the most controversial aspect of the subject is the concept of the *county community*. With a few exceptions, the majority of studies have tackled the question with an extremely narrow focus.<sup>1</sup> The principal result of this approach is that the community which in fact receives the closest scrutiny, is not the gentry community of the county as a whole, but what appears to be a rather close-knit elite who between them held the most productive manors, the most prestigious county offices and who acquired the richest heiresses in marriage. Essentially, in such studies the *county community* is synonymous with the *political community*.<sup>2</sup>

A number of county gentry historians have focused on the regional and county gentry usually without distinguishing between them but scant attention has yet been given to the parochial gentry and still less to the massive under class of sub or pseudo gentry jostling to take their turn to climb the social ladder.<sup>3</sup> It should also be noted that with the exception of the middling sort, the gentry may have given little thought to the concept of a county-based community. For the majority, that is the elite (whose

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<sup>1</sup> The historian with the most wide-ranging approach to the subject of the county community is Christine Carpenter who has written two recent articles which outline her views: 'Gentry and community in medieval England' *Journal of British Studies* 33 (1994) pp.340-380. and 'The Stonor circle in the fifteenth century' in R.E.Archer and S.Walker eds, *Rulers and Ruled in Late Medieval England* (1995), pp.175-200.

<sup>2</sup> I am extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to give a seminar paper at the University of Leicester entitled 'The Essex Gentry 1381-1450: County Community or County of Communities?' This and the subsequent questions from the audience helped me clarify my thinking on the topic.

horizons were regional or even national) and the lesser gentry (who rode or walked no further than the hundredal court or local market) the county boundary had little significance.

A more accurate picture emerges if we take Nigel Saul's description of the medieval county of Sussex as our starting point. It was, he says, 'a county of communities'.<sup>4</sup> If we accept this premise then we can begin to understand how the gentry functioned. With the notable and relatively recent exceptions of Eric Acheson's study of Leicestershire and Christine Carpenter's work on Warwickshire, historians of the medieval gentry have not only identified the county community almost exclusively with the county *political* community but have tended to see it as a cohesive body.<sup>5</sup> As I will show, there was neither single county gentry nor single political community in Essex. Not only did the county political community comprise a number of overlapping self-contained communities based on gentry affinities, but it also interfaced with political communities centred on magnate affinities which extended far beyond county boundaries. Furthermore, the political county community (together with its sub communities and overlapping communities) was interwoven with a complex web of social communities and networks (often underestimated by medieval historians) which, if they were to be represented by a three dimensional model, would resemble the complexity of the double helix of DNA.

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<sup>3</sup> Carpenter tentatively identifies a regional and a county gentry but does not develop the theme. 'Gentry and community' pp.344-346.

<sup>4</sup> N.Saul, Scenes from Provincial Life: Knightly Families in Sussex 1280-1400 (1986), p.60.

<sup>5</sup> E.Acheson, A Gentry Community : Leicestershire in the Fifteenth Century c.1422 – c.1485 (1992) and C.Carpenter, Locality and Polity : A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society 1401-1499 (1992).

The method by which I propose to reveal the nature of medieval gentry society in Essex is first to rehearse the arguments in the county community controversy and then to discuss some of the transactions which took place in and thereby illuminate the networks which overlaid the political, social and functional communities of the county. It is important to avoid the error of treating what was crucially a dynamic society as static or even stagnant. For reasons which include the long term effects of the plague-induced demographic disasters of the second half of the fourteenth century and the close proximity of London, Essex was a county which not only attracted economically active gentry from outside, but it also provided opportunities for residential sub gentry to achieve gentry status.

### **3.2 THE COUNTY COMMUNITY CONTROVERSY**

Historians who turn their attention to the study of a particular county cannot, unlike anthropologists or other social scientists, visit the subject of their choice. For this reason they are often unable to collect sufficient data for what a social scientist would consider to be an empirical study. The relative scarcity of data and reliance on chance survival of evidence, which in any case was never intended to reveal the nature of the community concerned, has tended to result in normative rather than empirical studies of medieval communities.<sup>6</sup> It is insufficiency of data that has perhaps contributed to some

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<sup>6</sup> For the sociological view of communities I have relied on C.Bell and H.Newby Community Studies (1971).

historians' inability or failure to distinguish between county society as a whole and the county communities that were its component parts.<sup>7</sup>

How do historians define a community? One of the best known definitions is H.P.R. Finberg's : 'Let us say that a community is a set of people occupying an area with defined territorial limits and so far united in thought and action as to feel a sense of belonging together, in contradistinction from the many outsiders who do not belong.'<sup>8</sup> Expanding upon this theme, Charles Phythian-Adams identified the following features of a local community : an inhabited territory with a fair degree of geographical coherence, enduring features of social organisation, shared cultural associations and the presence of a body of indigenous families.<sup>9</sup>

What then are the parameters of the county community controversy? Some historians have suggested that the concept of the medieval county community is an anachronism, that no such community existed until the seventeenth century.<sup>10</sup> Other, more recent studies, maintain that county communities existed in a variety of forms as early as the tenth century or perhaps even before.<sup>11</sup> I contend that historians have generally seen medieval county gentry society in terms which are too narrow and too

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<sup>7</sup> Although they were apparently not short of data, J.R.Maddicott 'The county community and the making of public opinion in fourteenth-century England' T.R.H.S. 5<sup>th</sup> ser. 28 (1978), pp.27-44 and M.J.Bennett 'A county community: social cohesion among the Cheshire gentry 1400-25' Northern History 8 (1973), pp.24-44 make no such distinction.

<sup>8</sup> H.P.R.Finberg 'Local History' in H.P.R.Finberg and V.H.Skipp Local History: Objective and Pursuit (1967), p.33.

<sup>9</sup> C.Phythian-Adams, Re-Thinking English Local History (1987). He expands this theme in C.Phythian-Adams ed., Societies, Cultures and Kinship, 1580-1850: Cultural Provinces and English Local History (1993) when in his 'Introduction :an agenda for English local history' pp. 1-23 he divides England into 14 cultural provinces based on river drainage basins.

<sup>10</sup> Carpenter 'Gentry and community', p.341.

<sup>11</sup> D.Crouch, 'From Stenton to McFarlane :models of societies of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries' T.R.H.S. 6<sup>th</sup> ser.5 (1995), pp.179-200.

simplistic, and I intend to expand on this theme.

To understand the way in which the many county communities of Essex functioned, it is helpful to consider some sociological definitions. Every community comprises some or all of the following characteristics: limited geographical area, a network of affiliations, a complex of institutions within an area and a sense of belonging.<sup>12</sup> What binds a community together is the sense of independence and loyalty of its members. In a community, human relationships tend to be intimate and enduring and are based on a clear understanding of the community's hierarchy and also the criteria in accordance with which deference is given. A man's standing, or in the case of the gentry his *worship*, is valued according to who he is and not what he has done; in other words, quality versus performance. A community exists when interaction between individuals leads to a meeting of individual needs and the attainment of group goals. The stability of the community was highly dependent upon the link between its past and present members; hence the gentry's obsession with lineage myths, genealogy and the private chapels in which continuity with the past is displayed in terms of ancestral tombs, armorial bearings and ritual prayers for the dead. The term community implies belonging and mutuality, whilst society does not.<sup>13</sup>

Clearly the medieval geographical county was too large to be a community in the terms just described; it was in fact a society not entirely confined by the county border. As we shall see, it comprised mutually interrelated and often functionally interdependent communities. The community can also be seen as a collective adjustment or response to an environment – a geographical area generally smaller than

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<sup>12</sup> Community Studies, pp.21-54.

<sup>13</sup> Community Studies, pp.21-54.

a region. Gentry clusters or communities may have developed as a result of the geographical and economic conditions of a *pays*.<sup>14</sup>

Most studies of the medieval county community focus almost exclusively on the principal and greater gentry who are seen to form a single cohesive unit.<sup>15</sup> This is virtually to ignore the lesser gentry communities within the county and the many networks of interrelationships which linked them to each other and to the more powerful gentry. The threads of interrelationships made the community a complex organisation. There was no cohesive social community at county level – many of the gentry were members of more than one community, some of which extended beyond the county borders, the county was a multi-nucleated society.

An analysis of the Essex gentry's relationships has led me to the conclusion that here, as in some other counties, it was neither the higher nobility nor the gentry who entirely dominated the county.<sup>16</sup> The political leaders, largely the principal and county gentry of Essex, were greatly influenced by the magnates to whom they were subordinate as members of affinities. Thus, there was a powerful interdependent policy-forming elite comprising magnates, principal and greater gentry which ruled the county. Few of the Essex gentry could match the individual wealth of the magnates but the combined wealth of the resident regional, county and parish gentry greatly exceeded the combined wealth of the higher nobility.<sup>17</sup> Had there been a genuinely cohesive county community comprising the majority of the gentry it might have exerted much more

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<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 1 above for a discussion of *pays* in Essex.

<sup>15</sup> See footnote 2 above.

<sup>16</sup> Christine Carpenter's view is that 'Noble rule was therefore inimical to the idea of a county community': 'Gentry and community' p.355.

<sup>17</sup> H.L.Gray 'Incomes from land in England in 1436' *E.H.R.* 49 (1934), pp.607-639.

influence over the magnates than the gentry are otherwise seen to have done. Although the higher nobility provided a local focus for many of the gentry, the principal gentry often had interests both inside and outside Essex, sometimes serving magnates elsewhere.<sup>18</sup> The higher nobility and principal gentry were not inwardly focussed; the idea of the geographical county of Essex or the community of the county may have had little relevance for them. Whereas lesser men identified themselves with a particular locality such as a vill or even a manor, the principal gentry, who invariably held land in, and concerned themselves with the politics of more than one county, had a focus that was wider than any county boundary and must be considered regional rather than county based.<sup>19</sup> The wills of the greater and lesser gentry occasionally give us an insight as to the degree in which they identified with their county or locality, Tab. 3.1 provides a list of gentry wills for our period. William Hanningfield esquire of East Hanningfield, died 1426, directed in his will that money should be dispensed 'among the poor men' of the Rochford, Dengie and Chelmsford hundreds.<sup>20</sup> Sir William Berland, died 1393, left money for the 'repair of public bridges and highways where there is most need' principally in the hundred of Rochford.<sup>21</sup> Thomas Darcy esquire, died 1485, took a broader view and left money for the 'marriage of poor honest people in Essex'.<sup>22</sup> As to the principal gentry, their regional, rather than simply county affiliations are often apparent from their wills, as in the case of Sir Gerard Braybrooke of Colmworth, Bedfordshire and Danbury, Essex. He left specific bequests to the

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<sup>18</sup> The magnates also had interests outside Essex, with estates in many counties. When considering the influence of the magnates this must be taken into consideration as must their chronic absence from Essex on national or personal business and the frequent long minorities of magnate heirs during our period. See Chapter 7 below.

<sup>19</sup> Carpenter, 'Gentry and community' pp.345.

<sup>20</sup> Will of William Hanningfield (d.1426) 6 Luffenham PCC.

<sup>21</sup> Will of William Berland (d.c.1393) quoted by J.Ward, Women of the English Nobility and Gentry 1066-1500 (1995), pp.34-35.

<sup>22</sup> Will of Thomas Darcy esq. (d.1486) 24 Logge PCC.

TABLE 3.1 ESSEX GENTRY WILLS

(PCC unless otherwise stated)

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1447	Alrede Richard	35 Luffenham
1467	Arderne Sir Peter	19 Godyn
1472	Barrington Thomas esq.	6 Wattys
1398	Bataill John	ERO D/DbA T2/11
1456	Bataill Thomas	6 Stockton
1449	Baud Thomas esq.	18 Rous
1434	Baynard Richard	Reg.3. f. 372 C.C.L.
1443	Bibbesworth Edmund	15 Rous
1471	Bruyn Dame Elizabeth	2 Wattys
1483	Condorowe Nicholas gent	8 Logge
1486	Corneburgh Avery esq.	3 Milles
1436	Cornwallis John esq.	20 Luffenham
1454	Cressener William	10 Rous
1486	Darcy Thomas esq.	24 Logge
1420	Doreward John	50 Marche
1463	Doreward John	2 Godyn
1390	Filioll John	7 Rous
1471	Fitzralph Alice	2 Wattys
1466	Fleming Sir Thomas	14 Godyn
1408	Goldingham Sir Alexander	16 Marche
1422	Goldingham John esq.	55 Marche
1497	Grene Edith	13 Horne
1426	Hanningfield William esq.	6 Luffenham
1397	Hawkwood Sir John	Reg.1 f. 404 .C.C.L.
1418	Hende John	42 Marche
1442	John Sir Lewis	14 Rous
1419	Knyvet Robert esq.	47 Marche
1459	Knyvet Thomas esq.	17 Stockton
1419	Lampet Elizabeth	45 Marche
1425	Legh John	4 Luffenham
1439	Legh Thomas	26 Luffenham
1443	Loveney John esq.	15 Rous
1379	Lyons Richard	Reg.1 f. 79 .C.C.L.
1382	Malgref Hugh	Reg.1 f. 83v.C.C.L.
1447	Malton John gent.	35 Luffenham
1414	Marney Sir William	29 & 31 Marche
1421	Marney Sir Thomas	52 Marche
1408	Mounteney Sir Robert	18 Marche
1385	Newport John	Reg.1 f. 136 .CC.L.
1396	Newport John esq.	Reg.1 .370.v.C.C.L.
1469	Poyntz John esq.	29 Godyn

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TABLE 3.1 (CONTINUED)

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1436	Pykenham John	23 Luffenham
1445	Rochford John	32 Luffenham
1421	Rokele Robert esq.	52 Marche
1427	Rokele Margaret	8 Luffenham
1440	Rolf Thomas	Reg. 4.48&78.CC.L.
1476	Scargill Thomas	22 Wattys
1475	Skrene Sir John	19 Wattys
1422	Swinburne William esq.	54 Marche
1375	Torell Elizabeth	Reg. 1 f. 17 v.C.C.L.
1442	Torell Thomas esq.	15 & 16 Rous
1442	Tyrell Edward esq.	16 Rous
1476	Tyrell Sir Thomas	31 Wattys
1470	Tyrell Sir William	32 Godyn
1374	Walden Sir Humphrey	Reg. 1 f. 9 v.C.C.L.
1375	Walden John	Reg. 1 f. 24 v.C.C.L.
1474	Walden Thomas gent	15 Wattys
1393	Wanton Sir William	Reg. 1 f. 270v.C.C.L.
1475	Writtle Walter esq.	21 Wattys

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churches of Colmworth, Danbury, Horsenden in Buckinghamshire whilst requesting burial in St Paul's London.<sup>23</sup> Some of the first historians to discuss the county community, Helen Cam and Bruce McFarlane saw the county as a *natural community*.

<sup>24</sup>Helen Cam regarded it as an *organism*, a unit held together by proximity, by local feeling and common traditions and considered that it included inhabitants as well as gentlemen. McFarlane saw the county in terms of a strongly provincial society where *men stood together*.<sup>25</sup>

During the 1960s Alan Everitt and others developed the concept of the county community in relation to the seventeenth-century county gentry.<sup>26</sup> According to the so-called *county community* school, the early modern county gentry were surprisingly ill-informed about wider political issues, their political horizons being contained within the boundaries of the shire.<sup>27</sup>

In the late 1960s and early 1970s there was a spate of studies about the late medieval gentry, some of which incorporated Everitt's view on county communities. In 1968 J.A.Tuck wrote that the gentry of the border counties of northern England in the

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<sup>23</sup> Will of Sir Gerard Braybrooke (d.1428). Register of Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1414-1443 E.F.Jacob ed., Canterbury and York Society 2 (1937), pp.409-415.

<sup>24</sup> H.M.Cam, Liberties and Communities in Medieval England (1944) and K.B.McFarlane 'Bastard feudalism' B.I.H.R. 20 (1943-1945), pp.161-180.

<sup>25</sup> The heraldic fonts of Essex, a subject not much studied, may give a clue to the self-identification of the Essex gentry. It is almost invariably the resident gentry (and magnates) whose arms are grouped on fonts, as at Finchingfield where de Vere, Finderne, Helion, Wauton and Cloville are to be found on the bowl of the late fourteenth-century font. The font at Shalford (Plate3.1) carries the arms of the Coggeshall family, perhaps indicating that their children were baptised here a short distance from their home at Great Codham Hall rather than at the more distant Wetherfield parish church.

<sup>26</sup> A.Everitt, The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion 1640-1660 (1966); 'The county community' in E.W. Ives ed., The English Revolution 1600-1660 (1968), pp.48-63 and Landscape and Community in England (1985).

<sup>27</sup> C.Carpenter 'The Stonor circle in the fifteenth century' in R.E.Archer and S.Walker eds., Rulers and Ruled in Late Medieval England (1995), p.175.

fifteenth century was drawn together by the need for mutual protection against hostile elements further north and a feeling of remoteness from the political centre of the country.<sup>28</sup> It was a *natural* society where social relations were based not on feudal bonds but on ties of kinship; horizontal rather than vertical relationships.

In 1973, Michael Bennett's pioneering study of medieval gentry communities expanded on the theme of a natural community of the shire with reference to fifteenth century Cheshire where the gentry acted together in a wide range of capacities supporting the existence of a close but informal network of social relations embracing the whole county.<sup>29</sup> He identified the county as providing the fundamental source of cohesion as only this would account for the range and regularity of contact between the gentry of medieval Cheshire. He saw the county as a social unit convenient to its constituent members at both a personal and institutional level. In the absence of powerful resident magnates the community formed a link between the king and his humbler subjects. Bennett suggests that the community was *coterminous* with the shire's boundaries and he identifies an extended network of kinship as paramount in the integration of county society. He sees the county community as a highly complex web of social relationships, a single network embracing the collective gentry of the shire.

Five years after Bennett's innovative study, J.R.Maddicott published a wide-ranging analysis of the county court in relation to the county community.<sup>30</sup> In his view the monthly meetings of the county court brought together the men of property and were

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<sup>28</sup> A. Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border magnates' *Northern History* 3 (1968), pp.27-52.

<sup>29</sup> M.J.Bennett, 'A county community: social cohesion amongst the Cheshire gentry, 1400-1425' *Northern History* 8 (1973), pp.24-44.

<sup>30</sup> J.R.Maddicott, 'The county community and the making of public opinion in fourteenth-century England' *T.R.H.S.* 5<sup>th</sup> ser. 28 (1978), pp.27-43.



**PLATE 3.1 HERALDIC FONT : SHALFORD**

the focus of the county's aspiration. He showed that the county court was not necessarily synonymous with the shire, and agreed that the large assemblies at the county court did not constitute a county community but were rather an interest group or gathering of those who managed the county and filled its offices. The fact that the gathering included not only gentry but also magnates and servile men such as reeves, made it a microcosm of county society.

Although the bulk of the power lay with the magnates and gentry, lesser men attended the court as part of the political community of the shire. Clearly, the model which Maddicott actually describes is of a *political* rather than a *social* county community but he recognises that those who assembled in the county court were members of a hierarchy of communities: village, hundred and county. Furthermore, he drew attention to the networks associated with meetings of the county community at provincial gatherings, in the market place, or in church. In practice, only a handful of the actual political community attended the county court; the majority of those eligible stayed at home, like the rest of the community of the shire.<sup>31</sup> Of those who met at Chelmsford and put their names to the election indentures for the Parliament of 9 November 1422, six were principal gentry, forty-one were greater or lesser gentry and the remaining seventeen appear to have been of sub-gentry status.<sup>32</sup>

In a paper critical of Alan Everitt's interpretation of history, Clive Holmes challenged the existence of a county community in the seventeenth century.<sup>33</sup> He posed

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<sup>31</sup> R. Virgoe, 'Aspects of the county community in the fifteenth century' in M.A. Hicks ed., *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England* (1990), pp. 1-13. shows that between 1422 and 1442 Essex election indentures never had less than 30 attestors. In 'attesting the indenture of those elected to represent it [the county community] must surely be recognition as part of that community'.

<sup>32</sup> PRO C219 13/1.

<sup>33</sup> C. Holmes, 'The county community in Stuart historiography' *Journal of British Studies* 19 (1980), pp. 54-73.

a number of questions. Was the county a social unit? How confining were the borders? To what extent were smaller regions of counties a focus? What was the role of the county court? Did magnates influence relationships? Were all free men part of the county community? Clive Holmes quoted Alan Everitt as saying that the seventeenth-century gentry were 'simply not concerned with affairs of state' and that their political horizons were exceedingly narrow. Other historians such as J.R.Maddicott have come to the same conclusion about county communities as Everitt and have transposed a seventeenth-century anachronism to the late medieval period.<sup>34</sup>

Christine Carpenter proposes that historians abandon the term 'county community' altogether, a concept she considers to be 'riddled with theoretical confusion'<sup>35</sup> She thinks that concentration on the county community merely serves to induce an interpretation of history in which the gentry dominate county society in the medieval period. She refers to Everitt's suggestion that England in 1640 was a union of such county communities and claims that this view of local history has somewhat clouded the judgement of historians of the medieval gentry.<sup>36</sup>

She says that the county community must entail a 'sense of belonging' if the term is to have any meaning, and that the gentry elite, whom medievalists have largely focussed on, would have had a sense of the shire as a unit through their experience of office holding. But, she explains, it is not easy to demonstrate that the county was in

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<sup>34</sup> J.R.Maddicott, 'The county community and making of public opinion in fourteenth-century England' *T.R.H.S.* 5<sup>th</sup> ser. 28 (1978), pp.27-43.

<sup>35</sup> Carpenter, 'Gentry and community', pp.340 and 342.

<sup>36</sup> In a review of Christine Carpenter's *Locality and Polity* (1992), Nigel Saul in *History Today* 43, May 1993 pp.56-57 savages the adversarial presentation of her argument in which, he says, she 'dismisses out of hand the work of virtually every other scholar who has worked in her field' and for ignoring the work of those who have also shed light on 'the ground-rules of late medieval politics' which she claims to have discovered.

fact the focal point of the office-holding gentry and shows that the more substantial a family became, the wider were its horizons.<sup>37</sup>

She believes that Maddicott and others have over-emphasised the importance of the county court, and considers that attendance was largely confined to election supporters and was usually low. In this regard she *appears* to ignore that the court met regularly for non-election functions. Her view that it was unusual for many of the local elite to attend, directly contradicts Maddicott's opinion that all levels of society were present. Furthermore, she thinks that if the county community ever was the focus of county unity it must have been at a time before the middle ages. Because many of the leading gentry had interests in several counties, she says it is often difficult to assign the elite to a *particular* county. She therefore introduces the interesting possibility that there was a regional rather than a county elite.<sup>38</sup>

Her recent work on the Stonor Letters evidently strengthened her view that there were regional societies in late medieval England. Their world, she claims, is revealed by this correspondence, and it is a dense local network of acquaintances and associates which spilled across the county borders. Kinship was the primary social focus, because the family lay at the heart of the gentry world. She says that 'parish pump' medievalists question the county as the focus for analysis, but in her view it should be the *pays* which is interpreted as the gentry's primary geographical focus.<sup>39</sup> Christine Carpenter's earlier study of fifteenth-century Warwickshire provided a different model, the gentry forming groups partly based on a 'natural' community of interests and partly on

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<sup>37</sup> Carpenter, 'Gentry and community', pp.344-345.

<sup>38</sup> Carpenter, 'Gentry and community', pp.347-348.

<sup>39</sup> C.Carpenter, 'The Stonor circle in the fifteenth century' in R.E.Archer and S.Walker eds, Rulers and Ruled in Late Medieval England (1995), pp.175-200.

baronial leadership. Bastard feudalism under the earls of Warwick was a social and political *bond*, where the desire of the gentry for friends and protection, complements the magnates' search for an alternative to defunct feudal ties. Gentry groups were drawn together by the earl's wide-ranging affinity, a series of 'concentric circles with the earl at the centre'.<sup>40</sup>

The gentry within a noble affinity would have looked to the magnate to protect their interests – particularly in connection with their estates and office holding. As in all such affinities, the gentry often sought their marriage alliances, feoffees, executors and mainpernors among their fellow members. Their lord offered them salaries, annuities, appointments to important county offices as well as powerful protection. In return, the gentry gave him advice, administrative expertise, *worship* and armed support. Christine Carpenter argues that there was no community in medieval Warwickshire, only a sense of unity provided by the earls.<sup>41</sup>

In the late 1970s and early 1980s there was a flood of gentry studies, first of the fourteenth and then of the fifteenth century. Most historians recognised that horizontal ties of kinship and common interests were almost universal amongst the gentry and that the 'social and political horizons of the lesser gentry were generally more localised than those of the wealthier and more influential gentry'.<sup>42</sup> Martin Cherry is convinced that the one factor that profoundly distinguished the political community in one shire from another was the presence or absence of vertical ties of locally resident lordship.

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<sup>40</sup> C. Carpenter, 'The Beauchamp affinity: a study of bastard feudalism at work' *E.H.R.* 95 (1980), pp.514-532.

<sup>41</sup> This theme is developed by Christine Carpenter in her monolithic *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401-1499* (1992) particularly in Chapter 10 where she discusses Warwickshire under Richard Beauchamp 1401-1439.

<sup>42</sup> M. Cherry, 'The struggle for power in mid fifteenth-century Devonshire' in RA Griffiths ed., *Patronage, the Crown and the Provinces in Later Medieval England* (1981) p.129.



Devon's political and social community of the shire, as described by Cherry, was dominated by the earls of Devon.<sup>43</sup> The county became, according to Cherry, a 'single lineage system' which included gentry. Within the earl's affinity there would have been a number of smaller affinities centred on particular families. These connections within the affinity were an indication that it had a clear identity 'a group of closely-connected men'. Cherry's view is that in Devon it is not possible to separate a county community from the bastard feudal society projected by the earls.<sup>44</sup>

In her study of the gentry in fifteenth-century Derbyshire, Susan Wright takes the view that the network of social relationships amongst the gentry was 'complex but fragile'. She sees no evidence of a 'cohesive county social group' or community; nor were the gentry as a whole involved together in county politics. The gentry, she says, 'operated through small inter-locking groups' which met their primary needs. The chief determinant of these groups was the geographical distribution of property and the kinship networks which overlapped with their social relationships as landowners and neighbours. There is no suggestion in her work that such networks were co-terminous with county boundaries.<sup>45</sup>

The patronage of powerful magnates in Derbyshire served to reinforce the position of leading gentry rather than coalesce them into a single power group. Susan Wright recognises however that the magnate affinity was one element of a pattern of gentry relationships: family, kin, neighbours, friends and fellow gentry could count for as much, if not more. In Derbyshire, unlike Devon, no individual magnate was in a

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<sup>43</sup> M.Cherry. 'The Courtenay earls of Devon: the formation and disintegration of a late medieval aristocratic affinity' *Southern History* (1979), pp.71-97.

<sup>44</sup> Cherry, 'Courtenay earls of Devon', pp.78-79.

<sup>45</sup> S.M.Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry in the Fifteenth Century* Derbyshire Rec.Soc.8 (1983),pp.1-12.

position to 'give constant direction to a county's political sentiments'; the bonds of society were local. Her view is that the gentry in Derbyshire did not look to magnate affinities for associates; they had their own bastard feudalism network of friend and clients in the county and 'sometimes with gentry counterparts in neighbouring shires'. Although she recognises that gentry interests overlapped the county boundary, she does not identify the concept of a regional gentry.<sup>46</sup>

The fifteenth-century Derbyshire gentry seem to have been more outward-looking than Nigel Saul's fourteenth-century Gloucestershire gentry who lived a life that he considers was 'bounded by remarkably narrow horizons'. He says their geographical interests hardly extended beyond the 'range of their own estates' but he does not suggest that the gentry who held estates in several counties took a regional view.<sup>47</sup> Like Susan Wright, Saul does not recognise the concept of regional gentry and he gives little weight to the distinction between greater and lesser gentry in this context. In his study of the fourteenth-century Sussex gentry, which was not organised around magnate affinities, Nigel Saul suggests that the 'familiar picture' of a county community may, in relation to Sussex, have to be revised. He argues that the Sussex gentry were not united by vertical ties of magnate affiliation and neither did they speak with one voice in the county court. In contradistinction to Gloucestershire, this may, he says, have been an assembly of individuals rather than a county community. Sussex men belonged to 'separate networks of clientage and collective responsibility'; bonds of 'tenure and locality' brought them together.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Wright, *Derbyshire Gentry*, pp.60-82.

<sup>47</sup> Saul, *Knights and Esquires*, p.257.

<sup>48</sup> N.Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life: Knightly Families in Sussex, 1280-1400* (1986), pp.28-72.

The county community debate is carried forward by David Crouch who considers that there may have been an Anglo-Saxon gentry and also an Anglo-Saxon county community.<sup>49</sup> He gives very little weight to the importance of horizontal ties but he raises the question of multiple allegiance, not much tackled by earlier historians. He rejects the concept of the county as a 'natural' unit and sees the idea of a 'cosy collection' of 'gentry communities' as the work of historians such as Alan Everitt.<sup>50</sup> David Crouch produces plenty of evidence, and he is almost unique in this, for the way in which men identified with their county, their *patria*. He shows that from at least the early middle ages, the men of Suffolk felt themselves superior to the men of Norfolk – and no doubt the men of Essex too – but he rightly questions whether such feelings can be translated into a socio-political structure based on the county.<sup>51</sup> He points out that as early as the twelfth century the shire contained a number of communities including towns, but does not mention religious communities – of which there were many in Essex and elsewhere. He agrees with Christine Carpenter however that the case for the county community is not proven; despite this he feels that people did identify with the shire. 'My belief is that there was a real feeling that one could belong to a shire and define oneself as a member of its community'. He says that the most significant form of political organisation in the county was a form of power focussed on a discrete region and a dominant personality who sought to control it.<sup>52</sup> Clearly there could have been

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<sup>49</sup> D.Crouch, 'From Stenton to McFarlane : models of societies of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries' *T.R.H.S.* 6<sup>th</sup> ser. 5 (1995), pp.179-200.

<sup>50</sup> Crouch, 'Stenton to McFarlane', p. 187.

<sup>51</sup> Crouch, 'Stenton to McFarlane', pp.188-189.

<sup>52</sup> Crouch, 'Stenton to McFarlane', pp.192-194.

any number of such personalities in a county of communities.

### **3.3 THE NATURE OF THE ESSEX GENTRY COMMUNITIES**

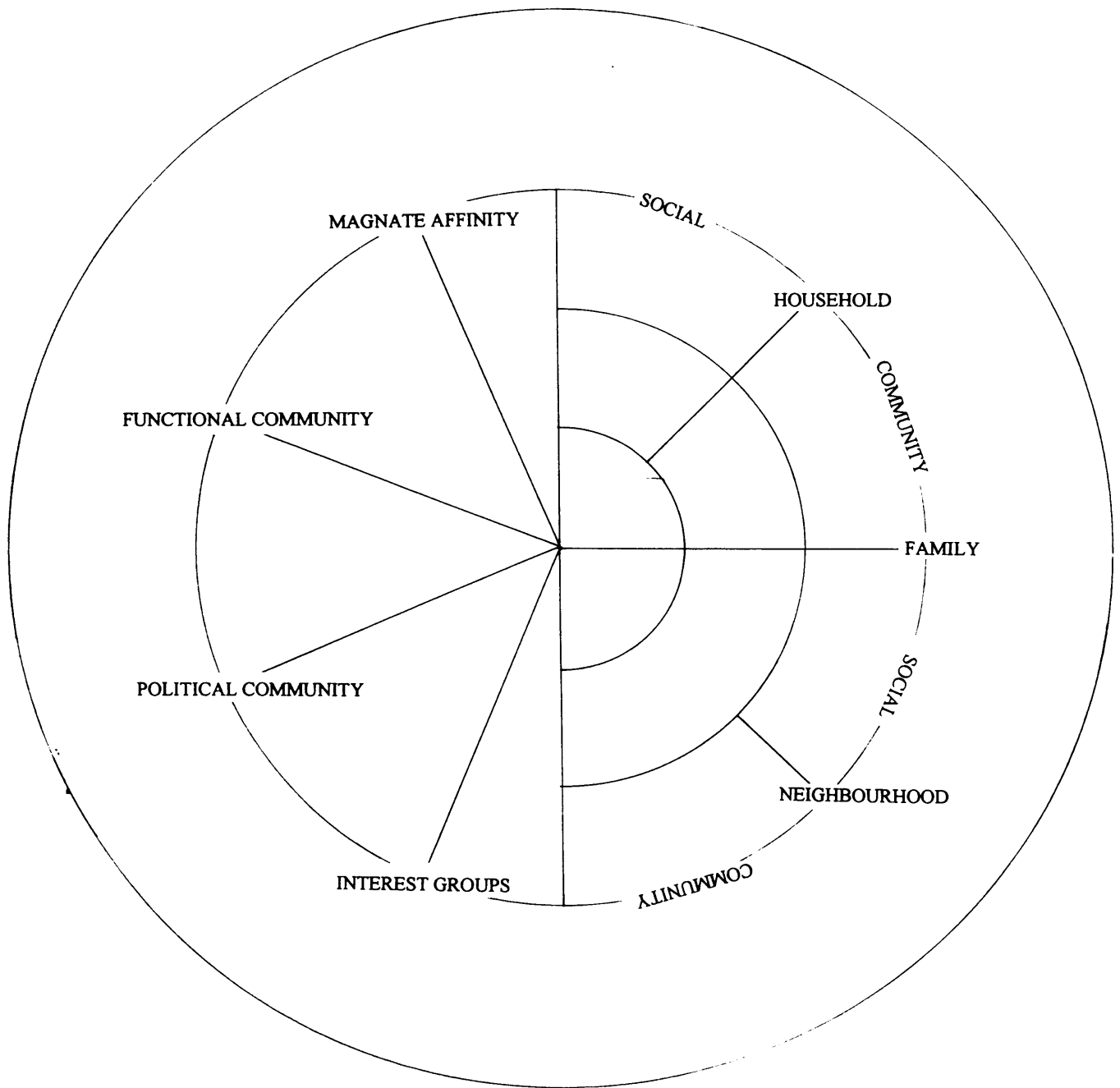
It is apparent that the question of medieval gentry communities is much more complex than has previously been described. It is clear that there were many such communities, some of them overlapping, most of them linked with more distant communities by a web of interconnecting networks. Analysis has shown that there were three principal types of gentry community – social, political and functional; within these communities, relationships could be vertical or horizontal (Fig. 3.1). Collectively these communities can be referred to as Essex gentry society, which was a component of county society as a whole.<sup>53</sup>

#### **Gentry communities : the family**

The basic building block of the gentry social community was the family. This in turn was the core of the household beyond which lay the neighbourhood area. Within the neighbourhood there were typically three networks – kin, friends and associates (including tenants); such networks overlapped and interlinked with other gentry neighbourhoods. Beyond the neighbourhood there may have been a magnate affinity

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<sup>53</sup> Most historians of the medieval gentry have employed the term 'county community' to refer almost exclusively to the gentry political community of the shire; the term 'community of the shire' it is suggested, can be taken to mean county society as a whole.



**FIG 3.1 ESSEX : COUNTY SOCIETY**

that covered a still wider area. Individual gentry communities were generally but not exclusively based on capital manors.<sup>54</sup>

The parish churches of Essex, some with their chapels and chantries full of monuments, are a rich source of information about individual gentry families. How else would we know, other than from the brass in Dagenham church, that Sir Thomas Urswick had thirteen children?<sup>55</sup> Or that William Hanningfield esquire had seven children by his first wife, three by his second and two by his third?<sup>56</sup> Family groups included parents, children, siblings, in-laws, step-children and other distant kin, particularly where the head of the family was a serial spouse like the four times married Richard Baynard whose family had been lords of Messing for six generations or more.<sup>57</sup> It is unlikely that many parents lived to see their grandchildren reach adulthood, but I have found a single example of four generations of a gentry family living together.<sup>58</sup> Essex proof of age inquests show that the majority of heirs were born on their father's capital manor – in fifty-one Essex proof of age inquests between 1289 and 1401, forty-seven out of fifty-one heirs were described as having been born (and baptised) in Essex.<sup>59</sup> Plate 3.2 illustrates the font at Chrishall in which John, son and heir

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<sup>54</sup> On subsidiary manors a steward rather than a manorial lord was resident and would generally have been part of a sub-gentry community. Robert Darcy of Maldon would have been based in his town house (now the Moot Hall) rather than on one of his manors.

<sup>55</sup> Brass in Dagenham church.

<sup>56</sup> Hanningfield's brass has long since disappeared but its description is known from his will. 6 Luffenham PCC.

<sup>57</sup> His wives were : Joan, Joyce Vyne, Joan Sandherst and Grace Burgoyne. The fact that so many children of the gentry were brought up by one or more step-parents may have had a long-lasting effect; it could for example have increased their feelings of insecurity.

<sup>58</sup> Will of Sir Robert Swinburne (d.1391) who mentions his great-grandson William. N.H.Nicolas ed., *Testamenta Vetusta* 1 (2 vols., 1826), p.203.

<sup>59</sup> *Cal.I.P.M.* 12-14 . A number of fonts in which these heirs were baptised have survived, notably at Springfield, Copford, Little Laver, Henham and Chishall. The font at Althorne has a panel depicting a baptism.



PLATE 3.2 FONT : CHRISHALL.

of Henry Helion was baptised on 14 February 1379.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the rich heritage of monumental brasses in Essex it is not usually possible to ascertain details of individual gentry families beyond the name of the *paterfamilias*, his wife and their heir. Occasionally taxation records can be helpful in this context however. In 1381 Joan Doreward (widow of William Doreward), her son John (subsequently Speaker of the House of Commons) and Katherine his wife, a second John Doreward (whose relationship to Joan is not known, but possibly the younger brother of the future Speaker) and his wife Alice lived at Doreward's Hall Bocking apparently as an extended family of three generations.<sup>61</sup>

It is a commonplace that wills are another helpful source for details of family members, particularly spouses and children, but wills survive for less than ten percent of Essex county gentry family heads between 1381-1450. Sir Lewis John (d.1444) mentions his five sons Lewis, Edmund, Philip, John and Henry together with his five daughters.<sup>62</sup> He also mentions his bastard son and makes provision for the provision of his daughters' dowries provided that they marry gentlemen. Sir William Berland (d.1383) makes provision for alms for the souls of his close family including his wife Christine, his father, mother, sons, daughters and sisters.<sup>63</sup>

Occasionally charters of feoffment or feet of fines provide a detailed description of two, occasionally three generations of a gentry family but, as with the foregoing

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<sup>60</sup> Cal. J.P.M. 14, p.221.

<sup>61</sup> ERO T/A 565. PRO E 179/107/687/7.

<sup>62</sup> Will of Sir Lewis John. 14 Rous PCC.

<sup>63</sup> Will of Sir William Berland quoted by J.C.Ward, Women of the English Nobility and Gentry 1066-1500 (1995), pp.34-35.



documents, it is never clear whether the list is complete. Similarly, inquisitions *post mortem* give us fragmentary but relatively precise information about families. Sir William Wauton (d.1383) had, we are told, at the date of his death a sister Joan aged twenty-four, and a sister Eleanor married to John Ednesore whose daughter was aged eleven.<sup>64</sup>

### **Gentry communities : the household.**

Beyond the family group was the household. This varied in size according to the wealth and status of the family head; it would also have varied on a day-to-day basis as visitors came and went.<sup>65</sup> Details of households can be found in many of the sources that supply information about the family. Wills are particularly useful in describing past and present members of a household. The will of Edward Tyrell of Downham, sometime sheriff, MP, JP and escheator who died in 1442, gives a considerable amount of information about not only his family and friends but also many of his kin and acquaintances.<sup>66</sup> Fig.3.2 shows this information in diagrammatic form.

William Hanningfield (d.1426) mentions in addition to family members, several other members of the household including 'John, my priest'.<sup>67</sup> Sir William Marney (Plate 3.3) of Layer Marney (d.1414) refers to an impressive thirty-six members of his household including his kitchen boy.<sup>68</sup> We have a glimpse of the household of Edward

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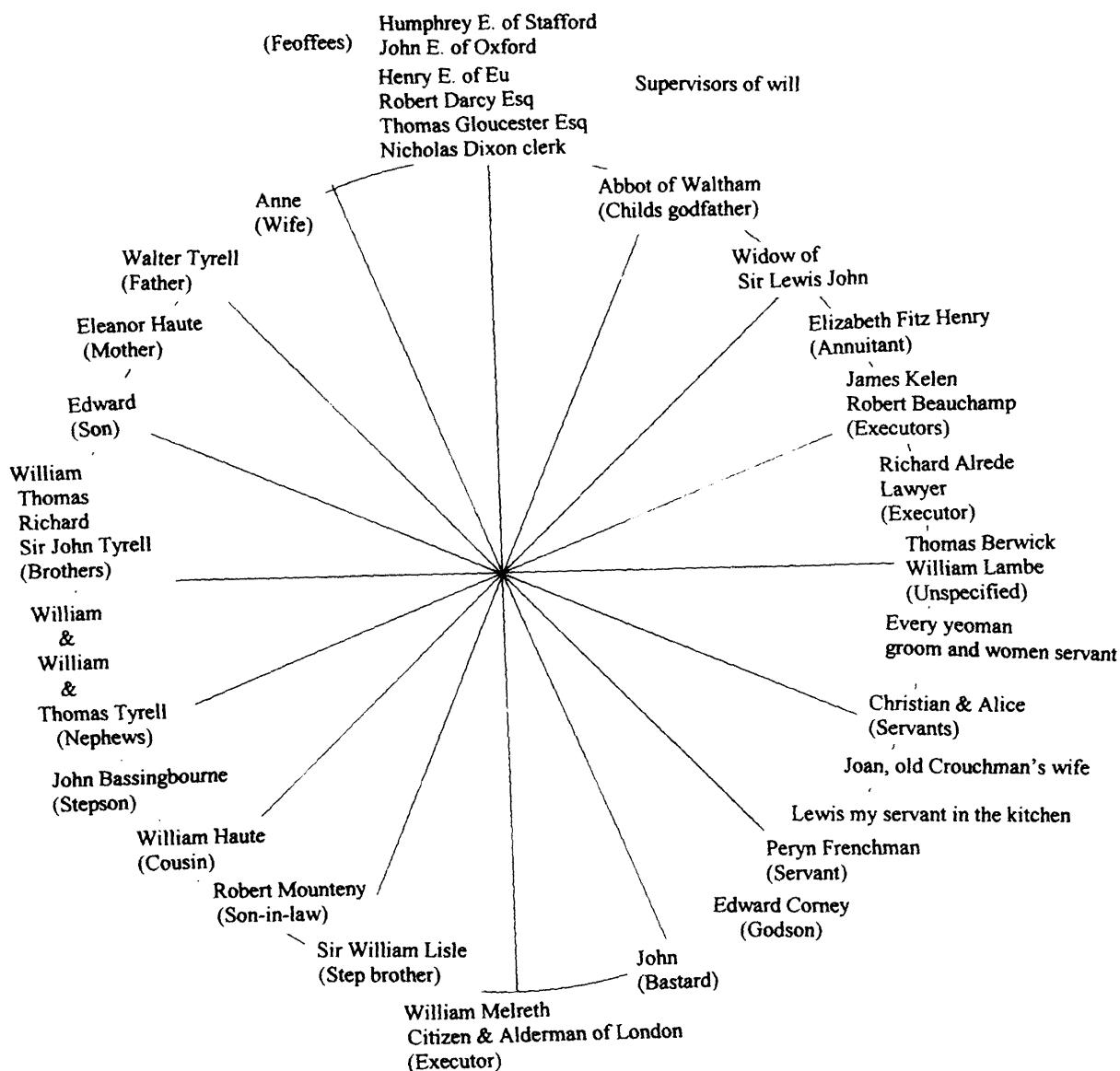
<sup>64</sup> Cal. I.P.M., 17 p.178.

<sup>65</sup> The accounts book of Lady Alice Bryene provides a vivid picture of the yearly comings and goings in a Suffolk gentry household. V.B.Redstone and M.K.Dale eds, The Household Book of Alice de Bryene Suff.Inst.Arch. & Nat. Hist. (1931).

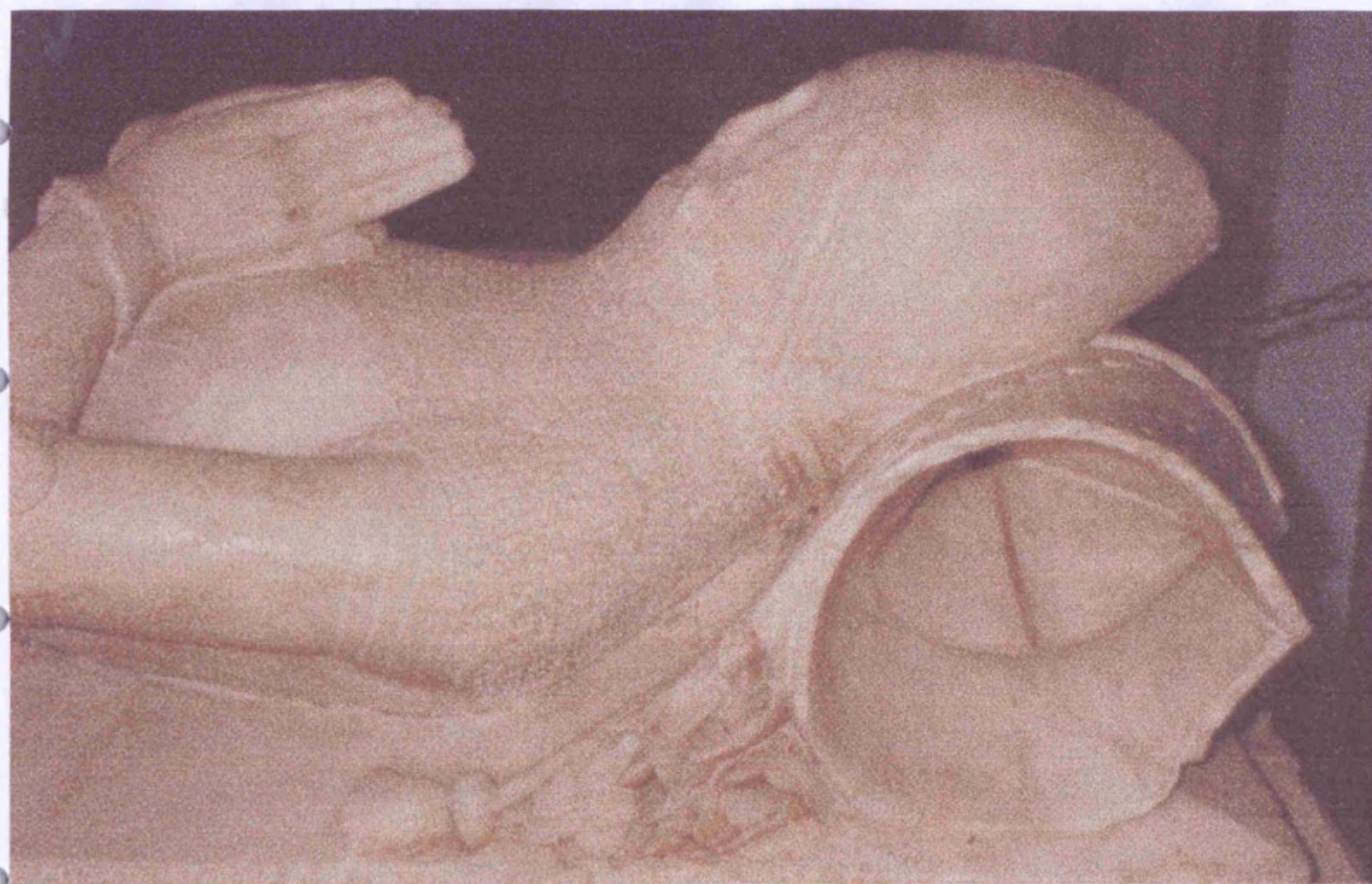
<sup>66</sup> Will of Edward Tyrell (d.1442) 16 Rous PCC.

<sup>67</sup> Will of William Hanningfield (d.1426) 6 Luffenham PCC.

<sup>68</sup> Will of Sir William Marney (d.1414) 29 & 31 Marche PCC.



**FIGURE 3.2 CONNECTIONS : EDWARD TYRELL (d.1442).**



**PLATE 3.3 SIR WILLIAM MARNEY : LAYER MARNEY**

Tyrell's father Walter in the poll tax return of 1381. This shows Walter Tyrell then living at Abbess Roding and his wife Eleanor, together with their servants Henry Helder, John Parker, John Chamberlain, Richard Cook and Katherine.<sup>69</sup> At this time Walter was heir presumptive to his older brother Sir Thomas Tyrell of Heron Hall whom he succeeded c. 1384. The oldest of Walter's children were probably no more than five years old in 1381 so were not listed for taxation purposes, but their names are known from Edward Tyrell's will. Similarly the poll tax returns for Great Baddow reveal that Thomas Coggeshall (d. 1402) lived with his wife and nine (named) servants whilst the household of John Bampton and his wife Isolda at Chipping Ongar included their priest John Hunt.<sup>70</sup>

### **Gentry communities : the neighbourhood**

In a sense, the core family and household were part of the same community but separate from them was the neighbourhood, comprising kin, friends and associates. Neighbourhoods may have had their own distinctive territories in homogeneous countryside. The neighbourhood may have comprised some of the family's dispersed kin – particularly married children and siblings, and also the spouse's kin. In some cases, as with the Tyrells of East Horndon, the kinship group could be numerous. Kinship connections manifested themselves in many ways. William Bateman of Little Sampford (sheriff in 1395, 97 & 98) and his wife Margery called on Margery's father Sir William Coggeshall to act as witness to the transfer of some small parcels of land

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<sup>69</sup> PRO E 179/107/60/18.

<sup>70</sup> PRO E 179/107/63/1 and E 179/107/60/12.

contained within great fields in the parish. They also called on Sir William Langham of Hempstead and a group of local yeomen (including John Hawkwood the elder, a distant kinsman of Margery Bateman) to witness the same minor transactions. Kin and neighbours came together to ensure that the Batemans got a secure title to their land.<sup>71</sup>

Two prominent members of the Essex gentry are known to have married into resident Essex magnate families thus strengthening the existing ties of affinity. Sir Lewis John (d.1442) married Alice de Vere, daughter of Aubrey 10<sup>th</sup> earl of Oxford (and widow of Sir Francis Court) and Sir Nicholas Thorley (d.1442) married Beatrice, second wife and widow of Richard 11<sup>th</sup> earl of Oxford.<sup>72</sup> The children of Sir Lewis and Lady Alice were close kin to successive earls of Oxford and undoubtedly influenced their lives. Magnate wills suggest that kinship sometimes brought with it affection. Richard earl of Arundel (d.1397) left 'my cup with hearts' to 'my dear sister of Hereford', countess Joan who died in 1419.<sup>73</sup> Countess Joan's daughter Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester, left 'to my lady mother the Countess of Hereford..... a pair of paternosters of coral'.<sup>74</sup>

Kinship extended beyond the confines of the county border. Sir Nicholas Haute (d.c.1445) of Waltham, Kent, married Eleanor, the widow of Walter Tyrell esquire of Essex (d.c.1407) William Haute, son of Sir Nicholas Haute, served in the retinue of John Tyrell (d.1437), his stepmother's son, during the Agincourt campaign.<sup>75</sup> A significant feature of the neighbourhood surrounding many a gentry household was the

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<sup>71</sup> ERO D/DQ 61/194 6 Jan 1391.

<sup>72</sup> Sir Lewis John subsequently married Anne Montague, daughter of the earl of Salisbury (and widow of Sir Richard Monkford)

<sup>73</sup> *Testamenta Vetusta* 2 p. 132.

<sup>74</sup> *Testamenta Vetusta* 2 p. 147.

<sup>75</sup> J.S.Roskell, L.Clark and C.Rawcliffe eds, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1386-1421* 4 (1993), pp.683-686.

number of labourers and craftsmen bearing the name of the manorial family. John Doreward of Gosfield, labourer; John Liston of Sible Hedingham labourer; John Coggeshall of Thaxted smith; and Robert Goldingham, tailor, of Braintree. Many may have been the bastards or cadets of more illustrious namesakes.<sup>76</sup> It can also be observed that Essex gentry names – Coggeshall and Rikedon amongst them can be found amongst London testators during our period, individuals who left their families and successfully found employment in London.<sup>77</sup>

The kin were sometimes grouped in clusters, the hub being the capital manor of the head of a leading dynastic family. Such dynastic families were few in number in Essex as attrition rates were high, and Essex gentry families seldom flourished in the male line for more than three generations during the later Middle Ages. Principal among the successful families were the Tyrells of Heron Hall, East Horndon, who rose to wealth and power in the early fourteenth century from obscure origins and were to survive in the male line at Heron Hall until the end of the eighteenth century. The Tyrells were successors and kin to the former leading county family, the Coggeshalls of Wethersfield, and they were also kin to the Dorewards and Darcys who, together with their friends the Baynards of Messing were the most powerful amongst the gentry elite.

The key to the growth of such gentry kinship networks was a combination of fertile couples and the accumulation of wealth. For several generations the head of the Tyrell family at Heron Hall not only fathered numerous sons (several of whom themselves founded enduring dynasties) but were prepared to divest themselves of sufficient wealth

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<sup>76</sup> C.C. Fenwick ed., *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381. Part 1 Bedfordshire-Lincolnshire* (1998), pp.206,210,214 and 237.

<sup>77</sup> John de Coggeshall, corder, died in 1385 leaving 'divers chattels' to Coggeshall Abbey. R.R. Sharpe ed., *Calendar of Wills in the Court of Hastings, London 1258-1688* 2 (2 vols, 1889-1890), pp.249-250.

to set them up as independent gentry on manors relatively close to the family seat. Such manors could conveniently be taken back into ownership by the head of the family should the junior line fail.

There is little evidence that kinship clusters arose in particular *pays*; it is worth noting however, that the principal and greater gentry were more numerous in the Essex Lowlands than elsewhere. Fig.2.1 above illustrates the distribution of the principal Essex gentry (knights and multiple office holders) by residence. The gentry were almost absent from the Essex Marshlands which, during the period 1381-1450 were undoubtedly as fever ridden, and dangerous as they were in the sixteenth century when Norden wrote about them.<sup>78</sup> It is also clear that the more important a family and the more numerous the kinship group, the wider were their connections. The regional gentry's network of interests extended far beyond the county whilst the parish gentry's interests had a much narrower focus. Where a hugely extended family such as the Tyrells occupied a cluster of manors it could perhaps be argued that they were based in a particular *pays*.

The kinship connections of Sir John Hawkwood of Sible Hedingham (d.1394) and his brother John Hawkwood the elder of Gosfield (d.c.1385) provide an insight into the networks of family, kinship and friendship which existed at the beginning of our period. (Fig. 3.3) As to the origins of the Hawkwood family there is little to be said. It is possible that the name comes from Hawk Wood in Gosfield, a small ancient wood close to present-day Hawkwood Farm. (Plate 3.4) Whatever their origin, the

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<sup>78</sup> J.Norden, *Speculi Britanniae Pars: An Historical and Chorographical Description of the County of Essex* Camden 9 (1840), p.42.



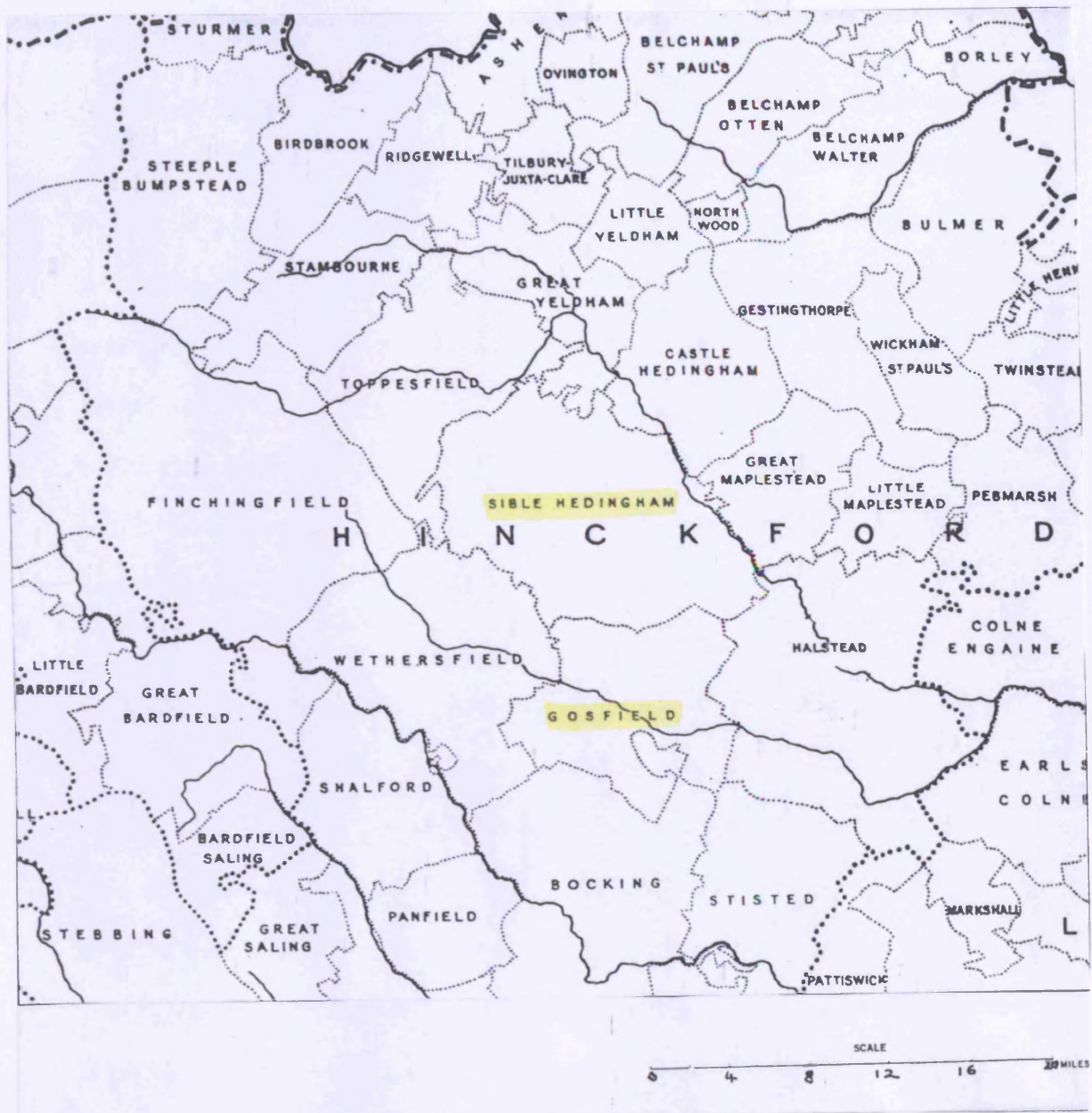


FIG 3.3 SIBLE HEDINGHAM AND GOSFIELD.



Hawkwoods were of unfree status at the beginning of the thirteenth century. A cartulary of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem preserves a number of references to individuals who were in all probability Sir John Hawkwood's lineal ancestors.<sup>79</sup> The earliest such reference is the confirmation of a sale by Robert de Hastings to Simon de Odewell and his wife Margaret of 'Alexandrum de Hauewode cum tota sequela et cum toto servicio'. The date of this transaction is c.1231.<sup>80</sup> In 1262 Walter Hawkwood, possibly Alexander's grandson, witnessed a grant by Walter the carpenter, of Sible Hedingham, relating to land and grazing in Sible Hedingham and Castle Hedingham respectively.<sup>81</sup> The subsidy of 1319/20 lists three Hawkwoods liable to tax in Sible Hedingham, William, Philip and Ellen (possibly a widow). Their precise relationship to Walter is not known but the two men may have been his grandsons.<sup>82</sup> Neither William nor Philip was assessed for tax in 1327 but in Sible Hedingham, Gilbert de Hawkwood, probably the son of one of them, was required to pay four shillings.<sup>83</sup>

Having risen from servile status the Hawkwood family as represented by Gilbert, had entered the ranks of the minor gentry at the beginning of the fourteenth century for Gilbert was a manorial lord. Whether it was Gilbert or one of his ancestors who acquired Hawkwoods manor in Sible Hedingham we do not know. Gilbert first appears in 1314/15 as party to a Fine and two years later he witnessed a Sible Hedingham grant.<sup>84</sup> In 1327, of the forty-four taxpayers in Sible Hedingham, only six were required to pay more than Gilbert; he paid four shillings and three pence in Finchingfield where

<sup>79</sup> M. Gervers ed., *Cartulary of Knights of St John of Jerusalem. Secunda Camera*. (1982).

<sup>80</sup> Gervers, *St John's Cartulary*, pp.20-21. Some one hundred and fifty years later in 1378, Alexander Hawkwood's descendant John Hawkwood the elder was himself able to buy 6 bondsmen on his own behalf. *Essex Fines* 3. p.185.

<sup>81</sup> Gervers, *St John's Cartulary*, p.29.

<sup>82</sup> Lay Subsidy for Essex 1319/20 E.R.O. T/A 564.

<sup>83</sup> J.C. Ward ed., *The Medieval Essex Community. The Lay Subsidy of 1327* E.R.O. Publication No. 88 (1983), p.63.

<sup>84</sup> *Essex Fines* 2, p.158 and Gervers, *St John's Cartulary* 2, pp.44-45.

he was also one of the highest rated taxpayers.<sup>85</sup> By 1336 Gilbert de Hawkwood had achieved sufficient status to witness a local deed in company with Sir John Botetort and Sir John Sutton.<sup>86</sup>

The most useful document concerning Gilbert de Hawkwood is his will dated 18 July 1340.<sup>87</sup> This tells a considerable amount about the Hawkwoods at that date but leaves many questions unanswered. The will was proven in St Peter's church, Sible Hedingham by the Commissary Thomas de Bocking who fixed his seal on the document on 10 October 1340. Gilbert made some fairly commonplace arrangements for his funeral – his will directs that he should be buried in St Peter's church, Sible Hedingham (an indication of his status). The will makes no mention of Gilbert's wife and there is no indication as to whether she was the source of his wealth. Perhaps he rose through his connection with the convent at Castle Hedingham to whose nuns he left numerous bequests. What the will does is to name his children. There are three sons, John the elder, John the younger and Nicholas; and there are four daughters : Agnes (married to Thomas Ruly), Joan (married to John Graveshall), Alice and Margaret (both unmarried). There is nothing to indicate why two of his sons are named John, perhaps Gilbert had an eye to the de Vere family living only a mile away whose son John was born c.1312. Maybe Gilbert held land from the earl or looked to him for some other form of patronage.

Some indication of Gilbert de Hawkwood's wealth is that he left his elder son John ten pounds and 'my yoke of six stots and of two oxen (the land must have been very

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<sup>85</sup> Ward, Medieval Essex Community, p.63

<sup>86</sup> E.R.O. D/DCw T46/3.

<sup>87</sup> B L Harl.Ch. 51. D. 6.

heavy to require such a plough team) at my messuage in Sible Hedingham' together with 10 quarters of wheat and 10 of oats. The will does not deal with the question of the family patrimony, as this would have been devised by way of his testament or some other instrument.<sup>88</sup> The Hawkwood home in Sible Hedingham was styled a 'messuage' in the will though it was almost certainly a manor.<sup>89</sup> The Hawkwood's house (Plate 5.19) still stands in Potter Street; though it has been largely rebuilt, it is now known as Hawkwood Manor.

Gilbert's daughters were also provided for: the two married women, Agnes and Joan, each received five pounds. Their unmarried sisters Alice and Margaret each received fifteen pounds and a bed. In addition to the bequest to his children there were bequests to seven members of the Munne family, one of whom, John Munne, was taxed at eighteen pence in the 1327 Subsidy. Perhaps the Munnes were his wife's family and John Munne was godfather to one of the Hawkwood boys baptised John. Other bequests were to local clergy, the prioress of Hedingham and each of her nuns, Gilbert's shepherds and servants and a tenant. The moveable property disposed of in his will amounts to about one hundred pounds, a considerable sum equating to the annual income from five sizeable manors (based on the 1412 tax returns).<sup>90</sup> It is such a large sum that it may only have existed in Gilbert's imagination for it was not uncommon – particularly in London – for testators to dispose of significant sums of money that they had no expectation of owning on the day of their death.

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<sup>88</sup> Will of Gilbert de Hawkwood (d.1340) BL Harl.Ch. 51.D.6.

<sup>89</sup> In a Fine of 1444 it was referred to as '28s8d rent called Hawkwoodes of Potterstrete in Hengham Sybill' *Essex Fines* 4 p.34.

<sup>90</sup> Manors worth £20 or more per annum were taxed in 1412, *Feudal Aids 1284-1431* 6, pp.433-447.

Gilbert de Hawkwood appointed his two elder sons and 'Sir John [Gallant]' vicar of Gosfield as his executors. It is not known why, although he craved burial in St Peter's church Sible Hedingham, and that he left money to nuns and various clergy including chantry priests, he did not appoint the rector of Sible Hedingham executor.<sup>91</sup> Gilbert left the residue of his estate to his executors for them to apply the proceeds for the benefit of his soul, the souls of his 'benefactors', and in celebration of masses and in alms for the poor.

The eldest of Gilbert's two sons named John was father of another John who was mentioned in a Fine of 1344 and who was under age.<sup>92</sup> The probability is that the elder John was born c.1310. On Gilbert's death in 1340, the elder John Hawkwood inherited his land by right of primogeniture.<sup>93</sup> It is not clear what was inherited but it almost certainly included one, perhaps two manors in Gosfield known to have been in John the elder's possession at a later date. It is possible that the Johannes *filius* Gilberti taxed at six pence for property in Gosfield in 1327 was Gilbert de Hawkwood's son.<sup>94</sup> Hawkwood's Farm (Plate 3.4) in Gosfield may have been John the elder's residence during the lifetime of his father; indeed it might have been the family home for a generation or two before Gilbert. Within eight years of inheriting his patrimony, John Hawkwood the elder obtained Letters Patent on 4 June 1348 to exempt him from the burdens of public office.<sup>95</sup> Thirty years later, on 7 October 1378, he paid half a mark to

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<sup>91</sup> The then rector of Sible Hedingham was Hugh de Strathern who was succeeded in 1369. R.Newcourt, *Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londinense* 2 (2 vols, 1708-1710), p.323.

<sup>92</sup> *Essex Fines* 3, p.72. John junior lived until at least 1368 when he witnessed a deed for Henry Prat in Kelvedon. ERO D/DU 40/50.

<sup>93</sup> John Hawkwood the elder was using his own seal by 1341, it shows a shield of arms with a lion rampant within a cusped quatrefoil. The legend reads: SECRETUM JOHANNIS DE HAUKWODE. Estate archive of Duchy of Lancaster PRO D125/1736.

<sup>94</sup> Ward, *Medieval Essex Community* p.66.

<sup>95</sup> *Cal.Pat.Rolls 1348-1350*, p.140.



**PLATE 3.4 HAWKWOOD'S FARM : GOSFIELD.**

obtain confirmation of the earlier grant.<sup>96</sup> This suggests that on the eve of the Black Death, John the elder was already prominent enough to be burdened with public duties linked to his status and income.

In 1344, John the elder, his wife Margery and their son (represented by a guardian) together with John Munne the elder (Munne and his brother had received a forty pence bequest from Gilbert de Hawkwood), sued out a fine which resulted in the transfer of four messuages and land in Gosfield, Sible Hedingham and Bocking from John Galant vicar of Gosfield (one of Gilbert de Hawkwood's executors) and John Calch (who received a bequest of forty shillings from Gilbert) doubtless acting as feoffees.<sup>97</sup> Calch and the Vicar held court in 1344 of Gosfield Hall prior to the transfer.<sup>98</sup> The transaction may represent the transfer of the Hawkwood patrimony in its entirety from Gilbert's trustees to John Hawkwood the elder.<sup>99</sup>

In 1360 John Hawkwood the elder held court at Park Hall Gosfield and in 1363 he witnessed a grant by John French of Halstead as '*dominus Johannes de Hawkwood*'.<sup>100</sup> He appears to have been seated at Gosfield and in a mortgage dated 1372 he and others granted to John de Newport he is described as 'of Gosfield'.<sup>101</sup> Gosfield was part of the endowment of the nunnery at Hedingham Castle founded by Alberic de Vere, first earl of Oxford. The Prioress and Convent had the advowson, and in the light of his other known connections with the nunnery Gilbert de Hawkwood may have been their bailiff.

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<sup>96</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1377-1381, p.277.

<sup>97</sup> Essex Fines 3, p. 72.

<sup>98</sup> Morant, History of Essex, 2 p.378.

<sup>99</sup> John Hawkwood the elder and his wife Margery rented pasture in Gosfield from Sir John Bourghier by a grant dated October 1354. E.R.O. D/DCw T37/31.

<sup>100</sup> Morant, History of Essex, 2 p.379 and Gervers, St John's Cartulary, pp.121-122.

<sup>101</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1369-74 pp.573-574.

The inquisition *post mortem* of Thomas de Vere, earl of Oxford, who died in 1371 (for whom John Hawkwood the elder was executor – an indication of his considerable local status) shows that the elder Hawkwood then held two thirds of a knight's fee from the earl in Sible Hedingham.<sup>102</sup> This was presumably the manor of Hawkwoods in Potter Street. Hawkwood was also employed as a feoffee by the earl – all this suggests that Hawkwood may have been his steward or lawyer – mainly for land in Leicestershire, Rutland and Kent. Hawkwood was later to be feoffee for the earl's widow countess Maud – he was clearly a trusted retainer of the de Vere family.<sup>103</sup>

In 1375 John the elder acted as feoffee for local lawyer John Kempe of Finchingfield (Kempe almost certainly married Hawkwood's widowed sister Agnes c.1346).<sup>104</sup> In 1379 John Hawkwood petitioned the escheator of Essex and Hertfordshire on behalf of Sir William Coggeshall (his brother Sir John's son-in-law) and gave evidence of his full age.<sup>105</sup> In the same year Hawkwood had sufficient capital to lend the King twenty pounds.<sup>106</sup> John the elder was a feoffee for his brother Sir John in 1380.<sup>107</sup> When described as 'the elder' by this time it is not clear whether it was to distinguish him from his brother (long ago knighted) or his own son John.<sup>108</sup>

In the poll tax returns of 1381 John Hawkwood and his wife Margaret were assessed at five shillings.<sup>109</sup> More interesting is that John Hawkwood's status or degree is noted in the margin of the return as 'frankeleyn' – a term implying wealth and status

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<sup>102</sup> Cal.I.P.M. 13 pp.92-103.

<sup>103</sup> Cal.Pat.Rolls 1401-1405, pp.69-70 and 512-513.

<sup>104</sup> Essex Fines 3 p.176.

<sup>105</sup> Cal.Pat.Rolls 1377-1381 p.637.

<sup>106</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1377-1381, pp.262-263.

<sup>107</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1377-1381, pp.367-368.

<sup>108</sup> E.R.O. D/DU 40/50.

<sup>109</sup> Fenwick, Poll Taxes p.210.

(Chaucer's Franklin had been sheriff, knight of the shire, head of the Sessions, and possibly also a lawyer) but not gentility, someone in fact who might be only a generation or two from servile status. This is the last known reference to Margaret Hawkwood. It is not known when John the elder died but he is last heard of renting land on the manor of Graves Hall, Gosfield, in 1385.<sup>110</sup>

Of John Hawkwood's sisters we know comparatively little. Agnes, the first named and presumably the eldest, was the wife of Thomas Ruly in 1340. As has been said she received a modest bequest of £5 from her father, like her married sister Joan. The sums were not to be paid at once but were to remain in the hands of their elder brother John 'for their need' and to be paid to them 'as he considers it for their advantage'.<sup>111</sup> These then were Hawkwood's immediate family in England; we can now consider his kin.

The Ruly family were minor gentry of similar but more ancient status than the Hawkwoods. They first appear in a deed of c.1180 – c.1190 when Robert de Roilia was witness to grant of land to the Hospitallers in Sturmer.<sup>112</sup> The family was afterwards widely distributed in Essex but its economic centre was in Ramsey in the north east of the county where, like the Hawkwoods, they had held a manor (Ray or Le Ray) from the earls of Oxford, probably since the reign of Henry III.

The branch of the Ruly family which was closest geographically to the Hawkwood's of Sible Hedingham lived at Finchingfield where Richard Ruly (dead by 1279) had held land. Richard's widow Sabina, son Thomas and daughter Margaret were living in

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<sup>110</sup> E.R.O. D/DBm M164.

<sup>111</sup> Will of Gilbert de Hawkwood. B.L. Harl.Ch. 51. D. 6.

<sup>112</sup> Gervers, *St John's Cartulary* p.191.



1279 when Margaret sued out a fine for land in Finchingfield.<sup>113</sup> Her son Thomas may have been the ancestor of the Thomas Ruly (whose origins are entirely unknown) who married Gilbert de Hawkwood's daughter Agnes, both of whom were living in 1340.<sup>114</sup>

It is possible that Agnes Ruly remarried after her husband's death, as between 1346-1350 John Kempe and his wife Agnes held half a fee in Finchingfield which had formerly belonged to Thomas Ruly.<sup>115</sup> This is unlikely to refer to the Thomas Ruly alive in 1279 but rather it refers to a descendant and namesake, thereby establishing Agnes Hawkwood's husband as a member of the Finchingfield clan. John Kempe of Spain's Hall (his father Nicholas having married Margaret de Ispagnia, an heiress) was a rising man who frequently appears in the Essex Fines between 1343 and 1366 as an attorney.<sup>116</sup> By 1383 he had remarried, his wife being the Katherine with whom he purchased land in Finchingfield.<sup>117</sup> In 1375 John Kempe the attorney enfeoffed John Hawkwood the elder – who was probably his first wife's brother – with his patrimony in Finchingfield, Great Sampford and Great Bardfield.<sup>118</sup> It appears likely therefore that Agnes Hawkwood married into two relatively minor but long-established gentry families, an indication of the status of her own family.

Joan, Gilbert de Hawkwood's second daughter, is described in his will as being the wife of John son of John Graveshall.<sup>119</sup> By a fine of 1314-1315 John de Graveshall and his wife Agnes (sic) - presumably the parents - of Hawkwood's son-in-law, acquired a messuage and more than 400 acres in Sible Hedingham from Master Richard de

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<sup>113</sup> *Essex Fines* 2 p.25.

<sup>114</sup> BL Harl.Ch. 51. D. 6.

<sup>115</sup> *Feudal Aids 1284-1431*, 2 p.163.

<sup>116</sup> *Essex Fines* 3, pp.66 and 148.

<sup>117</sup> *Essex Fines* 3, p.199.

<sup>118</sup> *Essex Fines* 3, p.176.

<sup>119</sup> BL Harl.Ch. 51. D. 6.

Canfield and Gilbert de Hawkwood.<sup>120</sup> It would appear that the messuage and land in fact represented Graveshall's manor in Sible Hedingham and that the fine effected a transfer to John Graveshall from Canfield in Hawkwood as feoffees. Gilbert de Hawkwood's son-in-law John Graveshall held the manor of Graves Hall for a knight's fee from the de Vere family in 1360 (on the death of the 7<sup>th</sup> earl of Oxford and in 1371 on the death of the 8<sup>th</sup> earl).<sup>121</sup> The Hawkwoods of Gosfield and Sible Hedingham show how one insignificant minor gentry family could within a generation or two of its rise from servile status, establish itself in a widespread county gentry network. We have now examined kinship in the neighbourhood area.

The second component of the neighbourhood area, but stretching far beyond it, was an individual's network of friendship.<sup>122</sup> What indication do we have of friendship within neighbourhood communities? A number of factors present themselves – men chose their feoffees from amongst those they could trust. This was absolutely crucial for on it depended the safety of them or more often their heirs' title to land, usually the family patrimony. Many feoffees were kin, others were personal friends, men with whom they had grown up, served overseas on military duty or with whom they were joint members of baronial affinities.

Some were magnates exercising good lordship for those who needed them as feoffee. Another category was the group of professionally trustworthy priests and lawyers who served in the capacity of feoffee for a fee, in the case of the lawyers, or perhaps out of

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<sup>120</sup> *Essex Fines* 2, p.158.

<sup>121</sup> *Cal.I.P.M.* 10, pp.513-521 and *Cal. I.P.M.* 13, pp.92-103.

<sup>122</sup> Philippa Maddern describes the dichotomy of affective versus instrumental relationships in medieval England in "Best Trusted Friends": concepts and practices of friendship among fifteenth-century Norfolk gentry' in N.Rogers ed., *England in the Fifteenth Century* (1994), pp.96-115.

Christian duty as clergymen.<sup>123</sup> An indication of an individual member of the gentry's choice of friends as well as some of his kin, who might not otherwise be known, is his choice of feoffees. Reliable feoffees were crucial to the maintenance of a family estate so a man would look to those in whom he could place complete trust even beyond the grave. The very livelihood of one's dependants and successors hung on the trustworthiness of feoffees and executors.<sup>124</sup>

In general, the gentry were sufficiently cautious as to use their own friends and associates (less often their kin) as their feoffees to use. When planning the disposal of their estate, the more powerful gentry tended to enfeoff a number of the great men of their acquaintance, dukes, bishops and other magnates who presumably were content simply to lend their name to the proceedings but did not expect, in fact, to act as trustees. Magnates and principal gentry could even be persuaded to lend their name to the most minute of transactions, such as the enfeoffment of as little as a few shillings rent where this presumably related to a matter of principal or was symbolic in some way. In 1412 John Pointz, lord of North Ockendon engaged none other than Joan, countess of Hereford, together with Sir Gerard Braybroke, Sir Richard Waldegrave, Robert Rikedon, Robert Darcy (four lawyers who were members of her affinity) and others as feoffees for a mere three shillings rent in South Ockendon.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Richard Baynard invariably used William Tasseburgh 'the parson of Rayleigh' as one of his feoffees, Cal. Close Rolls 1402-1405, pp.295 and Cal. Close Rolls 1405-1409, p.284. Occasionally John Sotel the parish priest of Messing was employed as a witness as well as Tasseburgh. Cal. Close Rolls 1405-1409, p.276-277.

<sup>124</sup> Maddern, 'Best Trusted Friends', p.108.

<sup>125</sup> Essex Fines 3. p.259.

Where kinfolk were appointed as feoffees, it was not usually direct descendants who were chosen, simply because they were invariably the ultimate beneficiaries of the enfeoffment. Sir William Coggeshall of Wethersfield enfeoffed two of his sons-in-law, John Tyrell and John Doreward (both of whom happened to be lawyers) together with the latter's father in 1417.<sup>126</sup> It was, however, common for close relatives to act together for gentry who were not kin. The Doreward (father and son) had acted together as feoffees for Rose Cavendish, widow of Sir Andrew Cavendish in 1416; she also employed the brothers William and Geoffrey Swinburne for the same purpose.<sup>127</sup> John Tyrell of East Horndon and his son-in-law John Cornwallis (almost certainly a lawyer) were joint feoffees in Essex on several occasions between 1408 and 1420.<sup>128</sup>

Some gentry enfeoffed the lords to whose affinity they belonged, partly, perhaps as a compliment to them, but also in the hope of securing their good offices should the need arise.<sup>129</sup> By the same token, the sub-gentry occasionally sought the gentry as feoffees. John Leventhorpe esquire consented, for example, to act for John Smith of Thaxted in respect of a tiny messuage.<sup>130</sup> There is no apparent pattern or consistency about the number of feoffees chosen but it is noticeable that women were seldom chosen. There are a few exceptions to the rule or custom which appears to have excluded them even though many women held land in their own right and sought to enfeoff others with their own land. Elizabeth Wolfreston (probably the widow of Roger Wolfreston) and a number of men were appointed as feoffees for Thomas and Joan Green of Stebbing (whose status was sub-gentry).<sup>131</sup> Widows were particularly likely to

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<sup>126</sup> *Essex Fines* 3, p. 267.

<sup>127</sup> *Essex Fines* 3, p. 265.

<sup>128</sup> *Essex Fines* 3, pp. 250-272.

<sup>129</sup> *Essex Fines* 3, p. 259 Robert Tey enfeoffed Countess Joan and the earl of Oxford.

<sup>130</sup> *Essex Fines* 3, p. 264.

<sup>131</sup> *Essex Fines* 3, p. 264.

protect their interests in land by enfeoffing their lord and his immediate circle as Rose Cavendish had done in 1416.<sup>132</sup>

There are clear examples of the gentry in baronial affinities acting together for their lord or for each other. Countess Joan's affinity which included Sir William Berland, Nicholas Berners, John de Boys, Ralph Chamberlain, Thomas Lampet, Sir Thomas Mandeville, Sir William Marney, Robert Rikedon, Robert Rokele, John Rookwood, Clement Spice, Sir John and Sir Richard Sutton and Sir Robert Swinburne was particularly active in this respect as indicated by the many fines sued out in the Common Pleas.<sup>133</sup>

In addition to powerful members of Essex society, the gentry sometimes chose their local social inferiors as feoffees. Where such individuals were willing and trustworthy their local knowledge in the case of a dispute would no doubt have been invaluable. It is not known whether they, or any other feoffee received a fee for their trouble but it is likely the favour was reciprocated in some way. John Basset of Great Chishill was sometimes a feoffee for relatively minor figures but invariably jointly with other powerful members of the gentry who included Sir William Coggeshall, Robert Tey, Clement Spice, Robert Rikedon, and Richard Waltham.<sup>134</sup> Was he merely a willing make weight or was he yet another lawyer acting for a fee? The value of cultivating local, if minor individuals, is evident from the accounts of proof of age inquests where it was invariably possible to call on low status neighbours to give evidence regarding

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<sup>132</sup> *Essex Fines* 3, p.265.

<sup>133</sup> An example of the affinity working together is the grant dated 20 February 1408 in which Thomas Lampet, Robert Rokele and others granted land (as feoffees) to John Boys and his wife Margaret. The grant was witnessed by Sir William Bourghier, Sir William Coggeshall, Clement Spice, Ralph Chamberlain and others. E.R.O. D/DB TI 324.

<sup>134</sup> Basset was feoffee for sub-gentry William Saxi and his wife Elizabeth in 1430 *Essex Fines* 4 p.14.

the date of birth of the heir. Their testimony sometimes conveys the close-knit nature of the communities in which they lived.<sup>135</sup>

There are other members of the gentry who inexplicably appear frequently as feoffees : John de Boys was exceptionally popular; clearly he was trusted and valued by his peers.<sup>136</sup> The frequency with which two unrelated members of the middling gentry William Hanningfield (d.1426) and William Totham of Canewdon (fl.1403) acted together as feoffees seems to suggest a partnership; once again it had to be questioned whether they were lawyers or trusted friends.<sup>137</sup> This may also be true of Ralph Leventhorpe of Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire who was a popular and frequent choice for the Essex gentry who clearly did not see the county border as a barrier to a trusting relationship.<sup>138</sup> In general, the long-established gentry appear much less frequently as feoffees than parvenus. Boxted, Filioll, Liston, Martel and Mounteney are rarely glimpsed. The ancient families were less active in the land market than parvenus and their absence as feoffees is perhaps explained by their disinterest in reciprocity.

The more powerful gentry, particularly knights, seldom acted as feoffees without at least one another member of the elite and usually on behalf of one of their own kind. Some knights rarely acted as feoffees, Sir Alexander Goldingham of Chigwell (d.1408), Sir Lewis John (d.1442), and Sir Robert Marney (d.c.1386) seem to have avoided what

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<sup>135</sup> Henry Bysyden giving evidence on behalf of Thomas Torrell of West Thurrock 'says that he knows by the relation and testimony of trustworthy people' whilst John atte More 'says that he knows by the common report in the county' *Cal.I.P.M.* 10 (1353), p.122.

<sup>136</sup> In 1383 Boys was a feoffee for Sir William Elman in common with Sir Walter Fitzwalter, Sir John Sutton, Sir Richard Sutton, John Bataill and the parson of Stratford. *Essex Fines* 3 p.196.

<sup>137</sup> Totham and Hanningfield first acted as feoffees together in 1403 for Sir John Scot of Yorkshire. *Essex Fines* 3, p.240.

<sup>138</sup> This partnership began in 1403 *Essex Fines* 3, p.239.

might have been an onerous responsibility.

When selecting their feoffees, the choice of the principal gentry occasionally fell not on their own kind, but the lesser gentry. Sir Richard Sutton of Wivenhoe, who held eight manors in Essex, chose a mixed group of Essex and Suffolk esquires (Wivenhoe is close to the Suffolk border) including Thomas Coggeshall, Edmund Brokesbourne, Roger Wolfreston, John Boys, and Ralph Chamberlain (several of whom appear to be lawyers) as his feoffees to uses in 1393.<sup>139</sup> In the same year however, John Doreward of Bocking, still only an esquire of middling rank, chose the Bishop of London, the earl of Oxford, three knights, four esquires, a priest, a chaplain and several other minor figures as his feoffees.<sup>140</sup>

Recently arrived gentry such as Poncius Pointz, formerly of Gloucester, who, having married an Essex heiress, sought in 1376 to settle his newly acquired manor of North Ockendon on trustees, neither of whom appear to have had any connection with Essex.<sup>141</sup> Richard Fox however, another Essex parvenu, was soon and frequently to be found as a feoffee with John Doreward, Robert Rikedon and others perhaps because he was a lawyer.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Leventhorpe was one of a distinguished group of feoffees for Sir William Bourghier in 1417 Essex Fines 3, p.267 in respect of the distant manor of West Thurrock whilst in 1406 he had been feoffee to Robert Newport, John Barley and their wives for the manor of Herteshoo in Farnham just inside the Essex border. Essex Fines 3, p.246. Similarly he was feoffee for Alice, countess of Oxford (widow of Sir Nicholas Thorley) together with Sir Thomas Tyrell, Richard Alrede esquire, William Tyrell esquire and Thomas Scargill. E.R.O. D/DB T96/41.

<sup>140</sup> Essex Fines 3, p.220.

<sup>141</sup> Essex Fines 3, p.179.

<sup>142</sup> Richard Fox began his activities as a feoffee in Essex (he had moved from Northamptonshire) with two other lawyers, John Doreward and Robert Rikedon in 1415. Essex Fines 3, p.264.

The early charters of Richard Baynard of Messing (d.1434) illustrate how the men chosen as feoffees and witnesses to the same lands could vary considerably within a few years. On 1 April 1403, when he settled his entire patrimony on feoffees, he chose Edmund, duke of York, Sir William Marney (a neighbour) and Sir John Howard, together with six senior members of the Essex/Suffolk gentry and five lesser local figures as feoffees.<sup>143</sup> The witnesses to the documents were, however, minor local (to Messing) individuals clearly chosen for their local knowledge rather than their social standing.<sup>144</sup> On 10 April 1407 the same patrimony was entrusted to less prominent feoffees when it was re-enfeoffed to three senior members of the Essex gentry and four lesser figures, two of whom were landowners.<sup>145</sup> The witnesses to the charter of enfeoffment however were much more important than those who witnessed the earlier documents; headed by Sir William Marney (a former feoffee) they included three other members of the gentry (two of them senior) and a parson.

It is rare for us to know the personal wishes of those who enfeoffed their land beyond what is contained in the routine transaction of the Common Pleas and personal charters of enfeoffment. However, the will of Sir William Berland of Rochford (d.1393) gives us an idea of the careful precautions enfeoffment required : ‘my will is that those who are feoffees in my lands are enfeoffed on the following conditions, if it pleases the said Sir William [Berland] to be re-enfeoffed in the future the said feoffees are bound to re-enfeoff him without warranty’.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> E.R.O. VB 49.

<sup>144</sup> The much married Baynard may have been cultivating his lesser neighbours with an eye to their eventual appearance as IPM jurors who would give evidence in support of the claims of his eventual heirs. Christine Carpenter refers to this phenomenon elsewhere. *Stonor Circle* p.176.

<sup>145</sup> E.R.O. D/DH VB 47: D/DH VB 51.

<sup>146</sup> Will of Sir William Berland; Ward, *Women of English nobility and gentry*, pp.34-35.



Essex fines show that particular lawyers acted frequently and for a whole range of Essex clients. Clearly they usually worked on a fee basis and there were occasions when they transacted feoffments in the Common Pleas for batches of clients but they must have also acted out of friendship. Sometimes the gentry used clusters of lawyers as feoffees for the same property as in the case of Nicholas Talbot and his wife Ismania who employed John Doreward, Robert Newport, Clement Spice, Robert Rikedon and John Greene on one occasion in 1415.<sup>147</sup> In our period the following lawyers have been identified as feoffees: Richard Alrede, Richard Baynard, Thomas Birchleigh of Witham, Thomas Cays, John Doreward, Richard Fox, Robert Newport, Robert Rikedon, Thomas Rolf, William Skrene, Clement Spice, Sir John Tyrell, and Richard Waltham. It is to be noted that only one of these lawyers achieved knighthood although there were other lawyers, Sir Peter Arderne and Sir Thomas Urswick who did not appear to have acted as feoffees. Richard Baynard, himself a lawyer, often made use of feoffees but rarely acted as one. Was he too busy, too unapproachable or simply deemed untrustworthy? This trust given to feoffees could on occasion be misplaced. The manuscript edited by Christine Carpenter which outlines the course of litigation surrounding the Armburgh inheritance c.1417-c.1453 includes a copy of a letter c.1427-8 from Robert Kedlington to his godfather Thomas Bendish of Steeple Bumpstead accusing him in very strong language of acting fraudulently as the feoffee and executor of his father Philip Kedlington. 'And fordermore aftyr the decces of my fader ye stale me fro my frendys and delyuered me vp to the erle of Oxinford, vndyr whos gouernance I was so euyllly kept that I schall fare the werse of my body all the dayes of my lyef.'<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> *Essex Fines* 3, p.266.

<sup>148</sup> C.Carpenter ed., *The Armburgh Papers* (1998), pp.90-91.

Other indicators of personal friendship are the people that were chosen as executors. Family members predominated in this function; invariably the spouse or children were the principal executors but beyond this, a man chose those he could trust to carry out his wishes – much as he did when he appointed feoffees. As in the case of feoffees, there was a tendency to appoint social superiors as supervisors rather than executors. A number of the gentry also appointed lawyers or citizens of London, the latter perhaps for their worldliness or business acumen, but also because many of the gentry had tenements, shops or businesses in London.<sup>149</sup> Sir Gerard Braybroke (d.1429) was unusual in this respect, appointing four parish priests as his executors, and the Dean of St Paul's together with his granddaughter's husband as his supervisors.<sup>150</sup> William Hanningfield seems to have been particularly careful in the appointment of his executors. Not only did he choose two powerful members of the Essex gentry, Robert Tey and John Basset, but a Londoner John Whetley and a man who was clearly valued for his personal qualities, named Philip Dane, who was to be paid twenty pounds for his trouble 'for he is pore'. In addition to his executors, Hanningfield asked his friend William Balington 'forto be good helper and counceillour to myn Executours in all matiers of lawe touching hem...'<sup>151</sup>

A feature of gentry life in the late middle ages was the importance of prayers for the dead. These were usually provided for by testators who carefully balanced their need

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<sup>149</sup> Edward Tyrell of Downham (d.1442) appointed William Melreth, citizen and alderman of London as executor. Tyrell may have had doubts about Thomas Tyrell his nephew and executor (to whom his patrimony eventually passed in tail male) for he took the precaution of saying in his will 'that he shall nott interrupt, breke ne contrarye any articul of this my sayde wyll nor do be interrupted nor brokun by hym in any wyse, and yff the sayd remaynders be nott parfomed in fourme abovewrytton withyne the said iij yere and allso yf he interrupte, breke or contrarye any articul of this m[y] last wyll or ony peynt of the sayd articles....I wyll the sayd remaynder mad to the same Thomas my nefew be voyde'. P.C.C. 16 Rous.

<sup>150</sup> E.W.Brabrook, 'The will of Sir Gerard de Braybroke of Danbury knt., A.D. 1429' T.E.A.S. 5 (1873), pp.296-303.

<sup>151</sup> Will of William Hanningfield (d.1426) P.C.C. 6 Luffenham.

for assistance in the next world against their ability to pay for prayers in the present. The richest of them provided for chantry chapels and chantry priests, an expensive luxury which usually required an endowment managed by trustees. Such trustees were either lawyers acting in a professional capacity or reliable friends, sometimes a combination of the two. Brian Roucliff, third baron of the Exchequer, an executor and kinsman of Sir Peter Arderne of Latton (d.1467) (formerly Chief Justice of the Common Pleas) granted Richard Haddilsey, the perpetual chaplain of Sir Peter's chantry in Latton church, the manor of Overhall in Gliston, Hertfordshire, to pray for the souls of Sir Peter and his benefactors by a charter of 9 December 1476.<sup>152</sup>

Even in death, the gentry formed communities with their family and friends. Family and kinship burial groups are known to have existed in many Essex churches, as for example, the Baynards at Messing, the Dorewards at Bocking and the Tyrells at East Horndon. Some manorial families were buried close to their predecessors or their spouse's ancestors. The Swinburne family were a particularly close-knit group. Lady Joan Swinburne, wife of Sir Robert (d.1391) and several of her Botetort ancestors were buried at Belchamp Walter, together with two of her five sons.<sup>153</sup> Her husband, stepson and two other sons are buried at Little Horkesley close to the bodies of the Horkesley family who held the manor for centuries before them. At Tolleshunt Major, three generations of the Higham family, all named Robert (who died between 1427 and 1460) were commemorated by brasses (long since lost) which Richard Symonds saw and recorded in 1639.<sup>154</sup> It was common for testators to specify burial close to the

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<sup>152</sup> E.R.O. D/DU 622.

<sup>153</sup> College of Arms Symonds Essex MS 2. f. 516.

<sup>154</sup> College of Arms Symonds Essex MS 1 f. 197.

family. Sir Thomas Marney (d.1421) chose to be buried 'near my father' and Thomas Knyvet of Stanway chose to be buried 'between my wives'<sup>155</sup>

The gentry were doing no more than imitating the magnates when they created mausolea for their families in parish churches. The de Veres had done as much at Colne priory, the Bohuns at Walden Abbey, the Bourghiers in Halstead parish church and the Fitzwalters at Little Dunmow priory. It is likely that some of the gentry, particularly members of affinities, were buried close to the magnates but there is little evidence for this.

Some gentry chose not to be buried in the parish church however. Edward Tyrell of Downham (d.1442) gave instructions that he should be 'bered in the churche of the freres of Chelmesford withyne my chapell that I have mad ther newe'.<sup>156</sup> Edward's nephew Sir Thomas Tyrell (d.1476) left money to the Chelmsford friars but chose to be buried in his parish church.<sup>157</sup> William Hanningfield (d.1426) chose to be buried in St Nicholas chapel, Bicknacre priory.<sup>158</sup>

London was a popular burial place for the elite gentry, probably because many of them happened to die there. The result was that there may have been clusters of Essex men and women in particular churches, sometimes several generations of a single family. In the Austin Friars church, Sir John Tyrell (d.1437), his wife Katherine, his sons William senior (d.1460) and Sir William junior (d.1471) and his grandson Sir William (d.1471), together with members of the de Vere, Bourghier and Bohun

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<sup>155</sup> *Testamenta Vetusta* pp.196 and 294.

<sup>156</sup> P.C.C. 16 Rous.

<sup>157</sup> P.C.C. 31 Wattys.

<sup>158</sup> P.C.C. 6 Luffenham.

families were buried within the same walls.<sup>159</sup> Lady Alice Fitzralph (d.1471) willed that : ‘if I die in London, to be carried to the church of the Grey Friars minor, beside Newgate, and buried by my mother’s sepulture called Dame Johane Pomeray’<sup>160</sup> Lewis John (d.1442) made provision for his burial in the abbey of St Mary Grace, London, perhaps deeming this more fitting than the church adjacent to his home at West Horndon or, just as likely, choosing the city where he grew rich as his burial place.<sup>161</sup> Sir Gerard Braybrooke (d.1429) made provision in his will for his burial in his parish church but in a codicil specified that ‘whanne my sowle is passed to God that my body be caried to the cherche of Poules’ where his uncle, Robert Braybrooke, Bishop of London (d.1404) lay buried.<sup>162</sup>

Further indications of trust and friendship are the powers of attorney granted by one man to another, when undertaking a hazardous enterprise such as a journey overseas. In some cases, as when John Coggeshall, son and heir of John Coggeshall of Rivenhall granted to William Coggeshall to Witham on 26 July 1391 it was from one kinsman to another.<sup>163</sup>

Nigel Saul identified the consequences of the obligations owed to kinsmen, neighbours and friends. ‘As members of the office-holding elite they had conflicting responsibilities to the king to execute his orders and to their peers to ensure that local affairs were run to their mutual advantage. And finally as clients or retainers they were linked to the nobility by the complementary processes of service and sponsorship.’ He

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<sup>159</sup> H.Morley ed., A Survey of London by John Stow 1598 (1994 edn.)

<sup>160</sup> P.C.C. 2 Wattys.

<sup>161</sup> P.C.C. 14 Rous.

<sup>162</sup> Brabrook ‘Will of Sir Gerard Braybroke’ p.299.

<sup>163</sup> E.R.O. D/Dxa 5.

considers that 'conflict in medieval society contained the seeds of its own destruction' since it arose from 'the differences that separated people' and 'the greater the number of claims on peoples' allegiance, the more difficult they would find it to commit themselves to any one, and the greater would be the pressure to effect a settlement...Divisive tendencies were thus neutralized, and the formation of permanently hostile groups rendered all but impossible.'<sup>164</sup>

As has been said, many Essex gentry activities (particularly those of the principal and greater gentry) spilled over the border into neighbouring counties. For the leading families in western and northern Essex their neighbourhood extended into Hertfordshire, Cambridge and Suffolk where many of them had land as well as kin. Contacts across the Thames into Kent were extremely limited however. Cross border contacts worked both ways; gentry resident in Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk may well have held land and / or found their marriage partners in Essex, and vice versa. For example, John Barley (d.1446), William Rokesburgh (d.1434), John Goldington (d.1419), John Kirkby (d.1443), Sir Walter Lee (d.1395), John Leventhorpe (d.1435) and Robert Newport (d.1417) had their capital manors in Hertfordshire but also held land in Essex where they were involved with their counterparts in county affairs. The fact that Essex and Hertfordshire were administered as a joint shrievalty and escheatry clearly brought the gentry into contact with one another. Similarly, Essex gentry such as John Hende, Sir John Tyrell,<sup>165</sup> Edward Tyrell, Richard Baynard, Clement Spice, Robert Rikedon and Sir Lewis John had land in London which, apart from their business interests, would have brought them into contact with Londoners. It

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<sup>164</sup> N.Saul, 'Conflict and consensus in English local society' in J.Taylor and W.Childs eds, Politics and Crisis in Fourteenth-Century England (1992), pp.38-58.

<sup>165</sup> Sir John Tyrell for example, owned a brewhouse in the parish of St Christopher, Cornhill called the 'Cok and Sterre' Cal.Close Rolls 1454-1461 p.489.

is also the case that some of the principal Essex gentry were appointed to county office in other counties where they held land.<sup>166</sup>

It was a feature of Essex gentry life that marriage partners were not sought solely in the local community but in many cases across the county border. Of the forty-seven married knights who were resident in Essex between 1381 and 1450 the origins of twenty-two (forty-seven percent) of their spouses are known. Fourteen (thirty percent) were the daughters or widowers of Essex magnates or gentry and eight (seventeen percent) originated beyond the county border.<sup>167</sup> The daughters of London merchants were also acceptable as spouses, particularly where they were heiresses or the widows of rich men. Some Essex families, such as the Filiolls and Teys but most notably the Coggeshalls (male and female) between c.1300 and c.1420 married almost exclusively into the local gentry. Four of the children of Robert Darcy of Maldon (d.1448) married Tyrells of Heron Hall, East Horndon. Other families were almost entirely endogamous in their approach to the marriage market, for example the Dorewards, Marneys, Bruyns and Torells. Whilst some Essex gentry held their land exclusively in Essex, Robert Tey (d.1426) with eleven manors, John Gobion (d.1403) five manors, Sir Edmund Bensted (d.1432) had two manors in Essex, one in Kent and one in Hertfordshire, Richard Torell (d.1404) had three manors in Essex and one in Sussex, Sir Ingram Bruyn (d.1400) one manor in Essex, one in Dorset, one in Kent and three in Hampshire.<sup>168</sup> In the competition for eligible Essex heiresses, it seems to be the case that out-of-county

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<sup>166</sup> Lewis John was MP for Hampshire in 1414; William Hanningfield was MP for Suffolk in 1419 and Robert Darcy was MP for Newcastle in 1401. J.S.Roskell, L.Clark and C.Rawcliffe eds, The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1386-1421 (1993).

<sup>167</sup> The information is derived largely from wills, inquisitions *post mortem* and Feet of Fine records for Essex.

<sup>168</sup> This information is derived from inquisitions *post mortem*.

suitors were often the most successful. This would account for the considerable immigration of 'foreign' gentry during this period. Lawyers such as Robert Darcy and Richard Fox from Northumberland and Northamptonshire respectively, acquired manorial lordship or other estates through marriage to Essex heiresses.

The third major component of the neighbourhood was the group of associates with whom the family regularly transacted business. These included tenants, local clergy, magnates, professional advisors (such as lawyers and doctors, traders, arbitrators), resident county officials and other acquaintances.

As to tenants, the *famuli* or permanent workers on the manor, these were recently described by David Farmer who distinguished between labourers such as ploughmen, carters, shepherds, cowmen and woodwards and managers such as reeves, haywards, parkers, foresters and grangers.<sup>169</sup> Not all these occupations would have been represented on any particular manor but each manorial lord would have been in contact with the majority of them.

The clergy, particularly parochial clergy, chantry priests and private chaplains would frequently have come into contact with their local manorial lord. Priests not only performed ecclesiastical duties but kept manorial accounts, wrote letters, drafted wills and charters and were generally available as trusted feoffees, executors, witnesses and councillors. Numerous charters and wills testify to the enormous use made by the gentry of this group.

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<sup>169</sup> D.Farmer, 'The *famuli* in the late Middle Ages' in R.H.Britnell and J.Hatcher eds, Progress and Problems in Medieval England (1996), pp.207-236.



Where the protection of an inheritance was paramount, resort to lawyers would have been a regular occurrence. No doubt this was usually for a professional fee but there may have been instances when a lawyer acted on behalf of a fellow member of the gentry simply for friendship's sake. In the case of arbitration, this was usually performed by laymen rather than lawyers. In cases of dispute the good offices of reliable gentry might be sought to assist the settlement of estates. In 1408 countess Joan, Sir Gerard Braybroke and Sir William Marney were chosen as arbitrators in the case of a dispute over property between John Barrington and John de Boys who had married daughters of John Bataill.<sup>170</sup>

We now move away from family, kin and associates. Linked to the primary social community – the manor - were those communities which overlapped it in terms of territory or were associated with it in the hierarchy of social communities - parish, hundred, county and region. Associated with these social communities were the political and functional communities of the shire that overlapped or interpenetrated them.

The political community has already been described in terms of the principal and greater gentry who between them held most of the important shire offices, men who were both politically and economically active. The group consisted of not only the rich long-established families such as the Tyrells, Coggeshalls, Dorewards and Baynards but it also contained a number of parvenus, many of them lawyers such as Clement Spice, Robert Darcy, and Richard Fox whose personal wealth and dynamism assured them of county offices, advantageous marriages, heiresses and manorial lordships.

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<sup>170</sup> E.R.O. D/DBa T6/4 and D/DB T1324.

Although they were in direct competition for scarce resources with the old established families, many of these parvenus seemed effortlessly (certainly rapidly) to achieve acceptance in gentry society.

In addition to the political community of the county there were a number of functional communities with links to many local communities. These included religious houses of which there were more than forty in Essex in the year 1400. Most of these exercised manorial and proprietary rights in much the same way as the gentry. Other functional communities were based on trade, crafts and manufacture. In the vicinity of Halstead, the population of the surrounding villages formed a community in which cloth making was the principal occupation.<sup>171</sup> The gentry had links with this industry – a number of them owning fulling mills or other premises where cloth was produced.

Essex boroughs, there were perhaps fifteen in 1381, were also functional communities.<sup>172</sup> In the largest, Colchester, Chelmsford and Maldon a small number of urban gentry were domiciled. Principal amongst these were the Darcy family of Maldon and the Godstones and Kimberleys of Colchester.<sup>173</sup>

In addition to the communities already described, there are also to be mentioned magnate affinities and what could be termed 'interest groups'. In many ways they meet the criteria of a community but they are often seen by historians in terms of networks

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<sup>171</sup> Gervers, M., 'The textile industry in Essex in the late 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries' *E.A.H.* 20 (1989), p.34-73.

<sup>172</sup> M.W.Beresford and H.P.R.Finberg, *English Medieval Boroughs: A Handlist* (1973), pp.108-111.

<sup>173</sup> Known examples of Essex urban gentry in the fifteenth century were newcomers to the county, the Godstones from Surrey, the Darcys and Galons from Northumberland. I agree with Rosemary Horrox who feels that there is no real sense of the English county gentry or nobility closing ranks against newcomers. 'The urban gentry in the fifteenth century' in J.A.F.Thomson ed., *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (1998), p.36.

rather than communities. It is not proposed to spend much time on magnate affinities except to say that each of the three or four resident magnates the number varied from year to year, had his or her affinity with the *caput* at its centre.<sup>174</sup> The principal gentry and many of the greater gentry were members of these affinities and a number of them, particularly lawyers such as Clement Spice and Robert Riketon belonged to more than one at a time. The most powerful gentry members of affinities – men like Sir John Tyrell or Sir William Coggeshall had affinities of their own – thus there were affinities within an affinity.<sup>175</sup>

In terms of interest groups within the county, these were certainly networks and probably also communities. For example the belted knights, the social elite among the gentry, formed an exclusive group, members of which often acted together as JPs, commissioners, feoffees and charter witnesses. There were in total fifty resident knights in Essex during the period 1381-1450, the number declining steadily towards the end of the period. It is likely that the principal gentry, most of who were of knightly status if not belted knights, associated for social, political and economic reasons. Many of the Essex knights, probably the majority, had served in military campaigns notably under the banner of the Bohuns, de Veres, Bouchiers and Fitzwalters in the French wars. No doubt, like old soldiers everywhere, the strong bonds of comradeship forged on the battlefield remained unbroken for the rest of their lives. Those who survived the hardship of military campaigns, including such outstanding soldiers as the retired

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<sup>174</sup> The dynamics of countess Joan's affinity are described by Anthony Goodman in 'The Countess and the rebels :Essex and a crisis in English society' *T.E.A.S.* 3<sup>rd</sup> ser.2 (1970), pp.267-279.

<sup>175</sup> Linda Clark, 'Magnates and their affinities in the parliaments of 1386-1421' in R.H.Britnell and A.J.Pollard eds, *The McFarlane Legacy. Studies in Late Medieval Politics and Society* (1995), p.146 points out that 'At least nine of the shire knights returned for Essex between 1399 and 1421 were of the affinity of one or other of these two countesses, [Joan de Bohun, countess of Hereford and her granddaughter Anne, countess of Stafford] occupying twenty of the thirty-four seats available'.

*condottiere* Sir William Coggeshall, probably continued to associate with their own kind at home in Essex and in London where business matters often took them.<sup>176</sup>

Other interest groups in Essex consisted of Londoners, many of whom settled in the south-west of the county. The majority were new men who had made their money in London and were able to buy themselves land or an estate either as a home or as an investment. John Hende (d.1418) of Bradwell-juxta-Coggeshall, a draper and former Mayor of London (whose origins are unknown but may be in Essex) married the widow of one rich Essex esquire and the daughter of another. He eventually settled on one of his ten Essex manors and his two sons, both named John, were to serve as sheriffs of the county, no doubt entirely confident in their gentry status.<sup>177</sup>

Londoners with a less spectacular career than John Hende or Lewis John, mainly lawyers and merchants, bought themselves manorial estates in Essex and thenceforward could claim, with what recognition from their neighbours we do not know, to be members of the Essex gentry. John Bugge, John Wiltshire and John Winslow each acquired an Essex manor during our period and each was to found a minor dynasty of gentry based in the county. Manors held by serjeanty seem to be particularly popular with Londoners, (see chapter seven below). It is doubtful that all Londoners who acquired Essex estates came to reside there. Richard Lyons, who held three Essex manors until he was murdered by the mob in 1381, and the former Lord Mayor of

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<sup>176</sup> The Essex knights and esquires who fought at Calais and Crecy are listed in G.Wrottesley, Crecy and Calais (1898); biographical details of other Essex men who fought in foreign wars including Sir Robert Marney of Laver Marney are quoted in N.H.Nicolas, The Controversy between Sir Richard Scrope and Sir Robert Grosvenor (2 vols, 1832). Even the vintner Sir Lewis John did his duty and took part in the siege of Harfleur. His indentures of war give details of his small retinue. PRO E 101/47/30.

<sup>177</sup> John Hende's will (d.1418) PCC 42. Marche, shows that he continued to regard himself as a citizen of London and of Essex (Bradwell Hall) as did John Pikenham 'of Essex, and citizen of London' whose protection was revoked in 1386 because he 'tarries in London on his own affairs'. Cal.Pat.Rolls 1385-1389 p.148.

London, Sir Adam Fraunceys, who held two Essex manors probably remained domiciled in London.<sup>178</sup> The process also worked in reverse; Essex men such as John Mille the son of John atte Mille of Great Tey became a citizen and author of London but retained his connections with Essex.<sup>179</sup> As has been said other immigrants to Essex, those arriving from more distant parts than London, may occasionally have congregated for purely social reasons, if only to speak their own particular dialect and be understood.

To summarise, I have demonstrated that the community which historians have generally described as the medieval gentry *county community* was in reality no more than the *political community* of the shire. In the light of recent research, we would be well advised to visualise counties including Essex in terms of multiple gentry communities, interlocking, overlapping and interpenetrating one another.

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<sup>178</sup> S.J.O'Connor ed., A Calendar of the Cartularies of John Pyel and Adam Fraunceys Camden Soc. 5<sup>th</sup> ser. 2 (1993).

<sup>179</sup> He leased the water mill and house called 'Millhous' (which had probably been his father's) in 1384. E.R.O. D/DU 646/82.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CLEMENT SPICE : A CASE STUDY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

With wealth the key not only to the ranks of gentry society in the late medieval period but also to subsequent advancement, it is not surprising that a significant number of rich and successful lawyers were to be found amongst the resident Essex gentry during this period 1381-1450. Wealth came in many forms – it might be through inheritance, marriage, profits of war, from trade or the practice of a profession. In the case of Clement Spice, his rise to gentry status was the result of a blend of many factors. An analysis of his life illustrates many of the critical features of the lifestyle of the Essex gentry in the period 1381-1450, most particularly the inter-relationship of individual gentry families as well as their relationship with their social superiors and inferiors.

#### **4.2 BACKGROUND AND ORIGINS**

During the period 1381-1450 there were in Essex two distinct groups of practising gentry lawyers. In the first group were those who had attained gentry status largely on the strength of their professional competence and the second group consisted of those who were gentry born but nonetheless chose to acquire greater wealth and position by means

of their legal practice.<sup>1</sup> The first group included Richard Alrede of Boreham, Sir Peter Arderne of Latton, Robert Darcy of Maldon, Richard Fox of Arkesden, Thomas Rolf of Gosfield, William Skrene of Roxwell, Richard Waltham of Little Waltham and Walter Writtle of Writtle together with Clement Spice himself, who, with the possible exception of Arderne, are thought not to have been of gentry origin. The second group included Richard Baynard of Messing, John Doreward of Bocking, William Hanningfield of East Hanningfield, Robert Rikedon of Witham, Sir Thomas Tyrell and his nephew Sir John Tyrell, both of East Horndon. A common characteristic of the self-made men is that they all acquired an Essex estate – either through marriage to an Essex heiress, or purchase, or in the case of Clement Spice by both means. Such men as these were doubtless well placed to spot heiresses and manors coming onto the market and were able to exploit their opportunities with the energy and determination of the parvenu. Lawyers in the second group were perhaps no less acquisitive in the search to extend their patrimony.

Clement Spice was a lawyer whose principal practice was in London but whose other interests were centred in his adopted county of Essex. It is probable that he was born in Suffolk c.1330 of minor or perhaps sub-gentry stock but by the fourth quarter of the fourteenth century he had not only entered Essex gentry society but he had joined its many networks through a deft combination of clientage, adherence to powerful magnate affinities, royal patronage, partnership with other lawyers, marriage, kinship,

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<sup>1</sup> 'Socially the lawyer's position remains ambiguous... Yet contemporaries regarded lawyers as socially inferior... Richard Scrope was taunted with the rebuke that he could not be a gentleman (*gentilhomme*) because his father was a lawyer. B.Vale, 'The profits of the law and the "rise" of the Scropes' in M.Hicks ed. *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England* (1990), p 100-101. E.W.Ives, 'The Common Lawyer in pre-Reformation England', *T.R.H.S.* 5<sup>th</sup> Series 18 (1968), pp.145-173 expands on this theme.

friendship and office holding. However grudging the acceptance of this parvenu by its other members, Clement Spice had become one of the elite group which comprised the richest county gentry and the resident magnates who dominated the political, economic and social life of Essex in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

We know a good deal about Clement's descendants for he founded a family which flourished at the heart of county life for several generations in the male line – a compliment to his own extreme longevity. As to his origins we know comparatively little. It seems that his immediate ancestors came from villages in South Suffolk, close to the river Stour, just a few kilometres from Essex. The name Spice (le Spicer or atte Spicer) suggests a mercantile and thus probably an urban origin for the family but there is no more than a hint of such a connection when we examine the records of his life. In spite of his eventual riches and of his choice of domicile in Essex, Clement never entirely lost touch with his relatively humble origins in Suffolk. Indeed he maintained close contact with local gentry families – some of whom may have assisted his early career – such as the Brahams and Wolverstones and at least one rich mercantile family – the Cavendishes – whose origins seem to have been similar to those of Clement Spice.

The earliest ancestor who can be tentatively assigned to Clement is John Spice of Redenhall in Norfolk (just across the river Waveney from Suffolk) who, with his wife Agatha, sued out a fine regarding land in nearby Withersdale in Suffolk in 1313.<sup>2</sup> It is possible that this couple were Clement's paternal grandparents. It is probable that the

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<sup>2</sup> Suffolk Fines, No.43, p.126.



William and Agnes Spice who sued out a fine regarding land in Great Wenham in Suffolk (3 kilometres from the Essex border) in 1327 were Clement's parents.<sup>3</sup> It was almost certainly no coincidence that Clement named his own first born son William. A William Spice of Wenham (either Great or Little Wenham) was one of two freemen responsible for collecting the subsidy in their township in the same year 1327.<sup>4</sup> (No other member of the Spice family paid the subsidy in Suffolk in 1327). The status of the Spice family in Wenham is not entirely clear but they were evidently free and subgentry, the manorial lords in Wenham being the Holbrook family.<sup>5</sup> Plate 4.1 illustrates Great Wenham church where Clement Spice may have been baptised.

#### 4.3. BUILDING CAREER

There are few clues as to the course of Clement's early life. At some stage, perhaps after local schooling in the parish church, he went to London to learn the law, almost certainly with the help of a local patron.<sup>6</sup> It is possible that this help came from the Cavendish family, many of whom were resident in Suffolk (principally at Clare) but there is nothing more than circumstantial evidence to provide this link.<sup>7</sup> On balance it would seem that it was a member of the local gentry who enabled Clement to make the

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<sup>3</sup> Suffolk Fines, No.12, p.160.

<sup>4</sup> Suffolk in 1327 Suffolk Green Books No.9 Vol.2. (1906), p.5. Great Wenham with Little Wenham.

<sup>5</sup> W.A.Copinger gives the history of the manor of Great Wenham The Manors of Suffolk (7 Vols. 1905-1911), 3, p.109, see also Feudal Aids 1284-1431, (Great) Wenham: p.24 1303; p.37 1316; p.48 1346.

<sup>6</sup> P.Brand, 'Courtroom and schoolroom: the education of lawyers in England prior to 1400' B.I.H.R. 60 (1987), pp.147-165, outlines the education trainee lawyers such as Clement Spice may have obtained.

<sup>7</sup> For details of the Cavendish family in Suffolk see J.H.Round 'The origin of the Cavendishes' in W.Page,ed., Family Origins (1930), pp.22-32.



**PLATE 4.1 GREAT WENHAM CHURCH, SUFFOLK**

move from his obscure East Anglian village to London and so take the first steps in his profession perhaps a year or two before the Black Death in 1348/49.

The first recorded mention of Clement Spice is as an advocate on behalf of Margaret, the wife of Geoffrey de Ruly, a minor landlord in Ramsey, Essex whose family connections were mainly in Finchingfield, Steeple Bumpstead and elsewhere in Essex but also in Suffolk. In 1352 Spice and Ruly sued out a fine together in the Court of Common Pleas concerning land in Ramsey.<sup>8</sup> Nothing more is known of Clement for the next six years by which time he was about twenty-eight years old. On 17 May 1358 he and Martin Cavendish were appointed attorneys for John son of Richard de la More of Waltham Holy Cross who was about to go overseas.<sup>9</sup> It is possible that Cavendish was also a lawyer but it is not clear whether he was a member of the Suffolk or London branch of the family. There also is a record of a fine of 1358 by which Clement transferred land in Raydon, a village coterminous with the Wenhams, to Thomas Ginmore and his wife Alice.<sup>10</sup>

In the same year Clement appeared in the Common Pleas on behalf of Lady Agnes (d.before 1367), wife of Sir Robert Swinburne (c.1327-1391), a contemporary of Clement's, where he sued out a fine for Lady Agnes and her husband regarding their capital manor of Little Horkesley near Colchester and their manor of Wiston in Wissington, Suffolk.<sup>11</sup> It may have been this Suffolk connection that brought Clement and the Swinburnes together and it is possible that it was through Sir Robert that he

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<sup>8</sup> Essex Fines 3 p.103. See chapter 3 above for the Ruly family.

<sup>9</sup> Cal.Pat.Rolls 1358-1361, p.47.

<sup>10</sup> Suffolk Fines No.4, p.218

<sup>11</sup> Essex Fines 3 p.124

came to the attention of the Prince of Wales. On 6 October 1361 Sir Robert Swinburne witnessed the enfeoffment of Roger de Wolfreston and others of land in Wissington. It is therefore probable that Wolfreston and Swinburne were acquainted by that date.<sup>12</sup> A year after, on 24 April 1362, Swinburne acted as Wolfreston's feoffee.<sup>13</sup>

On 11 February 1361 Spice was formally retained as the prince's attorney and agent in the Common Pleas at a fee of forty shillings per annum together with a further twenty shillings for his robe 'unless the prince gives him livery of a robe'. Furthermore he was now able to claim reimbursement (after taking an oath to account faithfully) for expenses incurred 'about the writing writs and records in the said court'.<sup>14</sup>

Clement had apparently been working for the prince for some time and as early as 13 September 1359 he appears in the prince's accounts. Sir Peter Lacey, clerk and receiver-general to the prince, was ordered to search the tallies of the former treasurer regarding a debt for oats and hay at the suit of 'Clement Spicer' (*sic*).<sup>15</sup> A brief reference to Clement at this time shows that he was assigned an annual rent of five pounds per annum in Suffolk dated 24 October.<sup>16</sup> On 6 February 1362 now aged about thirty-two, Clement's appointment as the prince's attorney during pleasure was confirmed by letters patent and the justices of the Common Pleas were thereby warned that he would 'sue and defend' for the prince 'in all pleas for and against him', unquestionably an important role for a rising young lawyer which would also have

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<sup>12</sup> E.R.O. D/DPb T2/1 and T2/2.

<sup>13</sup> E.R.O. D/DPb T2/6.

<sup>14</sup> *Black Prince's Register* (4 vols. 1930-1933), 4, pp.376-377.

<sup>15</sup> *Black Prince's Register*, 4, p.311.

<sup>16</sup> Bodleian Library Rawl.MS. B202.

helped him gain entry to gentry society in his chosen county.<sup>17</sup> Later in the same year (8 May) a William Spice was appointed attorney for Thomas Engayne who held the manor of White Notley.<sup>18</sup> In the October following Clement Spice and John Rookwood were appointed attorneys for Thomas Rookwood for a year during his absence abroad.<sup>19</sup> Clement's co- attorney was probably the John Rookwood of Stoke-by-Nayland (b.c.1323) who married Sir Robert Swinburne's daughter Joan (whose mother Lady Alice Swinburne, Clement had represented in 1358). Thomas Rookwood was John's eldest son. Also in 1363 Clement acted as advocate in a Common Pleas fine for John Brom, a chaplain and apparently an insignificant figure in comparison with his other known clients at this time.<sup>20</sup>

#### 4.4 BUILDING AN ESTATE

By 1363 Clement had married Alice, daughter of Reginald Bocking who according to a fine sued out in 1346, then had six children living – Roger, Thomas, John, Margery, Joan and Alice.<sup>21</sup> Reginald was born c.1297 for he declared his age when sworn as a juror in 1357; it is not clear whether he was a manorial lord but his cousin John was lord of Jenkins manor in Stisted and members of his family were successive lords of what subsequently became Dorewards Hall in Bocking.<sup>22</sup> Clement had not

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<sup>17</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1361-1364 158.

<sup>18</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1361-1364 p.191. This William Spice could have been Clement's father or an older brother or some other relative. On balance it would seem that he was his father. Thomas Dengayne (c.1336-1367) was the son of Sir Thomas Engayne of Dillington, Hunts. (d.1358).

<sup>19</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1361-1364 p.256.

<sup>20</sup> Essex Fines 3, p.138.

<sup>21</sup> Essex Fines 3, p.81

<sup>22</sup> Cal. I.P.M. 10 p.320. See P.Morant, The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex (2 vols.1763-68), 2, pp.384 & 392 has the history of Dorewards manor Bocking and Jenkins manor Stisted.

made a spectacular match but it was a sound one. It seems likely that the purpose of a fine sued out in 1363 by Clement and his wife was to settle their jointly held land on three trusted feoffees – Richard Treton, clerk, Roger Wolfreston and Roger Ketterich.<sup>23</sup> The property (which doubtless included Alice's dowry) consisted of two messuages, one mill, 300 acres (121 hectares) of land, 20 acres (8 hectares) of meadow, 40 acres (16 hectares) of pasture, 12 acres (5 hectares) of wood and thirty shillings rent in the parishes of Black Notley, White Notley, Colchester, Lexden and Bergholt. Fig. 4.1 shows the villages of Willingale Spain, Black Notley and White Notley in context. It is possible that the settlement was made at the time of Clement's marriage: it would have been the act of a prudent lawyer. Two of Clement's feoffees on this occasion are known to have maintained close ties with him for many years to come. Roger Wolfreston came from the village of Wolverstone on the river Waveney and just a few kilometres east of Clement's birthplace. Whether Wolfreston was a lawyer is not known but he was sheriff of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Hertfordshire (briefly administered as a single shrievalty) in July 1357.<sup>24</sup> He was subsequently escheator of Suffolk in 1366.<sup>25</sup> This suggests that he was older than Clement but they may have been contemporaries. The Wolfreston family had been settled in Wolverstone for several generations since at least 1283 when Hamo Wolfreston and his heirs were granted free warren in his demesne lands in Wolverstone, Freston and Chelmondiston.<sup>26</sup> Roger may have been the son of Thomas Wolfreston who paid four shillings subsidy in 1327 in Wolverstone and

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<sup>23</sup> *Essex Fines* 3, p.137.

<sup>24</sup> *List of Sheriffs for England and Wales* PRO List and Indexes 72, (1932).

<sup>25</sup> *List of Escheators for England* PRO List and Indexes 9, (1898).

<sup>26</sup> *Cal. Charter Rolls 1257-1300*, p.270.



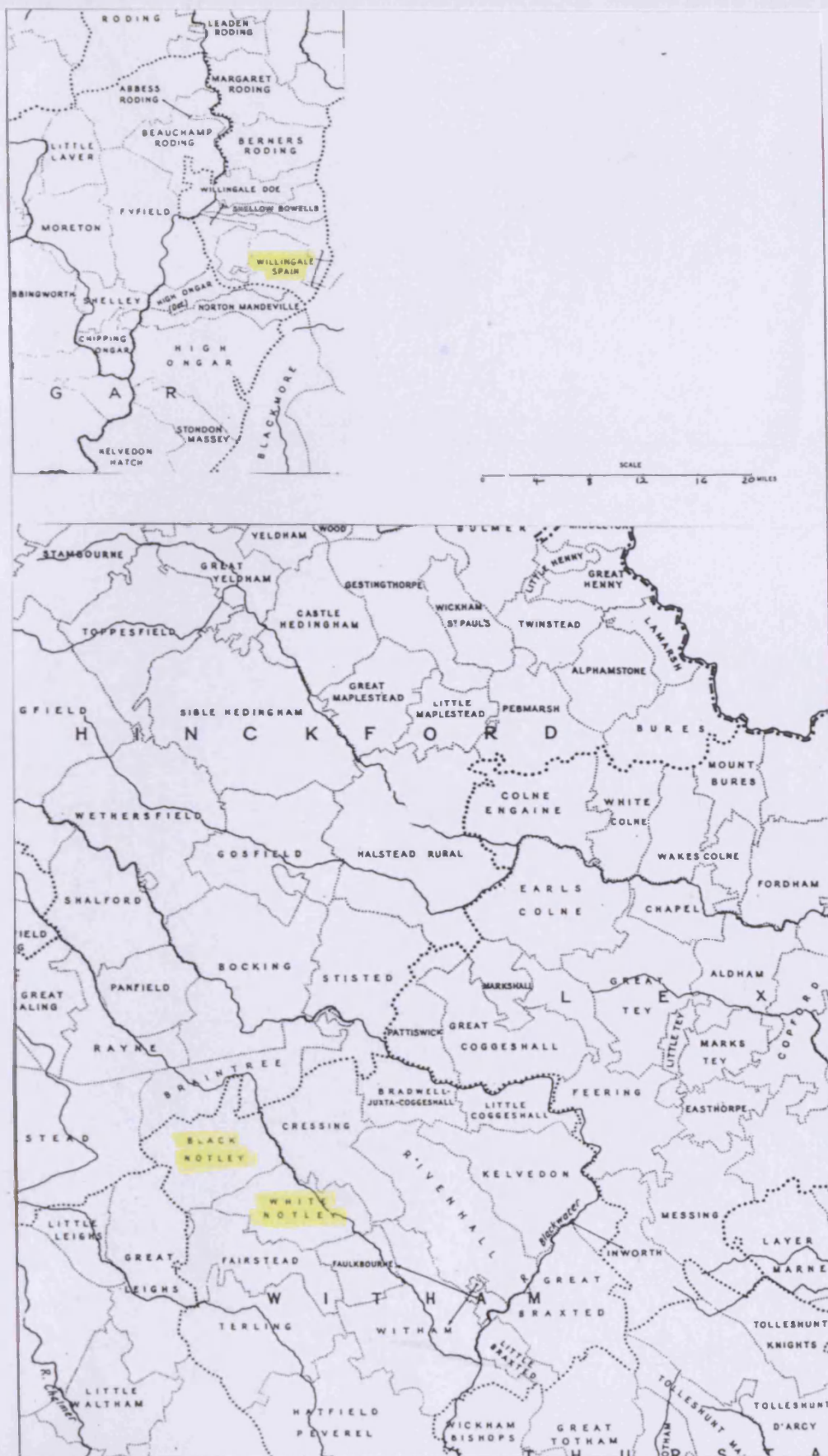


FIGURE 4.1 VILLAGES OF WILLINGALE SPAIN, BLACK NOTLEY & WHITE NOTLEY

Chelmondiston.<sup>27</sup> Roger Wolfreston, who was succeeded by his sons Roger junior and Robert, was associated with Clement Spice until at least 1382.

The second of Clement's feoffees, Roger Ketterich, was according to evidence given at the proof of age inquisition of John Liston in 1357 (when Clement's father-in-law also gave evidence) born c.1307 and was therefore old enough to be Clement's father.<sup>28</sup> Roger was the son of Adam Ketterich of Shalford and in 1356 we find father and son buying a small estate comprising a messuage, land, meadow, pasture and wood in the parishes of Finchingfield, Birdbrook and Steeple Bumpstead probably for Roger's benefit.<sup>29</sup> By 1360 he had married Agnes and in 1373 they jointly leased the manor of Parkhall in Gosfield from Sir Robert Swinburne and his wife Joan. Clearly, both Clement's early feoffees – Ketterich and Wolfreston – were associated with Sir Robert; it is therefore likely that Clement acted on his behalf too.<sup>30</sup> Ketterich was probably dead by 1399 for Sir Robert's widow Joan leased Parkhall to John Doreward in her own name that year.<sup>31</sup> Ketterich was sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire in 1370 and escheator of the two counties from 1372-1375 and 1377-1379.<sup>32</sup> Clearly Wolfreston and Ketterich were substantial members of the gentry as well as personal friends. Recalling Clement's Suffolk origins it is tempting to see Wolfreston as a childhood friend. The Ketterich family were not manorial lords in Essex and it is likely that they did not meet the twenty pounds per annum income from land in the county which was

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<sup>27</sup> Suffolk in 1327 p.2.

<sup>28</sup> Cal.I.P.M. 10, p.320.

<sup>29</sup> Essex Fines 3, p.114.

<sup>30</sup> Essex Fines 3, p.130 and p.168.

<sup>31</sup> Essex Fines 3, p.230.

<sup>32</sup> List of Sheriffs and List of Escheators



the basic criterion for their appointment to high office.<sup>33</sup> It was therefore by his own efforts that Roger Ketterich attained his appointments.

The last we hear of Clement in 1363 is that he acted with Stephen Cavendish (mayor of London in 1362) in suing out a fine regarding land in Raydon, Suffolk<sup>34</sup> Cavendish was probably not related to the Suffolk family of that name because his father had changed his name from atte Wate to Cavendish in c.1304 in deference to the London mercer Walter de Cavendish his former master, but his relationship to Martin Cavendish (Clement's old associate) is not known. It seems possible that Clement's connection with the Cavendish family may have resulted from his mother belonging to that family but there is no firm evidence to substantiate this view.

By 1364 Clement had acquired another important Essex client, possibly to the extent of joining his affinity. This was Sir John Bourghier and Clement acted for him in respect of his manor of Little Maldon when he, together with two members of the Naylinghurst family (including Robert de Naylinghurst, rector of Sible Hedingham where the Bourghiers were manorial lords and patrons of the living), of Little Rayne and Roger Ketterich, were appointed as Sir John's feoffees.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> N. Saul, *Knights and Esquires* (1981), pp. 106-107 discusses the necessary qualifications for office-holding in the fourteenth century. Ketterich was described as still 'of Shalford' in a quitclaim dated 13 October 1392 E.R.O. D/DO T1/4 but was dead by 21 April 1395 when his widow had right of dower over his land. E.R.O. D/DO T1/5.

<sup>34</sup> *Suffolk Fines* No.7 p.229. See *Calendar of Wills in the Court of Hustings 1258-1688*, 2, (1890), p.149. for the will of Stephen Cavendish dated 1372.

<sup>35</sup> *Cal.Close Rolls 1364-1368*, p.200.

The year 1365 proved to be crucial for Clement in more ways than one but particularly in relation to consolidation of his estate. On 13 February he received what was undoubtedly a reward for his services to the Prince of Wales and a clear mark of royal approval. He was granted the hundred of Barstable in South Essex 'with all profits and advantages' to hold for six years, for which he was to pay to the receiver-general in London twenty marks per annum.<sup>36</sup> A letter patent was made out at the time but this has not survived. At almost the same time, perhaps as a means to raise ready cash or merely to assist with the consolidation of their estates, Clement and Alice Spice sold to Richard Wight and his wife Margaret a messuage and twenty-three acres (nine hectares) of land in Bocking.<sup>37</sup> Could this have been a part of Alice's dowry?

On 25 April 1365 Thomas, son of Sir Thomas Grey of Cavendish, Suffolk confirmed and quitclaimed with warranty the manor of Spains Hall, Willingale Spain, (Plate 4.2) with 'all lands, rents, services, villeins, villeinage etc' lately held by Sir Thomas to three trustees – Roger Wofreton, William Spice (presumably Clement's father) and Roger Ketterich which they held for the life of William from Clement and Alice Spice 'as appears by the record of an assize of novel disseisin' by Sir Thomas and his son Thomas before the king's justices in Chelmsford.<sup>38</sup> Sir Thomas had granted the manor of Spains Hall, together with the manor of Ryes Hall in Little Henny, to a group of feoffees which included Sir John de Aspale and John de Cavendish (probably the future chief justice) in 1348 at the height of the Black Death.<sup>39</sup> Ryes Hall passed to Grey's son Fulk and Spains Hall to his son Thomas. According to Morant, Sir Thomas

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<sup>36</sup> Black Prince's Register 4, p.547.

<sup>37</sup> Essex Fines 3,

<sup>38</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1364-1368, pp.170-171

<sup>39</sup> Essex Fines 3, p.90.

A photograph of a large, light-colored, two-story house with a dark roof and a prominent chimney, surrounded by bare trees in a winter or late autumn setting. The house is partially obscured by the trees, and the foreground is a grassy field.

176

died in 1361 (during the second major outbreak of plague) but it is likely that the family had already come into contact with the Spices, possibly through the Cavendish connection. Sir Thomas had held Spains Hall from the earl of Oxford as early as 1358.<sup>40</sup> On the day that Sir Thomas enfeoffed Roger Wolfreston, William Spice and Roger Ketterich with Spains Hall, Clement Spice quitclaimed to him at Cavendish the manor of Greys in Sible Hedingham which the Grey family had held since at least 1321 'saving his action for debt by reason of a statute merchant to him lately made by the said Thomas and others.'<sup>41</sup>

A single detail of Clement's early life in London during 1365 has survived in the form of a letter patent of Adam de Bury, Lord Mayor, which certified that John de Radeclive of London 'had a portion of his left ear bitten off, whilst in the service of one Clement Spice, by a savage horse belonging to his master, to such a degree that the ear remained unhealed at the present day, and in order that his character might not suffer by incurring the suspicion of his having been punished for theft or other matter, the said John had prayed them to testify to the truth'.<sup>42</sup>

In the following year, on 10 July, when Roger de Wolfreston was escheator in Essex, he received an order from the king to take no further action in a case involving the manor of Rawreth Hall which the late William Doreward of Bocking had demised to Clement Spice, Roger Ketterich and others shortly before his death 'in fraud of the statute...in order to deprive the king of the wardship and marriage of the said Willaim's

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<sup>40</sup> Morant, History of Essex 2, p.480.

<sup>41</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1364-1368, p.171.

<sup>42</sup> R.R.Sharpe ed., Letters from the Mayor and Corporation of the City of London c.1350-1370 (1885), p.125.

heir [John Doreward] who is of age.<sup>43</sup> Doreward had probably met Clement through his wife Alice Bocking's family connection with the village of Bocking.

#### **4.5 SEASONED PROFESSIONAL**

Nothing more is known of Clement's activities until 18 February 1367 when on the first of eight recorded occasions between 1367 and 1398 he acted as a mainpernor. On this occasion he acted (together with Robert de Naylinghurst, parish priest of Sible Hedingham c.1362 until his death in 1369 with whom he had acted for Sir John Bourghier in 1364) on behalf of Thomas Tewe, of Tewes manor Little Sampford standing surety for Tewe's appearance in court in the sum of one hundred shillings.<sup>44</sup>

On Saturday after Easter (24 April) 1367, Roger de Wolfreton and his co-feoffees granted the manor of Willingale Spain to William Spice his heirs and assigns.<sup>45</sup> One of the witnesses to the deed was Robert Tey of Marks Tey, member of a family with gentry status in Essex for many generations. This is the earliest event in the long association between Spice and Tey. It is curious that the charter makes no specific reference to Clement as William's heir although it is clearly the grantors' intention that it should pass to him. By a further charter, dated July 27 1368, Roger de Wolfreton and Roger Ketterich, acting as trustees once more, granted back to Clement and his

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<sup>43</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1364-1368, p. 243.

<sup>44</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1364-1368, p. 372.

<sup>45</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1374-1377, p. 200.

wife Alice 'and the heirs of their bodies with remainder for lack of such heirs to the right heirs of the said Clement' the land in Black Notley and White Notley which Clement and Alice had settled on them in 1363.<sup>46</sup> Richard de Treton, clerk, who had been co-feoffee with Wolfreston and Ketterich in 1363 quitclaimed his trusteeship to them on 10 February 1373 in respect of land in Black Notley, White Notley, Colchester, Lexden and Bergholt.<sup>47</sup> On 13 November 1368 Clement Spice and Robert Naylinghurst, together with Sir Aubrey de Vere (younger brother of Thomas 8<sup>th</sup> earl of Oxford but later 10<sup>th</sup> earl himself) and John de Sudbury, were appointed as feoffees of the manor of Beauchamps in Dullington, Cambridgeshire, by John, son of Sir John de Meryet, by means of a deed witnessed in London.<sup>48</sup> Unlike other members of the gentry it seems that many of the enfeoffments in which Clement was involved were undertaken for a fee rather than out of friendship for the grantor. The services of lawyers and priests were for obvious reasons frequently required for this purpose as were the higher nobility and senior clergy. It should not be assumed that by lending his name to such transactions Clement had more than a professional relationship with the parties involved.

In letters dated 5 December 1369, Katherine Engayne, widow of the Thomas Engayne (d.1367) who had appointed William Spice as his attorney in 1362 and who held the manor of White Notley until Engayne's death referred to a charter made by her appointing Clement Spice and others as feoffees for one-third of the manor Blatherwick, Northamptonshire.<sup>49</sup> By a fine sued out in 1369 Clement and others were

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<sup>46</sup> Essex Fines 3, p.137.

<sup>47</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1369-1374, p.535.

<sup>48</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1364-1368, p.491.

<sup>49</sup> L.C.Lloyd and D.M.Stenton eds, Sir Christopher Hatton's Book of Seals (1950), p.62.

appointed as feoffees for John de Goldington and his wife Joyce (sister and co-heir of Thomas Engayne) in respect of half the manor of Blatherwick, one third of the manor of Colne Engaine, and two-thirds of the manor of White Notley.<sup>50</sup> By this time Clement had received yet another mark of royal favour that would have increased his *worship* and advanced his position in Essex and London society. Probably at the prompting of the Prince of Wales he had been made steward of the royal manor of Havering-atte-Bower in succession to John de Bampton.<sup>51</sup> On 10 October 1369 he witnessed a Havering charter as Clement Spice, Steward of Havering.<sup>52</sup> By 24 November he was active in determining which houses on the manor were in need of repair.<sup>53</sup> It is not clear when his stewardship of the manor came to an end but John de Bampton held it again in 1380. An inquisition to determine whether a convicted felon ever held an estate on the manor shows that Clement was also one of two bailiffs of Havering in 1370.<sup>54</sup> In February 1370 he witnessed a grant relating to the manor and advowson of Kelvedon Hatch; witnessing such deeds may have been an everyday activity though only a small number survive.<sup>55</sup>

On 20 May 1370 the justices of the King's Bench – to whom Clement was probably a familiar figure – were ordered to receive Clement Spice and Richard Withermarsh, both of whom acted as attorneys for the Prince of Wales. They were in due course received by the Chancellor and in professional terms this must have been beneficial to

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<sup>50</sup> Essex Fines 3 p.158.

<sup>51</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1369-1374, p.64. See also M.K.McIntosh, Autonomy and Community: The Royal Manor of Havering 1200-1500 (1986) for Clement's office holding on the manor.

<sup>52</sup> E.R.O. D/DU 651/2.

<sup>53</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1369-1374, p.64.

<sup>54</sup> Cal. Inq. Misc. 1348-1377, pp.291-292.

<sup>55</sup> E.R.O. D/DK T229/1

the two lawyers.<sup>56</sup> In the following January Clement Spice and the clerk Robert de Melton, were appointed as attorneys for Lady Margaret, widow of William, lord Ferrers of Groby, Leicestershire, in order to sue for her dowry and take it into possession on her behalf.<sup>57</sup> Such transactions for the higher nobility underline Clement's growing reputation as a lawyer and probably represent a substantial source of his income at that time. In the same year an inquisition following the death of Thomas, 8<sup>th</sup> earl of Oxford showed that the manor of Spains Hall in Willingale Spain had passed from William Spice to feoffees and then to Clement and his wife Alice who held it in 1371 as a knight's fee, the same fee that had been held by Sir Thomas Grey from the 7<sup>th</sup> earl in 1360.<sup>58</sup> Morant states that the manor was held by *Thomas* Spice in 1370 but he is clearly in error.<sup>59</sup> He frequently gives a brief description of manorial buildings as they were in his day but all he has to say about Spains Hall is that it 'stands a little way south-east from the Church'. (Plate 4.3)<sup>60</sup>

In 1372 Clement Spice and an associate named John Bek borrowed £40 from two individuals, one of whom was a priest; we do not know the purpose of the loan but it was repaid.<sup>61</sup> Such transactions not only augmented the income of lawyers but also contributed in part to their general unpopularity as they were seen to be using the machinery of the law to enforce their own property rights.<sup>62</sup> In February of the following year the dowager countess of Oxford, widow of the 8<sup>th</sup> earl, received the

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<sup>56</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1367-1370, p.406.

<sup>57</sup> Cal. I.P.M. 13, p.70.

<sup>58</sup> Cal. I.P.M. 10, p.522 and 13, p.102.

<sup>59</sup> Morant, History of Essex 2, p.480.

<sup>60</sup> Morant, 2, p.480.

<sup>61</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1369-1374, p.446.

<sup>62</sup> Vale, 'Profits of the land', p.99.





**PLATE 4.3 WILLINGALE SPAIN CHURCH**

Willingale Spain estate from Clement's friend Roger Ketterich who was the escheator. This formed part of her dower, for which Clement would have paid five pounds per annum and done homage in due course.<sup>63</sup> In June, Clement received his first known appointment to a royal commission; its purpose was to inquire into possible trespasses against the king or his tenants within the lordship of Havering.<sup>64</sup> Probably acting for a fee once again rather than out of friendship, Clement and others were appointed in 1374 as feoffees for John Hunt in respect of the latter's land and tenements at the Barbican in London. In November 1375 they quitclaimed to new feoffees, probably after Hunt's death.<sup>65</sup> One of the witnesses to the quitclaim was Robert Rikedon and in due course he was to become Clement's long-term associate and friend, possibly beginning as his clerk and ending as his business partner. Rikedon (born c.1350) was the son of John Rikedon of Powers Hall, Witham (Plate 4.4) and as such the family were Clement's neighbours in Essex. The two lawyers were in partnership for more than forty years, only ceasing on Clement's death c.1419. In May 1374 Clement began another long-term association, this time with Barking Abbey, when he acted as mainpernor for the abbess.<sup>66</sup> She was almost certainly a close relative of the brothers Sir John and Sir Richard de Sutton of Wivenhoe with whom Clement was also long associated. In the same year he once more acted as feoffee for his old client Sir Robert Swinburne.<sup>67</sup> Clement aged about forty-five was at the height of his powers, favoured with royal appointments, lawyer to powerful local magnates, feoffee to the Essex gentry and citizens of London alike, member (albeit a parvenu) of Essex

<sup>63</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1369-1374 p.492.

<sup>64</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1370-1374, p.314.

<sup>65</sup> N.J.M.Kerling ed., Cartulary of St Bartholomew's Hospital (1373), p.51.

<sup>66</sup> Cal. Fine Rolls 1369-1377, p.249.

<sup>67</sup> Essex Fines 3 p.173.





**PLATE 4.4 POWERS HALL, WITHAM**

landed society and manorial lord. He has established a partnership with a well-born young Essex lawyer, and is earning a considerable income from fees. Also his family is growing; by now he and Alice have four or five sons.

#### 4.6 COMMISSIONER

In February 1375 Sir Thomas Tyrell of East Horndon, himself a lawyer and steward to members of the royal family, lent, together with Clement Spice, the considerable sum of one hundred pounds to Robert Buckskin.<sup>68</sup> We do not know the reason for the loan but it might have been the basis of a mortgage. Tyrell and Spice probably operated as bankers for their client. In May that year there was yet another settlement concerning the manor of Spains Hall by which the four feoffees (which included the future knight and Speaker of the House of Commons, John Gildsborough) granted an income of ten marks per annum to John Spice, one of Clement's sons, with a successive remainder to his sons William, Edmund and Richard.<sup>69</sup> Little is known of these four sons (none of whom was to become a lawyer it seems) and it was his youngest son, Roger, who seems to have been born much later than his brothers and possibly by a different mother, who was to succeed Clement as his heir.<sup>70</sup> In July Clement was appointed with John Cavendish (murdered by the mob in 1381 when lord chief justice) to inquire into two suspicious deaths in Essex.<sup>71</sup> A week later he was appointed to a commission of

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<sup>68</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1374-1377, p. 198.

<sup>69</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1374-1377, p. 238.

<sup>70</sup> Roger Spice died in 1459 and was buried at Black Notley.

<sup>71</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1374-1377, p. 158

sewers and ordered to investigate the Thameside marshes in Barking, one of his fellow commissioners being John Gildsborough, and again in October regarding 'divers marshes' in Essex.<sup>72</sup> In July 1375 Clement acted as Gildsborough's feoffee in relation to land which belonged to Gildsborough's sister-in-law.<sup>73</sup> Later in October Clement, Robert Riketon, Sir Thomas Mandeville (whose granddaughter was to marry Clement's grandson) and Sir Thomas Hoo, lent one hundred pounds to a fellow member of the gentry but, as is usually the case, for what purpose and on what terms we do not know.<sup>74</sup>

Clement must have suffered a considerable blow on hearing that his patron the Prince of Wales had died on 8 June 1376. Six weeks later Clement Spice, Sir Robert Tey and others were appointed mainpernors for the alien priory of Mersea and keepers of the Mersea property as 'long as war with France shall last' – probably a lucrative sinecure.<sup>75</sup> In March 1377 he was appointed to another commission (to inquire into illegal fishing in Essex by men 'who have cunningly made an instrument called a "wunderthon" like a "drag" upon which so close a net is fixed that even the smallest fish cannot escape therefrom'), which was headed by Walter, lord Fitzwalter (d.1386). Fitzwalter was sufficiently impressed with Clement to retain him as his personal lawyer.<sup>76</sup> In September that year we find Clement (described as his 'servant') acting as feoffee for Lord Fitzwalter.<sup>77</sup> This was an extremely important position for Clement as he was now associated with three of the four resident families of the higher nobility in

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<sup>72</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1374-1377, p. 158.

<sup>73</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1374-1377, p. 241.

<sup>74</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1374-1377, p. 267.

<sup>75</sup> Cal. Fine Rolls 1369-1377, p. 358.

<sup>76</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1374-1377, p. 489.

<sup>77</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1377-1381, p. 99.

Essex – de Vere, Fitzwalter and Bourghier. It is clear from his activities that his clients found no difficulty with the fact that Clement served, and was retained by, several masters. Evidently they relied on his professional integrity to avoid any conflict of interest. In common with other members of the gentry Clement sought to avoid the onerous public duties which might otherwise be imposed on him by the king. His remedy was to purchase a grant by letters patent dated 6 June 1377 giving him exemption for life.<sup>78</sup> He had this grant confirmed by further letters patent dated 5 November 1377 but in fact it offered him little actual protection.<sup>79</sup> It is not clear why he took out the second protection unless it was due to the death of Edward III on 21 June, just two weeks after the original grant; perhaps he was simply taking a wise precaution in uncertain times.<sup>80</sup> On Christmas Eve 1377, Clement and his wife Alice witnessed a grant relating to land in White Notley. Clement's personal seal, incorporating a letter C, remains attached to the document.<sup>81</sup> In the following January an inquisition by the escheator Roger Ketterich following the death of the late king's mistress Alice Perrers, found that Clement had a reversionary interest in land which had been held by her husband's family the de Haverings.<sup>82</sup> Later in 1378 Clement was appointed to a distinguished group of feoffees by Lord Fitzwalter which included the archbishop of Canterbury, Walter Fitzwalter the younger, Sir Thomas Percy, his client Sir Robert

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<sup>78</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1374-1377, p.482.

<sup>79</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1377-1381, p.56.

<sup>80</sup> By this time Clement may have obtained a grant of arms. Several examples of a seal inscribed SIGILL CLEMENTIS SPICE survive. P.R.O. E 329/396 and E. 326/10697. They show a shield of arms party fesswise and a pale counter coloured. Robert Riketon used the device of a boar's head and the letters R.R. above the snout. An example of this is attached to a quitclaim of the manor of Sandon dated 20 December 1406. E.R.O. D/DP TI/12.

<sup>81</sup> E.R.O. D/DK T233/1.

<sup>82</sup> Cal. Inq. Misc. 4. No. 15., pp.10-11.

Swinburne, a fellow feoffee, Sir John Gildsborough, Sir Thomas Mandeville and his old friend and feoffee the former escheator Roger Wolfreston.<sup>83</sup>

Clement's son Edmund makes a brief appearance in 1378 when he and others were appointed to arrest one William Wolf.<sup>84</sup> The outcome of this action is not known but the date suggests that Edmund was born about 1357, an indication that his parents (with several older children) married about 1350 when Clement was about twenty years old and could have hardly yet made much progress in his profession. The New Year 1379 was a busy time for Clement who acted as a feoffee for Lord Fitzwalter in respect of the manor of Great Tey and then received an order from the new king to review a judgement which had been made in the Court of Husting, clearly a sensitive task requiring skill and diplomacy.<sup>85</sup>

#### **4.7. JUSTICE OF THE PEACE**

1380 began with Clement acting as mainpernor again. In April he was appointed to a commission of oyer and terminer, together with the constable of the Tower, the abbot of Waltham and others, to determine the date of construction of a number of the weirs on the Thames.<sup>86</sup> This was followed by his entry for the first time to the Essex Commission of the Peace in May that year.<sup>87</sup> His fellow JPs included Thomas

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<sup>83</sup> Essex Fines 3 p.186.

<sup>84</sup> Cal.Pat. Rolls 1377-1381, p.301.

<sup>85</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1377-1381, pp.131 and 220.

<sup>86</sup> Cal.Pat. Rolls 1377-1381 p.474.

<sup>87</sup> Cal.Pat. Rolls 1377-1381 p.514.

Woodstock, earl of Buckingham (son of Edward III and resident at Pleshey castle), Lord Fitzwalter, and his own partner Robert Riketon. Finally that year, Clement witnessed a quitclaim by John Cavendish, draper (probably one of the Suffolk Cavendishes), to John Hawkwood the elder (brother of Sir John Hawkwood who had already made a name for himself as a *condottiere* in Italy), of a manor in Toppesfield.<sup>88</sup> The following year saw the Great Rising in Essex and an attack on Clement's house in Black Notley on 12 June during which attack his goods were taken.<sup>89</sup> He was probably leasing Black Notley Hall (Plate 4.5) at this time and somehow he managed to buy the rebels off and prevented serious damage, no mean feat considering the unpopularity of lawyers with the mob. Robert Riketon was not as lucky as he was forced on pain of death to join the rebels who attacked his house in Witham.<sup>90</sup>

By December 3 Clement was involved in other matters having been appointed with Lord Fitzwalter and others to a commission which was to consider whether, following a petition by Sir John Bourghier, he had the right to present to the advowson of the hospital of St.Giles in Little Maldon as it belonged to the manor of Little Maldon, and whether the manor was held of the Crown in chief or as of the honour of Peverell.<sup>91</sup> The commission appears to have failed to reach a conclusion for it was replaced by a further commission on 12 February 1382.<sup>92</sup> As a result of this Clement held an inquisition in Brentwood and found that the manor of Little Maldon was held of the king as of the

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<sup>88</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1377-1381 pp.367-368.

<sup>89</sup> W.H.Liddell and R.G.Wood eds, Essex and the Great Revolt of 1381 E.R.O. Publication No.84, (1982), p.94.

<sup>90</sup> Liddell and Wood, Great Revolt, p.98.

<sup>91</sup> Cal.Pat. Rolls 1381-1385, p.83.

<sup>92</sup> Cal.Pat. Rolls 1381-1385, p.133.





PLATE 4.5 BLACK NOTLEY HALL

honour of Peverell and that Sir John had no right to present to the living.<sup>93</sup> The decision would not have endeared Clement to Sir John and it is significant that they did very little business together thereafter. Lord Fitzwalter did, of course, have landed interests in the Maldon area, his capital manor being Woodham Walter, so perhaps he used his influence over Clement to curb Bourghier's power in the area.

Repercussions of the Great Rising continued into 1382 for Clement Spice and Robert Rikedon and others were ordered to bring fugitive rebels to justice.<sup>94</sup> In April, Roger de Wolfreton, probably the last surviving trustee of the manor of Spains Hall, quitclaimed to Clement and Alice (this is the last we hear of her) until 1419.<sup>95</sup> Later in the year Clement quitclaimed the manor of Dillington in Cambridgeshire to Aubrey de Vere (the future 10<sup>th</sup> earl of Oxford) and witnesses to the document included Lord Fitzwalter, Sir William Coggeshall (probably the richest member of the Essex gentry at that date and son-in-law of Sir John Hawkwood), Sir John de Sutton and his brother Sir Richard.<sup>96</sup>

In March 1383 Clement Spice and Robert de Upston, parson of Shimpling, borrowed forty pounds from Robert de Muskham clerk, (Clement's old associate).<sup>97</sup> It is likely that the money was repaid as later we hear that Clement was executor of 'Sir Robert de Muskham'.<sup>98</sup> In October that year, further to the many exemptions he had obtained by letters patent in 1377, Clement purchased exemption from 'being put on

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<sup>93</sup> Cal. Inq. Misc. pp.99-100.

<sup>94</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1381-1385, p.139.

<sup>95</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1381-1385, p.123.

<sup>96</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1381-1385, p.385.

<sup>97</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1381-1385, p.292.

<sup>98</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1381-1385, p.231.

assizes, juries, attaints, inquisitions or recognizances and from being made mayor, sheriff, escheator, coroner, collector, assessor or controller of tenths, fifteenths or other tallage or subsidy, arrayer or leader of men at arms, hobelars and archers, or other minister of the king against his will, or compelled to take the order of knighthood'.<sup>99</sup> We shall see how successful he was at avoiding this very comprehensive list of liability to service; in summary however, he was able to avoid any duties regarding the collection of tax and was never knighted.

A commission of oyer and terminer was established on 18 February 1384 which required Thomas of Woodstock, earl of Buckingham, the de Sutton brothers, William Rickhill of Kent and Clement Spice to investigate treasons, felonies and other offences committed in Colchester and the hundreds of Tendring and Lexden.<sup>100</sup> Doubtless it was these two lawyers Spice and Rickhill who were best qualified to carry out the investigation; the other commissioners probably just lent their powerful names to the proceedings to give them weight. It may have been Buckingham who secured the role of commissioner for Clement on this and other occasions as he was now a member of the earl's affinity, and almost certainly his attorney together with Robert Rikedon.

For a fee of forty shillings a licence was obtained from the king on 20 June which enabled Sir Geoffrey de Stratton, Clement Spice, Roger de Wolfreston and Roger Cavendish (son of Sir John Cavendish and sheriff of Suffolk, 1395, Norfolk and Suffolk 1397) to grant the manor of Talbots in Hintlesham, Suffolk to John Hadelee (citizen of London and mayor in 1379 and 1393) his wife Margery and others in fee

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<sup>99</sup> Cal.Pat. Rolls 1381-1385, p.322.

<sup>100</sup> Cal.Pat. Rolls 1381-1385, p.420.

simple.<sup>101</sup> A year later Lord Fitzwalter, now only a year away from his death, obtained a licence to enfeoff Sir Richard Sutton (without his brother on this occasion), the parson of Shimpling, Clement Spice and others with the manors of Hemenhale and Diss, the feoffees being required to grant the property back to Lord Fitzwalter and his wife, his heirs in tail male with remainder to his heirs general – a classic settlement.<sup>102</sup> For some reason the settlement did not take effect and was cancelled. A fresh licence was granted by the king in November to enfeoff the same individuals with the exception of Clement whose omission was not explained.<sup>103</sup> This and many other settlements show how literate and trustworthy clergy and lawyers were much in demand as feoffees for the gentry and higher nobility. By a fine of 1385, Clement Spice and other members of Buckingham's affinity (he was created duke of Gloucester on 6 August) including the earl of Arundel, the countess of Hereford (his mother-in-law), Sir Richard Waldegrave, Sir William Berland, Thomas Coggeshall (brother of Sir William) and Ralph Strelley (parson of Great Waltham) acted together for the recently knighted Sir John Gildsborough and others concerning the manors of Rochford, Foulness and Bretton.<sup>104</sup>

Another echo of the Great Rising was a commission empowered in June 1386 to investigate the circumstances in which bondmen belonging to the Essex manors of St. Paul's London had withdrawn their customs and services from their lord. Clement together with John Holt, John Plays, Sir John de Sutton, Sir Walter atte Lee, and Robert

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<sup>101</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1381-1385, p. 414.

<sup>102</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1385-1389, p. 2.

<sup>103</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1385-1389, p. 2.

<sup>104</sup> Essex Fines 3 No. 194, p. 203.

Rikedon were members of the commission.<sup>105</sup> Only a month later, Clement sat on yet another commission, this one requiring him to arrest and bring before the king and council or into chancery all forgers of royal seals, counterfeiters of papal bulls, indulgences and pardons, together with those sending money, bullion and jewels abroad without authority.<sup>106</sup> It is not clear what Clement's precise role would have been on such a commission but he was undoubtedly present as a lawyer rather than a makeweight.

In a deed dated 2 May 1386 quoted by Copinger, Clement quitclaimed the manor of Bosford Hall, Sproughton, Suffolk (presumably as a former feoffee) to Margaret, the widow of Sir Thomas Vissdelieu, mother-in-law of the powerful local MP Sir William Burgate, kinsman of the Tyrells of East Horndon.<sup>107</sup> Five days later the same manor was granted to a group of new feoffees which included Roger de Wolfreston.<sup>108</sup> Early in 1387 Clement was acting as feoffee for the eighteen-year-old Lord Fitzwalter whose father had died in Galicia the previous year.<sup>109</sup> Doubtless there was much business to transact at this time and the young man was fortunate to have his father's trusted attorney to advise him during his minority. During the month of July alone Clement was much in demand as a feoffee or witness to documents. On the 5<sup>th</sup> he was a feoffee of a Hintlesham property again, on the 10<sup>th</sup> he was one of a group of witnesses which included Sir Robert Marney of Layer Marney, Sir John Gildsborough, Sir Ralph Selynger and Nicholas Fitzrichard who witnessed an indenture for Sir Aubrey de Vere

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<sup>105</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1385-1389, p.256.

<sup>106</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1385-1389, p.257.

<sup>107</sup> B.L. Add. Charter 9660.

<sup>108</sup> W.A. Copinger, The Manors of Suffolk 6, (1910), p.91.

<sup>109</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1385-1389, p.213.

and others, whilst on the 13<sup>th</sup> he witnessed a charter concerning land in Stanford Rivers and Greensted together with important men from the locality including Sir William Wauton, Thomas Lampet and Thomas Bataill.<sup>110</sup>

It is probable that Clement drew up the deeds and indentures that he witnessed and it would have been his clerk or associate who collected the signatures and seals of the other witnesses. Documents dated at a particular manor house would not necessarily have been attested by all the witnesses at the same time. It was from these transactions (only a tiny number of which have survived in documentary form) that Clement would have made a significant proportion of his income. By such means he would also have become well known to many if not most of the senior gentry in Essex, together with many of the Suffolk gentry and powerful Londoners. Clement continued to work for both the de Vere family and the Fitzwalters and it may occasionally have required a deft touch to avoid being embroiled in the rivalry between his various powerful masters. However, it seems that relations between the de Veres and Fitzwalters were generally cordial. This may have been helped by the fact that Sir Aubrey de Vere's first wife was the daughter of Lord Fitzwalter. The Fitzwalters were also on good terms with the duke of Gloucester at Pleshey but all the resident magnates seem to have been at arms length with the Bourghchiers to judge from their absence from feoffee and witness lists.

In January 1388 Clement and a group of gentry whose interests lay mainly in the south-east of the county were associated with the enfeoffment of Sir Aubrey de Vere's

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<sup>110</sup> Cal Close Rolls 1385-1389, p.422; p.429.

manors and other property in the Horndon area.<sup>111</sup> Witnesses seem to have been selected on the grounds of being 'well-wishers' of the future earl of Oxford and being resident in the area where the property lay. Perhaps the selection and management of feoffees and witnesses was a function Clement performed for his powerful clients. In this case the witnesses included Sir Robert Marney, Sir John Gildsborough, Sir Ralph St. Leger, Thomas Belhouse and Thomas Gobion. Age was clearly no bar to the appointment of feoffees as Clement was now approaching his sixtieth year. On 27 February, Clement Spice and two others were appointed trustees of the principal Essex manors of the Fitzwalters and were charged with paying the income into the Exchequer during the heir's minority except for an allowance of thirty pounds per annum (a relatively small amount it would seem) for his maintenance.<sup>112</sup> It is probable that lord Fitzwalter spent time with Clement learning the elements of law and estate administration. Unlike large gentry estates in Essex such as the Tyrells' compact cluster of manors in the area of East Horndon, the Fitzwalters' land was, like other magnates' estates, scattered across the county and therefore more difficult to administer. In the November following it seems that Clement's old associate Sir John Gildsborough was putting his affairs in order in anticipation of his imminent death for Clement was asked to quitclaim as the last surviving feoffee of Sir John's capital manor at Wennington.<sup>113</sup> The last transaction which we know about for that year was Clement's appointment with Sir Gerard Braybroke and his son, Sir John Trayly and others as feoffees for William Bateman a future three-time sheriff of Essex whose brothers-in-law included John Doreward, Sir John Tyrell both of them Speaker of the House of Commons and

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<sup>111</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1385-1389, p.485.

<sup>112</sup> Cal.Fine Rolls 1381-1391, p.221.

<sup>113</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1385-1389, p.633.

Sir Ralph St Leger.<sup>114</sup>

In 1389, for reasons that are not clear, Clement Spice and others paid twenty marks to the king for a licence to found a chantry in the church at Over in Cambridgeshire. Both Clement and his partner Robert Rikedon were associated with a member of chantry foundations and it is probable that they did this in their role as lawyers rather than out of pious devotion.<sup>115</sup> Foundation documents could be complex and there was often a series of property transactions, including the sale of land, involved. In February, Clement was enfeoffed with the manor of Wennington by Sir John Gildsborough and the witnesses to the charter included Sir Robert Marney, Sir William Wauton, Thomas Belhouse and others.<sup>116</sup> It is not possible to say whether such witnesses were chosen by the lawyer or the client but they include powerful Essex gentry as well as locals, relatively unimportant individuals. Shortly after his death, Wennington estate was transferred from Sir John's feoffees to his widow Dame Elizabeth Gildsborough in October 1389.<sup>117</sup>

On 15 July Clement was appointed JP once more and joined a number of his clients and acquaintances on the Bench; these included Sir Robert Swinburne, Sir John and Sir Richard de Sutton (all three knights rather elderly and approaching the end of their lives).<sup>118</sup> He was reappointed JP on 10 November and was no stranger to his fellow JPs Aubrey de Vere, John Bourghier, Sir Richard de Sutton, Alexander Walden, Thomas

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<sup>114</sup> Essex Fines 3 p.211.

<sup>115</sup> Cal.Pat. Rolls 1388-1392, p.13.

<sup>116</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1385-1389, p.638 and 645.

<sup>117</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1389-1392, p.71.

<sup>118</sup> Cal.Pat. Rolls 1388-1392, p.135.



Coggeshall and others.<sup>119</sup> On 13 October Clement and a clerk named Robert de Garton lent Alice, the widow of John de Gestingthorpe, William and Thomas Toppesfield five hundred marks for reasons which are not known.<sup>120</sup> The debt was repaid but we can only speculate as to the value of such a transaction to Clement; such transactions illustrate that even in the case of money lending, clerics were party to the transactions involving lawyers such as Clement Spice. In 1390 Clement once again sat as JP on the Essex Bench together with local magnates and senior gentry.<sup>121</sup> Much of the practical work was carried out by the lawyers rather than the lay members, the majority of whom many may have attended infrequently.

By this time Clement's own sons may have married and had children of their own. It is not clear whether any of his sons assisted him or went on to qualify as lawyers in their own right. Of all the Essex lawyers known to have had sons few of them followed their fathers' profession the exceptions being in the Tyrell and Doreward families. Clement's son Edmund is heard of again in 1391 when a bond of thirty-four marks was taken out and made payable on Michaelmas Day to John Brown parson of St. Stephens Walbrook, John Giffard of Essex and 'Edmund, son of Clement Spice of Essex'.<sup>122</sup> In October 1390 Clement, John de Boys (a neighbour of Robert Rikedon at Witham) and others acted as feoffees for two freeholders regarding land in Boxford, Suffolk.<sup>123</sup> It is therefore significant that even these small landowners were able to obtain the services of a leading member of the local gentry and a prominent lawyer. Was this simply for a

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<sup>119</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1388-1392, p. 139.

<sup>120</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1389-1392, p. 68.

<sup>121</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1389-1392, p. 341.

<sup>122</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1389-1392, p. 330.

<sup>123</sup> Cat. Anc. Deeds 6, p. 129.

fee in Clement's case and to increase his 'worship' in the area in Boys' case ? As a final echo of the 1381 Rising Clement, Sir Walter atte Lee, Sir Richard de Sutton, Sir Thomas de Mandeville, Edward de Brokesbourne and other prominent members of the gentry were appointed to a commission which inquired into damage which occurred to houses in Manningtree 'in the time of the insurrection'.<sup>124</sup>

Clement was still involved with Suffolk matters where a fine of 1391 shows him active in the land market with Roger Wolfreston, and Roger Cavendish.<sup>125</sup> The year 1391 saw Clement, John Doreward and a young lawyer named Richard Waltham who was establishing himself in the Common Pleas (and was working in association with Robert Rikedon) appointed as feoffees for William Geldrich (who would be escheator in 1392 and 1400) and his wife Margaret for the manors of Petches in Finchingfield and Dynes in Great Maplestead.<sup>126</sup> It is remarkable how many of Clement's clients were past or future escheator of Essex and Hertfordshire.

On 8 May Clement was appointed to a commission to inquire into felonies committed in the Liberty of St Edmund, Suffolk, one of his fellow commissioners being Sir Robert Swinburne who was without doubt very close to death.<sup>127</sup> Several other commissions followed during that year which involved Clement and prominent members of the Essex gentry.<sup>128</sup> As the only lawyer on most of these commissions he

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<sup>124</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1388-1392, p. 442.

<sup>125</sup> Suffolk Fines p. 264.

<sup>126</sup> Essex Fines 3 p. 217. Richard Waltham (d. 1428) was buried in Little Waltham church where a small monumental brass inscription plate remains to his memory. R. Philips and R. Bazett, Ages in the Making (1974), p. 24. Symonds saw this brass on 7 March 1637 and noted that it was merely an 'inscription without any picture or armes'. College of Arms Symonds MS 3 f. 411v.

<sup>127</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1388-1392, p. 441.

<sup>128</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1388-1392, p. 522.

was probably there to give professional advice but he may also have acted as secretary to the commission. By the end of the year Sir Robert Swinburne was dead because on 2 December his son and heir Sir Thomas Swinburne was required by an order of that date to produce mainpernors in the colossal sum of one thousand pounds in order to ensure that 'he shall do or produce no hurt to Joan who was wife to Sir Robert Swinburne [she was the step-mother of Sir Thomas]...his feoffees John Doreward, John de Boys, Thomas Lampet, Clement Spice and Ralph Chamberlain'.<sup>129</sup> Whatever the cause of these Swinburne family problems, Sir Robert and his son Sir Thomas are commemorated side by side on a superb monumental brass in the church of Little Horkesley. Less than a month after the order to find a mainpernor Sir Thomas managed to borrow the spectacular sum of ten thousand pounds from a consortium comprising Sir Thomas Mortimer, Robert Hethe and Robert Newport. They in turn borrowed six thousand pounds from John Doreward, Clement Spice, Thomas Lampet and John Boys – none other than Sir Thomas's own feoffees.<sup>130</sup> If these sums actually existed – and were not merely paper transactions for some other purpose – they would have been arranged on the London money market and no doubt Clement would have had the necessary contacts to make this possible. At the beginning of the following year Clement was again lending money – this time he, together with his old friend Roger Ketterich, and others lent John Rokele of Wormingford (escheator in 1384 and 1387), two hundred pounds.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1389-1392, p. 508.

<sup>130</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1389-1392, p. 533.

<sup>131</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1389-1392, p. 536.

On 20 February 1392 Clement Spice, a clerk named Robert Crull, judge William Rickhill of Kent and others paid forty marks for a licence to alienate land in Barking to the abbess in return for her providing a chaplain to celebrate divine service daily at the shrine of St. Ethelberga the Virgin in the abbey church.<sup>132</sup> On 20 June the much larger sum of two hundred and fifty marks was paid to the king for a licence to alienate in mortmain the manor and advowson of Histon, Cambridgeshire to the abbess and convent of Denney in Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire.<sup>133</sup> This was undertaken by Clement and his associates – whether on their behalf or on behalf of others we do not know. Judging by the frequency of such transactions it seems likely that Clement's role was a professional one.

Called on yet again to provide a loan, the irony of his position would not have escaped Clement Spice when on 18 December 1392 – some sixty years after being born to relatively poor parents in a Suffolk village he was able to lend the very considerable sum of three hundred pounds to Sir John Braham - a knight from his native county.<sup>134</sup> At the close of the year Clement acted as mainpernor for Sir John and also for Sir Robert Mounteney of Mountnessing regarding a share of the manor of Sheringham, Norfolk whilst it remained in the king's hands.<sup>135</sup> There is also the record of a Suffolk fine sued out at this time in which Clement appears to have purchased land in Braham, Suffolk on behalf of Sir John Braham and his wife Johanna.<sup>136</sup> These transactions

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<sup>132</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1391-1396, p. 59.

<sup>133</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1391-1396, p. 74.

<sup>134</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1392-1396, p. 109.

<sup>135</sup> The Mounteneys were an Essex gentry family of great antiquity. With one or two exceptions they appear to have played little part in the social or political life of the county gentry between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries.

<sup>136</sup> Suffolk Fines p. 267.

illustrate that Clement appeared equally at home acting on behalf of clients in London, Essex or Suffolk. His clients ranged from small, sub-gentry landowners to all the families of the higher nobility resident in Essex. It is significant that Clement's Suffolk clients were restricted to such a small geographical area. Perhaps it was Sir John Braham who brought him to the attention of Michael de la Pole, earl of Suffolk for on 11 January 1393 Clement Spice together with the de Sutton brothers, Sir Robert Tey and John Rookwood were appointed as his feoffees.<sup>137</sup> On the following day Clement was appointed to a commission inquiring into the carelessness, negligence and bad governance of the abbot of Colchester.<sup>138</sup> The abbot had initially submitted to the bishop of London when charged with three offences but had subsequently refused obedience to the extent of 'maliciously withdrawing the food and clothing of the priests and monks and selling and alienating the possessions of the abbey'. Clement and his fellow commissioners Sir Adam Fraunceys, Sir William Coggeshall, Thomas Coggeshall and John de Boys were charged with putting an end to this behaviour and to restoring peace in the abbey. This would have been a severe test of their diplomatic skills.

On 18 June Clement returned to the Essex bench as one of a distinguished list of JPs some of whom rarely if ever sat in judgement.<sup>139</sup> These included Thomas, duke of Gloucester, Aubrey de Vere (now earl of Oxford), John lord Bourghier (who was to marry Lady Margaret, widow of the recently deceased Sir John Sutton), Sir Alexander de Walden, Thomas Coggeshall, John Doreward, William Rickhill and others. Later

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<sup>137</sup> Cal.Pat. Rolls 1391-1396 p.210.

<sup>138</sup> Cal.Pat. Rolls 1391-1396 p.234.

<sup>139</sup> Cal.Pat. Rolls 1391-1396 p.436.

that year John Doreward sought to protect the succession of his estate by a series of enfeoffments the first of which included his manors of Leaden Roding, Loft Hall, Olivers, Belhouse in Orsett, Stanway and Layer de la Haye. In addition to Clement he enfeoffed among others, the bishop of London, the earl of Oxford, Sir George Felbrigge, Sir Thomas Erpingham, Sir Walter Clopton, the parson of Bocking, Thomas Coggeshall and Robert Rikedon.<sup>140</sup> In contrast with this transaction, Clement was a feoffee for John Schoolmaster and his wife Margery of Chelmsford, in respect of some land in Great Dunmow and it is significant that this ordinary couple were able to engage not only Clement but such heavyweights as Sir Richard Waldegrave, Thomas Coggeshall and Edmund Fitzsimon.<sup>141</sup>

In January 1394 Clement accepted the role of feoffee for his friend Sir John Gildsborough's widow and in October did the same for Robert Sewale of Coggeshall (probably the son of sheriff John Sewale whose 'wonderthon' Clement had investigated years before) and Agnes Magdaleyne, possibly on the occasion of their marriage.<sup>142</sup> If Clement took an active role as a feoffee and had a hand in the administration of the property for which he was a trustee this would have been very time-consuming. It is more likely that his clients retained *de facto* control of their property and the ongoing demands on Clement and the other feoffees were relatively slight.

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<sup>140</sup> Essex Fines 3, p.220.

<sup>141</sup> Essex Fines 3, p.218.

<sup>142</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1392-1396, p.252.

#### 4.7. ESCHEATOR

24 November 1394 was a significant date in Clement's life for it was then that he was appointed (at the advanced age of about sixty-five) as escheator for Essex and Hertfordshire, an honour which his various grants of exemption from public office show he may well have tried hard to avoid. Whatever his views of the office, he held it for an unprecedented unbroken term of five years until 8 December 1399.<sup>143</sup> His old friend Roger Ketterich served as escheator as long as Clement but not continuously, for he had a break of two years after his first three years in office. Ketterich was also sheriff in 1372 and 1377. In view of his age and busy legal practice the demands of the escheatery must have been a heavy burden for Clement Spice. For reasons we can only guess at he never became an MP or sheriff; his income would have allowed him to become a knight but this was a distinction he clearly wished to avoid. In this context it is significant that the parvenu Clement Spice, manorial lord, rich and having the highest connections was rarely addressed as *esquire*. He may have been accepted into gentry society on account of his wealth and because he was useful rather than being recognised as an equal.<sup>144</sup>

As escheator it was Clement's duty in May 1395 to give Joan, countess of Hereford (widowed in 1373), whose daughter Eleanor had married Thomas of Woodstock (now duke of Gloucester) livery of certain manors in Essex.<sup>145</sup> This may have been the first

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<sup>143</sup> Other long term escheators were John de Coggeshall 4 Nov 1351–10 Nov 1354; John Welde 15 Nov 1369–11 Nov 1371; Roger Ketterich 12 Dec 1372–3 Nov 1375 and 26 Nov 1377–13 Nov 1379, John Clerk 12 Dec 1379–10 Jun 1381 and Henry English 12 Dec 1390–21 Jan 1392.

<sup>144</sup> Clement was described as 'Clementius Spice Armig' on the tomb of his son Roger who died in 1459 and was buried at Black Notley. College of Arms. Symonds MS.1 f.120r.

<sup>145</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1392–1396, p.350.

occasion when they met but in due course Clement was to join her affinity, perhaps on the recommendation of lord Fitzwalter, a good friend to the countess and her son-in-law Gloucester. Similarly Clement was ordered to give the duke of Gloucester livery of the advowson of Wethersfield church and the earl of Derby livery of the advowsons of East Horndon and Little Hallingbury churches.<sup>146</sup> During March 1395 Clement had witnessed a series of three transactions concerning the manor of Nortofts in Tilbury-juxta-Clare. Clement, Thomas Coggeshall and Robert Rikedon were witnesses on 4, 6 and 12 March, and other witnesses were variously employed on the same dates. It is scarcely credible that three such busy men actually met three times in nine days regarding a relatively unimportant transaction and this suggests that witnessing may only have required consent, not actual presence.<sup>147</sup>

Sir John Braham, Clement's Suffolk client planned to go to Ireland on the King's business in 1396 and he chose Clement, together with Roger Cavendish (son of Sir John Cavendish and then serving as sheriff of Suffolk), to be his attorneys. Clearly Sir John placed great trust in the elderly lawyer.<sup>148</sup> Despite his age Clement remained physically active for on 26 July, he and William Bateman (sheriff that year and half Clement's age) were commanded by the king to eject Richard Lord Talbot from the manors of Braxted, Wallbury and Hassenbrook and to seize them on the king's behalf as both Lord Grey and William Beauchamp claimed the manors as their own. Clement Spice and William Bateman went to Braxted and commanded Lord Talbot to leave. Fortunately for Clement who doubtless wished to avoid violence, Lord Talbot 'humbly

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<sup>146</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1392-1396, p.448.

<sup>147</sup> E.R.O. D/DCw T46/12 and T46/15.

<sup>148</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1391-1396, p.701.



with honour' inspected their commission 'and obeyed the king's commands with all humility and reverence'.<sup>149</sup> Two months earlier, in May 1396, Clement Spice with an array of prominent gentry and lawyers including Sir Walter atte Lee, John de Boys, William Bateman, Robert Rikedon, William Geldrich, John Kempe, Richard Waltham and John, lord Cobham, quitclaimed their rights as feoffees in respect of the manor of Great Sampford on behalf of Sir William Coggeshall and his wife Margaret to John Doreward of Bocking and the rector of Bocking and Stisted. Both Bateman and Doreward were Sir William's sons-in-law.<sup>150</sup> Clement received other commands from the king that required him as escheator to physically deliver important documents. In September he had to deliver the temporalities of the conventual church of St Mary and St. John the Baptist, Bicknacre to William Winchester the newly elected prior.<sup>151</sup> There is no suggestion that Clement employed a deputy to carry out these time-consuming tasks. Still trusted by the Essex gentry during his term of office as escheator, Clement obliged his occasional co-feoffee John de Boys and acted as feoffee for him regarding the manors of Blunts Hall, Witham, Tolleshunt Tregoz and Tolleshunt Virley.<sup>152</sup> Just before Christmas 1396 Clement witnessed a charter of enfeoffment for Lady Joan Swinburne – who had now apparently sorted out her problem with her stepson. The list of witnesses is far more impressive than the list of feoffees (the latter includes two former sheriffs, William Geldrich and William Bateman) as it includes the bishop of London, the earl of Oxford, Sir Bartholemew Bourghier, Sir William Coggeshall, Sir

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<sup>149</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1396-1399, p.110.

<sup>150</sup> E.R.O. D/DL T1/248.

<sup>151</sup> Cal. Inq. Misc. 6, p.66.

<sup>152</sup> Essex Fines 3, p.227.

William Bourghier, Sir William Langham, Sir Geoffrey Brokhole, Thomas Coggeshall, John Doreward, John Langham, John de Boys and Clement Spice.<sup>153</sup>

1397 was to prove a momentous year for Clement Spice as he was to witness the fall and destruction of the duke of Gloucester his sometime patron. As late as 16 April he was still acting on behalf of the doomed duke regarding the manor of Wethersfield.<sup>154</sup> On 1 July Sir Thomas Swinburne enfeoffed Clement, John Doreward, John de Boys, Thomas Lampet, Ralph Chamberlain and others with his lands in Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Essex.<sup>155</sup> Ten days later Gloucester was arrested by the king at Pleshey castle and taken to Calais where he was confined in prison. There, on 8 September, Sir William Rickhill, the judge from Kent who had served on commissions of the peace with Clement, interrogated the duke. Gloucester appears to have confessed to treason against the king and by 24 September it was put about that he had died. It later transpired that he had been smothered under a feather bed. As a member of Gloucester's affinity it was Clement's misfortune to be a royal official in Essex when Gloucester's affairs in the county came under the king's scrutiny. On 1 October he received an order from the king requiring him as escheator to deliver to the treasurer and chamberlain a complete certified inventory of goods and chattels seized by him on information that Gloucester had embezzled 'divers prests and sums of money' from the king.<sup>156</sup> In addition, Clement was to seize and keep safe until further notice the duke's goods and chattels to be found in Clement's bailiwick. No doubt Clement made his way to Pleshey at great speed and personally supervised the

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<sup>153</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1396-1399, p. 79.

<sup>154</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1396-1399, p. 111.

<sup>155</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1396-1399, p. 202.

<sup>156</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1396-1399, p. 160.

preparation of the inventory. Having done this he was appointed with others to seize on the king's behalf all other property located in Essex and Hertfordshire belonging to the duke, the archbishop of Canterbury, the earl of Arundel and the earl of Warwick.<sup>157</sup> His task having been completed to the king's satisfaction it seems, Clement was re-appointed to the Essex Bench on 12 November together with William Bateman, Robert Newport, William Skrene (a fellow lawyer and neighbour from Roxwell), the earl of Oxford, lord Bourghier and others.<sup>158</sup> Ten days later he was a member of a commission of oyer and terminer with William Skrene, John Doreward, Robert Newport and others regarding bondmen of Great Bromley who had withdrawn their customs and services.<sup>159</sup> By 24 November his professional practice had sufficiently returned to equilibrium to enable him to lend (with Roger Cavendish) James Andrew of Suffolk two hundred marks.<sup>160</sup> At the end of what had undoubtedly been an exhausting year for Clement he was appointed on 20 December to an extraordinarily important royal commission on which sat the bishop of London, the earl of Oxford, lords Fitzwalter and Bourghier, five abbots, the prior of St.Botolph's Colchester, four knights and ten other members of the gentry, in order to consider the payment of the ancient farm of Essex.<sup>161</sup> Clement may have taken a rest at the beginning of 1398 for we do not hear of him until 21 March when he was ordered by the king to give Gloucester's widow livery of the castle and manor of Pleshey, the king having taken her homage and fealty.<sup>162</sup> The duchess died, apparently of grief, on 3 October the following year and her only son died aged eighteen on his return from exile in Ireland.

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<sup>157</sup> Issues of the Exchequer Henry III-Henry IV F.Devon ed., (1837), p.264.

<sup>158</sup> Cal.Pat. Rolls 1396-1399, p.232.

<sup>159</sup> Cal.Pat. Rolls 1396-1399, p.309.

<sup>160</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1396-1399, p.228.

<sup>161</sup> Cal.Pat. Rolls 1396-1399, p.311.

<sup>162</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1396-1399, p.253.

On May 14 Clement was a mainpernor once again (but we do not know upon what terms he acted) in the sum of one hundred marks for a West Ham man and next day he and William Skrene were appointed justices of oyer and terminer in Essex.<sup>163</sup> A further royal commission followed on 16 June when Clement, together with William Skrene and William Bateman and others were charged with examining waterways in Essex. Another member of that commission was Sir William Rickhill and it may be that in view of his own relationship with Gloucester, Clement had difficulty in serving with him.<sup>164</sup>

On 16 July following, Richard Spice (apparently Clement's youngest son by Alice Bocking) was witness to a quitclaim in Hertfordshire by Thomas de Hoddesden.<sup>165</sup> His fellow witnesses included John and William Chertsey, his two stepsons from his marriage to Isabella, widow of John Chertsey who died the previous year. Chertsey had been a citizen and clothier of London who is mentioned in the will of John Parker as having left his son property in London to hold for the lives of Beatrice (possibly the sister of Roger) Wolverston and the unnamed wife of John Newers.<sup>166</sup> Despite his surname the clothier John Chertsey was the son of Nigel Theobald of Sudbury and brother of Simon of Sudbury, archbishop of Canterbury murdered in 1381 during the Great Rising. The Spice family therefore continued their connection with Suffolk to the next generation.

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<sup>163</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1396-1399, p.304 and Cal. Pat. Rolls 1396-1399, p.335.

<sup>164</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1396-1399, p.371.

<sup>165</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1396-1399, p.386.

<sup>166</sup> Cat. Anc. Deeds 1, p.213.

During the following February Clement and his neighbour Thomas Lampet of Fyfield borrowed one hundred and sixteen pounds from John Doreward (who was sheriff from 22 August that year) and William Geldrich (escheator in 1392 and 1400) of Finchingfield.<sup>167</sup> It is perhaps significant that Clement does not appear to have acted with his partner Robert Rikedon during his years as escheator and this suggests that Rikedon may have taken over the running of the partnership at this time, probably in association with Richard Waltham his own neighbour from Little Waltham. Like Clement, Rikedon also held public office, including his appointment as J.P. between 1386-1410; he was, of course, very active as a commissioner as well. At last Clement was able to relinquish his duties as escheator being succeeded by Robert Ramsey on 8 February 1399 who was himself succeeded by the lawyer Richard Baynard on 30 September.<sup>168</sup> Such a short term of office suggests that Ramsey was a stand-in for Clement who may have been temporarily incapacitated. Appointments to the escheatry at this time generally lasted at least a year and ran from November or December. September 1399 saw the deposition of Richard II and Clement may well have looked forward to the reign of his patron Countess Joan's son-in-law. In October Clement and others obtained a relatively cheap licence (ninety-five marks) to enable the prior and convent of Leighs to alienate land in Halstead in mortmain so as to celebrate masses for the soul of Richard atte Hoo in perpetuity. Leighs priory had an interest in the manor of Great Wenham in Suffolk so it was no surprise that Clement was the lawyer chosen to arrange the alienation.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1396-1399, p.429.

<sup>168</sup> Lists of Escheators for England P.R.O. Lists of Indexes 72 (1932).

<sup>169</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1399-1401, p.150.

Although Clement was appointed to the Essex Bench again in November we hear very little of him during 1400.<sup>170</sup> A deed of 7 February shows him as tenant and occupier of a messuage and shops in the parish of 'Aldermarichurche' in London.<sup>171</sup> This is our only clue as to the whereabouts of Clement's London home and perhaps also the place where he conducted his law practice. At the close of the year and despite his advanced age Clement was appointed to another commission of oyer and terminer with such dignitaries as Sir William Rickhill, Sir William Waldegrave, Thomas Coggeshall and Thomas Lampet. They were to investigate a complaint from the prior of Earls Colne, that the dowager countess of Oxford, John Preston (a monk), Thomas Tewe (the de Vere's steward) and others broke into the prior's house at Earls Colne at night 'assaulted and imprisoned him and carried him from thence to divers places' and then back to Earls Colne 'shamefully clad' where he was forced to swear on the Host never to dispute the monk John Preston's claims to the priory. The prior also claimed that this mob of people had cut down his trees, fished in the fisheries, carried away his goods, consumed his corn and grass and assaulted his fellow monks and servants.<sup>172</sup>

In 1401 Clement was twice more appointed to the Essex Bench and he was named in a pardon purchased from the king by Thomas Walden which forgave Thomas for granting Clement and others his manor of Ongar Park in High Ongar (which he held of the king) and appointing them as feoffees. The same pardon gave the feoffees licence to grant the manor back to Thomas and his wife Margaret.<sup>173</sup> In March he witnessed a quitclaim of the manor of Stanway by William Farman to John Doreward, other

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<sup>170</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1399-1401, p. 559.

<sup>171</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1399-1401, p. 195.

<sup>172</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1399-1401, pp. 414-415.

<sup>173</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1399-1401, pp. 426 and 559.

witnesses included Sir William Coggeshall (Doreward's father-in-law), Robert Rikedon and Richard Baynard (Doreward's brother-in-law).<sup>174</sup> Meanwhile Clement's son Richard was probably living at the manor of Baas in Hoddesden, Hertfordshire as he regularly accounted to his stepson John Chertsey in the church of Waltham Holy Cross for the rent.<sup>175</sup> At the end of November Clement was associated with the powerful London draper and former mayor John Hende (Richard Baynard's stepfather) and Robert Rikedon as feoffees for John Bishop of Suffolk.<sup>176</sup> Two months later Hende appointed Clement as one of his own feoffees.<sup>177</sup> Maybe these two came into contact through members of the London family of Cavendish (some of them of Suffolk origin) who, like John Hende, were drapers. Hende had acquired an estate at Bradwell-juxta-Coggeshall, having like other successful Londoners, established himself as an Essex gentleman. In his case he took the added precaution of marrying as his second wife Katherine Baynard, the widow of Thomas Baynard of Messing, the Baynards being a long-established Essex gentry family. In May 1402 Clement was appointed to a commission with the task of enquiring into the whereabouts of concealed goods belonging to John, the late earl of Huntingdon.<sup>178</sup> A year later when challenged concerning these goods he was able to prove on oath in chancery that he had not physically received the commission document.<sup>179</sup> He was however properly appointed to a commission *de walliis et fossatis* which included Richard Waltham and William Hanningfield, both Essex lawyers, for part of the Thames estuary.<sup>180</sup> In a fine sued out

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<sup>174</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1399-1402, p. 307.

<sup>175</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1399-1402, pp. 410 and 472-473.

<sup>176</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1399-1402, p. 479.

<sup>177</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1401-1405, pp. 188-189.

<sup>178</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1401-1405, p. 124.

<sup>179</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1402-1405, pp. 165-166.

<sup>180</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1401-1405, p. 198.

in 1403 Clement and his youngest son Roger acted as feoffees for John Bray (JP 1402-1406) of Tilbury-juxta-Clare and his wife Joan in respect of land there.<sup>181</sup> It is unlikely that Roger was the son of Alice Bocking as she was born c.1335, but it is possible that he was born to her shortly after 1375 when the names of her sons were set out in a deed. If Roger (perhaps Roger Wolfreston or Roger Ketterich was his godfather) was born c.1380 he would have been about eighty when he died in 1459 – a remarkable example of father/son longevity as Clement was about eighty-five when he died.<sup>182</sup>

Unusually, when aged more than seventy, and having had no previous military service as far as is known, Clement was appointed to a commission of array for Essex on 28 August 1403 with Sir John Howard, Sir William Coggeshall (the former *condottiere*), John Doreward, Robert Luton, Robert Rikedon and the sheriff Helming Leget.<sup>183</sup> Presumably his duties would have been entirely administrative and therefore entirely appropriate to elderly lawyers like Clement Spice and Robert Rikedon. At Chigwell during February of the following year Clement and a distinguished group of Essex gentry which comprised Sir John Howard, Sir William Coggeshall, Sir William Bourghier and Sir William Marney together with Robert de Tey and John de Boys had witnessed a charter in which Bartholemew lord Bourghier enfeoffed Robert Newport, John Doreward, Robert Rikedon and Richard Fitznichol of land in Chigwell and the advowson of the church.<sup>184</sup> It was an indication of Clement's advancing years that some of his fellow witnesses – Sir William Marney and Robert Tey – were the sons of old

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<sup>181</sup> *Essex Fines* 3, p.238.

<sup>182</sup> An explanation for this apparent longevity is that there may have been two Clement Spices, father and son. There is no evidence for this, no mention of two Clements in the same document or reference to the elder/younger, senior/junior.

<sup>183</sup> *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1401-1405*, p.290.

<sup>184</sup> *Cal. Close Rolls 1402-1405*, p.297-298.



clients and associates. Another administrative task that came Clement's way was his appointment as one of the controllers of the collection of the subsidy for Essex, his fellow controllers being Robert Rikedon, Richard Waltham, Richard Torrell (Clement's neighbour from Willingale Doe) and John Lightfoot.<sup>185</sup>

In April 1405 aged about seventy-five Clement was appointed to a commission investigating treasons and felonies said to have been committed by the abbot of St.John's Colchester – doubtless he would have recalled his earlier commission to investigate an abbot of Colchester in 1393.<sup>186</sup> However, Clement, Newport and Rikedon were subsequently able to take an oath swearing that the commission had never come into their hands, in Clement's case a repetition of the administrative failure of the 1403 commission.<sup>187</sup> He was appointed to yet another commission in February 1406, together with the ubiquitous Sir William Coggeshall, as well as William Clopton, William Skrene and Helming Leget (whose widow Alice was to marry Clement's son Roger) this time to investigate a report of poaching in a park at Bardfield in the king's hands during the minority of the earl of March.<sup>188</sup> In November Robert Rikedon was appointed escheator for Essex and Hertfordshire, no doubt finding it useful that his mentor Clement Spice could give him a comprehensive briefing on his duties. In 1407 Clement was enfeoffed with land by Robert Sewale of Coggeshall, son of John Sewale the sheriff of Essex during the Great Rising.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Cal.Fine Rolls 1399-1405, p.257.

<sup>186</sup> Cal.Pat. Rolls 1401-1405, p.514.

<sup>187</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1405-1409, p.240.

<sup>188</sup> Cal.Pat. Rolls 1405-1408, p.151.

<sup>189</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1405-1409, p.277.

#### 4.8 RETIREMENT

Very little is known of Clement's activities during 1408; no doubt his professional workload was greatly reduced but he was still in demand as a totally trustworthy feoffee. He did, however, witness a grant by feoffees dated 20 February to the heirs of Thomas Bataille concerning the manor of Matching Barns. His fellow witnesses included Sir William Coggeshall and Sir William Bourghier, also Ralph Chamberlain a lawyer popular as a feoffee and witness to documents.<sup>190</sup> On 20 March 1409 Clement witnessed a grant of land with Helming Leget and others. Clement's son Roger later married Leget's widow who died in 1420, almost certainly after giving birth to Clement Spice II.<sup>191</sup>

The earl of Oxford – now Richard de Vere the 11<sup>th</sup> earl (the 6<sup>th</sup> earl had been alive when Clement was born) - appointed Clement as his feoffee on 10 March together with John Hende, Robert de Tey, Robert Rikedon, John Basset and others including Elias de Bocking, a kinsman of Clement's wife Alice.<sup>192</sup> In February 1412 Clement and John Hende lent lord Clinton of Say two hundred marks but it is not recorded whether the debt was recovered in Clement's lifetime.<sup>193</sup> On 16 April at Dunmow, a short journey down the Roding valley for an octogenarian living at Willingale Spain, Clement witnessed a quitclaim of the manor of Alfreton in Great Dunmow and a manor in Norfolk by William Bygod to his step-father John Doreward and his mother Isabel

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<sup>190</sup> E.R.O. D/DB T1/324.

<sup>191</sup> E.R.O. D/DI T1/314.

<sup>192</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1409-1413, p.78.

<sup>193</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1409-1413, p.314.

(who was Richard Baynard's sister).<sup>194</sup>

Clement was one of a group of friends and well-wishers still associated with countess Joan (who was to die in 1419) who obtained a licence for forty marks enabling the countess (the king's grandmother) together with Sir Gerard Braybroke, Sir William Marney and John de Boys to found a perpetual chantry of two chaplains to celebrate divine service daily in the church of Dunmow priory for Walter Fitzwalter (1345-1386) son and heir of John Fitzwalter, and his wife Eleanor together with their ancestors and descendants. For this they granted the prior of Little Dunmow the advowson of Great Tey.<sup>195</sup>

In 1412 Clement, like the majority of landowners with an income from land of more than twenty pounds per annum, was assessed for the payment of the subsidy. His lands and tenement at White Notley were assessed at twenty pounds, at Willingale Spain twenty marks and Colchester five marks. As an experienced escheator and lawyer it is likely that he overestimated the value of his estate.<sup>196</sup> In 1436 when his son Roger Spice was assessed for income tax he was found to have an annual income of one hundred and thirty-three pounds making him one of the richest members of the Essex gentry.<sup>197</sup> We next hear of Clement in July 1413 when he witnessed a charter of enfeoffment for John Ewell of Ewell Hall, Kelvedon whose father had been murdered by the rebels in 1381

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<sup>194</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1409-1413, p.335.

<sup>195</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1408-1413, p.411.

<sup>196</sup> Feudal Aids 1285-1431 6, p.440.

<sup>197</sup> H.L.Gray, 'Incomes from land in England in 1436' E.H.R. 49 (1934), p.633.

whilst serving as escheator.<sup>198</sup>

It is probable that Roger Spice married Helming Leget's widow Alice in 1413 having first married Tiffany whose existence is only known from the record of her now vanished tomb at Black Notley.<sup>199</sup> When Helming Leget died in 1412, he left a young son Thomas by his wife Alice, who was probably brought up in Roger's household. Alice was the daughter and co-heiress of Sir Thomas Mandeville of Black Notley Hall and this became the seat of the Spice family from the time of Alice's marriage to Roger Spice. On 28 October 1414 Clement's name together with that of Robert Rikedon, is among the list of witnesses to a grant of land in Terling and Fairstead.<sup>200</sup> Whether Clement was actually present is not known. Some time during Michaelmas term (6 October and 25 November) 1415, Clement's name appears in the record of a fine sued out in the Court of Common Pleas where he began as a lawyer. Clement Spice together with John Doreward, his partner Robert Rikedon and his son Roger were thereby enfeoffed with land in Stebbing and Great Saling by Nicholas Talbot and his wife Ismania.<sup>201</sup>

Clement is mentioned in a letter of attorney dated 6 March 1416 from himself, Robert Rikedon, Roger Spice and Richard Honeley to John Fokes and John Barber to deliver seisin of land in Essex to his old acquaintance John Bray of Felsted.<sup>202</sup> The document still bears the remains of Clement's armorial seal (a chevron is visible) and

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<sup>198</sup> *Cal. Close Rolls 1409-1413*, p.417.

<sup>199</sup> College of Arms Symonds MS 1, f.120v. [Black Notley 1640] 'Upon another flat stone adjoining Hic jacet Tiffania que fuit uxor Rog. Spyce Armig.'

<sup>200</sup> E.R.O. D/DPo T56/10.

<sup>201</sup> *Essex Fines* 3 p.266.

<sup>202</sup> E.R.O. D/DCw T46/26.

also the personal seal of Robert Rikedon. Clement's last known transaction is recorded in a deed dated 4 March 1419 which refers to Clement Spice of Black Notley granting a messuage in White Notley to four named individuals. The document was witnessed *inter alia* by his son Roger and is sewn to the grant of 1377 in which Clement and his wife Alice had conveyed the same property to Roger and Lucy Andrew.<sup>203</sup>

We do not know when Clement died but it was at the age of 85 or more. Perhaps it was in 1419 in the same year as Countess Joan. There is no will, no inquisition *post mortem* and no record of a tomb. He may have been buried in London but it is perhaps most likely that he was buried at Black Notley (Plate 4.6) or in St. Andrew's church Willingale Spain, close to his manor of Spains Hall. Roger Spice succeeded his father and named his own son after the old lawyer; Roger died in 1459 and was buried at Black Notley.<sup>204</sup> Clement Spice II (1420-1483) became an M.P. for Essex and eventually succeeded his father at Black Notley.<sup>205</sup> Clement II's son Humphrey is the last known male descendant of Clement I and when Humphrey died in 1485 he left an only daughter and heiress Phillipa through whom the Spice line continued in Essex.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> E.R.O. D/DK T233/2.

<sup>204</sup> College of Arms Symonds MS 1 f 120v. [Black Notley 1640] 'Upon a flat stone of blew marble in ye Church are these 3 Coates [Spice, Mandeville and Fitzwalter] & inscriptions inlayd with brasse, sans pictures. Hic jacet Rogus Spyce Armig. Filius & heres Clementius Spice (sic) Armig. Qui obiit XI die Martij Anno Milesimo XXXXLIX & Alicia uxor eius filia & heres Thome Mandeville militis'.

<sup>205</sup> An unnamed member of the Spice family of Essex is rather fancifully portrayed as a knight in full armour on horseback in B.L.Harl. MS 4205 f.20v. of c.1476-93. Other leading Essex families are similarly depicted in the same manuscript.

<sup>206</sup> J.H.Round, 'The descent of Faulkebourne' *T.E.A.S.* 15 (1921), pp.1-25.



**PLATE 4.6 BLACK NOTLEY CHURCH**



#### 4. 9. CONCLUSIONS

This study of the life and career of Clement Spice highlights a number of aspects of lawyer and gentry activity in our period. Spice rose from obscurity to be not only a leading member of his profession (counsel to the Prince of Wales) but also one of an elite group of lawyers who, having achieved success, acquired an estate in Essex and thereby joined local gentry society. His initial acceptance as a parvenu may have been grudging (he was rarely addressed as esquire – an indignity experienced by most lawyers) but he was clearly valued and respected by his many clients. In time, through a combination of clientage, adherence to magnate affinities, partnership with other lawyers, marriage to an heiress with local connections, kinship, friendship and office holding he was as much a part of gentry society as if he had been born to it.

For his services to the Prince of Wales he was rewarded with a salary, livery, and the stewardship of a royal manor (a valuable sinecure). From his magnate and gentry clients he seems to have relied on fees, but membership of these circles no doubt had other advantages. There is no reason to suppose Spice's services as a lawyer were unusual but he does seem to have done his job extremely well, as is demonstrated by the fact that his clients retained him for so long, sometimes recommending him to their children. Not only was he trusted as a feoffee, witness and executor, but he also acted as arbitrator, banker (providing loans and raising capital on behalf of clients) and mainpernor. Most of his business in Essex was done in partnership with gentry-born lawyer Richard Rikedon and later with the lawyer Richard Waltham as well. Partnership seems to have been a regular practice amongst Essex lawyers. It is also to be noted that he frequently acted in matters of trust with members of the clergy,

particularly regarding the execution of wills; magnates and senior gentry were frequent users of their joint services.

An analysis of Spice's clients shows that his everyday work was done with the principal and greater gentry, seldom with the parish gentry and those outside gentry society. He was retained by resident magnates and had the remarkable distinction of working for all four families, occasionally being employed by more than one at the same time. In some extraordinary way he was not only able to avoid becoming embroiled in their rivalry but he was trusted adviser to them all, with no apparent conflict of loyalty. He was also employed as a commissioner to deal with particularly sensitive matters such as the abbot of Colchester's misbehaviour or an errant magnate. Reviewing the decisions of the Court of Husting would also have taxed his diplomatic skills. Perhaps the most serious test of his professional skills was to be part of the royal commission which dealt with the aftermath of Gloucester's death whilst remaining a part of countess Joan's affinity, she being the duke's supporter and mother-in-law.

Spice's career shows just how much the Crown relied on the gentry, especially lawyers, in the provision of local government in the counties. He had what must at times have been a crushing workload, particularly as he was at his busiest when he was well past middle age. For an unusually long period he served as escheator and also as JP. In the latter role he was appointed to a Bench comprising magnates and senior gentry many of whom rarely attended the sessions. It was left to him and his fellow lawyers to carry the main burden of the work. Similarly he was appointed to numerous royal commissions where it is obvious that he dealt with not only the administration,



but also the execution of the king's orders. It is significant that Clement Spice was never chosen as sheriff nor elected as MP; these offices were still the almost exclusive preserve of the long-standing principal and greater gentry and no appointee in Spice's time is known to have been a lawyer.

In relation to his position in gentry society there remains a paradox; he had many kin in Essex and probably in Suffolk, also neighbours and no doubt personal friends, yet it is never clear from the analysis of his transactions when he was acting as a lawyer for a fee and when out of goodwill. A measure of his acceptance in, and value to the gentry, is his frequent employment as feoffee, executor and mainpernor until he had passed his eightieth year. Although he must in many ways have been typical of his profession, it is difficult to believe that his record was not also remarkable.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### LIFESTYLE – HOME AND RELIGION

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION.

‘The massing of biographical information on members of the medieval gentry is not necessarily guaranteed to bring them to life. The details of office-holding and military service that can be gleaned in relative abundance from the public records tell us much about their public careers but little about their private lives.’<sup>1</sup> This chapter examines the lifestyle of the Essex gentry 1381-1450 from the point of view of their home and religious life; chapter six will look at the wealth of the gentry and the means by which landed estates were accrued. It is hoped that by these means the lifestyle of Essex gentry will be given more substance.

#### 5.2 HOME

To visualise the Essex gentry in their daily life we can begin with an examination of their homes, many of which still survive, such homes being the focal point of everyday family activity. For most gentry, home would have been the Hall (*aula*), those with several to choose from probably identified with their capital manor. Of the 1400 or so individual Essex manors known to have existed at the end of the fourteenth century, most if not all, would have had a hall or hall-house at their centre, whether the lord was resident or not. With rare exceptions these houses were, due to the scarcity of suitable

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<sup>1</sup> N.Saul, ‘A “rising” lord and “declining” esquire : Sir Thomas de Berkeley III and Geoffrey Gascelyn of Sheldon’ *B.I.H.R.* 61 (1988), p.343.

building stone in Essex, timber-framed, at least until the second decade of the fourteenth century when brick began to appear for domestic use.<sup>2</sup>

Few of these medieval halls survive in a totally recognisable form and many are hidden beneath a Tudor or Georgian shell. The RCHM listed some 750 surviving medieval houses of varying status in Essex but subsequently many more have been identified as a result of modern surveying techniques which concentrate on the evidence of carpentry and other sophisticated dating methods pioneered by Cecil Hewett and his colleagues.<sup>3</sup> A.C. Edwards took the view that a 'framed building can be relatively early altered and added to throughout its history, and this is exactly what has happened, sometimes almost to the point of complete incapsulation of the original house'.<sup>4</sup>

Recent work on medieval Essex houses has shown that throughout the fourteenth century – certainly to the beginning of our period – the majority of Essex timber-framed manor-houses consisted of a one-storeyed aisled hall, between gabled cross-wings two storeys in height, the whole building being H-shaped in plan. In some cases, as at Fyfield Hall, the central hall was the only room but there may have been some lean-to buildings or 'outshots' attached.<sup>5</sup> John Walker in conversation with the author

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<sup>2</sup> The manor-house at Little Chesterford was built of stone c. 1225. Surviving parts of the stonework of Priors Hall, Widdington have led to the astonishing conclusion that the house may be of Anglo-Saxon construction, N. Smith 'England's oldest house?' *Country Life* (31 Aug. 1989), pp. 84-85 : also B. Kerr and N. Smith 'Widdington, Priors Hall' *E.A.H.* 20 (1989), pp. 169-170.

<sup>3</sup> L. R. Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525* (1991), p. 74 refers to information received from M. C. Wadhams of the Essex County Council to the effect that there are about 8000 pre-1500 houses, or containing pre-1500 portions in Essex.

<sup>4</sup> A. C. Edwards, *Essex Houses* ERO Publication No. 30 (2<sup>nd</sup> edn. 1965) Unpaginated.

<sup>5</sup> H. Forrester, *The Timber-Framed Houses of Essex* (1959), provides a full explanation of the development of timber-framed houses in Essex.

explained that the earliest timbers in Fyfield Hall (Plate 5.1) are of the eleventh century and it appears that the house has been in continuous occupation since that date. The best and least-altered surviving examples of aisled halls in Essex are St Clere's Hall, St Osyth, Bouchier Hall and Tollesbury Hall, the latter pair being in the once prosperous village of Tollesbury.<sup>6</sup>

Another way to visualise medieval halls, at least in terms of their original style and construction, is to examine some of the surviving Essex barns which date from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Such barns can be found in considerable numbers, often unrestored and yet in a remarkably fine state of preservation. Particularly good examples can be seen at Priors Hall, Widdington;(Plate 5.2) Cressing Temple and at Powers Hall, Witham, the home of the lawyer Robert Riketon (d.c.1425).<sup>7</sup>

Where the construction was more substantial than a simple aisled hall, additions in the form of a single wing, generally comprising a buttery and pantry with a solar above, are usual. Stanton's Farm, Black Notley is a surviving fourteenth-century example of this L-shaped or two-part form of house. The next stage of development in this type of house was the addition of a wing at the end of the hall furthest from the entrance. The ground floor would generally have served as a parlour, and the room above as a solar.

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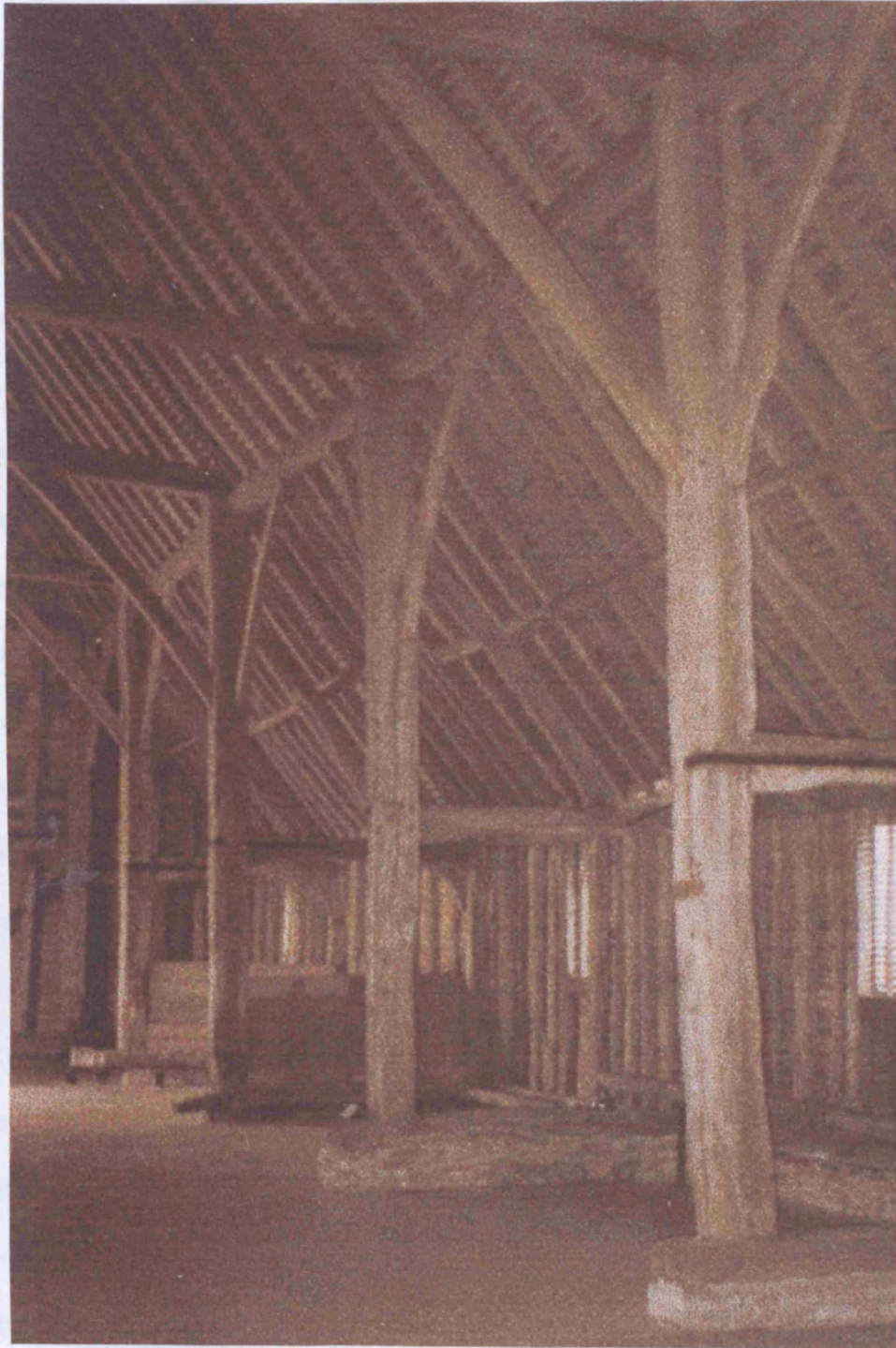
<sup>6</sup> J.McCann and D.Scott 'Tollesbury Hall, Tollesbury, a thirteenth-century manor house' E.A.H. 18 (1987), pp53-62.

<sup>7</sup> S.E.Ringold 'The distribution of aisled timber barns' Vernacular Architecture 1 & 2 (1970-71), pp.2.20-2.23 and K. Sandall 'Aisled halls in England and Wales' Vernacular Architecture 6 (1975), pp.6.19-6.27.



**PLATE 5.1 FYFIELD HALL: FYFIELD**





**PLATE 5.2 PRIORS BARN : WIDDINGTON.**

The space above the buttery and pantry at the opposite end of the hall may have been allocated to junior of the family, guests or senior servants. Three-part halls of this type dating from the mid fourteenth century survive at Lampetts, Fyfield, Gatehouse Farm, Felsted and Bretts, Aveley. The latter building is moated, half L-shaped in plan, with cross wings; the Felsted site also has an extensive fifteenth-century timbered barn.

By the end of the fourteenth century it was common for a partition to be placed across the hall pierced by one or more doorways, opposite the high table. This construction was intended to form a passage between the doorways at either end of it and on the other side of the passage were doors leading to the buttery and either a yard or some other domestic building. An early example (*c.*1340) of this arrangement is at Tiptofts, Wimbish and there is another at Baythorne Hall, Birdbrook. In terms of scale, the original hall at Wimbish, including the side wings, measured about 11x7 metres with aisles 1.5 metres wide. The hall screen (eventually with a gallery above) continued to be a feature of Essex timber-framed houses throughout the late medieval period.<sup>8</sup>

Because of the high risk of fire, the kitchen and bakery were detached from the main building and were only incorporated after the introduction of brick fireplaces and chimneys. Very few such ancillary buildings can yet be traced but they are gradually coming to light.<sup>9</sup> As to the fireplace in the hall it was merely an open hearth before about 1450 (with a few exceptions where the building was of brick or stone) with

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<sup>8</sup> Forrester, *Timber-Framed Houses* pp. 1-20.

<sup>9</sup> C.A.Hewett, 'A medieval timber kitchen at Little Braxted, Essex' *Medieval Archaeology* 17 (1973), pp.132-140. The smoke-blackened timbers of what was originally taken to be a dovecote indicate its original use as a kitchen at Little Braxted Hall. David Stenning has provided a review of current knowledge of medieval kitchens in D.F.Stenning 'Medieval kitchens in Essex' *E.A.H.* 28 (1997), pp.113-116.

smoke escaping through louvres in the roof. The smoke-blackened soot-encrusted timbers of fourteenth-and-fifteenth-century halls such as Crepping Hall, Wakes Colne, Foxearth Hall and Tiptofts bear testimony to the almost total lack of fireplaces before the sixteenth century.

Less typical of gentry homes during the period 1381-1450 are manor houses built of brick. Only a few examples are known to predate 1450, Robert Darcy's house, now the Moot Hall, Maldon (built c.1400), West Horndon Hall (built c.1414 when Lewis John received a licence to crenellate and impark 300 acres of land around his manor house), Heron Hall, East Horndon (built c.1430 by Lewis John's neighbour Sir John Tyrell) and Faulkbourne Hall (built around an existing timber-framed hall by Sir John Montgomery c.1439, he having obtained a licence to crenellate that year).<sup>10</sup> Of these four buildings only the Moot Hall and Faulkbourne Hall (Plate 5.3 ) remain, both of which have been much restored and extended. The present dining room was, as Nikolaus Pevsner observed: 'no doubt originally the Hall. It has moulded ceiling beams and at the dais end a bay window with a very pretty brick lierne-vault. The Hall has always been one-storeyed'.<sup>11</sup> Plate (5.4) shows the superb craftsmanship of the stair newel in the Moot Hall Maldon.

When West Horndon Hall (Old Thorndon Hall) was excavated by a team led by Kenneth Marshall in 1957-59 some remains of the early fourteenth-century original

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<sup>10</sup> The licence to crenellate at West Horndon is in Cal. Charter Rolls p.467 and a copy of the licence is in E.R.O. D/DP T1/817 and the Faulkbourne licence Pat. Roll 18 Hen VI, p.2, m. 33 (cited by R.C.H.M. Essex, 2 p.69).

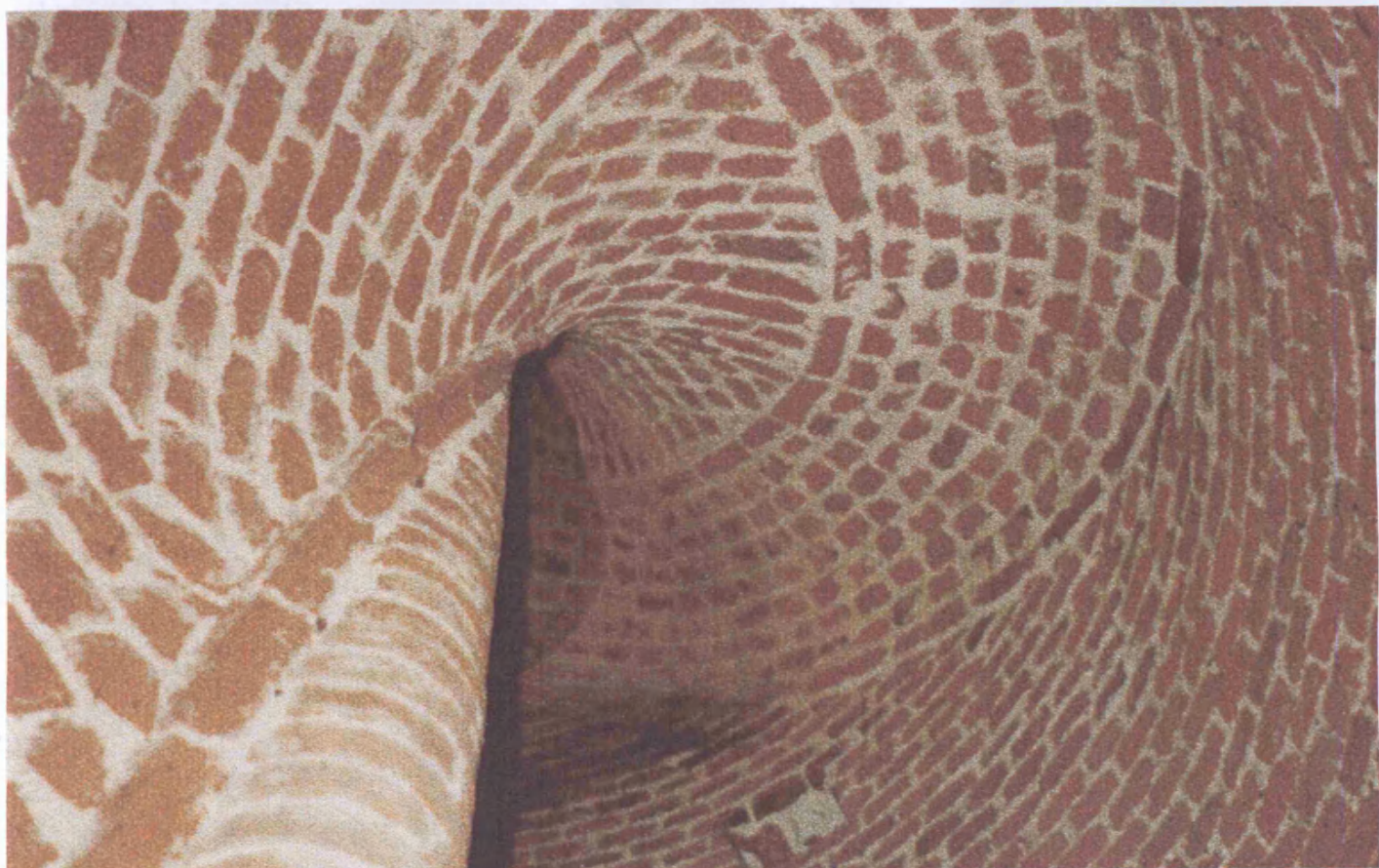
<sup>11</sup> N.Pevsner and E.Radcliffe, Buildings of England: Essex (1965 edn.), pp.177.





**PLATE 5.3 FAULKBOURNE HALL.**





**PLATE 5.4 MOOT HALL STAIRCASE: MALDON.**

house were found. This house was rebuilt in brick in 1455-6 according to an account roll. A hundred years later it was described as: 'an auntyent howse of bryck verye well leaded beyng meate for a nobeleman to dwell and kepe good hospytalytie uppon.'<sup>12</sup>

Heron Hall was partially excavated in 1964-5 but the results were never published.<sup>13</sup> The building was largely demolished in 1789 but an undated sketch and plan of the building survive. A relatively detailed description of the medieval house shortly before its demolition was given in a letter by the antiquary Smart Lethieullier to Charles Lyttleton, Dean of Exeter, dated 19 October 1756: 'Sir John Tyrell who was appointed Captain of the Carpenters by King Henry 5<sup>th</sup> for his new works at Calais and made Treasurer of the Household by H6 was I apprehend the Builder of the Present house at Heron Gate which is of brick and suits well with the Taste and Style of that Age. There is a piece of ground 300 feet in Length by 200 wide surrounded on all sides by a deep and broad moat and within that a high embattled wall. The entrance was by 2 Draw-Bridges which lead into the Mansion-House, which stands at the South West Corner of this Enclosure the ancient disposition of it was thus. You entered from the Bridge under a Lofty Tower on Each Side of which was a Guard Room now made into Two Parlours. From the Tower you Cross and (sic) Inner Court to the North Corner where there is a Noble Hall in the College Stile, and one good Eating Room within it. The Court is Surrounded by a Closed up Passage like a Cloister, into which every Room opens. This

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<sup>12</sup> D/DP M1082 *Custus Reparacionum* (1455-6) and D/DP M1086 Valuation (c.1550) The history and archaeological excavation of West Horndon Hall is described in J.C.Ward and K.Marshall, Old Thorndon Hall (1972). The excavation showed that Lewis John's house was small, rectangular, and an outer wall which had bastions and buttresses. The brickwork was massive and had been surrounded by a moat.

<sup>13</sup> The excavation was carried out by the author with permission of the owner.

is carried up 3 Stories high all of the same Dimensions, so that there is room to Lodge a vast Number of people.

At the 4 Angles there are round Towers with circular Stair cases, on the North side of the House is the other Drawbridge, to another Tower, leading to the Offices. On the outside of this Tower I observed several of these Arches intersecting one another at the Top which occur often as Ornaments on the inside of our most Ancient Churches.<sup>14</sup> According to C.Coulson, some four hundred and sixty licences to crenellate were issued by the Chancery between 1200 and 1536 of which nineteen were for Essex. This suggests that several other Essex manor-houses may have been built in brick during our period than are currently recorded.<sup>15</sup> A number of manor houses were repaired or extended in brick before 1450 as for example Rochford Hall.

Some idea of the gentry's lifestyle can be gathered from an examination of surviving manor houses, but there are difficulties; 'The physical environment in which our families lived is admittedly hard to visualise. So much has gone, and what remains is often too fragmentary to move any but the most fertile imagination'.<sup>16</sup> Great Codham Hall, Wethersfield, was the capital manor of the Coggeshall family for approximately two hundred years until the death of Sir William Coggeshall in 1426, the Coggeshalls being the pre-eminent gentry family in Essex until superseded by the Tyrells. The hall is situated on rising ground above a stream which until recently supplied a working

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<sup>14</sup> B.L.Stowe MS. 752 f.89. I am grateful to Mr Arthur Searle for drawing this letter to my attention. There is also an eighteenth-century plan of Heron Hall that supplies more detail. E.R.O. D/F8. The description is similar to some of the surviving remains of Nether Hall at Roydon built by Thomas Colt c.1460.

<sup>15</sup> C.Coulson, 'Hierarchism in conventual crenellation' *Medieval Archaeology* (1982), pp.69-100.

<sup>16</sup> N.Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life: Knightly Families in Sussex 1280-1400* (1986), p.171.

water mill. The church in this large parish lies nearly five kilometres to the north-west but only one hundred and fifty metres north of the hall is a small dilapidated cottage which was once the manorial chapel – a piscina in one of its rooms indicates its origins. About one hundred metres to the south is a moated mound some 35 metres in diameter at the base and fifteen metres in height. This is probably the site of the original manor house at Codham and may predate the Coggeshalls' tenure. Beyond this site are the brick walls and earth banks of the former parks still sheltering an orchard but the deer are long gone. A modern dovecot is a reminder that in late medieval Essex such buildings would have been a commonplace feature of many manor-houses though few survive. Much of the fourteenth-century timber-framed hall remains though it was, as so many halls were, divided into two storeys in the sixteenth century. The two original wings of Codham Hall were pulled down and subsequently rebuilt.<sup>17</sup>

A yet more complete example of a hall is Tiptofts in Wimbish (Plate 5.5). Here the aisled hall of c.1340 is still virtually intact after seven hundred years and unlike most of its contemporary survivors, has not been horizontally divided.<sup>18</sup> As Niklaus Pevsner has observed, to stand under the hall roof is to see a form of construction identical with many roofs in Essex churches, a tie beam carrying an octagonal crown-post with capitals which in turn carry four-way struts.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *R.C.H.M. Essex* 1 pp.335-336.

<sup>18</sup> The earliest surviving part of the present house probably dates from the tenure of Sir John Wanton or Wauton, (d.1347).

<sup>19</sup> Pevsner and Radcliffe, *Essex* pp.392-393.





**PLATE 5.5 TIPTOFTS: WIMBISH.**

There are few contemporary building records for Essex manor-houses, but a number of references in proof of age inquests purport to tell us precisely when some of them were built. The inquest taken at Braintree in 1359 for Thomas, son of John Baynard produced a sworn witness named William Naylinghurst who recalled the birth of Thomas in 1338: 'and says he built a new house called the hall (*aula*) at Branketre (Braintree) in the summer before'. This was a reference to the manor of Naylinghurst in Rayne, now Naylinghurst Farm.<sup>20</sup> In 1366 the witness, John Bolt, when giving evidence at a proof of age inquest at Henham for Walter Fitzwalter said he recalled how in 1345: 'about the Feast of the Annunciation before the birth he built (*de novo construxit*) a new hall'.<sup>21</sup> Accounts for building new houses in our period are relatively rare but Patricia Ryan has analysed the accounts for the construction of the 'New Hall and chamber at the manor of Waltham' (Great Waltham) in 1440-1442 at a cost of £19 13s. 7d.<sup>22</sup>

The *compoti* of the manor of Messing Hall for the year 1417/18 show that Thomas Malone made an agreement with Richard Baynard to make 'a certain building' (possibly an extension to Messing Hall or a new hall for the adjacent manor of Harborough) 60 feet (18.2 metres) in length and 18 feet (5.5 metres) in width entirely of the lord's timber, doing the carpentry at the Manor of Harborough' for 66s 8d. The accounts show that: 'For tiles bought, nothing, (was paid) because they were in the Manor's stock there' but the roofer John Syward was paid 'for roofing the said building with the said tiles .....and also for strengthening the aforesaid building, 23s.4d.'

<sup>20</sup> *Cal.I.P.M.* 10, pp.428-429.

<sup>21</sup> *Cal.I.P.M.* 12, pp.71-72.

<sup>22</sup> P.M.Ryan, 'A new house at Great Waltham, 1440-42' *Historic Buildings in Essex* 7 (1993), pp.17-20. Mrs Ryan also published the building accounts of the manor-house built at Plesheybury in 1442 which comprised a hall, two cross-chambers and a latrine. P.M.Ryan 'A "new" house at Berewyk in Pleshey, 1442.' *Historic Buildings in Essex* 6 (1992), pp.6-8.

Various nails ‘called dorenail, evesbordnail, Wyndownail, bertyngnail (sic) & lathenail’ for the building cost 7s.4d. and ‘Whitewashing the building by various labourers hired by the day’ cost 10s.4d.<sup>23</sup>

As to the contents of our Essex gentry homes under consideration there is little evidence beyond references to goods in wills, but this can be illuminating. Edward Tyrell of Downham (d.1442) gives details in his will of the napery and bed linen at his manor house of Fremnells: ‘to Edward my sone a payre of shetes of Reyns, ij payr shetes of chaumpeyn cloth, ij payre of gentilman shetes, iiij payre of yoman shetes’ together with blankets, pillows and hangings.<sup>24</sup> The difference between ‘gentleman’ and ‘yoman’ sheets is not clear from the will, though it is undoubtedly one of quality. More important however, is the evidence that at a time when the income of some yeomen far exceeded that of neighbouring gentry, their relative social standing could be defined by pairs of sheets.

Testators commonly refer to items of plate but the will of Sir William Marney of Layer Marney (d.1414) gives an exceptionally detailed list of silver plate that he left to his son Thomas. Sir Thomas Marney died seven years later and his will reminds us of the fact that military accoutrements, armour, horses and weapons, were of considerable value and likely to constitute bequests to close relations, in Sir Thomas Marney’s case his brother John.<sup>25</sup> Edward Tyrell also took great pains to dispose of his plate and he carefully refers to what must have been cherished pieces. His wife Anne was to have ‘a stondyng cuppe of sylver that I have of the abbot of Waltham when he

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<sup>23</sup> E.R.O. D/DH X27.

<sup>24</sup> Will of Edward Tyrell (d.1442), P.C.C. 16 Rous. See page 246 below for similar sheets belonging to Richard Baynard in 1406.



crystened my daughter' and a 'rose cupp that I drynke of every day'.

Hangings were used to keep out the cold in draughty rooms, particularly larger rooms, and these are often mentioned. Lady Elizabeth Bruyn (d.1471) of South Ockendon left her son Thomas 'all the hangings of blak in the hall, the bedde in the parlour'. Thomas Bruyn also received 'the bed in the chamber of the chapel' from his mother.<sup>26</sup>

Reading for pleasure amongst the gentry is indicated by their bequest of books. Lady Elizabeth Bruyn left 'the boke called Canterbury tales' to Robert Walsall, probably a trusted servant whilst Sir Thomas Tyrell (d.1476) of East Horndon refers in his will to 'my boke called *Barthu. de p'prietatibus*.....my boke called *Legenda Sanctorum*'<sup>27</sup>. The only surviving book known to have belonged to a member of the Essex gentry in our period is a collection of poems by Lydgate and Hoccleve which bears the inscription '*Iste liber constat Aluredo Cornburgh de Camera Regis.*' Avery Cornburgh was a Cornishman who settled in Essex and became Keeper of the Great Wardrobe.<sup>28</sup> Another literate figure at this time was Sir John Hawkwood of Sible Hedingham, the *condottiere* whose holograph letters in English are amongst the earliest extant in the vernacular.<sup>29</sup> Whilst most wills were written in Latin (usually by clerics)

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<sup>25</sup> Wills of Sir William Marney (d.1414), P.C.C. 29 & 31 Marche and Sir Thomas Marney (d.1421), P.C.C. 52 Marche.

<sup>26</sup> Will of Lady Elizabeth Bruyn (d.1471), P.C.C. 2 Wattys.

<sup>27</sup> Will of Sir Thomas Tyrell (d.1476), P.C.C. 31 Wattys.

<sup>28</sup> Huntingdon Library. Ellesmere MS 26 A 13, quoted in V.J.Scattergood and J.W.Sherborne eds, *English Court Culture in the Late Middle Ages*. (1983), p.177.

<sup>29</sup> There are letters to Hawkwood in Latin in great profusion in Italian archives, notably the Vatican library, W.H.Bliss and J.A.Twemlow eds, *Cal.Papal Registers* 4 1362-1404, and two examples in B.L.Harl.MS 6989, 1 & 2. A single example in French is Longleat NMR 370. His English letters are in A.H.Thomas ed., *Calendar of Select Pleas and Memoranda of the City of London* 1381-1412 (1932), pp.308-309.

there is a gentry will from our period in English (his testament is in Latin) written by William Hanningfield of Bicknacre (d.1426).<sup>30</sup> Occasionally wills contain mention of very specific and unusual items. Lady Elizabeth Bruyn left Robert Walsall not only the Canterbury Tales, a gilt cup and two horses but also a 'diall of gold'<sup>31</sup> and a 'Double harp'. Servants are commonly listed in gentry wills; Sir William Marney listed no less than thirty-six including 'John de Kechene' to whom he left 13s.4d. A similar bequest by Edward Tyrell went to 'Lewys my servant in the ketchyn'. Tyrell also remembered 'John my bastard sone' in his will, perhaps the offspring of one of his servants at Fremnells.<sup>32</sup> This is no equivalent of the Paston, Stonor or Plumpton letters for Essex; just as the correspondence of the higher nobility in Essex has perished, so has it for the gentry. It is as Bruce McFarlane observed that: 'The fate that has wiped out or scattered the contents of so many castle muniment-rooms has not been more sparing of their humbler neighbours'.<sup>33</sup>

Furniture other than beds is rarely disposed of in wills but Lady Elizabeth Bruyn left her daughter Katherine: 'all my coffers and chests' which after all, besides beds, chests, tables and chairs, comprised most of the furniture in a house of this period.<sup>34</sup> Coffers and chests were particularly important items of furniture however, as it was there that valuables of every description were stored. Some of the most valuable items likely to be kept were muniments. When in 1466 Margaret Paston wrote to her son John about such documents she clearly appreciated their value: 'And in all wise I advise you for to

<sup>30</sup> F.J.Furnivall, *The Fifty Earliest English Wills in the Court of Probate* E.E.T.S. (1882), pp.68-72.

<sup>31</sup> Will of Lady Elizabeth Bruyn (d.1471), P.C.C. 2 Wattys: will of Sir William Marney (d.1414), P.C.C.29 & 31 Marche.

<sup>32</sup> Will of Edward Tyrell (d.1442), P.C.C. 16 Rous.

<sup>33</sup> K.B.McFarlane, *The Nobility of Late Medieval England* (1973), p.17.

<sup>34</sup> Will of Lady Elizabeth Bruyn (d.1471), P.C.C. 2 Wattys.

beware that ye keep wisely your writings that been of charge, that (it) come not in their hands that may hurt you hereafter. Your father, whom God assoil, in his trouble season set more by his writings and evidence than he did by any of his movable goods. Remember that if tho were had from you, ye could never no mo such as tho be'.<sup>35</sup>

Manor court rolls which had been carefully preserved were the objects of many attacks on manors in 1381 by those who wished to destroy the evidence they contained.<sup>36</sup> Richard Baynard clearly insisted that his steward kept continuous and meticulous records; the manorial *compoti* of Messing Hall 1417/18 show that the year's expenditure on 'parchment bought for the court rolls, accounts and estreats' was 12d.<sup>37</sup>

An inventory dated 26 October 1406 of goods and chattels belonging to Robert Baynard at Messing Hall delivered to John Sanders, Baynard's bailiff, at the manor court 'as is made fully clear in certain indentures made thereof by the same John' tells us much about Baynard's home lifestyle<sup>38</sup>. Such inventories for the Essex gentry of this period are comparatively rare, the only other known example (it is much longer and more detailed) relating to the goods, mainly in his London house, of Richard Lyons, vintner and draper, alderman, sheriff of London and knight of the shire for Essex. Lyons held the manor of Ashen by grand serjeanty, which required him to deliver a wafer to the king at his coronation, which he did in 1377. The Lyons inventory (which

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<sup>35</sup> N.Davis, *The Paston Letters: A Selection* (1983 edn.), p.156.

<sup>36</sup> A. Prescott. 'Judicial records of the Peasants Revolt' unpubl. Ph.D. Thesis, London University (1984) has an account of the manor-houses attacked and court rolls destroyed in 1381. The court rolls of Messing Hall commence in 1275 and continue to 1378 when there is a break until May 1383. ERO D/DH X1-3.

<sup>37</sup> ERO D/DH X27.

<sup>38</sup> ERO D/DH VB 61.

was prepared following his death in 1381) lists not only the items in his house but amongst other things, the contents of his inns and drapery shops in London.<sup>39</sup> It is not clear why Richard Baynard's inventory was drawn up in 1406 but it is likely that it was because he obtained seisin of his patrimony that year, following the death of his mother who was the life tenant. 1406 is also the year that Baynard was first elected to Parliament and it may have been the year he married Joyce Vine, the daughter of a London draper.<sup>40</sup> Both Baynard's stepfather and father-in-law were drapers so it is not surprising that the inventory shows him to have been particularly well provided with bedding and napery.

As to Richard Baynard's background at Messing Hall, he was probably descended from a cadet branch of the family of Ralf Baynard who held twenty-five manors in Essex in 1086. Ralf's descendants lost most of their land to the Fitzwalter family as a result of their treasonable activities but this did not deter Richard Baynard from serving the Fitzwalter family three hundred years later.<sup>41</sup> Richard's earliest proven Baynard ancestor was the Thomas Baynard *fl.*1200-1236 who married Ismannia de Messing in 1217. At her death in 1272, long after she was widowed, she held the manor of Messing Hall and Old Hall, Rayne.<sup>42</sup> Ismannia was the daughter and heir of Roger de Messing *fl.*1214-1219, the descendant of Anketil de Messing *fl.*c.1176-1194 who was probably the son or grandson of the Domesday tenant of Messing Hall.<sup>43</sup> Fig. 5.1 shows the village of Messing in context. The proximity of the Baynard land in Messing to that of

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<sup>39</sup> A. Myers, 'The wealth of Richard Lyons' in T.A. Sandquist and M.R. Powicke eds, *Essay in Medieval History Presented to Bertie Wilkinson* (1969), pp.301-329.

<sup>40</sup> J.S. Roskell, L. Clark and C. Rawcliffe eds, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1386-1421* 2 (1993), pp.150-152.

<sup>41</sup> C. Starr 'The Fitzwalter family (1243-1431)' *New Dictionary of National Biography* (Forthcoming).

<sup>42</sup> *Cal.I.P.M.* 1, p.261.

<sup>43</sup> ERO VB 11.

the Marneys at Layer Marney, the Markshalls at Markshall, the Teyes at Marks Tey, the Darcys at Maldon, the Rikedons at Witham and the Hendes at Bradwell-juxta-Coggeshall is clearly to be seen.



Richard Baynard's father died in 1375 when Richard was aged 4, his mother shortly afterwards married John Hende, former Lord Mayor of London who had already acquired extensive estates in Essex.<sup>44</sup> Richard proved his age in 1393 and in 1396 John Hende and Baynard's mother (who retained a life interest in the Baynard estate) leased part of it, including Messing Hall, to Richard Baynard.<sup>45</sup> His mother retained the life interest until her death c.1406 and in 1407 Baynard was able to place his patrimony in the hands of feoffees.<sup>46</sup> There is an unusually complete set of muniments which record the descent of Messing Hall and a set of inquisitions post mortem which detail the growth of the Baynard estates in Essex over five generations.<sup>47</sup> There is specific mention of 'two chests for muniments' among Baynard's possessions in 1406 and it was probably there that the dozens of early surviving deeds relating to Messing were stored.<sup>48</sup> Baynard was a lawyer as well as a landowner and county office holder so he may have kept a large quantity of documents.

The 1406 inventory provides a few clues as to the appearance of Messing Hall which was demolished about two hundred years ago, the site being relatively undisturbed since.<sup>49</sup> A survey of Messing dated 1650, (Fig.5.2) shows a moated Messing Hall inexpertly drawn in perspective, with domed gateways and castellated walls.<sup>50</sup> Although nothing now remains of Messing Hall the moated site of Baynard's manor of Birch Holt 2 miles (3.2 kilometres) west is well preserved. The inventory

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<sup>44</sup> *Cal.I.P.M.* 14, pp.92-93.

<sup>45</sup> *Cal.Close Rolls* 1392-1396 p.54.

<sup>46</sup> ERO D/DH VB 51.

<sup>47</sup> ERO D/DH VB 2-33: *Cal.I.P.M.* 1, p.261; pp.170-171; 8, pp.366-367; 9, pp.144-145; 10, pp.428-429, 14, pp.93-94; *Cal.I.P.M.* 2<sup>nd</sup> ser. 3, p.315.

<sup>48</sup> ERO D/DH VB 61.

<sup>49</sup> ERO D/DH VB 61.

<sup>50</sup> ERO D/DH P1.



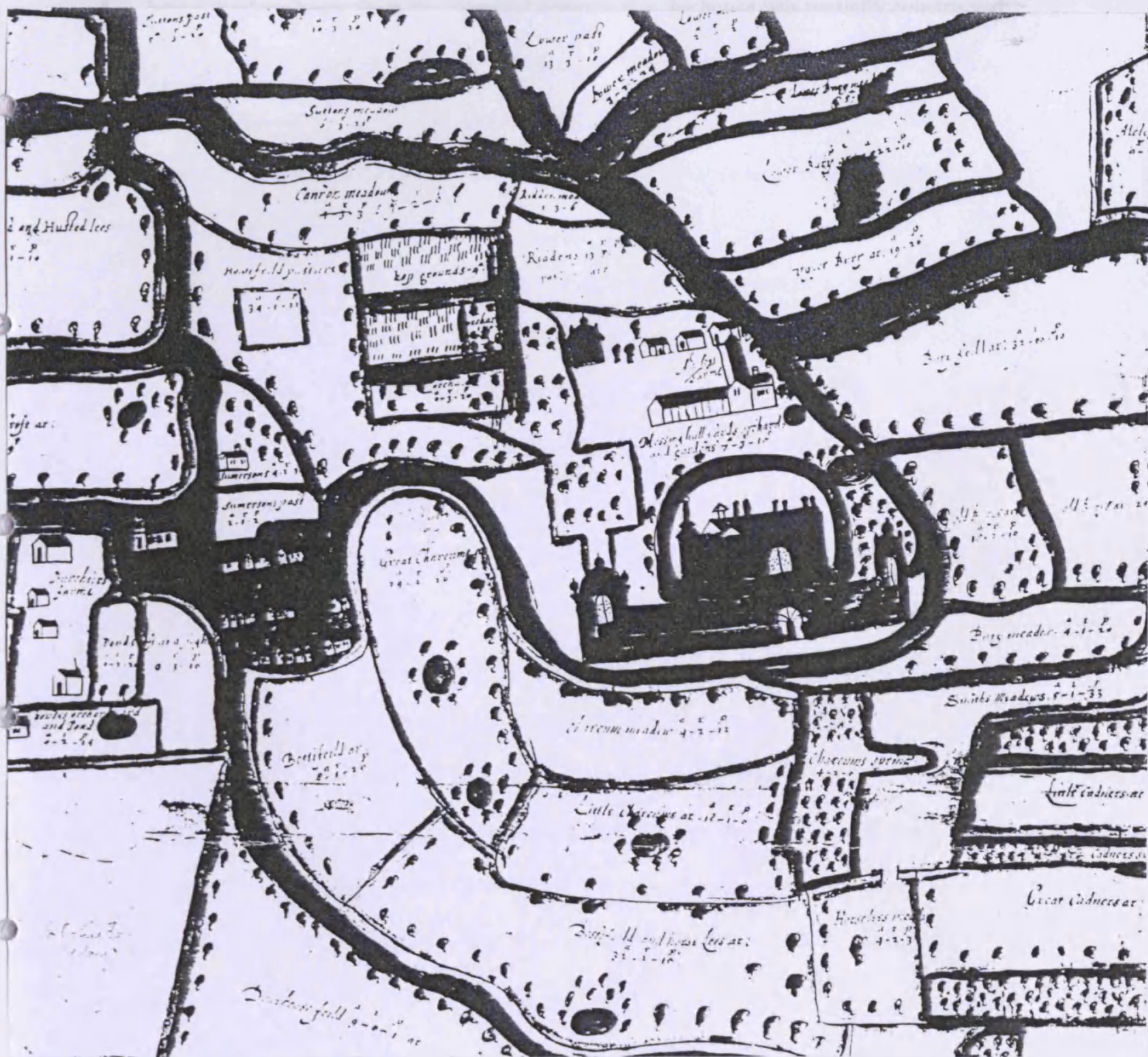


FIGURE 5.2 MESSING HALL c. 1650. (ERO D/DH PI)



refers to the items 'in his [the lord's] chamber within the moat of the aforesaid manor-house' and we know from the manorial *compoti* that the house was partially constructed of brick. In addition to Baynard's 'chamber', the house had a central hall, buttery, kitchen bakehouse, larder and chapel and a 'gathoussoler' which was probably a loft over the gatehouse and used for storage purposes or accommodation for servants.

The contents of Richard Baynard's private quarters are listed in considerable detail in a mixture of Latin, French and English.<sup>51</sup> His bed linen is described as 'one coverlet with one tester and one complete bed canopy, each embroidered with a man and woman, and three curtains and seven coasters.....Two hangings of red worsted'. There is also mention of a duplicate set of bedding including 'one coverlet and one tester, and a half-canopy with three curtains of Worsted striped with black and blue, in London with the lord.' There are several varieties of sheets stored in this room for the use of Baynard and others. 'Queen's sheets', sheets 'for knights' together with 'canvas sheets' and 'two worn pairs for servants'. The variety of sheets is reminiscent of those belonging to Edward Tyrell. There were also two pairs of sheets and two blankets 'in London with the lord'. Other bedding included a mattress of 'blue muslin', cushions of 'tapestry work', and 'great palliasses'. There were also a number of 'presses' (apparently folding beds for other members of the family or guests) complete with linen.

As for the other furniture in his room there was a 'short table on feet', 'one table for armour', 'one barrel for armour', 'two screens', and 'two chests for spices' (no doubt

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<sup>51</sup> E.R.O. D/DH VB 61.

rather valuable if kept in the lord's chamber). The room was probably divided by curtains 'one curtain of blue muslin' being listed. This may have meant that others in the family slept in the same room, hence the folding beds kept close by. In addition, there was 'one chair for the chamber', 'four stools', 'one little form' and, presumably arranged along one wall of the room, 'one chest for arrows', 'one chest for sheets', 'one counting coffer', 'one chest for napery' 'two chests for muniments', 'one iron-bound ship coffer', 'one chest for nets'.

Some miscellaneous items in the inventory indicate that Baynard washed and took his food in the chamber: 'one large glass', 'two little basins', 'one table and two trestles', 'two iron plates for hot food'. The latter item corresponds with the 'iron plate for hot food in the entry to the lord's chamber' listed in the hall section of the inventory. Also stored in Baynard's chamber were 'one saddle for the lady, with all the harness' and 'one saddle for her maidservant'. A number of other valuables including silver vessels were also stored in this the most secure room in the house: 'two turned cups for hot drinks, of which one has a cover with a knob on the top inlaid with blue enamel, and the other with one cover with one crown on top', 'one piece with one leaden cover with the holy ghost' there were salt cellars, two dozen spoons and 'one powder box with the top inlaid' and 'one mazer bound with silver, with one painted cover'.

The contents of the hall are described in full. This contained a miscellaneous collection of furniture and what appear to be nets for hunting or fishing. 'Item, one dragge and one traviaylle with the cords and two stanys plum[m] byd Wyt(h) led'.

‘Item, two new Bushnet(es)’. The buttery contained a large number of domestic items such as knives, candlesticks, ewers, tankards, bottles, and ‘one cloth for covering the bredbyrne’. Covering the buttery doors were two cloths ‘of which one cloth is new’. In the kitchen were the usual domestic pots and pans including a ‘frying panne’, pewter plates, dishes, grid irons, pestle and mortar, a ‘wooden mortar for garlek’ many pewter items – plates, dishes and salt-cellars and a ‘gryndyngston’.

## CHAPELS

If the archaeological evidence for chapels and oratories in manor houses was not available their existence could be determined by the many references in wills to chapel furnishings. They appear to have been given to parish churches as a matter of form, leaving the testator’s executors or heirs to refurbish the manorial chapel in the course of time. Edward Tyrell’s executors were instructed to give the chalice, vestments and other ornaments from his manorial chapel for: ‘ganeyshyng of my chapell’ in the Friary at Chelmsford where he wished to be buried.<sup>52</sup> Sir William Marney left a missal, candelabra and paxbreads to Layer Marney church whilst his son Sir Thomas left vestments, silver cruets and a paxbread to the same parish church.<sup>53</sup> Sir Thomas Tyrell was equally generous and instructed his executors to strip his chapel at Heron Hall of a chasuble of blue cloth of gold (blue was the Tyrell’s livery), a cope and a mass book. All this was to go to the parish church of East Horndon.<sup>54</sup> Lady Elizabeth Bruyn left to the parish church a mass book, chalice and vestments: ‘now belongyng unto the chapell

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<sup>52</sup> Will of Edward Tyrell, P.C.C. 16 Rous.

<sup>53</sup> Wills of Sir William and Sir Thomas Marney, P.C.C. 29 & 31 Marche and P.C.C. 52 Marche.

<sup>54</sup> Will of Sir Thomas Tyrell, P.C.C. 31 Wattys.

of my mannou' place of South Wokynton '.<sup>55</sup> It is easy to sympathise with Sir Thomas Tyrell or Lady Elizabeth Bruyn for wanting to worship at home as their manors lay a considerable distance from the parish church, however a very large proportion of manor-houses were adjacent to parish churches such that papal indults for portable altars were often merely a fashionable luxury.

The manorial chapel was particularly important in the life of the gentry, its very proximity making it more used than the parish church and its priest was likely to have been a considerable influence in the lord's household. One of the earliest manorial chapels to be founded was in c.1190 at Little Wakering. The bishop who granted the licence took care that no communion, confession, baptism, font, bell, vigil or preaching should be found in the chapel thus safeguarding the rights and pre-eminence of the parish church.<sup>56</sup> Chapels appendant to manors were found during the first half of the thirteenth century at Thorington, Broxted and Gestingthorpe. In the latter case, the oblations of the chapel, including the making of knights, betrothal and churching of women were permitted but were to belong to the mother church. Also at this early period, at Enfields manor in Great Saling, Richard de Enfield and his wife Joan had an oratory for two chaplains in 1248.<sup>57</sup>

The second half of the thirteenth century produced many chapels of which the foundation deeds are known. At Shalford, the lord of the manor was able to buy the

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<sup>55</sup> Will of Lady Elizabeth Bruyn P.C.C. 2 Wattys.

<sup>56</sup> C.A.Hewett & H.M.Taylor 'The chapel at Harlowbury, Harlow, Essex' *Medieval Archaeology* 23 (1979), pp.223-225 where it is suggested that the chapel is possibly of Saxon origin.

<sup>57</sup> R.C.Fowler, 'Essex chapels' *T.E.A.S.* n.s. 16 (1923), p.119.



**PLATE 5.6 ST HELEN'S CHAPEL: WICKEN BONHUNT.**

advowson of the chapel in 1284 (although he did not have the advowson of the parish church).<sup>58</sup> At Wicken Bonhunt in 1340, John Flambard obtained a licence to grant land to produce a sum sufficient to find a chaplain to celebrate divine service daily in the chapel of St Helen within the manor of Bonhunt. This chapel still survives though it has been secularised and appears to be used as a barn, the fate of so many medieval chapels (Plate 5.6).<sup>59</sup> At Ramsey, John de Sutton had a licence in 1352 to endow a chaplain to celebrate divine service daily in the chapel of St Michael.<sup>60</sup> A fourteenth-century chapel incorporated in manorial buildings, survives at Feeringbury, Feering, and is now occasionally used as an art gallery.<sup>61</sup> Religious houses also obtained licences to erect chapels within their manors even where, as at East Horndon, the manor was adjacent to the parish church.<sup>62</sup>

A number of manorial lords were able to obtain a licence for an oratory in their own manor – John de Terling in 1308 was able to do so ‘on account of the distance from the parish church’ and difficulties with roads, especially in winter. In John Terling’s case the licence was granted on condition that offerings were to be paid to the mother church and that he and his household go there on the four principal feasts.<sup>63</sup> Many if not most of these chapels continued in use until the Reformation. In addition to the manorial chapel the gentry were apt to further distance themselves from every day worship in the parish church by means of papal indulgences which they seem to have been able to obtain with comparative ease (to judge by their numbers) but no doubt at a price – and here we

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<sup>58</sup> Fowler, ‘Essex chapels’ p.116.

<sup>59</sup> Fowler, ‘Essex chapels’, p.121.

<sup>60</sup> P.H.Reaney, ‘Essex chapels’ *T.E.A.S.* 20 (1933), pp.287-289.

<sup>61</sup> My thanks to Mr & Mrs Giles Coode-Adams of Feeringbury for allowing me to inspect the chapel.

<sup>62</sup> B.L.Harl. 4809 f.38.

<sup>63</sup> Fowler, ‘Essex chapels’ p.118.

see the hand of either a household priest or possibly a parish priest at work in preparing the request to Rome. Indults enabled the gentry to use portable altars, choose their own confessor or to obtain plenary remission of sins.<sup>64</sup> The first of these was the most popular; such leading members of the Essex gentry as Robert Darcy and his wife (1414), Lewis John (1400), John Swinburne (1423) and John Doreward and his wife (1425) made the matter one of fashion. 'The ownership of a private chapel, though a formal manifestation of piety among the laity, was also an unmistakable status symbol.'<sup>65</sup>

Table 5.1 lists the Essex gentry known to have sought papal indults between 1394 and 1445; a feature of these indult requests is that several of them coincide with the date of marriage of the applicant(s).

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<sup>64</sup> Cal.Papal Registers. Papal Letters 1362-1455 (7 vols. 1902-1915): gives details of many but by no means all the papal indults granted to the Essex gentry in our period..

<sup>65</sup> G.Pritchard, 'Religion and the Paston family' in R.Britnell ed., Daily Life in the Late Middle Ages (1988), p.77.

**TABLE 5.1 ESSEX GENTRY SEEKING PAPAL INDULTS**

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**DE ALTARIBUS PORTATILIBUS**

1394	John Basset of Great Chishill
1412	Lewis John of West Horndon
1414	Sir Robert Tey of Marks Tey
1414	Robert & Margaret Darcy of Maldon
1414	Thomas & Catherine Stockdale
1420	John Montgomery of Faulkbourne
1421	Idonia, widow of John Walden
1423	John & Cecily Swinburne of Little Horkesley
1423	John and Katherine Tyrell
1425	Thomas & Eleanor Knyvet
1425	John & Blanche Doreward of Bocking
1428	William Rainsford
1431	John Rochester of Terling
1432	Thomas & Elizabeth Montgomery
1445	Thomas & Sibyl Montgomery
1445	Margaret, widow of John Roppeley

**DE CONFENSIONALIBUS**

1403	John Basset of Great Chishill
1413	Sir William Marney of Layer Marney
1423	John and Katherine Tyrell
1425	Margaret Boys, widow

**DE PLENARIA REMISSIONE**

1405	John & Alice Coggeshall
1441	Thomas Urswick

Source: Calendar of Papal Registers: 1345-1452 ( 27 vols; 1895-1916 ).

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Plate 5.7 illustrates what appears to be a unique survival in Essex of a portable altar in St Mary's church Newport; it is of oak, iron-bound and it retains its original drop handles. The altar is dated *c.*1300 and there are paintings of the Crucifixion, the Virgin Mary and three saints on the underside of the lid, mainly in red and green. The altar has a false bottom and a locker at one end. It may have come from a nearby manor house, perhaps as a testamentary bequest, but the passage of time has effaced the heraldry of the shields on the front of the altar so it is not possible to identify the previous owner.<sup>66</sup> What may be the representation of a portable altar (Plate 5.8) is to be seen on several of the series of eight monuments erected in the sixteenth century to distant ancestors of the Pointz family at North Ockendon.

As to the furnishing of a manorial chapel the 1406 inventory of Richard Baynard's goods gives a particularly detailed list of what was to be found at Messing Hall.<sup>67</sup> It should be noted that three or possibly four items are listed as belonging to Messing church; perhaps the parish priest acted as private chaplain.

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<sup>66</sup>In a letter dated 20 October 1992 Paul Williamson, Curator of Sculpture at the Victoria and Albert Museum kindly drew my attention to the museum's sole example of a portable altar. It is German *c.*1130 and probably once enclosed a relic or relics. It is fully described in P. Williamson ed., The Medieval Treasury (1986), pp.114-115. Portable altars are discussed in greater detail in A. Heales, The Archaeology of the Christian Altar (1881), pp.19-21.

<sup>67</sup>E.R.O. D/DH VB 61.

‘The equipment of the altar,

Firstly, two veils with the arms of the said Richard, [Gules, three chevrons ermine with a label of fine points, or] two altar cloths of linen painted with the colours<sup>68</sup>

Red and white with ermines, with one little cloth painted with Mercy

Item, one altar-cloth and two towels pertaining to Messing church.

Item, one piece of canvas for covering the altar,

Item, one towel from Venice,

Item, one complete set of vestments, red in colour, one ‘Chamelet’ cloth, with the said Richard’s arms,

Item, one pillow,

Item, one corporal cloth,

Item, one portable altar,

Item, one paxbread,

Item, one muslin canopy [for] the portable altar,

Item, one silver chalice,

Item, two cruets, and one basin of pewter,

Item, one earthenware dish from Venice,

Item, one holy water stoup with one ‘strynkell’ of latten,

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<sup>68</sup>A number of examples of the Baynard coat of arms have survived. There are several Baynard seals attached to charters in the ERO collection of Messing papers; a particularly fine example with the superscription *RICARDI BAYNARD* is attached to a deed of enfeoffment dated 1 April 1403. ERO D/DH VB 47. The Baynard arms may also be seen in the roof of Messing church in the form of a corbel showing an angel bearing an escutcheon.



**PLATE 5.7 PORTABLE ALTAR: NEWPORT.**



**PLATE 5.8 PORTABLE ALTAR : NORTH OCKENDON**

Item, one candelstick of latten,

Item, two missals,

Item, one portable breviary of the aforesaid church's

Item, one good psalter,

Item, one pyx for holding the bread,

Item, one portable missal,

Item, one chest for holding the equipment of the chapel,

Item, one painted panel of the Passion,

Item, one painted panel of St Christopher, with one side panel also,

Item, painted images, one crucifix with images of [Sts] Katherine and Margaret,

Item, an image of St Mary, with an image of St James,

Item, two panels painted with one Mercy (sic) and St Mary,

Item, two latten candlesticks.'

## MOATS & PARKS

Having examined its contents, we return to the Hall. This building in its context would have dominated most communities – not only in terms of its size (compared with the smaller domestic houses and cottages in the village) but also of its infrastructure – the moat, the park, the mill and so on, all owned by the lord and surrounded by his demesne. All this would have been served to elevate the status of the family within the community and at the same time to ensure its separation from it.

‘The moat afforded all the protection that was needed by a resident of this kind [the small manor house]. But it carried one main disadvantage – the lowlying location dictated by the need for a supply of running water exacted a heavy price in unhealthiness, and for much of the year the occupants were condemned to live in damp, and dark, surroundings.’<sup>69</sup> As to the park that was a feature of so many manors, some one hundred and eight have been identified in Essex (one for every four parishes) and it is probable that there are more yet to be traced.<sup>70</sup> Fig. 5.3 shows the distribution of known Essex parks, many of which had practical as well as recreational uses for manorial lords: most were in existence by the fourteenth century.<sup>71</sup> There is a single known contract for the construction of a moat in medieval Essex and this is quoted in full by Michael Jones in his description of the military career of John, second lord Bourghier (d.1400). The indenture was between Bourghier and Nicholas Degrowe of

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<sup>69</sup> N.Saul, *Provincial Life*, p.166.

<sup>70</sup> L.M.Cantor, *The Medieval Parks of England: A Gazetteer* (1983), pp.29-31.

<sup>71</sup> The first park to be licenced in our period was granted to Sir Alexander Goldingham who was permitted to enclose and impark his garden and fifty acres of land within Waltham Forest adjoining his manor of Chigwell. *Cal.Pat.Rolls* 1381-1385, p.36. Grants for markets, fairs and free warren were sometimes granted in conjunction with licences to impark as in the case of Theydon Garnon. E.R.O. D/DU. 992.



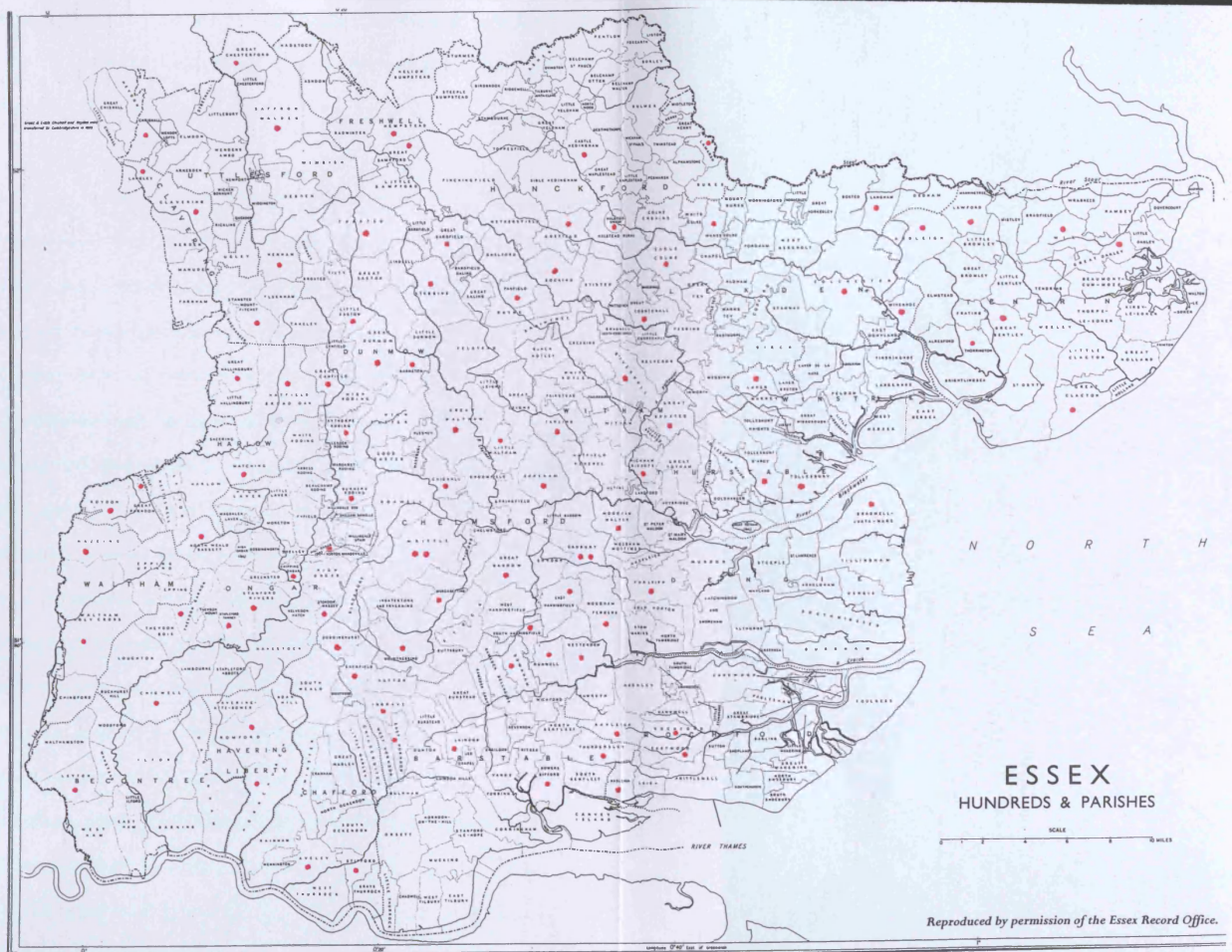


FIG 5.3 ESSEX PARKS (AFTER CANTOR)

London who agreed to make: 'une dowe entour le manoir de Stansted' to be finished by All Saints 1381.<sup>72</sup> One of the best preserved medieval moats is at Heron Hall, East Horndon (Plates 6.4 and 6.5).

Not every village in Essex had an easily identifiable capital manor. There were, for example, three separate manors and at least twenty moated sites in Wimbish a large parish of 4916 acres (1990 hectares). The majority of moated houses in Wimbish clearly belonged to the sub-gentry, yeomen and rich peasants and those of the manorial gentry were widely dispersed within the parish. In Messing there were three manors, each with a substantial hall, grouped round the church in close proximity to one another: Messing Hall, Harborough and Bourghiers Hall. Did this quantity reduce the quality of local gentry status? We do not know. We do know that an extensive network of footpaths, tracks and roads linked not only villages but individual manor-houses – then as now. The Baynards had but a short ride to Bourghier Hall and Harborough Hall (which was in effect a sub-manor of Messing Hall) in their own village but they were also part of a cluster of influential gentry in a neighbourhood which included the Marneys at Layer Marney, the Darcys at Maldon, the Filiolls at Kelvedon, the Montgomerys at Faulkbourne, the Spices at Black Notley and the Rikedons at Witham together with others, lesser gentry. The capital manor of Lord Fitzwalter, for whom Baynard was lawyer and feoffee, at Woodham Walter was just a short distance away on horseback. It was along such paths and tracks that neighbours habitually came to participate in the family's social life and to witness important rites of passage.

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<sup>72</sup> M.Jones, 'The fortunes of war: the military career of John, second Lord Bouchier (d.1400)', E.A.H. 26 (1995), pp.145-161.



## rites of passage

Gentry children were invariably born at home – only occasionally in someone else's home – and it is to illuminate this proposition and to provide evidence for the ceremony of baptism that we turn to proof of age inquests.<sup>73</sup> In attending church on such important occasions the gentry household participated in 'generational events marking the passage of linear time, and involving church ritual.'<sup>74</sup>

The proof of age inquest of Margaret de Boville in 1328 shows that she was born at Great Leighs 'in the large chamber in the upper part of the hall' according to the witness Henry de Naylinghurst. The witness John de Polhay recalled that: 'he was in the hall of Lyes, and when Petronella, mother of the said Margaret, was delivered, her midwives came into the hall, and announced the birth to him and others'. Lyes was the principal of ten manors in Great Leighs (otherwise Leighs Boville) and the proof of age inquest record shows that Margaret's father John Boville had a squire acting as household steward named John de Liston (later he was knighted) who could verify the date of the heir's birth by reference to: 'the dates of the rolls of the aforesaid household'.<sup>75</sup> Neither these, nor any other gentry household rolls (other than manorial *compoti*) are known to have survived for Essex during the period 1381-1450.

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<sup>73</sup> Children of magnates were born in the same house (despite the often vast choice of homes available to their parents) from generation to generation. The de Vere earls of Oxford were invariably born at Great Bentley in preference to Castle Hedingham, just as they were eventually buried at Earls Colne priory.

<sup>74</sup> R.G.K.A. Mertes, 'The household as a religious community' in J. Rosenthal and C. Richmond eds, *People, Politics and Community in the Late Middle Ages* (1987), pp. 128-139.

<sup>75</sup> *Cal.I.P.M.* 7, p. 135. It is now generally accepted that testimonies are not necessarily actual memories, that 'Certain stock recollections, it can be assumed, were merely formal, utilized to give an acceptable form to the proof.' S.S. Walker, 'Proof of age of feudal heirs in medieval England', *Mediaeval Studies* 35 (1973), p. 320. See also: J. Bedell, 'Memory and proof of age in England 1272-1327' *Past & Present* 162 (1999), pp. 3-27.

A certain lack of privacy attended the birth of the gentry's children if the evidence given by a witness regarding the age of Alice de Southchurch at Southchurch Hall in 1304 is typical, for he recalls that: 'he was in a garden when he heard the cries and groans of the mother of the said heir labouring in childbirth'.<sup>76</sup> Sometimes within a matter of hours the new born child was rushed to the parish church, usually by a midwife or wetnurse, for immediate baptism. If the child's life was in danger however, baptism would be performed at home by the midwife if no priest was at hand. Godparents would sometimes have had little notice of the ceremony and they would also have been rounded up and hurried to the church. Records of proof of age inquests for Essex and elsewhere indicate that baptisms scarcely disturbed the other activities which were going on in the parish church and would have attracted little notice.<sup>77</sup> The usual sequence of events was for the priest to meet the family at the church door, enter the church with them and perform the baptism at the font (which was usually close to the door) and thereafter the participants would return to the hall for a feast and thanksgiving. If the evidence of the Inquisitions is to be believed, the generally rushed nature of these events is indicated by the number of accidents which happened to the participants, including godparents, on their way to and from the church. An extraordinary number of them are recorded as having broken a limb like John Leget who: 'fell into a pit and broke his arm' when riding to fetch John de Enfield's godfather in 1369.<sup>78</sup> This fixed the date of birth of the heir in his mind.

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<sup>76</sup> Cal.I.P.M. p.187.

<sup>77</sup> It was not unusual for archery practice or even cockfighting to be taking place in the churchyard or for the baptism to be hurriedly fitted in after a wedding or funeral or before Mass was said. For baptismal rites at this period see S.Shahar, Childhood in the Middle Ages (1990), pp.45-52.

<sup>78</sup> Cal.I.P.M. 12 p.363.

Plate 3.2 below illustrates the font at Chrishall in which John, son and heir of Henry Helion of Helion Bumpstead was baptised on 14 February 1379 in the presence of his godparents Master John Dunwich, rector of Borley, John Basset of Chrishall and Amice prioress of Ickleton.<sup>79</sup>

Many Proof of Age inquests give details of the church where the baptism took place and in some cases the original font has survived.<sup>80</sup> There are Essex fonts which are monuments to family pride, some of them depicting heraldically a number of successful marriage alliances by their arrangement of escutcheons around the bowl. There is a well-preserved font in Shalford church near Great Codham Hall where the arms of the Coggeshall family have pride of place, perhaps indicating that Coggeshall children were brought for baptism here rather than to the more distant parish church at Wethersfield.

As to the second important rite of passage, very little is known of Essex gentry marriages save that they were customarily arranged between neighbouring families and took place when the bride was as young as twelve years. It seems to have been the practice, certainly it was described in the Stonor correspondence, for brides to be married in their father's house, usually in the family chapel. No direct evidence exists for this amongst the Essex gentry however. If such were the case, or even if the marriage took place in the porch of the parish church as it did for most people, it would

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<sup>79</sup> *Cal.I.P.M.* 18 pp.221-222.

<sup>80</sup> The font in which Richard Baynard was baptised survives but it was taken to the church at Wakes Colne in the nineteenth century by an incumbent who held both benefices.

undoubtedly have been the occasion of a feast at the hall.<sup>81</sup> In this context, a notable feature of life in Essex gentry households between 1381-1450 must have been the frequency of second and third marriages with collections of step children, and half brothers and sisters brought together, together with children of neighbours being trained as future knights, esquires and gentlemen.

With an eye to maintaining the dignity and status of the family and perhaps also the physical wellbeing of their children, testators routinely made provision for the marriage of unmarried children, particularly daughters. Sir William Marney (d.1414) left land to his sons and 300 marks *pro maritagio* for his daughter Anne.<sup>82</sup> Sir Lewis John (d. 1442), the City vintner, made business-like provisions for his children. The dowry received on the marriage of his son Lewis was to serve as the marriage portion for his eldest daughter Margaret, 'yef she be married unto gentel blode' (a sensitive point for her father who had several times been falsely accused of servile origin), other estates were to be sold to provide for his daughter Elizabeth's dowry whilst those of Alice and the younger Margaret were to be raised from other Essex properties.<sup>83</sup> Thomas Rolf of Gosfield (d.1440) left a legacy to provide small dowries for local unmarried girls.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Sir William Berland, whose will is quoted by Dr. Jennifer Ward in Women of the English Nobility and Gentry 1066-1500 (1995), pp.34-35, left his two daughters well provided for but required that they should either get married before they were fifteen or, if they wished, become nuns. In either case they were to be maintained from the sale of his lands.

<sup>82</sup> Will of Sir William Marney (d.1414). P.C.C 29 & 31 Marche.

<sup>83</sup> Will of Sir Lewis John (d.1442) E.R.O. D/DP TI/823 and P.C.C.14 Rous.

<sup>84</sup> Will of Thomas Rolf (d.1440). C.C.L.Reg. 4 f 48 & 78.v.

### 5.3 RELIGION

A discussion of the religion of the Essex gentry in our period must necessarily take account of the recent debate which arises from what Richard Davies has described as the “major shift in all historical discussion..... from the institution to the individual”.<sup>85</sup>

Writing in 1976 Malcolm Vale asserted that in the late medieval period ‘the display of heraldic achievements was intended to impress the spectator with the antiquity and honour of the .....family’ and that tombs had ‘become a sort of pictorial genealogy in brass and stone’.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, the (Yorkshire) gentry’s ‘movement towards burial in private chapels within parish churches, or even in the chancels of those churches....suggests a proprietary attitude towards the places in which they were buried.....It was thus to be expected that territorial connexions and dynastic sentiment might combine to bring many members of the gentry home to rest among their relatives, tenants and dependants’.<sup>87</sup> Much of Vale’s data concerning the late medieval gentry was derived from the analysis of wills and testaments which

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<sup>85</sup> R.Davies, ‘Religious sensibility’ in C.Given-Wilson ed., An Illustrated History of Late Medieval England (1996), p.107.

<sup>86</sup> M.G.A.Vale, Piety, Charity and Literacy among the Yorkshire gentry, 1370-1480 Borthwick Papers No.50 (1976), p.10.

<sup>87</sup> Vale, Piety, Charity and Literacy pp.10-11. See also N.Saul, ‘The religious sympathies of the gentry in Gloucestershire, 1200-1500’ Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society Transactions 98 (1980), p.104. ‘As the knights settled on their estates to become country gentry so they came to look upon the local parish church almost as a family chapel. If this was not an attitude completely novel to the 14<sup>th</sup> century it was certainly at that time that it came to find full expression. In the previous century tombs had usually been concealed under arched recesses in the chancel or along the aisles of the nave....A hundred years later, though, a village church situated next to a manor house was more than likely to be invaded by the sculptured effigies of the lords of the manor.’

‘must be used with caution’.<sup>88</sup> In this context he draws our attention to the possibility that a ‘pious Latin preamble to a will’ may in fact be the work of the clerk who drew it up, and he queries how far such statements can be ‘accepted as professions of an individual’s religious beliefs’.<sup>89</sup>

Malcolm Vale identifies a number of devotional traits that were clearly changing as the fifteenth century progressed. Laymen were, for example, ‘becoming more fastidious in the choice of those members of the clergy who should celebrate masses for their souls’ yet a ‘distaste for the institutionalised mass-saying industry of the Church was compatible with orthodox personal piety’.<sup>90</sup> It could reflect a tendency towards such practices as ‘private devotions, to private chapels in the houses of the laity, the privilege of appointing one’s own confessor with a portable altar and no parochial responsibility’.<sup>91</sup> He concludes that from c.1450 ‘There is more talk about doctrine, and more intense expressions of personal feeling’ in wills.<sup>92</sup>

In 1984 Colin Richmond drew on his profound knowledge of the Paston family to illustrate his views about what he considered was the privatization of religion for the

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<sup>88</sup> Vale, *Piety, Charity and Literacy* p.6. This view is supported by numerous historians, for example: ‘Wills are surely among the best-loved, and most intensively studied, records of the late middle ages. To a medievalist the sheer volume of information they contain is voluptuous’. P.Maddern, ‘Friends of the dead: executors, wills and family strategy in fifteenth-century Norfolk’ in R.E.Archer and S.Walker eds, *Rulers and Ruled in Late Medieval England* (1995), p.155.

<sup>89</sup> Vale, *Piety, Charity and Literacy* p.6. A small number of the Essex gentry drew up their own wills, for example Sir William Tyrrell of Beeches (d.1470) P.C.C. 32 Godyn wrote: ‘The last will and Intent of me William Tyrrell of Beeches in the shire of Essex Knight, written .....with myn owne hande’. The numerous surviving drafts of Richard Baynard’s will (see page 409 below) were probably written by him.

<sup>90</sup> Vale, *Piety, Charity and Literacy* pp.18-20.

<sup>91</sup> K.B.McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (1972), p.225.

<sup>92</sup> Vale, *Piety, Charity and Literacy* p.14.

late medieval gentry and the so-called 'interiorization' of the religious life.<sup>93</sup> He identifies a 'certain coolness in the Pastons' religion' shown by the 'Paston menfolk' who showed 'not just their coldheartedness but also their lack of true religion' in failing to arrange the foundation of Judge William Paston's chantry.<sup>94</sup> He deduces from this and other evidence that the Pastons were 'folk not oppressed by the so-called burdens of late medieval religion. Anxiety ....is not to be detected in them.'<sup>95</sup> Richmond, like Malcolm Vale, does recognise that family tombs and their heraldic display were intended as a means to demonstrate their status. In his view the Pastons' 'parsimony over John Paston's tomb probably did reduce or help keep depressed the family's standing in Norfolk society'.<sup>96</sup> The more 'intense expressions of personal feeling' which Vale identified from c.1450 onwards are also seized on by Colin Richmond.<sup>97</sup> Taking the example of religious relics worn by the gentry as jewellery, Richmond sees 'the personalization of relics [formerly kept in church reliquaries]' as 'a feature of the privatization of religion'. Furthermore, that this 'non-communal' approach by the gentry is for him the 'most important development in later medieval English religion' and it lead 'directly to the English Reformation'.<sup>98</sup>

Colin Richmond also interprets the private pew in parish churches as a further example of privatization, leading to 'introspection and non-participation', 'a manifestation of the interiorization of religion, a corollary of its personalization'. In 'becoming isolated from their neighbours' argues Richmond, the gentry 'were also

<sup>93</sup> C.Richmond, 'Religion and the fifteenth-century gentleman' in B.Dobson ed., The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century (1984), pp.193-208.

<sup>94</sup> Richmond, 'Religion', pp.194-195.

<sup>95</sup> Richmond, 'Religion', p.195.

<sup>96</sup> Richmond, 'Religion', p.196.

<sup>97</sup> Vale, Piety, Charity and Literacy, p.14.

<sup>98</sup> Richmond, 'Religion', p.198.

insulating themselves against communal religion'. For him, having 'the Mass at your own home, in your own chapel, conducted by your own priest' was an obvious next step'.<sup>99</sup>

For Peter Fleming, also writing in 1984, the gentry were wholeheartedly religious. 'Most wills contained some form of provision for prayers for the dead, thereby demonstrating the widespread acceptance of the concept of *purgatio*'.<sup>100</sup> Fleming takes the view that 'Religion pervaded daily life, and there is little to suggest that the vast majority of the gentry did not take their religion very seriously'.<sup>101</sup> Perhaps therefore, Richmond's judgement of the Pastons is too harsh. We should not interpret what may have been no more than procrastination as 'coolness'. In addition, although he warns us that the Pastons may not have been typical, his argument relies heavily on the evidence of their surviving papers.

Fleming draws our attention to portable altars and private chapels which, he suggests, 'were probably regarded as status-symbols'.<sup>102</sup> Perhaps they were an expensive convenience which made the obligations of religion easier to bear. In this sense they should not be seen as 'interiorization' for, as Gillian Pitchard remarks, evidence from the Paston letters does not substantiate the claim that 'Private ownership

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<sup>99</sup> Richmond, 'Religion', p.199. As has been said at pages 248 and 249 above, it is a feature of Essex gentry wills that lords who had a private chapel in their manor house invariably left a proportion of their vestments, books and vessels for use in the parish church.

<sup>100</sup> P.W.Fleming, 'Charity, faith and the gentry of Kent, 1422-1529' in A.J.Pollard ed., Property and Politics: Essays in Late Medieval English History (1984), p.37.

<sup>101</sup> Fleming, 'Charity, faith and the gentry', pp.41-42.

<sup>102</sup> Fleming, 'Charity, faith and the gentry', p.42.



of a chapel' can be 'interpreted as a withdrawal from the parish community' as the Pastons 'attended their parish churches'.<sup>103</sup>

There is little apparent disagreement that family tombs both reflected and projected family pride for it was as Fleming says, accumulations of a gentry family's burials in the same church that 'strengthened the identification' of the family with the church. The church was the focus of parish life, and such an association enhanced the family's proprietorial claims on their locality'.<sup>104</sup> Clearly, in the view of Fleming and Pritchard, the high status tombs and private pews of the gentry were symbolic of their position in the community rather than an indication of their withdrawal from community religion; the gentry therefore do not seem to be as 'isolated' as Richmond thinks. It was perhaps much more the case that the gentry were 'separated' rather than 'isolated'.

For Peter Fleming, the gentry's attitude to religion had practical consequences: 'Certain religious practices served to strengthen their position in society, by emphasising their role as patrons and leaders of their local communities'.<sup>105</sup> In his view it was not until the end of the fifteenth century that even a minority of the Kentish gentry 'seem to have been moving towards a more personal, less institutionalized form of worship, with less emphasis on prayers and funeral ceremonies, a decline in support for the religious orders, and the beginnings of a new attitude towards charity'.<sup>106</sup> From these conclusions it seems that Fleming is not entirely divorced from Richmond's view that the late medieval gentry's non-communal approach led directly to the English Reformation.

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<sup>103</sup> Pritchard, 'Religion and the Paston family', p.77.

<sup>104</sup> Fleming, 'Charity, faith and the gentry', p.51.

<sup>105</sup> Fleming, 'Charity, faith and the gentry', p.52.

<sup>106</sup> Fleming, 'Charity, faith and the gentry', p.53.

The 'interiorization' debate was carried forward by R.G.K.A. Mertes in 1987 'Nobles and gentry largely confined themselves to the exercise of traditional forms of pious practice open to the layperson, but adapted these to suit the requirements of what Joel Rosenthal calls "an individualised form of institutionalised religion."' <sup>107</sup> Clive Burgess writing in 1990 also approached the subject, but this time in relation to wills and testaments, an analysis of which, he says, may lead to the wrong emphasis being placed on individualism, 'Each [will] essentially is a statement of one testator's plans and intentions. Each tends to emphasize the individual, excluding the role that others may have played in his or her practices and priorities, and neglecting corporate activities in which a testator would probably have been involved'. <sup>108</sup>

Michael Hicks (1991) reminds us that the religious practices of the gentry were in a sense dynamic and therefore subject to continual change and development 'Piety, after all, did not exist in a vacuum. It was shaped not only by the official teaching of the Church and by its individual clergy, but by the conventions of particular classes, regions, and families'. <sup>109</sup>

According to Richard Davies (1996) 'There is considerable debate whether families did seek to build up displays of lineage through tombs, or whether it was each generation for itself'. In this context he approaches the 'privatization' debate with a challenge to Colin Richmond's views. 'The landed gentry did not depart from their

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<sup>107</sup> Mertes, 'The household as a religious community', p. 130. and J. Rosenthal, Nobles and the Noble Life, 1295-1500, (1976), p. 49.

<sup>108</sup> C. Burgess, 'Late medieval wills and pious convention: testamentary evidence reconsidered' in M. Hicks ed., Profit, Piety and the Professions in Late Medieval England (1990), p. 17.

<sup>109</sup> M. Hicks, 'Four studies in conventional piety' Southern History 13 (1991), p. 16. Hicks also makes the point that not only did chapel-owning gentry continue to worship in their parish church but they also visited monasteries for the same purpose.

parish churches either in life or death. The idea, more clever than persuasive, that they “privatised” their religion, retreating to their household chapels, takes no account of their need to affirm by ritual their proactive headship of their manorial estates and tenants through placement at church services and by tombs after death’.<sup>110</sup> Davies sums up the current debate as follows: ‘Between the crude extremes of uniformity and individualism, attention is now on the formative agencies around the individual, with attention to the influence of the family’.<sup>111</sup> As to the ‘interiorization of religion’ argument which, says Davies, means ‘that inwardly they [the landed classes] wanted to work out their own faith, as an aspect of individual existence; while outwardly they needed to provide enhanced symbols and structures which would both satisfy their servants and retainers and bond them in loyalty through rituals of social identity with their lord’. Again this is subtle, he says, but cannot overlook the fact that the gentry built churches and beautified them ‘not in idle ways but with references to the most striking and central of religious imageries’ and were finally buried in them.<sup>112</sup>

Nigel Saul (1980) takes the view that: ‘As devotion becomes more personal and more inward, so it becomes more difficult to analyse... In the tightening of the gentry’s grip over the parish churches and in the detailed observances specified by the countless founders of chantries we can certainly discern nascent erastian tendencies at a local level’.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Davies, ‘Religious sensibility’, pp.116-117.

<sup>111</sup> Davies, ‘Religious sensibility’, p.118.

<sup>112</sup> Davies, ‘Religious sensibility’, p.121.

<sup>113</sup> Saul, ‘Religious sympathies of the gentry’, p.109.

The last rite of passage for the gentry would probably have begun at the hall: it was usually only a short distance from the parish church and the elaborate burial ceremony provided for in gentry wills.<sup>114</sup> A few families, the Baynards of Messing for example, the Filiolls of Kelvedon and the Markshalls of Markshall could by the end of the fourteenth century, have been buried beside ten generations of their ancestors. In gentry wills one of the overriding concerns of the testator is for the disposal of their bodies. Sir Thomas Tyrell (d.1476) directed that his body was 'to be buried in the chancell of the church of Esthoredon...under the place where the sepulchre is wont to stonde' thereby at a stroke he seized the most prestigious burial place in the church, beneath the Easter sepulchre, the representation of Christ's own tomb. His next provision is somewhat more modest for he goes on to say 'I wolle that their be a tombe of tymber or of stone for me and my wyf according honestly for our degree'. For his son, however, killed at the battle of Barnet in 1471, there was to be 'also a stone to be ordeigned for Sir William Tyrrell, my sonne, with his Image, and the ymage of dame alianor his first wife'.<sup>115</sup> Sir William, like his grandfather Sir John Tyrell (d.1437) and various other close relatives, was buried in the Austin Friars church in London.<sup>116</sup> Sir Thomas Tyrell's mention of a 'tombe of tymber' is as puzzling as it is unusual, the few wooden effigies in Essex being more than a century old when he died, and it is doubtful whether such effigies had been favoured at all during the intervening period. Even William Hanningfield (d.1426) who was not in the first rank of Essex gentry, had rather grand ideas about his memorial : 'Also I woll that I have a tumbe like sire

<sup>114</sup> Davies, 'Religious sensibility', p.113. 'Funerals were statements. At the highest level, they stated the importance and goals of the deceased, with armour, heraldry and didactically composed processions of kin, retainers, priests and poor folk....Tombs with their effigies then fixed these values for posterity, with the deceased in full regalia, the men usually in armour, however limited their actual military activity in life'.

<sup>115</sup> Will of Sir Thomas Tyrell (d.1476), P.C.C. 31 Wattys.

<sup>116</sup> H.Morley ed., *John Stowe's Survey of London 1598* (1994 edn.) p.161.

Thomas More, and ther-upon, a brode ston with iiij pilers, and the brode stone gravyn with Laton, of Cisily and vij children'.<sup>117</sup> Lady Elizabeth Bruyn (d.1471) required her body to be buried 'afore the Roode' beside her husband Sir Maurice.<sup>118</sup>

The majority of Essex memorials to members of the Essex gentry during our period 1381-1450 were brasses, most of them made in London. A very large number were laid down in memory of the gentry and a smaller group to represent the clergy and sub-gentry. Table 5.2 shows the surviving figure brasses and does not take into account the many more inscriptions and indents which remain. It is not clear how many brasses from this period have been lost as a result of deliberate vandalism, theft, fire and neglect. To judge from documentary references to missing brasses (especially Richard Symonds) and surviving indents it is likely that about seventy-five percent of the original total of Essex brasses no longer exist. During the period in which brasses were laid down, some care seems to have been taken by families to preserve them, as in the case of the Darcys at Maldon; their brasses accumulated to the point when they eventually covered the floor of the chantry chapel and an adjacent aisle. Christine Carpenter draws attention to the paradox that loyalty to distant ancestors was more typical of the newly 'arrived' gentry (the Darcys of Maldon were at best parvenus) than to families from genuinely ancient lines.<sup>119</sup> This was evidently the case with the Tyrell family who by 1620 had allowed their family chapel at East Horndon to fall into serious decay. The neglect was reported by John Weever: 'There be other funeral monuments in this church, erected to the honor of the family, but their inscriptions are all torn or worn out,

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<sup>117</sup> Will of William Hanningfield (d.1426), P.C.C. 6 Luffenham.

<sup>118</sup> Will of Dame Elizabeth Bruyn (d.1471), P.C.C. 2 Wattys.

<sup>119</sup> M.C. Carpenter, 'The religion of the gentry in fifteenth-century England' in D. Williams ed., England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium (1987), pp.53-74.

and their sepulchres like all the rest, foully defaced : these TYRELLS (me thinks) having been gentlemen for so many revolutions of years, of exemplary note, and principal regard, in this country, might have preserved these houses of rest for their ancestors from such violation'.<sup>120</sup> It is quite surprising that so many medieval brasses have actually survived in Essex considering the many threats posed against them.<sup>121</sup> It is often impossible, however, to attribute accurately the remaining fragments of particular individuals. The notebooks of such as Symonds, Holman, Cole and Powell, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century antiquaries, are often helpful in this respect as many brasses which have disappeared were still to be seen in their day. Remaining brasses and indents however fragmentary, show that practically every significant gentry family in our period (and some insignificant ones) is represented by a tomb or the identifiable remains of a tomb in Essex or one of the surrounding counties, despite the high attrition rate of memorials.

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<sup>120</sup> Weever, *Funerall Monuments* p.410.

<sup>121</sup> In advance of Martin Stuchfield's forthcoming book, for the Monumental Brass Society, the most complete list of Essex brasses remains M. Stephenson *A List of Monumental Brasses in the British Isles* (1926 and 1938 reprinted as one volume 1964). Malcolm Norris listed 15 Essex brasses from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and 76 from the fifteenth century in *Monumental Brasses: The Craft* (1978).

**TABLE 5.2 ESSEX GENTRY SURVIVING MONUMENTAL FIGURE BRASSES 1348-1479**

<u>DIED</u>		<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>SERIES</u>
1348	Sir John Gifford	Bowers Gifford	
1361	Isabel Cloville	West Hanningfield	
1370	Ralph de Knevynton	Aveley	
1371	Thomas Stapel	Sutton (formerly Shopland)	B
1380	Sir John & Lady Joan de la Pole	Chrishall	B
1390	Unknown widow	Stebbing	
1391	Sir Robert Swinburne	Little Horkesley	
c.1395	Unknown lady	Hatfield Broad Oak	
1400	Sir Ingram Bruyn	South Ockendon	B
1410	William Loveney	Wendens Ambo (formerly Great Wenden)	D
1412	Sir Thomas Swinburne	Little Horkesley	B
c.1415	Unknown man in armour	Felsted	B
1419	John de Boys & wife	Tolleshunt Darcy	B
1420	Christine Bray	Felsted	B
1420	John & Isabel Doreward	Bocking	D
1422	Thomas Coggeshall	Springfield	D
c.1430	Unknown man in armour & wife	Harlow	B
1439	Richard Fox	Arkesden	D

**TABLE 5. (CONTINUED)**

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1440	Sir John & Lady Frances Hunt	Ashen	B
1440	Thomas Rolf	Gosfield	D
1441	Thomas Torrell	Willingale Doe	B
1447	John Maltoun	Little Waltham	B
1450	John Green	Widdington	
1455	Elizabeth wife of Roger Deyncourt	Upminster	
1462	Isabel widow of George Langham	Little Chesterford	
1466	Margaret Wake		
1467	Sir Peter & Lady Katherine Arderne	Latton	D
1471	Thomas & Joan Colte	Roydon	B
1479	Sir Thomas & Lady Anne Urswick	Dagenham	D

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\* A number of 'civilians' represented on surviving brasses in Essex may have been members of the gentry but identification is not now possible due to inscriptions having been lost.





**PLATE 5.9 SIR JOHN & LADY DE LA POLE : CHRISHALL.**

One of the finest fourteenth-century gentry brasses in Essex is at Chrishall (Plate 5.9) on the Essex/Cambridgeshire border and it commemorates Sir John de la Pole (d.c.1380) who is shown in full armour, and his wife Joan.<sup>122</sup> Although Sir John held land in Essex it is not likely he was often resident in the county, and the circumstances in which he was buried at Chrishall are not known. A little earlier in time is the brass of Thomas Stapel at Sutton<sup>123</sup>. Stapel died in 1372 and the brass is unique in Essex in representing a sergeant-at-arms.<sup>124</sup> The standard military equipment of a late fourteenth-century knight consisted of a bascinet and mail aventail, armour for the arms and legs, a hauberk and a tight-fitting jupon. This equipment was so standard as to be depicted on the majority of Essex military brasses for many years, notably at Chrishall, Sutton (as previously mentioned), Little Horkesley, South Ockendon and Halstead. It is significant that at the beginning of our period the majority of brasses depicted belted knights but at the end they more frequently depicted rich esquires. This simply reflects the decline of knighthood both in numbers and prestige for even lawyers are depicted in full armour by the time Richard Fox died in 1434. Probably the finest military brasses in terms of style and execution are at Little Horkesley where beneath a canopy of brass are the armoured figures of Sir Robert Swinburne (d.1391) (Plate 5.10) and his son Sir Thomas (d.1412). The craftsman who made these brasses was probably working after the death of Sir Thomas but he took the trouble to show the older knight in armour appropriate to his time. He is wearing chain mail and jupon whilst his son wears a breastplate and skirt of lames. The armour is shown in considerable detail and there is

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<sup>122</sup> Peter Coss draws attention to the fact that most unusually it is the lady who holds her husband's hand on the brass: 'The hold is light but tender; undoubtedly she is unassertive, but that she is holding him is certain'. P.Coss. *The Lady in Medieval England 1000-1500* (1998), p.101.

<sup>123</sup> This brass was formerly in Shopland church (demolished 1967).

<sup>124</sup> N.Briggs, 'Monumental brasses' in C.Starr ed., *A Guide to Essex Churches* (1980), pp.55-58.





**PLATE 5.10 SIR ROBERT SWINBURNE : LITTLE HORKESLEY**

no reason to believe that it is anything other than an accurate picture of what was in use at the time in Essex. The Swinburne chapel must once have been unsurpassed for the richness of its brasses in the county for there were also brasses to Sir Robert Swinburne's sons John and Andrew, who died in 1430 and 1418 respectively and to other members of the family known to have existed only by reference to the indents of brasses to their memory in the family chapel. In the same church the pale oak effigies of the de Horkesleys and the brasses of the Fynderne and Leventhorpe families commemorate both the predecessors and the successors of the Swinburnes – a sequence of monuments unique in Essex.<sup>125</sup>

It is noticeable that the majority of knights and esquires are commemorated on monumental brasses without their wives but it is not clear why this is so.<sup>126</sup> Could it be that their wives tended to outlive their husbands and were buried elsewhere or did executors (often sons whose income was severely curtailed during the lifetime of their widowed mothers) lack the enthusiasm to lay down brasses in their memory? A small number of brasses to wives of Essex gentry do exist from this period; Christina Bray c.1420 at Felsted, (Plate 5.11) unknown ladies c.1390 at Stebbing, and c.1395 at Hatfield Broad Oak, Margaret Wake 1466 at Ingrave and the indent of a brass to Marjorie de Gildsborough c.1380 at Wennington. Perhaps these resulted from women predeceasing their husbands who were subsequently buried elsewhere, but who took care to provide memorials to their wives. There is also a single known example of a

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<sup>125</sup> The Swinburnes' array of monumental brasses in Essex is not restricted to Little Horkesley. Two more of Sir Robert's sons were buried at Belchamp Walter and indents of their tombs indicate that these were magnificent brasses depicting one brother as a priest and the other as an armoured knight.

<sup>126</sup> The alabaster effigy of Sir William Marney (d.1414) at Layer Marney was placed in the church according to his father's wishes by Sir Thomas Marney (d.1417) but there appears to have been no corresponding memorial to his mother unless there was once an inscription on Sir William's monument.





**PLATE 5.11 CHRSITINA BRAY : FELSTED**

woman (Isabel Cloville) and her son (John) commemorated together on a brass at West Hanningfield of c.1361, the brass to the son being now missing.

A large number of gentry brasses in Essex, probably the overwhelming majority, are of London manufacture.<sup>127</sup> Many brasses conform to a common pattern and design, being, apart from the accompanying inscriptions virtually indistinguishable from one another. John Doreward (d.1420) (Plate 5.12) William Loveney (d.1410) the knight or esquire at Felsted (c.1415) Thomas de Coggeshall (d.1422) and John de Boys (d.1419) forming one group with Richard Fox (d.1439), John Maltoun (d.1447) and Thomas Torrell (d.1441) form another with many features in common. They are also very similar to the surviving groups of brasses in Hertfordshire and Suffolk. The brilliant exceptions to this rather colourless collection are of course the Swinburne brasses at Little Horkesley and elsewhere, which to judge from what their contemporaries spent, must have been very expensive.<sup>128</sup> In terms of the development of armour, complete plate armour begins to appear c.1415 and continues on brasses for another twenty years. Brasses of this description are found at Bocking, Felsted, Springfield, Tolleshunt D'Arcy, and Wendens Ambo. So called Milanese 'Gothic' armour is the next stage of development and is found at Arkesden, Little Waltham and Willingale Doe and in its ultimate form at Roydon.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> S.F.Badham 'London standardisation and provincial "idiosyncrasy" ' *Church Monuments* 5 (1990), pp.3-25.

<sup>128</sup> R.Emmerson, 'Monumental brasses: London design c.1420-85.' *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 131 (1978), pp.50-77.

<sup>129</sup> J.P.C.Kent 'Monumental brasses – a new classification of military effigies c.1360-c.1485' *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 3<sup>rd</sup>. ser. 12 (1949), pp.70-97.





**PLATE 5.12 JOHN & ISABEL DOREWARD : BOCKING**

Clearly the purveyors of brasses in London satisfied the requirements of their Essex customers (who were generally their executors) by supplying an acceptable pattern and design at an acceptable price. 'Customised' exceptions to the straightforward design on offer would seem to have been rare, for example the Swinburne brasses at Little Horkesley. There are one or two brasses of particularly unusual design such as the brass to the Swinburne brothers represented by the indent of c.1425 at Belchamp Walter mentioned above where the monument fails to conform to the general pattern in terms both of size and innovative design. The general conformity of executors in ordering the design of brasses which indicates an unimaginative, even routine approach to the matter which should perhaps not be mistaken for a lack of concern for the departed.

Other notable gentry brasses in Essex during this period include a memorial to the lawyer Thomas Rolf (d.1440) at Gosfield whose relatives caused the following inscription to be put on his tomb : *Inter juristas quasi flos enituit iste*. His brass (Plate5.13). depicts a sergeant-at-law in full legal costume including a coif: 'Rolf's robe would have been parti-coloured, with ray cloth on one side, and furred with lamb : popular colours at this time were blue and green, or brown and green'. Peter Arderne (d.1467), whose brass is at Latton, lists his judicial robes in his will : scarlet lined with fur (for winter), escarlet with tartarin (for summer), green with red tartarin, and blue with green tartarin.<sup>130</sup>

The only other style of brass laid down in respect of gentry families in Essex in this period was the simple cross brass such as can be found in Danbury, Terling and

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<sup>130</sup> The information about legal costume is taken from the report of a lecture given to the Monumental Brass Society by Professor J.H.Baker on 8 April 1989. *MBS Bulletin* 51 (1989).





**PLATE 5.13 THOMAS ROLF : GOSFIELD**

Fyfield: this pattern flourished and died in the 1420s. As for the lesser gentry, those below the degree of knight or esquire, they seem never to have been depicted in armour. There are many surviving examples of brasses of individuals all over Essex such as those at Dovercourt c.1430, Romford and Corringham c.1450 and Wormingford c.1460 which depict the form of dress worn by well-to-do civilians during this period. In general, brasses to the minor gentry do not predate the year 1425, for it was at this time that the growing wealth and self-consciousness of this group led them to copy the behaviour of the greater gentry. By 1450 some relatively insignificant families were able to buy themselves memorials and place them within the protection of the parish church interior – if only in inferior positions such as the nave or the porch.

Occasionally whole families were depicted on brasses at this period, there is such a brass at South Weald of c.1450 which shows a man, his three wives and three groups of children totalling more than twenty in number. There is a woman and her nine children on a brass of c.1440 at Theydon Garnon and another large family group of c.1450 at Chishall. Such brasses can seldom be assigned to a particular family as the inscriptions which were not integral to the brass have usually been lost and depiction of children was probably to illustrate how well the deceased had propagated his line. As with brasses of the greater gentry these humble stereotype memorials were clearly never intended as portraits, being merely representations of the deceased and as such a reflection of the image the family wished to present to the world

Other gentry monuments of 1381-1450 in Essex are rare in comparison with monumental brasses. There are a few incised slabs, the best of which is probably the

best in England. The memorial at East Horndon ( see page 374 below) is of exceptional quality and artistic skill and depicts Lady Alice Tyrell (d.1422); it is thought to have been executed c.1440 in Normandy at her son's expense.<sup>131</sup> There are also a few stone and alabaster monuments in Essex but these were clearly so expensive that with one exception they relate to the higher nobility – the de Veres at Bures, Bourghiers at Halstead and Fitzwalters at Little Dunmow. The single gentry exception in our period is the excellent alabaster monument at Layer Marney which comprises a lifesize effigy of Sir William Marney (d.1414) in full armour. Whereas the de Veres and Fitzwalters continued to use stone or alabaster for their family monuments (Plates 5.14 and 5.15) the Bourghiers moved down from stone to latten; Bartholomew Lord Bourghier (d.1409) and his two wives are depicted on magnificent brasses on the floor of their chapel at Halstead a step or two from the stone effigies of earlier Bourghiers.<sup>132</sup> (Plates 5.16 and 5.17)

The majority of Essex gentry, were, from the evidence of their wills and surviving memorials, buried in the parish church of their capital manor, often (literally) within the shadow of their manor houses and amongst the bones of their ancestors. Some of the richer gentry however, chose to be buried in local religious houses, usually Chelmsford or Colchester or in London where they had property. Numerically, the most popular burial place in London for the Essex gentry was the church of the Austin Friars. Others chose to be buried in the religious houses founded by the ancestors of the lords in

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<sup>131</sup> It was so described in a letter by F.A.Greenhill, the authority on incised slabs, to the author.

<sup>132</sup> Nancy Edwards (nee Briggs) has compiled a bibliography of Essex brasses which will not be superseded until the publication c.2001 of the The Monumental Brasses of Essex by the M.B.S. See her 'A bibliography of Essex brasses' Trans.M.B.S. 11 (1971), pp.149-161: this follows her 'Chapter and verse' Trans.M.B.S. 10 (1968), pp.472-482, which gives details of documentary sources for the study of monumental brasses.



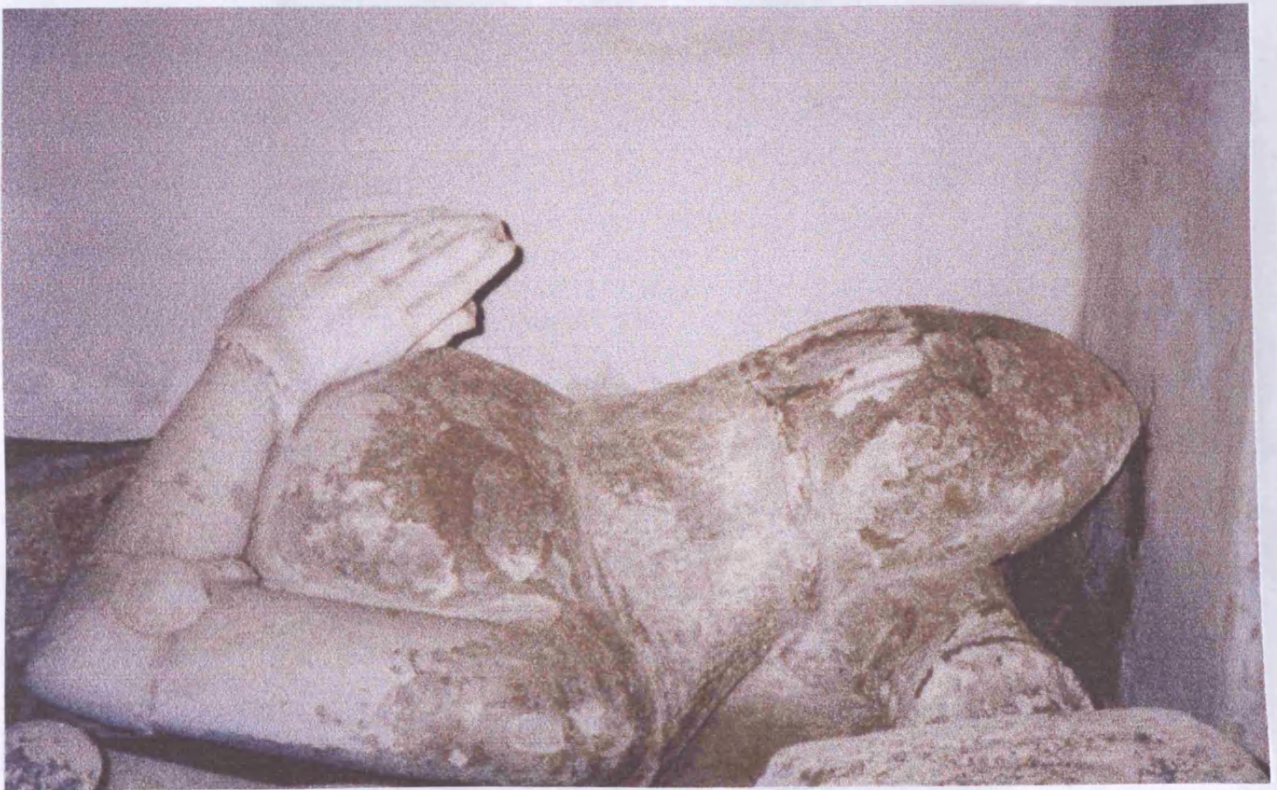


**PLATE 5.14 RICHARD DE VERE, EARL OF OXFORD : BURES, SUFFOLK.**



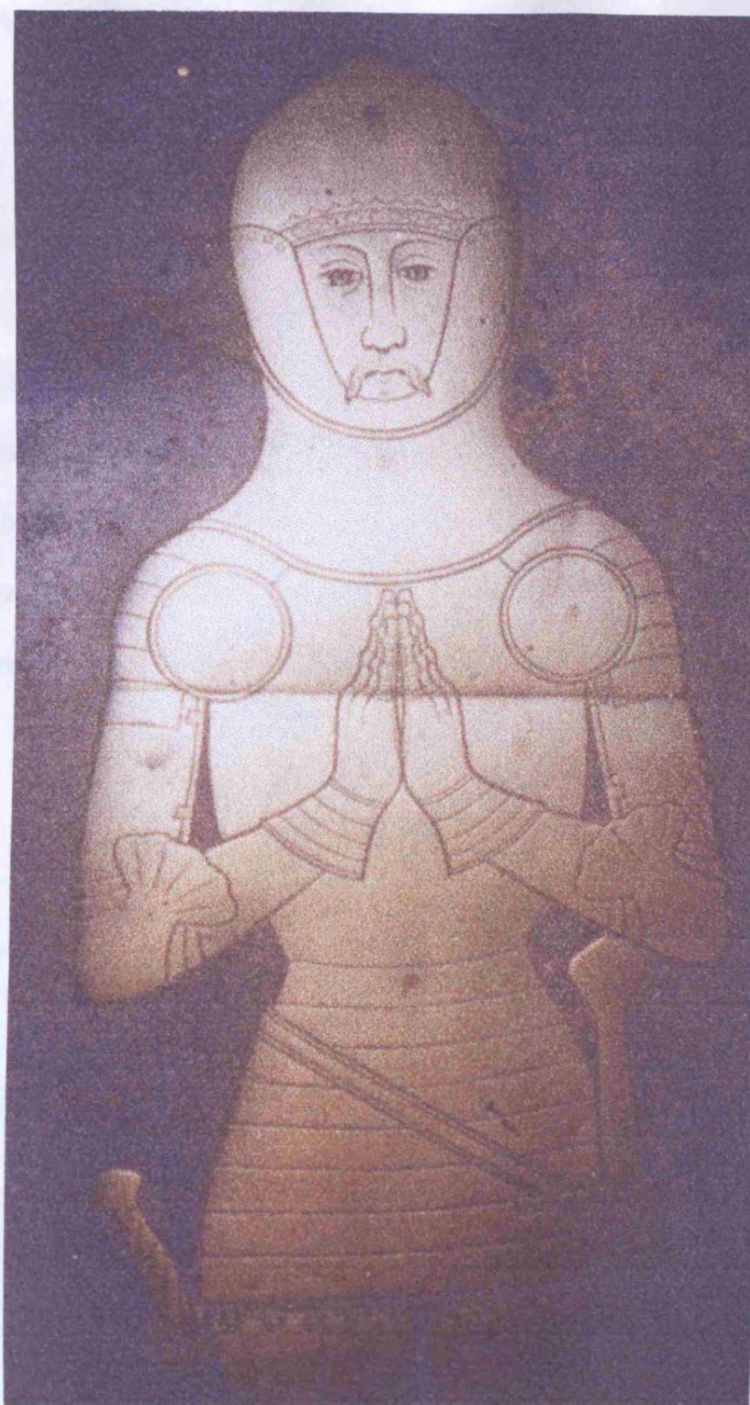
**PLATE 5.15 WALTER, LORD FITZWALTER : LITTLE DUNMOW.**





**PLATE 5.16 JOHN, LORD BOURGCHIER : HALSTEAD.**





**PLATE 5.17 BARTHOLOMEW, LORD BOURGCHIER : HALSTEAD**

whose affinities they served, as for example the Rokele family in the Bohun's foundation at Walden Abbey.

It has been observed by Peter Fleming, Christine Carpenter and others that the gentry's response to religion was dominated not only by their spiritual needs – the saving of their souls – but also by secular considerations. 'Certain religious practices served to strengthen their position in society, by emphasising their role as patrons and leaders of their local communities'. Thus 'personal salvation and the security of the lineage could be achieved simultaneously'.<sup>133</sup> The Essex gentry were no less concerned to avoid the agony of Purgatory than their counterparts in other English counties; indeed their conformity with the gentry of Kent and Warwickshire for example, is quite striking.

The structure of wills continued to fall within prescribed parameters throughout our period, particularly in respect of religious matters. The principal feature of this convention required the ordering of masses, prayers and *obits* for the testator although there is a degree of choice in the form such matters should take. The richer gentry in general had the most expensive and elaborate provision; the usual requirement was that a mass should be said at the time of burial followed by a memorial mass a month later. 'I will that my monethes mynd be discretely doon, and in soberwise' (Sir Thomas Tyrell).<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Fleming 'Charity, faith, and the gentry', pp.36-58; Carpenter, 'Religion of the gentry', pp.53-74.

<sup>134</sup> Will of Sir Thomas Tyrell (d.1476) PCC 31 Wattys.



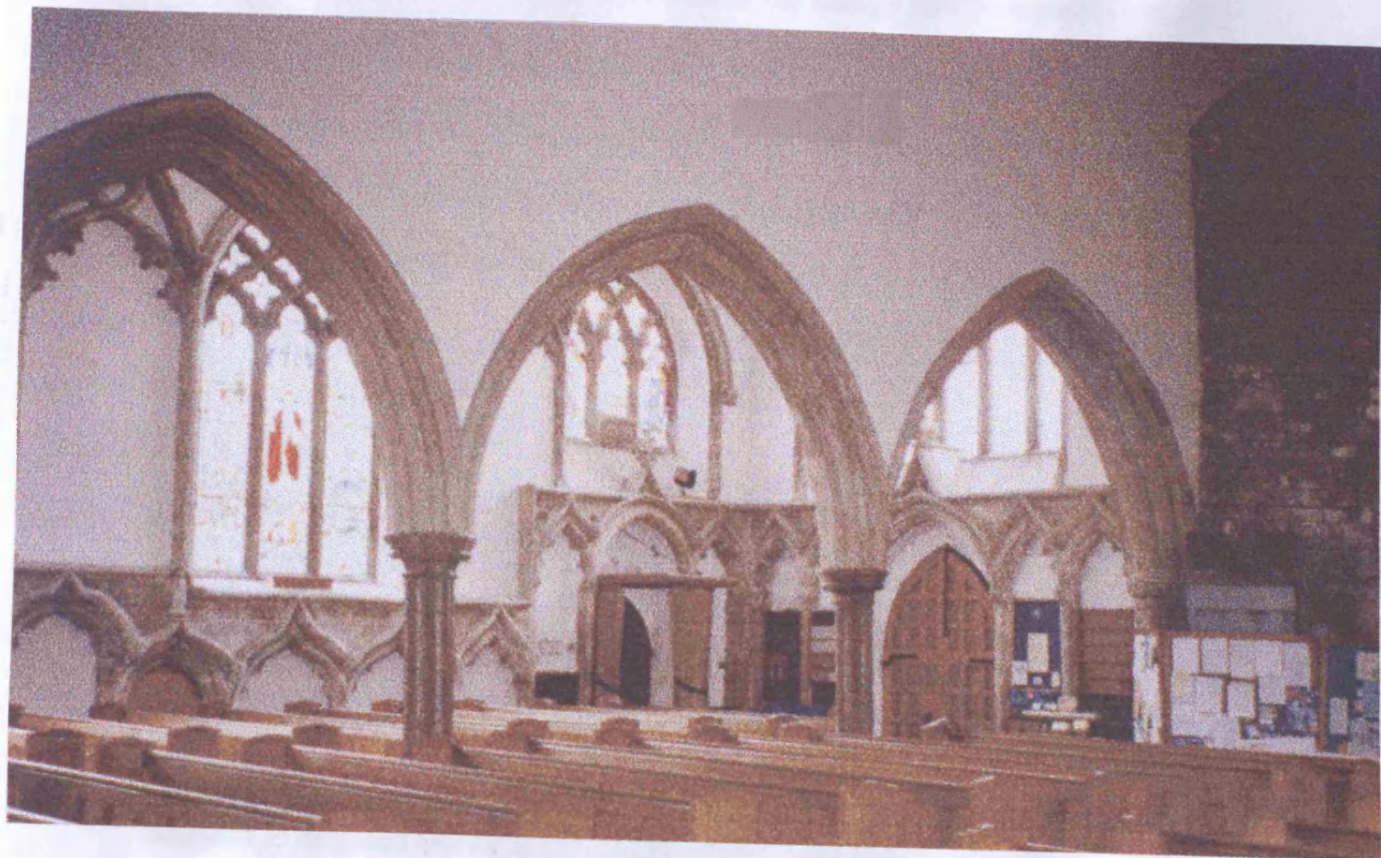
After directions for the funeral there are usually instructions as to the payment of debts 'I woll that all the detts which can be proved duly of right that I owe, shalbe wole and truly paied' (Sir Thomas Tyrell). A year after the death there was to be an *obit*; sometimes supplementary *obits* followed this. Finally there was provision for prayers to be said for ancestors, surviving relatives, friends, benefactors and occasionally patrons and distinguished people. The means by which such prayers were to be ensured was sometimes complex and it involved not only the clergy but often the laity too. The poor could be counted on to pray for the dead in response to a dole or alms, the literate laity were encouraged to pray for the dead by inscriptions on the tomb.

The richer gentry could, and occasionally did, provide for perpetual prayer foundations.<sup>135</sup> Sir Robert Darcy (1469) founded no less than three chantries in his Maldon parish church. By his will, Darcy ordained that a chantry called 'Darcyeschaunterye' (Plate 5.18) should be set up in All Saints church. It was to have two chaplains who were to celebrate mass daily before the altar of the Holy Trinity for the souls of himself and his wives Margaret and Alice. The chaplains were to have a messuage, garden and land in Maldon and this has been identified as the west cross-wing of the present vicarage of All Saints church.<sup>136</sup> In 1362 William Doreward founded a chantry in Bocking church, his son John founded another in 1397 in the same church. 'Because [says the Foundation Deed] in these days divine worship is diminished rather than increased'. Round interpreted this as a reference to Doreward's

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<sup>135</sup> Saul, 'The religious sympathies of the gentry', p.109. 'The late middle ages hardly seem to have been bursting forth with self-confidence to match the age of the Crusades. This is betrayed by the concern of testators for the salvation of their souls. Such fear, coupled with the enhanced importance of the mass and the belief that the intercession of the priest could ease the torments of Purgatory, encouraged the multiplication of chantries'.

<sup>136</sup> J.R.Smith and M.W.Wadhams 'Robert D'Arcy's chantry priests' house, Maldon, Essex Medieval Archaeology 19 (1975), pp.213-219.



**PLATE 5.18 DARCY CHANTRY : MALDON.**

religious orthodoxy and anti-Lollard stance.<sup>137</sup> Doreward not only established a further chantry at Stanway church in 1407 but he also endowed a chantry at St Botolph's Priory Colchester in 1400.<sup>138</sup> The chantry was always the prerogative of the richer families who had the surplus land and the money to get the necessary licences.<sup>139</sup> It was 'the salvation of the individual rather than of the lineage that prompted the endowment of chantries at the expense of future generations'.<sup>140</sup>

A little can be said here about unorthodox religious views amongst the Essex gentry. Sir Lewis John, whose father-in-law John Montagu, third earl of Salisbury was lynched in 1440 for being a Lollard may have been a Lollard on his own account. His will refers in a way characteristic of the sect to his 'wretched body'. In a similar style Sir Gerard Braybrooke (d.1429) describes himself in his will as 'I wreche clepe Gerard Braybroke' and asks God to accept his soul when it 'shall departe from my wreched body'.<sup>141</sup>

A cheaper alternative to the chantry, though as Peter Fleming has pointed out, less prestigious, was membership of a religious guild.<sup>142</sup> Sir Robert Darcy (d.1464) left bequests to religious houses in Colchester, Chelmsford and Clare as he was a brother of their order: in return for such bequests prayers were said. Edward Tyrell (d.1442) went a stage further: 'my body to be buried in the church of the freres of Chelmsford withyne my chapell that I have mad ther new'. His nephew Sir Thomas Tyrell (d.1476) refers in

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<sup>137</sup> J.H.Round, 'John Doreward's chantry' *T.E.A.S.* n.s. 13 (1915), pp.73-78.

<sup>138</sup> Round, 'Doreward's chantry' pp.73-78.

<sup>139</sup> Carpenter, 'Religion of the gentry' pp.53-74.

<sup>140</sup> M.A.Hicks, 'Piety and lineage in the Wars of the Roses: the Hungerford experience' in R.A. Griffith and J.Sherborne eds, *Kings and Nobles in the Late Middle Ages* (1986), pp.90-108.

<sup>141</sup> E.W.Brabrook, 'The will of Sir Gerard de Braybroke of Danbury knt., A.D. 1429' *T.E.A.S.* 5 (1873), p.297.

<sup>142</sup> Fleming, 'Charity, faith and the gentry', pp.36-58.

his will to a box containing twelve sealed letters 'by the which I am made a broth[er]' of divers houses of religion' and he left each house a bequest so that they might pray for him, his wife Anne and his parents. Cheaper still than the membership of a guild was simply to pay for a name to be included in a service book in the parish church so that an *obit* would be said on the anniversary of the deceased's death. A number of the minor gentry in Springfield paid for this option and their names, amongst them Richard Duke, Thomas Prentice, Geoffrey Colville and Margaret Duke, were added between 1379 and 1417 to the Calendar of an Antiphoner dated c.1300.<sup>143</sup>

Acts of charity by the gentry may either have been an attempt to shorten their time in Purgatory or as is more likely to enhance the status of their family in the neighbourhood. William Hanningfield left four marks yearly for ten years to the poor but no doubt with the expectation that they would continue to pray for him throughout this period.<sup>144</sup> Similarly Thomas Darcy of Maldon left money to 'finding scholars to Oxford and Cambridge, [and] the marriage of poor honest people in Essex',<sup>145</sup> John Doreward of Bocking left money to the prisoners in Colchester gaol (perhaps not expecting too much of a return by way of prayers) and to the poor and sick in Essex.<sup>146</sup>

Moving from the form of charity which was largely intended to assist the salvation of their souls we move to the sort which enhanced their social standing. This often took the form of bequests for the repair of roads or bridges, an act that could be interpreted

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<sup>143</sup> Cambridge University Library MS Add. 2602. Antiphonale (Sarum). This book was discovered hidden in the roof of All Saints church, Springfield in 1867 and was sold to the University in 1885 by the then incumbent.

<sup>144</sup> Will of William Hanningfield (d.1426), P.C.C. 6 Luffenham

<sup>145</sup> Will of Thomas Darcy (d.1485), P.C.C. 24 Logge

<sup>146</sup> Will of John Doreward (d.1420), P.C.C. 50 Marche

as increasing the dependency of local inhabitants on the gentry family still further. Thomas Darcy (d.1485) made a bequest for 'mending foul and noyous ways and bridges' which he considered to be 'works of piety and charity'. William Hanningfield (d.1426) left money for the repair of a bridge and John Doreward (d.1420) for the repair of roads.<sup>147</sup>

A further example of what Peter Fleming calls a 'desire to promote themselves and their kin through displays of wealth and munificence' was the gentry's contribution to the maintenance or even complete rebuilding of their local parish church.<sup>148</sup> Whereas Sir William Marney (d.1414) left money for the repair of the nave and chancel of Layer Marney church his son-in-law Sir Thomas Tyrell (d.1476) began the complete rebuilding of All Saints, East Horndon but had not finished it by the time of his death. When he drew up his will he ordained that 'I woll that yf I make nott up in my life tyme to the steple and new werk which I have bigon at Esthonedon aforesaid.....that it be made sure in such wise that the stepill fall nott dooun.'<sup>149</sup> There were so many burdens on testators that 'One wonders how many of those things testators wanted their executors to do for them actually got done'.<sup>150</sup>

We may still ask the question whether their careful provision for religious observance was indeed motivated by piety or anxiety. How secure were these gentry families – especially the newly risen? How real were their concerns about the continuity or failure of their lineage? During the period 1380-1450 gentry families were

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<sup>147</sup> J.S.Roskell 'John Doreward of Bocking, Speaker in 1399 and 1413' *E.A.H.* 8 (1976), pp.209-223.

<sup>148</sup> Fleming, 'Charity, faith and the gentry', pp.36-58.

<sup>149</sup> Will of Sir Thomas Tyrell (d.1476), P.C.C. 31 Wattys .

<sup>150</sup> C.Richmond, *John Hopton* (1981), p.248.

under considerable stress from many directions. Those families with an extended lineage had survived famine, plague, war and insurrections; they undoubtedly realised how fortunate they had been. Economic conditions for the gentry were growing less favourable, and continued to do so until reaching their nadir at the end of our period.<sup>151</sup> Attrition rates were high, and Bruce McFarlane has shown that even the most powerful families could expect extinction in just a few generations. He described a situation where of one hundred and thirty-six families whose head had by 1300 received a least one personal writ of summons to Parliament and whose line can be traced, only 16 of the original one hundred and thirty-six were still represented in the male line by 1500<sup>152</sup> It is not surprising that gentry families took the precautions as they did to preserve their family name, and that testators such as Thomas Bataill of Matching left ten marks for the glazing of a window in his memory in Walden Abbey.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Christopher Dyer discusses the economic problems of the gentry during this period in Standards of Living in the Late Middle Ages: Social Change in England c.1200-1520 (1989).

<sup>152</sup> K.B.McFarlane, The Nobility of Late Medieval England (1973), pp.144-145.

<sup>153</sup> Will of Thomas Bataill (d.1397). E.R.O. D/DbA T2/11.

#### 5. 4. THE HAWKWOOD MONUMENT: SIBLE HEDINGHAM.

##### A CASE STUDY

‘Do for his soule & foor his frendes as you thenketh best: And nameliche  
for the soules of hem that weren slain for his love’.

Indenture dated 20 April 1393.<sup>154</sup>

In the south aisle of St Peter’s parish church Sible Hedingham near Halstead in Essex, is the well-preserved tomb recess which commemorates a member of the Hawkwood family, and there is little doubt that it is either the cenotaph or last resting place of the famous *condottiere* Sir John Hawkwood who died in Florence on the night of 16/17 March 1394.<sup>155</sup> The purpose of this case study is to draw attention not simply to the survival of this tomb and others like it but to the visual evidence and ample documentary sources which illuminate its long history.

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<sup>154</sup> H.H.Thomas ed., Calendar of Select Pleas and Memoranda of the City of London 1381-1412 (1932), pp.308-309..

<sup>155</sup> The only full biography of Sir John Hawkwood is that of J.Temple-Leader and G.Marcotti Sir John Hawkwood. Story of a Condottiere (1889). This is excellent for Hawkwood’s Italian career and prints many original documents but it says little about Hawkwood’s English connections. For more modern works, both of which say little about England, see F.Gaupp ‘The condottiere John Hawkwood’, History 23 (1938-1939), pp.305-321 and G.Trease The Condottieri (1970), the latter book being lavishly illustrated.

Sir John Hawkwood was born c.1320 in Sible Hedingham, probably in a house on the site of what is now Hawkwood Manor in Potter Street, the second son of Gilbert de Hawkwood who died in 1340. Gilbert was a minor landlord in Sible Hedingham, Gosfield and Finchingfield who, despite being only two or three generations removed from servile status, was probably lord of at least one manor, possibly two or three, held from the earl of Oxford whose castle at Hedingham stood only a mile from the Hawkwood's home. (Plate 5.19) At least two of Gilbert de Hawkwood's daughters married into local minor gentry families and in addition to his land he was able to dispose of almost £100 in bequests when he died.<sup>156</sup>

Having inherited from his father twenty-five pounds, a bed, 5 quarters of wheat, 5 quarters of oats and his keep for a year, John Hawkwood is said to have enlisted as a soldier, probably in the retinue of John de Vere, 7<sup>th</sup> earl of Oxford (or possibly that of lord Robert Bourghier another powerful local magnate) and served with him at the battles of Crecy and Poitiers.<sup>157</sup> The earl died at the siege of Rheims in 1360 and it was probably at about this time that Hawkwood made the decision to become a mercenary, having already been knighted by Edward III, presumably on account of his bravery or outstanding leadership in battle. It was in Northern Italy, almost certainly in the service

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<sup>156</sup>BL.Harl. Ch.51.D.6. Will of Gilbert de Hawkwood (1340).

<sup>157</sup> There is a persistent long-standing tradition that Hawkwood was apprenticed to a tailor in London before beginning his military career. There is no evidence for this and the tradition may have arisen from his association with London drapers and tailors together with his origins in a village which was in the centre of the Essex cloth manufacturing area. It may also result from a pun on *Acuto* the Italian form of his name meaning 'needle'. *The Westminster Chronicle 1381-1394* ed. L.C.Hector and B.F.Harvey (1982), pp.518-520 confidently asserts that Hawkwood had been apprenticed to a London hosier '*Johannes Haukewode, qui de paupere apprenticio caligarii London*' The chronicle was written within about three years of Hawkwood's death. The Guild of Merchant Taylors in London claim Hawkwood as one of their own arguing that he 'sprang from the lowest sphere of life, and became by the force of his own character a man of accepted position before his death'. C.M.Clode, *The Early History of the Guild of Merchant Taylors* (1888), p.5.





**PLATE 5.19 HAWKWOOD MANOR : SIBLE HEDINGHAM.**

of the city of Pisa, that Hawkwood began the long and successful career as a *condottiere* which ended with him being retained by the city of Florence as Captain General of its military forces.<sup>158</sup>

In 1394 when he was seriously in debt and homesick, Hawkwood was planning to return to England when, after a short illness he died in his house in a suburb in the city. Such were his fame and achievements that the grateful citizens of Florence gave him a magnificent funeral in the Duomo, his body wrapped in cloth of gold, his sword on his chest, lay in state in the cathedral Baptistry upon the font in which Dante had been baptised. Hawkwood's tomb in the Duomo was on the north side of the chancel, within the wall.<sup>159</sup> The design for his monument – long planned by the city but never constructed – was subsequently painted on the wall above by Paolo Uccello.<sup>160</sup>

Whilst in Italy – there is no evidence that he returned to England after 1360 – Hawkwood's interests were looked after by a network of relatives, friends and business contacts many of whom were in powerful positions. His brother John Hawkwood the elder (died c.1395) was a landowner in Gosfield and Sible Hedingham (having inherited the family patrimony) and retainer to the earl of Oxford, serving him as executor, feoffee and possibly also as lawyer or steward.<sup>161</sup> Sir John's son-in-law, Sir William Coggeshall (who was once a *condottiere* and second-in-command in Hawkwood's White Company), was one of the richest members of the Essex gentry,

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<sup>158</sup> G. Trease, *The Condottieri* (1970), pp.42-45.

<sup>159</sup> Trease, *The Condottieri*.

<sup>160</sup> Uccello's fresco was later transferred to canvas and the painting hangs famously at the west end of the Duomo in Florence.

<sup>161</sup> *Cal. Pat. Rolls* 1401-1405, pp.69 and 512-513; *Cal. Close Rolls* 1381-1385, p.110.

whose uncle Thomas Coggeshall of Sandon was an MP and escheator, an old soldier too, who was influential at Court. Thomas Coggeshall's brother-in-law was lord Bourghier.<sup>162</sup> It was Thomas Coggeshall and John Sampson (his squire 'Jankyn' whom Hawkwood sent to England to carry out his instructions) that drew up an indenture in 1393 which was to be the basis of the administration of the Hawkwood estate – Sir John apparently left no will in Italy and in England letters of administration were taken out following his death in 1394.<sup>163</sup>

Hawkwood was also associated with Sir John Thornbury, the mercenary captain who fought together with him in the war against Milan. Thornbury was of similar minor gentry origins to Hawkwood but was a luckier and perhaps shrewder individual. Thornbury returned to England with his Italian wife and bought an estate in Hertfordshire where he quickly became an active member of the local community, eventually representing it as MP.<sup>164</sup> It is likely that Hawkwood also knew Sir John Gildsborough (died 1389) who was an Essex MP, and Speaker, who had fought at Crecy and Poitiers and was associated with the brothers Sir Henry and Thomas Coggeshall. Notable visitors to Italy on diplomatic business who met and worked with Hawkwood included Geoffrey Chaucer and Sir Nicholas Dagworth; they may have used their good offices on Hawkwood's behalf when they returned to England.<sup>165</sup>

<sup>162</sup> For bibliographies of Sir William Coggeshall and his uncle Thomas Coggeshall see Roskell, Clark and Rawcliffe, *History of Parliament*, 2. pp.614-618.

<sup>163</sup> Thomas, *Select Pleas and Memoranda*, pp.308-309.

<sup>164</sup> Sir John Thornbury is buried at Little Munden, Hertfordshire where he too has a splendid tomb.

Roskell, Clark and Rawcliffe, *History of Parliament*, 4. pp.591-593 for Thornbury's career.

<sup>165</sup> M.M. Crow and C.C.Olson eds, *Chaucer Life Records* (1960), pp.36-40 and 54-56 and J.M.Manly, 'Chaucer's mission to Lombardy' *M.L.N.* (1934), pp.209-216 also R.A.Pratt 'Geoffrey Chaucer, Esq., and Sir John Hawkwood' *J.E.L.H.* 16 (1949), pp.188-193.

In addition to these other connections in England, Hawkwood employed a group of men – principal amongst whom was the lawyer Robert Rikedon of Witham – who acted as feoffees and trustees in his complex financial transactions.<sup>166</sup> This group also included John Sergeant of Essex, John Cavendish of London, draper; and Robert Lyndesey of London, tailor. Hawkwood refers to Sergeant as ‘Jankyn’ and Rikedon as ‘Hopky’ in a congenial letter to Thomas Coggeshall dated 20 February 1393 – where Coggeshall is his ‘Dere trusty & wellbiloved friend’.<sup>167</sup>

At Hawkwoods’s death, the majority of his estate in Italy had already been sold and his pension commuted for a cash payment in preparation for his return to England. His wife had been provided for in various ways and also his daughter Anne, who in 1394 was still unmarried. Donnina Hawkwood completed the sale of the properties her husband had contracted including their house in San Donato di Torre and the castle in the Aretino – the latter were sold to the Florentine republic which, together with the commutation of his pension, his wife’s jointure, and the marriage portion of his third daughter, raised 6000 florins of gold from the city.<sup>168</sup> How much of this was needed to pay off debts in Italy we do not know.

In the indenture of 20 April 1393 between Thomas Coggeshall and John Sampson, Hawkwood’s intentions: ‘yf he deye bfore his comyng hom’ regarding the disposal of certain of his English estates – already purchased for him by trustees – were made clear and in them can be found the origins of the chantries at Sible and Castle Hedingham.

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<sup>166</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1408-1413, p.452 and Cal. Pat. Rolls 1374-1377, p.435.

<sup>167</sup> Thomas, Select Pleas and Memodanda, pp.308-309.

<sup>168</sup> Temple-Leader and Marcotti, Hawkwood, pp.298-305.

Firstly, Hawkwood wanted his London property 'the leden halle' together with the five advowsons of City churches which went with it, sold and: 'ii preestes yfounded in the nonnerie of Hethyngham to singen there in my maistre chapel & i prest in the parisshe chirche of Hethyngham Sibille'.<sup>169</sup>

The indenture provided that if Lady Hawkwood should outlive her husband, remain unmarried and come to England, she was to be enfeoffed with the manor of Liston in Gosfield and Hostages farm in Sible Hedingham for her life, with the reversion to their son John Hawkwood junior in tail. The rest of the English property was to be held in trust until John junior came of age. His parents married in 1377 so he was presumably no more than 16 when the indenture was drawn up. Possibly he was considerably younger as he had three sisters. It is likely that he came of age in 1409, and that he was born c.1388 as 1409 is the year he was given seisin of his father's land in England.<sup>170</sup>

Hawkwood also provided that in the event of his son failing to produce male heirs (as happened) then 'he wele that the forseide londes had ben sold & do for his soule & for his frendes as yow thenketh best : And nameliche for the soules of hem that weren slayn for his love'.<sup>171</sup> This moving final phrase seems to refer to those of his comrades who died in battle under his command. Clearly the indenture is of profound importance in relation to the arrangements to be made following Hawkwood's death if it should be in Italy. It shows that he wanted a chantry established in Sible Hedingham church and another in the convent at Castle Hedingham and that masses were to be said for his soul

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<sup>169</sup> Thomas, Pleas and Memoranda 1381-1412, pp.308-309.

<sup>170</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1405-1409, p.520 and 522.

<sup>171</sup> Thomas, Select Pleas and Memoranda, pp.308-309.



and those of his military comrades. There is nothing said about his burial in England or the provision of a tomb. He may never have envisaged that his remains would be transported such a great distance.

The reference in the indenture to 'my maistre chapel' in the convent at Castle Hedingham is puzzling. Had Hawkwood previously endowed a chapel or altar there or was this something his father or brother John had done? Gilbert de Hawkwood certainly had connections with the convent for, although he made conventional arrangements in his will to be buried at Sible Hedingham with prayers for his soul after seven days and thirty days and for the provision of ten shillings for wax, he also made small bequests to the nuns of Hedingham : 'to Agnes Prioress of Hedingham half a mark, and to Sarah formerly Sub-Prioress 3s. and to each of the other nuns for the time being 12d.'<sup>172</sup> The convent chantry may have been founded by John Hawkwood the elder who lived at, and was probably buried, in Gosfield. John the elder was a retainer of the earl of Oxford having his own links with the convent and it is also the case that the convent at Hedingham had the advowson of Gosfield church.

Shortly after Hawkwood's death Richard II had written to the city of Florence requesting that his remains should be returned to England. In their reply of 3 June 1395 the Commune were happy to oblige:

'Most serene and invincible Prince, most reverend Lord and special benefactor : Our devotion can deny nothing to the eminence of your Highness. We will leave nothing undone that is possible to do, that we may fulfil your good pleasure. And therefore,

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<sup>172</sup> B.L.Harl. Ch. 51.D.6. Will of Gilbert de Hawkwood (d.1340).

although we hold that it reflected glory upon us and our people, to keep the ashes and bones of the late great soldier Sir John Haukkodue, who, as commander of our army, fought most gloriously for us, and whom at the public expense we interred honourably in the principal church in our city, nevertheless according to the tenor of your request, we freely concede permission that his remains shall return to his native land'.<sup>173</sup>

We do not know whether Richard II wrote to the Commune on his own behalf but he was, as Nigel Saul argues, prone to gather the bones of those who had distinguished themselves in royal service for burial in Westminster Abbey.<sup>174</sup> Richard was undoubtedly aware of Hawkwood's reputation and fame and he had been of use to the Crown on a number of occasions, particularly in the field of diplomacy. He probably knew that Hawkwood had been knighted in his grandfather's time and many years later had been granted a general pardon 'at the special asking of the nobles, magnates and commonalty of the realm, and for good services rendered in the king's wars of France and elsewhere'.<sup>175</sup> No doubt the Commune was happy to comply for not only did it improve Anglo-Florentine relations but it removed the necessity to provide a large and expensive memorial to Hawkwood in the Duomo.

Although it is known that Hawkwood's tomb in the Duomo was opened shortly afterwards, there is no evidence that Hawkwood's body was ever brought back to

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<sup>173</sup> Temple-Leader and Marcotti, Hawkwood pp.293-294.

<sup>174</sup> N.Saul, 'The fragments of the Golafre brass in Westminster Abbey' Trans.M.B.S. 15 (1992), pp.19-32.

<sup>175</sup> Cal.Pat.Rolls 1374-1377 p.435.

England, nor that it was interred in the Sible Hedingham tomb.<sup>176</sup> Obviously from the family's point of view Sible Hedingham would have been the most appropriate burial place for Hawkwood possibly beside his father's burial place but it cannot be ruled out that he was buried elsewhere, either in Gosfield or even in London if Richard II expressed such a wish.

Lady Hawkwood seems to have come to England, probably for the first time and perhaps accompanied by one or more of her children, for she made what appears to have been a plea in person to Richard Whittington Lord Mayor of London on the 24 February 1398 (four years after Sir John's death). Her plea claimed redress for the fact that her husband's feoffees were detaining the land purchased for his use, and were also detaining other goods and chattels, and furthermore that they had not rendered accounts. An inquisition was held in London on 11 April 1398 but its non-committal findings could have been of little comfort to Lady Hawkwood.<sup>177</sup> It is possible that she stayed with her husband's son-in-law the influential Essex knight Sir William Coggeshall who had a London house as well as numerous manors in Essex. Whether Lady Hawkwood remained in England we do not know; neither is it known whether she remarried. It is clear that by 1409 her son John Hawkwood junior was in possession of the properties in which she had a life interest so we may presume that she was dead or had remarried by that date.<sup>178</sup> It is possible that it was Lady Hawkwood who brought

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<sup>176</sup> Dr Eve Borsook of the Harvard University Centre of Italian Renaissance Studies, Florence, kindly sent me a reference to masons opening Hawkwood's tomb in May 1394 (two month after his death), G.Poggi, *Il Duomo di Firenze* (1988), p.124. see also E.Borsook *The Mural Painters of Tuscany* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn. 1980), pp.74-79 for an account of Paolo Uccello's painting of Sir John Hawkwood.

<sup>177</sup> Thomas, *Pleas and Memoranda 1381-1412*, pp.257-258.

<sup>178</sup> A deed of 1409 in the possession of C.F.D.Sperling in 1898 shows that the Hawkwood patrimony had been vested in trustees (including Sir William Coggeshall) on behalf of John Hawkwood junior. See C.F.D.Sperling 'Hawkwood Family' *T.E.A.S.* n.s. 6 (1898), pp.174-175.



the remains of her husband to England; if it was not her then the task could have been entrusted to a priest or perhaps a merchant in the Anglo-Florentine trade.

In 1406 John Hawkwood junior, born in Italy, was granted denization on payment of a fee of forty shillings and in 1409, with John junior resident in England a series of transactions occurred in connection with his father's English property.<sup>179</sup> It will be recalled that in 1393 Hawkwood required that his English property should be sold if he died abroad but it was on 16 February 1409 (fifteen years after Hawkwood's death) that Robert Riketon his principal trustee (Thomas Coggeshall having died in 1402) sold the Leadenhall to Richard Whittington and others for £566 13s. 4d. who sold it a year later to the Mayor and Commonalty – who still possess it.<sup>180</sup>

Later in the year Riketon quitclaimed the Hawkwood estate to John junior and property was settled on him in similar terms to those contained in the 1393 indenture between Thomas Coggeshall and John Sampson. By the close of 1408 John junior seems to have been in full possession of his inheritance and had reached his majority.<sup>181</sup> Nothing more is known about him except that he was taxed in 1412 on land in Gosfield, Sible Hedingham, Toppesfield and Havering with an annual income from it of fifty pounds declared for tax purposes.<sup>182</sup> At this point John junior disappears from history and it is probable that he died in 1412 or soon after; the Hawkwood property would then have passed into other hands, either by descent or by purchase. The identity

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<sup>179</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1405-1408, p.276.

<sup>180</sup> London Topographical Record 13 (1923), pp.1-5.

<sup>181</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1405-1409 p.523. The John Hawkwood who witnessed a Kelvedon deed in 1391 with Sir William Coggeshall was probably Sir John Hawkwood's son. ERO D/DB 61/194.

<sup>182</sup> Feudal Aids 6 pp.433-447.

of John junior's heir has yet to be established but there is no indication that he married or that his sisters in Italy inherited the Hawkwood patrimony.

In 1412 Robert Riketon carried out his final duty as trustee for Sir John Hawkwood by obeying the instructions contained in the 1393 indenture.<sup>183</sup> Together with his son Robert junior and John Coo he obtained a licence for a fee of twenty pounds from the king dated 12 October 1412 to found a chantry with one chaplain in Sible Hedingham parish church and another chantry with one priest in the nun's priory of Castle Hedingham. The two clerics were to celebrate divine service daily in both locations for the souls of Sir John Hawkwood, John Oliver esquire and Thomas Newenton esquire. In order to endow the two chantries and perhaps provide appropriate furnishings including a tomb at Sible Hedingham, a substantial amount of property was granted in mortmain to the two cantarists and comprised a total of four messuages, four tofts, 420 acres of land, 13 acres of meadow, 20 acres of pasture, 4 acres of wood, 22 acres of alder and twelve shillings rent in Sible Hedingham, Castle Hedingham, Gosfield, Maplestead, Great Yeldham, Little Yeldham and Toppesfield. However, without the actual foundation deed (this is not included in the bishop of London's register) it is not possible to say precisely what the founder's intentions may have been. It is likely that the property was amortised with the remainder of the Hawkwood patrimony formerly held by John junior who seems to have died in 1412.<sup>184</sup>

Although there is substantial evidence still in the parish church of Sible Hedingham of the Hawkwood chantry there is nothing left of the other chantry at Castle

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<sup>183</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1408-1413, p.452.

<sup>184</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1408-1413, p.452

Hedingham. When the convent was dissolved in 1536 an inventory of its goods in various chambers and buildings was prepared and it showed the value of the convent's property at a mere £21. 14s. 7d. Some 71oz. of plate, part of which may have belonged to the Hawkwood chantry, was valued at £13 10s. 6d.<sup>185</sup> The chantry house where the priest lived was described by Morant as 'standing at the end of the town, by the right hand side of the road leading to Sudbury till 1676, when it was pulled down, and set up again for a farm-house upon some land belonging to late dissolved Nunnery'.<sup>186</sup>

Of the parties to the foundation, Robert Rikedon junior was also a lawyer and probably acted in partnership with his father. John Coe, the third co-founder of the chantries may be the John Coe who held arable and pasture in Gestingthorpe of Lady Swinburne.<sup>187</sup> Possibly the John Coe of Bures St Mary, who appears in the Patent Rolls on 2 May 1422 regarding a debt due to him is the same man.<sup>188</sup> Morant lists Coe's as one of the estates of 'significancy' in Bures in his day.<sup>189</sup>

The name of the rector of St Peter's church Sible Hedingham in 1412 is not known but it is likely to have been Robert Banbury who was appointed to the living in 1387 (during Sir John Hawkwood's lifetime) under the patronage of the Bourghier family.<sup>190</sup> He is probably identical with Robert, parson of Sible Hedingham, who as feoffee for the Bourghier family was party to a charter dated at Great Totham, on 26 May 1409 granting a life interest in a number of manors and other property to Idonea,

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<sup>185</sup> R.C.Fowler, 'Inventories of Essex monasteries in 1536' *T.E.A.S.* 9 n.s. (1906), pp.280-292: *V.C.H.* 2 (1907), p.122.

<sup>186</sup> Morant, *History of Essex* 2, p.298.

<sup>187</sup> Morant, *History of Essex* 2, p.307.

<sup>188</sup> *Cal.Pat.Rolls* 1416-1422 p.428.

<sup>189</sup> Morant, *History of Essex* 2, p.226.

<sup>190</sup> R.Newcourt, *Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londinense* 2, (1910), pp.322-324.

wife of Bartholomew Bourgchier, who died on 12 September 1409.<sup>191</sup> It is not known when Banbury was succeeded at Sible Hedingham, the next known rector being John Dyggon who resigned in 1433.<sup>192</sup>

The stated purpose of the chantries in Sible Hedingham parish church and in the Castle Hedingham nunnery (it was relatively rare for two chantries to be set up simultaneously, though in this case it appears that there was already a Hawkwood chantry to be augmented at Castle Hedingham) was for the two chaplains to: 'celebrate divine service' daily for the souls of Sir John Hawkwood, John Oliver esquire and Thomas Newenton esquire. Without the foundation deed it is not clear whether this was the full list of people to be prayed for – it seems likely that many more would have been included in the cantor's daily prayers, most particularly Sir John Hawkwood's closest relatives.<sup>193</sup> John Oliver and Thomas Newenton (Newton), the so-called military companions of Sir John Hawkwood have not been satisfactorily identified. However, at Stanway near Colchester, John Oliver held the manor of Olivers at his death in 1338; his son John was the father of Joan Oliver who married William Doreward of Bocking, – whose son John came to own much of the Hawkwood patrimony, probably by purchase. Morant describes another property known as Olivers as 'an ancient capital messuage' in Toppesfield and that 'John Oliver purchased an estate of John de Radclifden about 1360, which is supposed to have been this. He was one of Sir John Hawkwood's Esquires, companions and fellow warriors'.<sup>194</sup> The Essex fines show two,

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<sup>191</sup> *Cal.I.P.M.* p.263-264.

<sup>192</sup> Newcourt, *Repertorium*, 2 pp.322-324.

<sup>193</sup> *Cal.Pat.Rolls* 1408-1413 p.452.

<sup>194</sup> Morant, *History of Essex* 2, p.362.

possibly three, John Olivers active in the Essex land market between 1349 and 1383 but there is no indication that they were in any way associated with Hawkwood.<sup>195</sup>

Robert Rikedon (and his father John Rikedon before him) had previously been party to a number of chantry foundations.<sup>196</sup> In 1380 Robert Rikedon obtained a licence to alienate land for this purpose to the abbot of Coggeshall, in 1392 to the abbot of Beeleigh and also to a chaplain at Great Baddow, and in 1408 to the abbot of Coggeshall again.<sup>197</sup> It seems that Rikedon had no personal interest in the chantries other than his lawyer's fee for obtaining the necessary licence on behalf of the founders. In 1397 however, he obtained a licence together with Thomas Bircheleigh (another lawyer) to found a chantry for themselves, Joan countess of Hereford, Essex and Northampton, the vicar of Witham and eighteen others.<sup>198</sup> Details of the foundation are in Bishop Braybrooke's register and they shed considerable light on the arrangements subsequently made at Sible Hedingham for Sir John Hawkwood. The chantry was founded in Witham church (Rikedon's manor was at nearby Powers Hall) and the north chapel of the church appears to have been its location. Amongst those for whom masses were to be said daily were Sir John's brother, John Hawkwood the elder and his wife Margaret.<sup>199</sup> It is not known who employed Rikedon in 1397 to arrange for prayers to be said for Hawkwood's brother who died c.1385.

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<sup>195</sup> *Essex Fines* 3, pp.136 and 198.

<sup>196</sup> *Cal.Pat.Rolls* 1377-1381, pp.27 and 482.

<sup>197</sup> *Cal.Pat.Rolls* 1391-1396, pp.129 and 130, and 1405-1408, p.389.

<sup>198</sup> *Cal.Pat.Rolls* 1396-1399, p.163.

<sup>199</sup> H.J.Rowles, 'The Rikedon Chantry' *Essex Review* 155 (1930), p.72.

It is possible that the Witham chantry was the forerunner, as far as Rikedon was concerned, of the Hawkwood chantry and that the foundation of the latter was on similar lines. At Witham: 'the duties of the cantarist are laid down with great precision, and he is to be bound under oath to keep residence and to accept no other paid employment. In addition to himself saying a daily requiem mass (no variations are specified) with the Placebo, Dirige and seven penitential psalms, he is to answer the vicar of Witham at mass, matins and vespers every day and at other services on feast-days. As well as fulfilling his religious duties (which must have taken up a considerable part of each day) he is burdened with the duty of acting as rent-collector for a considerable estate (except in so far as he farmed it himself)...From the income thus obtained he must keep his chantry and its furnishings in repair, maintain a light before the altar of Our Lady. The cantarist was to have board and lodging with Thomas Bircheleigh during Bircheleigh's life together with four marks salary per annum. On Bircheleigh's death the cantarist or his successor was to enjoy the income from the chantry estate.' The founders were to have the right of presentation to the advowson and this arrangement may have pertained at Sible Hedingham. It is known however, that the advowson of the chantry was held by John Helion on his death in 1450.<sup>200</sup>

The Hawkwood chantry was founded on 2 May in the same year as the Bourghier chantry at nearby Halstead for which Robert Rikedon again took out a licence together with local lawyers Richard Waltham and Thomas Rolf.<sup>201</sup> The licence, which cost one hundred marks, *i.e.* £66 13s. 8d., compared with the twenty pounds spent on the licence

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<sup>200</sup> Rowles, 'Rikedon Chantry' p.72. For an insight into the complexities of chantry foundations see R.Hill, ' "A Chaunterie for Soules": London chantries in the reign of Richard II' in F.R.H.Du Boulay and C.M.Barron eds, The Reign of Richard II (1971), pp.242-255.

<sup>201</sup> D.W.Clark, 'The college of Halstead or Bourchier's chantry T.E.A.S. 14 n.s. (1918), pp.311-337.

for the Hawkwood chantry, and included a grant in mortmain of not only more than 850 acres of land, meadow pasture and wood, together with the advowson of Sible Hedingham church but also the appropriation of the parish church in mortmain, provided that a vicarage was endowed. This in fact never happened and Sible Hedingham remained a rectory. Coincidentally perhaps, the Hawkwoods were distant kin of the Bourghier family (through Sir John's son-in-law Sir William Coggeshall) and they were the Bourghier's tenants at Sible Hedingham. Thomas Newenton (or Newton) is much harder to identify than John Oliver. He may be the individual named by Morant as holding the manor of Sandon c.1393 where he was succeeded by Thomas Coggeshall, kinsman and feoffee of Sir John Hawkwood.<sup>202</sup>

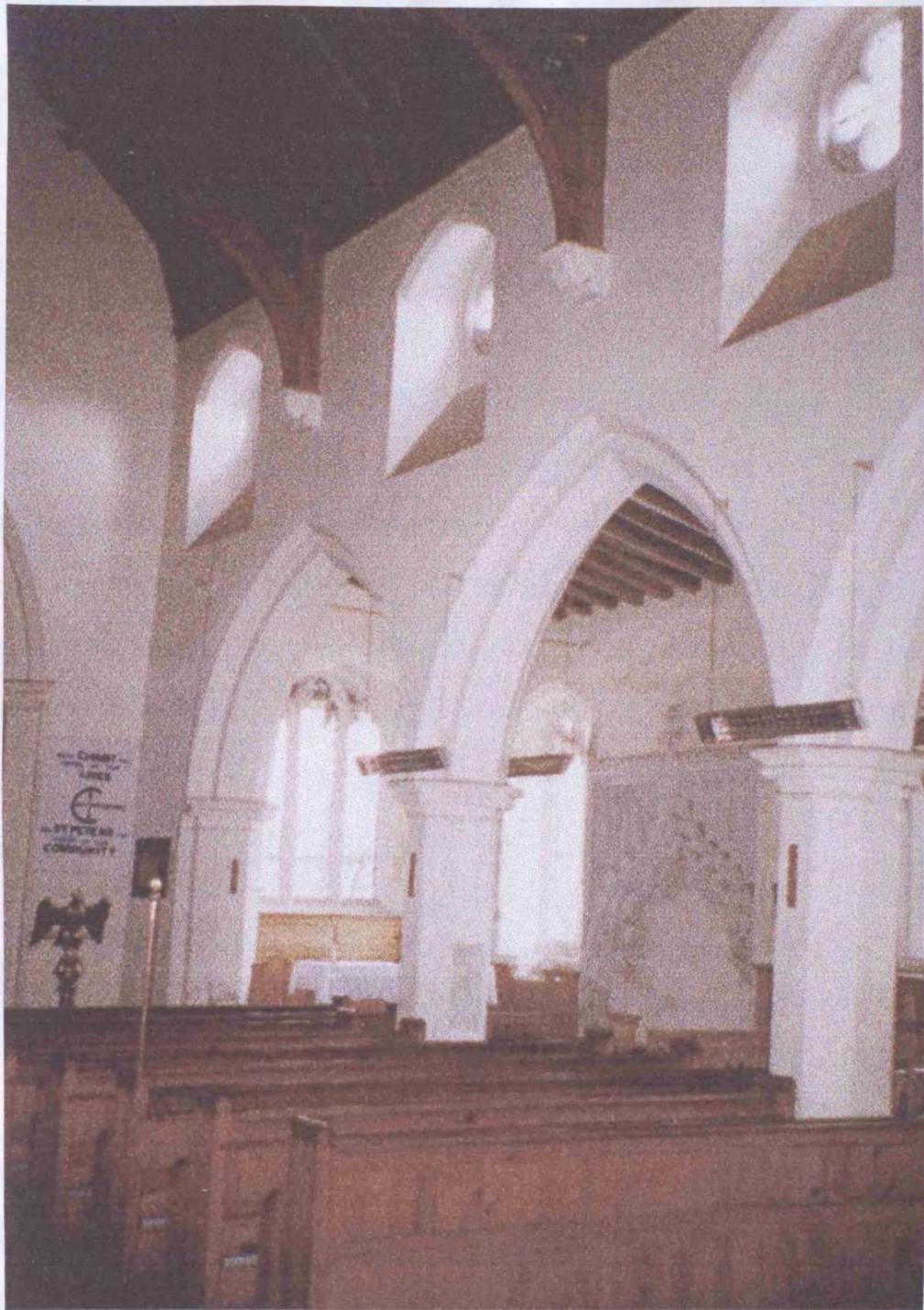
Focussing now on the monument, the Hawkwood tomb is a major feature of the south aisle of Sible Hedingham church and it occupies a prominent position in the south wall between two window openings. (Plate 5.20) According to the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments the south aisle was built c.1350, some ten years after the chancel, north vestry and west tower and about twenty years before the north aisle.<sup>203</sup> The construction of the south aisle (and other parts of the church) may have been financed by the Bourghier family who were patrons of the living. It is also possible that the south aisle was financed by the Hawkwoods or one of the other gentry families in the parish. Armorial glass once in the windows of the south aisle suggests a Bourghier connection but it might have been placed there by a family wishing to

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<sup>202</sup> Morant, *History of Essex* 2, p.26.

<sup>203</sup> *R.C.H.M. Essex* 1, pp.266-268.





**PLATE 5.20 SOUTH AISLE : SIBLE HEDINGHAM**



compliment them.<sup>204</sup> The entire church was thoroughly restored in the nineteenth century and this meant the loss of many valuable medieval features.<sup>205</sup>

The south aisle is lit by four windows; sunk in the part of the sill of the second window from the east is a piscina with a quatrefoil drain – undoubtedly marking the position of a now vanished altar. It appears to be of the late fourteenth century and may therefore be associated with the Hawkwood chantry. Sir Stephen Glynne who saw it c.1867 described it as: ‘a rude piscina scooped in the window sill’.<sup>206</sup> It is not clear how much of the aisle would have been occupied by the chantry or what arrangements would have been made by the cantor to come to terms with the parish priest regarding their respective duties, some of which may have been shared. It is likely that the aisle was used by other contemporary gentry families as a burial place – but there is no surviving evidence. Two of the church bells may date from the foundation of the chantry, one is from the Wokingham foundry dated c.1400 with the inscription ‘*Ave Maria*’ and the other is by John Danyell c.1420 inscribed ‘*Sancta Katerina ora pro nobis*’.<sup>207</sup>

In the addition to the tomb, piscina and stained glass which survive as components of the Hawkwood chantry chapel, there are several other objects associated with it. A slip decorated tile showing a hawk has been kept for many years in a drawer in the church; its provenance is unknown but the hawk design suggests that it came from the

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<sup>204</sup> College of Arms, Symonds MS Essex 2, f.605 r. dated 13 April 1637.

<sup>205</sup> G.Worley, *Essex. A Dictionary of the County Mainly Ecclesiological* (1915), pp.152-153.

<sup>206</sup> ERO T/A 641/2. Church notes of Sir Stephen Glynne.

<sup>207</sup> C.Deedes and H.Walters, *The Church Bells of Essex: their Founders, Inscriptions, Traditions and Use*. (1909).

floor of the Hawkwood chapel. At some remote date in the past the outline of a hawk was scratched on one of the arcade piers opposite the Hawkwood monument. The surviving architectural evidence indicates that the aisle dates from c.1350, that the piscina was added forty years later and that some time between 1390 and 1420 the Hawkwood tomb was completed. This could have been done long before the licence to found a chantry was obtained, possibly in anticipation of the return of Hawkwood's remains to England.

The earliest writers to mention the tomb – Stowe, Weever and Fuller – have left us descriptions that are tantalisingly vague.<sup>208</sup> Weever appears never to have visited Sible Hedingham for he confidently described the tomb as no longer extant : 'In this parish church sometime stood a tomb, arched over, and engraved to the likeness of hawks flying in a wood, which was raised to the remembrance of Sir John Hawkewood knight', furthermore he describes Hawkwood's tomb in Italy (long vanished by Weever's time) as 'a sumptuous monument, wherein his ashes remain honoured at the present day'.<sup>209</sup> Thus, ludicrously, he refers to the existing English tomb as vanished and to the destroyed Italian tomb as extant. Furthermore, he believes Hawkwood's remains still to be buried abroad. Finally, Weever describes, on what basis we do not know, John Oliver and Thomas Newenton esquires as Hawkwood's military companions.

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<sup>208</sup> J.Stowe, The Annales of England (1605), p.498 describes the Hawkwood tomb at Sible Hedingham as 'a Monument, or Tombe arched over, and ingraven to the likenesse of Haukes flying in a woode'.

<sup>209</sup> J.Weever, Ancient Funerall Monuments (1631: 1767 edn), p.382.

Thomas Fuller, who died in 1661, acknowledges his debt to Weever and describes the Hawkwood tomb relying heavily on Weever's account. 'Great the gratitude of the State of Florence to this their general Hawkwood, who in testimony of his surpassing valour and singular faithful service to their state, adorned him with the statue of a man in armour, and sumptuous monument, wherein his ashes remain honoured at the present day. Well it is that monument doth remain: seeing his cenotaph, or honorary tomb, which sometimes [*sic*] stood in the parish church of Sible Heningham (arched over, and, in allusion to his name berebussed with hawks flying into a wood), it is now quite flown away and abolished'. His rather fanciful description would undoubtedly have been more accurate had Fuller visited the church.<sup>210</sup>

An early observer of the tomb in situ was William Holman, the Essex clergyman and antiquary who died in 1730. His manuscript notes concerning the parish of Sible Hedingham provide some crucial information about the tomb as it was before being covered in paint.<sup>211</sup> 'In the wall of the South Isle is erected an Arched Monument of Stone to the memorie of Sr John Hawkwood embellished with woodbine Leaves Several Hawks, the wild Boare, Hare, Pelican and other inhabitants of the wood, in Allusion to his name. Within the Arch on the wall in colours are the Pourtraichures of Sr John Hawkwood, and two women (his 2 wives if Tradition may be regarded) standing in a devout posture, their Hands lifted up & conjoynd with Sentences in Latin issuing out of their mouths, and going in Labels over their Heads in the Gothick character : vizc. over his Head vere fili Dei misere mei, over the 1<sup>st</sup> women [*sic*] a ter Dei mometo mei & over the last a ter xi mometo mei''. This unusual arrangement is

<sup>210</sup> T. Fuller, Worthies of Essex 1. (1840 edn) p.513.

<sup>211</sup> ERO Holman MS T/P 195/2.

unique in Essex – it is particularly significant that Holman is describing a wall painting ‘in colours’ rather than a more commonplace monumental brass on a tomb slab. In the same manuscript he writes: ‘from the Effigies on his monument in this Church it should seem if he had 2 wives’. This suggests that there were brasses as well as a ‘Pourtraichures’.

Holman goes on to describe the: ‘bottom of the monument where there are severall escutcheons in stone with the Arms of his military companions depicted on them: but so defaced by time yt they are not discernible enough to distinguish wt they are’. Holman also recorded some stained glass which remained in the windows of the aisles, apparently of similar date to the tomb : ‘In the middle window of the South Isle remains yet part of an Escoccheon of Sr John Hawkwood wch was lately entire Diaper vert or of quaterfoils, on a Chev[ron]: sable 3 escallops arg[ent] in the Dexter Angle an Hawk proper percht on a Branch or’.<sup>212</sup> Holman quotes the manuscript notes of Richard Symonds who refers to stained glass escutcheons of the de Vere, Hawkwood and Burgate families in the ‘Lower south window of the South Isle’.<sup>213</sup> Symonds visited the church on 13 April 1637 and having seen the Hawkwood tomb wrote as follows: ‘Upon the south yle Wall of this Church is the remaynders of an Ancient Monument upon the top of the Arch there is a Falcon..... The p[ar]ishoners say it was for one of the Hawkewoods who it is said built this Church.’<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> ERO Holman MS T/P 195/12.

<sup>213</sup> ERO Holman MS T/P 195/12.

<sup>214</sup> College of Arms Symonds MS Essex, 2, f.605.

Philip Morant who based his account of Sible Hedingham church on Holman's notes, alludes to the effigies but he appears to be plagiarising Holman rather than giving his own direct observations about the tomb : 'his friends and executors erected for him an honorary cenotaph in the Church of this parish, and founded a Chantry. From the effigies on this monument it should seem that he had two wives'. Are the 'effigies' which Morant describes wall paintings or monumental brasses on the tomb slab? It is unhelpful that Morant does not describe the Hawkwood monument more carefully for he gives us an account of the church which, in comparison with his descriptions of about four hundred other Essex churches, is quite detailed : 'from several Hawks carved in stone in divers parts of the Church and tower, it is concluded, that this Church was built in the time, or at the charge, of the Hawkwood family: about the reign of K.Edward III. The old Church that stood there before, was much less, as hath appeared by the foundations that have been discovered'.<sup>215</sup>

The author of 'Memoirs of Sir John Hawkwood' published in 1782 appears to have seen the tomb for himself.<sup>216</sup> He berates Fuller, for in his opinion he: 'never took any pains to visit or procure true information about this monument, which still remains in good preservation near the upper end of the south isle of Sible Hedingham church'. Now we are given the first detailed description of the tomb: 'the arch of the tomb is of the mixt kind, terminating in a sort of bouquet, on both sides of which over the arch are smaller arches of tracery in relief. The arch is adorned with hawks and their bells, and

<sup>215</sup> Morant, *History of Essex* 2, pp.288-290.

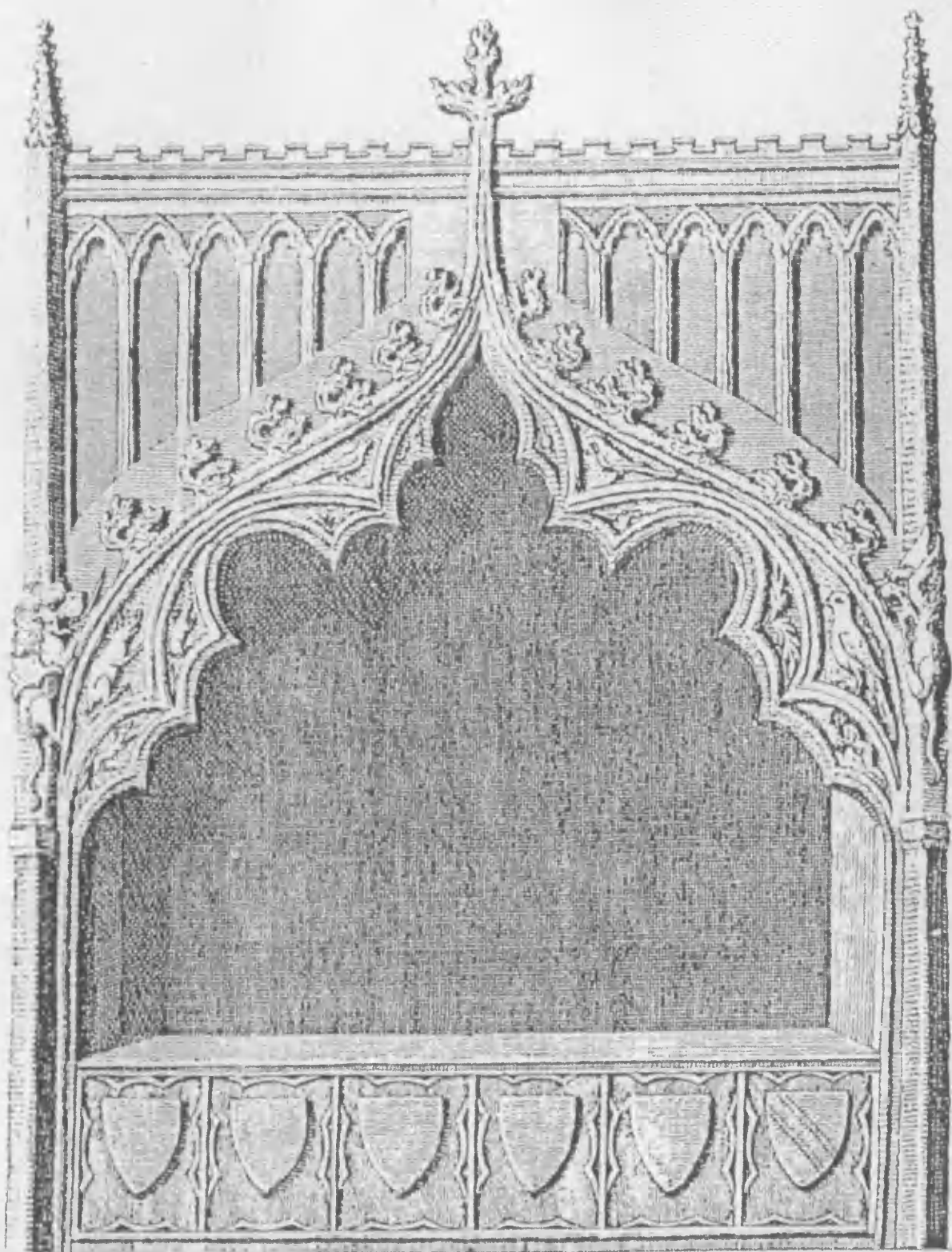
<sup>216</sup> R.Gough, 'Memoirs of Sir John Hawkwood' *Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica* 4 (1782), pp.1-47. Richard Gough had taken the Revd. Philip Morant to task for not doing more fieldwork in the preparation of his monumental history of the county and the course of their disagreement is charted in W.R.Powell, 'Antiquaries in conflict: Philip Morant versus Richard Gough' *E.A.H.* 20 (1989), pp.143-146. With Morant in mind, Gough had written: 'Recluse and sedentary antiquarians find it much easier to arrange materials put into their hands than to ramble about the country and examine every remain of antiquity.'

other emblems of hunting, as a hare, a boar, a boy sounding a conchshell, &c. The two pillars that support it are charged with a dragon and lion. Under this arch is a low altar tomb with five [*sic*] shields in quatrefoils, formerly painted. One of them seems to have been charged with a *bend cotized*. On the slab, which is of grey marble, are some imperfect traces of figures inlaid in brass : but not enough to support Mr Morant's assertion, that "from the effigies on this monument it should seem he had two wives". Within the arch were some lines painted on the wall by way of epitaph, but they have been whited over, and are not preserved in any author'. Clearly he had not seen Holman's notes and was presumably reporting an oral tradition.

Combined with the 'Memoirs' is a print showing the tomb 'from a drawing taken on the spot in 1775 by the late ingenious Mr Tyson' (Plate 5.21). This print is quite accurate and it clearly shows the shield with its 'bend cotized'. These could be the arms of the Prayors family who held the eponymous manor in Sible Hedingham, but it is not known whether Hawkwood had any connection with that family. The author of the 'Memoirs' goes on to give more evidence of Hawkwood's connection with the church : 'in a south window of the chantry chapel at the east end of this isle, are painted hawks, hawks bells, and escallops, which last are part of the Hawkwood arms, as the first were probably the crest as well as a rebus of the name; and we find a hawk volant on Sir John's seal. In the north and west side of the tower are two very neat hawks on perches in relief, in roundeaux hallowed [*sic*] in the wall : that over the west door is extremely well preserved'.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Gough, 'Memories of Sir John Hawkwood' p.31.



*The Monument of* SIR JOHN HAWKWOOD  
AT SIBLE HEDINGHAM ESSEX

PLATE 5.21 HAWKWOOD TOMB (AFTER TYSON) : SIBLE HEDINGHAM

On 14 November 1835 the *Mirror* published a small sketch of the Hawkwood monument by 'C.A.' who supplied the following description : 'it is a long, low altar tomb, having in front six quatrefoil divisions, each charged with a shield, over this is a beautiful ogee arch, ornamented with tracery and supported by corbels, that on the dexter side representing a cockatrice, and that on the sinister side a lion rampant, above this are twelve long narrow arches with trefoil heads, the whole being mounted with an embattled cornice. The tomb is supported on each side with a slender buttress, finished with a crocketed pinnacle'.<sup>218</sup> D.W.Coller, wrote the following in 1861: 'a fragment of the superb arch of this monument may still be seen on the wall of the south aisle of the church, but the monument itself, and the inscription which it bore, were ruthlessly destroyed nearly a century ago, in ungrateful forgetfulness of those by whose pious munificence this handsome place of public worship was raised.'<sup>219</sup>

The next known visitor to record the tomb was the Revd. David Powell (d.1848) who, despite having made exquisite sketches of the tombs at Shalford and Halstead, made only a brief undated note of his visit to Sible Hedingham. 'The church is at the very end of the town a greatway & near Castle Hedingham within I saw nothing worth notice but a tomb of Sir John Hawkwood in the wall of the isle of the kind with 3 foils in canopy & a hawk in its spandrels – which hawk is also on the tower. I was almost inclined to think it belonged to some more ancient period for certes it is very old'.<sup>220</sup>

<sup>218</sup> *Notes and Queries* 9<sup>th</sup> ser, 10 (1902), p.50.

<sup>219</sup> D.W.Coller, *The People's History of Essex* (1861), p.429.

<sup>220</sup> BL Add. MS 17460 f.152 Powell.



The architect Frederick Chancellor visited the church in the late nineteenth century and wrote the following description: 'the monument is of stone of the late Decorated period, the carving is bold and spirited. In the four large spandrils in tracery are carved a Boar in foliage, (in allusion to his friend De Vere), a hawk, belled, in foliage (a punning allusion to his name), a pelican feeding her young, and another bird, probably intended for a hawk in foliage; there is something attached to one leg, but it is not so distinctly a hawk bell as in the other spandril. In the small spandrils are a wild animal with long head and long thick tail (perhaps a fox in allusion to his craftiness), a coney and a figure blowing horn, a wild naked man and foliage, and in one is a small implement like a cruet, perhaps intended to represent something in connection with hawks. The foliage is very decorated in character, and the crockets and finials are very spirited and good'. Chancellor also refers to the absence of an inscription and brasses and says 'the whole is now covered with a thick coat of light blue distemper'.<sup>221</sup> Traces of this paint are still visible, particularly at the base of the tomb.

At about the time Chancellor was writing, the Hawkwood tomb was enclosed with panelling so as to make a large box pew. It is not clear how long the pew existed as it does not figure in any published or unpublished account of the church. The evidence for the pew is an undated but c.1920 photograph in the collection of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments that clearly shows the tomb in use as a pew. The wall at the back of the tomb was partially covered by a wainscot panel and there are a number of dowel holes in the wall which show where the panel was attached. The R.C.H.M.

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<sup>221</sup> F.Chancellor, Ancient Sepulchral Monuments of Essex (1890), pp.123-128.

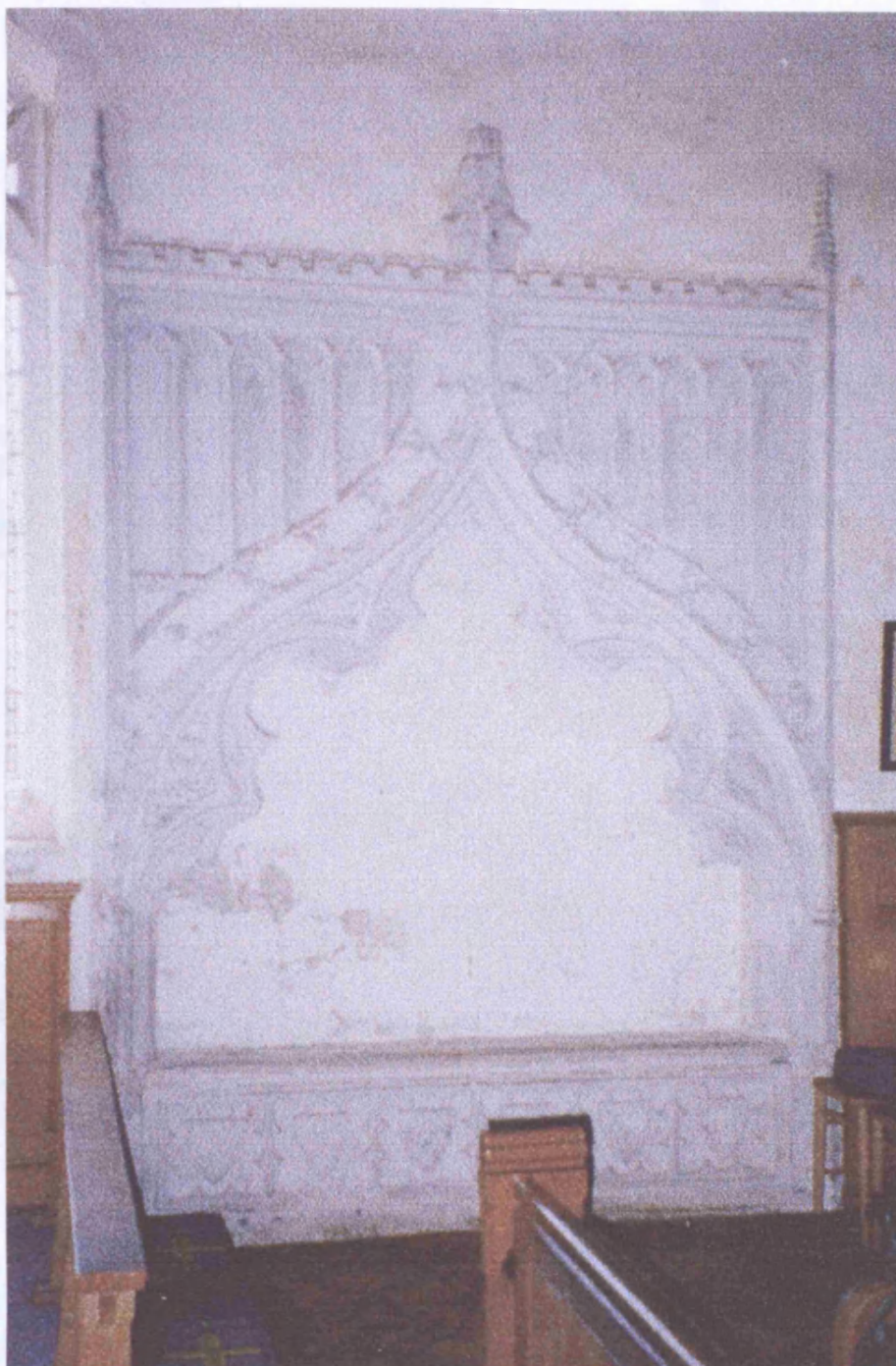
with a hawk, boar, pelican, and hunting figures, pinnacles at sides and embattled cornice with cinquefoil panels on face of wall below, base with square cusped panels in front, each with a blank shield'.<sup>222</sup>

Today the Hawkwood monument in Sible Hedingham church comprises a tomb chest spanned by an ogee arch (Plate 5.22).<sup>223</sup> The surface of the stonework is generally well preserved but there are numerous graffiti and traces of medieval polychrome and blue paint, as well as a number of indentations of unknown origin or use. The arch over the tomb recess terminates in a large finial, is crocketed on the outer surface, and has cinquefoil cusping and sub-cusping on the inner surface. The cusping produces four large spandrels and eight smaller ones, each of which contains a carving. In the four large spandrels are (clockwise) a boar, a belled hawk, (Plate 5.23) a pelican in her piety, a hawk with no bell. In the eight smaller spandrels are (clockwise) a fox (or hound), a hare, a flower, foliage, a cruet, foliage, foliage, a male figure blowing a horn. The arch has panelled shafts either side and between the pillar and shaft are a lion (on the east) and a dragon (on the west). Between the finials of the pillars is an embattled cornice which has five and a half cinquefoiled panels beneath on either side. Under the arch of the tomb recess is a low altar tomb covered by a grey marble slab. The side of the tomb had six cusped panels each containing a blank shield.

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<sup>222</sup> R.C.H.M. Essex 1, p.268.

<sup>223</sup> I am most grateful to Dr David Andrews of Essex County Council and Mr David Park of the Courtauld Institute for the opportunity to discuss the Hawkwood monument.



**PLATE 5.22 HAWKWOOD TOMB : SIBLE HEDINGHAM**



**PLATE 5.23 HAWKWOOD TOMB (DETAIL) : SIBLE HEDINGHAM**

As has been said, the tomb bears the marks of having been used as a pew, not only are there dowel holes and rivets in the wall but also a number of graffiti on the tomb slab which may date from its use as a pew. A number of these graffiti are very deeply scored and they include rectangles, a pentacle and a cross. Below the row of six shields on the tomb chest is a brick-sized mortise recess cut in the stone just to west of centre. This may be associated with the structure of the pew. Although the monument is no longer used as a seat it was used in 1993 as a Christmas crib. The front edge of the slab contains several rivets that may have been for an inscription plate. There are no apparent indents for monumental brasses on the surface of the slab. Below the feet of the belled hawk a round hole has been drilled to a depth of several inches. The remains of a metal bar can be seen at the bottom of the hole. It may have been a slot for a banner stave; there is no corresponding hole on the west side.

There are in Essex some twenty-four fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century tomb recesses but they await a comparative study. Many have a more than superficial resemblance to the Sible Hedingham tomb but documentary evidence is generally poor.

## **CONCLUSION**

This case study draws attention to a monument that has numerous parallels in Essex but is unique in its history and significance, both in an Essex and a European context. Despite its apparent anonymity, the tomb clearly relates to a member of the Hawkwood

family and the balance of available evidence points to it being the cenotaph then the tomb of Sir John Hawkwood the internationally known *condottiere*.

Tombs in Essex such as the Sible Hedingham example are notoriously difficult to date as so many of them were constructed to an anachronistic design, and no longer bear an inscription relating to the person they were intended to commemorate. In this case it is possible, in the light of surviving documentary evidence to reconstruct not only the events leading to the foundation of the chantry and construction of the tomb, but also their subsequent history. Errors perpetuated by a succession of writers in their description of the tomb highlight the value of fieldwork and recording. What also emerges is the long persistence of the tradition that this is Sir John Hawkwood's tomb. Perhaps the most important point that the case study illustrates in relation to the Essex gentry is that a man's faith in his friends could be well placed, even though they were to take twenty years to justify it.

## CHAPTER SIX

### LIFESTYLE – WEALTH AND THE ACCUMULATION OF ESTATES.

#### 6.1 WEALTH AND THE SUBSIDY OF 1412.

Having examined the home and religious life of the gentry in chapter five, this chapter examines their wealth together with the means by which they acquired and were able to sustain their lifestyle. The 1412 subsidy was granted by Parliament halfway through our period and an analysis of the returns provides an indication of the relative wealth of the Essex gentry.<sup>1</sup> Tax lists have previously been used by other historians to determine the wealth and status of medieval county gentry notably Eric Acheson who concentrated on the 1436 income tax for Leicestershire. Nigel Saul used the poll tax of 1379/81 to illustrate the relative economic status of the gentry and sub-gentry in Gloucester and Anthony Gross was able to demonstrate by reference to the 1327 subsidy the social and economic standing of the gentry in fourteenth-century Staffordshire. To illustrate the wealth of the fifteenth-century Nottinghamshire gentry Simon Payling used the 1412 subsidy, 1428 tax on knight's fees and the 1436 income tax.<sup>2</sup> Although it poses as many questions as it answers, the 1412 subsidy assessment for Essex is at least a useful means of identifying the county's higher nobility and

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<sup>1</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1408-1413 pp.378-379; Feudal Aids 1285-1431 6 (1920), pp.433-447.

<sup>2</sup> E. Acheson, A Gentry Community: Leicestershire in the Fifteenth Century c.1422 – c.1485 (1992); N. Saul, Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century (1981); A. Gross, 'Adam Peshale: a study in the gentry society of fourteenth-century Staffordshire' Unpubl. Ph.D. Thesis, University of London (1989) and S. Payling, Political Society in Lancastrian England: The Greater Gentry of Nottinghamshire (1991).

leading gentry both resident and non-resident at approximately the mid-point in our period 1381-1450.

The subsidy of 1412 required that anyone holding land (principally manors) or rents to the value of twenty pounds per annum had to pay a tax at the rate of 6s.8d. and a further 6s.8d. for each successive twenty pounds in value. It is not clear, however, what 'value' meant; the most likely explanation is that it represented a notional annual income from property including rents; M.J.Stanley argued that 'they were based on general assessments of wealth'<sup>3</sup> The tax also appears to have been self-assessed in view of apparent low values and non-disclosure. The total value assessed for Essex, that is for individuals holding at least twenty pounds in land or rent with a few exceptions was £6,820 and the total subsidy collected was £114-13-4 representing three hundred and forty-four units of property.<sup>4</sup> Two hundred and sixteen individuals and a small number of feoffees are enumerated, and the extent to which this list provides details of the Essex gentry will now be examined and comparisons made with similar lists, including the Peace Oath of 1434, and the income tax of 1436.

The return for Essex in 1412 was made by Sir Robert Lutton (or Litton), William Hanningfield, John Barrington of Hatfield Broad Oak, Thomas Toppesfield, Thomas Fraunceys and John Rasch, escheator for Essex and Hertfordshire that year. The original commission for the subsidy was by letters patent dated at Westminster on 2 January 1412 and had listed Richard Baynard (the prominent lawyer who was escheator

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<sup>3</sup> M.J.Stanley 'Medieval tax returns as source material' in T.R.Slater and P.J.Jarvis eds, Field and Forest: A Historical Geography of Warwickshire and Worcestershire (1982), pp.231-256.

<sup>4</sup> This compares with the £1,234 14s 7 3/4d. collected from the 1334 Subsidy. R.E.Glasscock ed., The Lay Subsidy of 1334 (1975).



in 1399 and 1423, JP between 1407 and 1433 and MP six times between 1406 and 1433 having been Speaker in 1412) but he is not named on the certified return to the exchequer or, incidentally, although a rich man, taxed for the subsidy – one of a number of gentry who either avoided or evaded the tax. Another omission from the return – though he did pay tax – is Sir William Coggeshall the notable soldier who was sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire for the third time in 1412, twelve times MP between 1396 and 1422 and JP between 1381 and 1426 who is also listed in the original commission and whose land in Essex and Cambridgeshire was assessed at the considerable sum of one hundred and twenty-six pounds.

All the commissioners whose names appear on the final certificate held land in Essex; apparently a qualification for their role as taxers was either holding land directly or as feoffees. Sir Robert Litton of Wennington who heads the list, was MP for Essex in 1404, JP 1401-1406, and commissioner for array in 1403. He held the manor of Wennington with Kennington in Aveley valued at twenty-pounds together with other land in Berners Roding and Shellow Bowells valued at twenty-five marks per annum. Sir Robert (d.c.1415) is a rather shadowy figure about whom little else is known but as far as can be ascertained his personal tax return for Essex land is scrupulously accurate.<sup>5</sup> William Hanningfield esquire of East Hanningfield was probably the son of John and Alice Hanningfield and he died in 1426. He appears in the taxation as a feoffee of Robert Tey but he is not shown as a landowner in his own right although he was certainly a manorial lord in Essex.<sup>6</sup> John Barrington of Hatfield Broad Oak who

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<sup>5</sup> For biographical details see J.S.Roskell, L.Clark and C.Rawcliffe eds, The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1386-1421 (1993).

<sup>6</sup> See Roskell, Clark and Rawcliffe, History of Parliament and J.H.Round, (WR Powell ed.,) 'Short studies in topography and family history' E.A.H. 26 (1995), pp.164-168.

died c.1425, was so named to distinguish him from his namesake and kinsman of Rayleigh who died in 1416, was the son of Sir John Barrington and a member of a family with Essex associations stretching back to the twelfth century.<sup>7</sup> John Barrington held land to the value of thirty pounds in High Laver, High Ongar and Hatfield Peverel, but curiously he does not appear to have been taxed in respect of his family's valuable capital manor in Hatfield Broad Oak which would almost certainly have been worth more than twenty pounds per annum. Little is known of Thomas Toppesfield who had served on a single commission as JP in 1397. Despite having the requisite property qualification of twenty pounds in 1397 Toppesfield was not taxed on his Essex land in 1412. Thomas Fraunceys of Colchester (kinsman of the powerful Fraunceys family in London) was the only burgess amongst the commissioners. He held land to the value of thirty pounds in Colchester where only Thomas Godstone was a richer citizen. Thomas Franceys may have been the nephew of Sir Adam Fraunceys, citizen of London, who was sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire in 1392. If the tax commissioners largely failed to tax themselves we must ask how accurate was the self-assessment expected from the gentry.

Listed in the return in order of precedence (with a few exceptions) the Essex gentry of 1412 are placed in their relative order of social importance rather than (necessarily) their relative wealth. Appendix 3 gives the complete list of taxpayers and Tab. 6.1 shows the leading thirty-five gentry in wealth order. A number of individuals have been erroneously assessed on land valued at less than twenty pounds, sometimes as little as five marks; they should have been deleted from the final return but it is not

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<sup>7</sup> P.Morant, The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex (2 vols, 1763-1768 repr. 1978), pp.503-505.

**TABLE 6.1 1412 TAXATION: GENTRY IN ORDER OF WEALTH.**

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	£
John Doreward of Bocking	108
Sir William Coggeshall of Wethersfield	80
Sir John Howard	80
John de Boys	80
William Totham	69
Robert Tey	60
John Hende	55
John Hawkwood	50
Lady Elena Brokhole	40
Lady Joan Swinburne	40
Sir Thomas Swinburne	40
Sir William Marney	40
Alice, widow of Elming Leget	40
William Mounteney	40
John Bardfield	40
John Chamber of Epping	40
Robert Newport	40
John Fitzralf	40
John Godston	40
Maurice Bruyn	40
Robert Knyvet	40
Thomas Godston	40
Philip Inglefield	35
John Bray of Felsted	33
Sir Thomas Sackville	30
Sir Edward Bensted	30
John Walden	30
John Roundell	30
John Helion	30
John Barley	30
Nicholas Berners	30
John Barrington of Hatfield Broad Oak	30
Thomas Heveningham	30
John Doun of Bradwell	30
John Martin	30

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clear why they were not unless it was a simple administrative error. As all land valued at less than twenty pounds per annum is supposed to have been exempt from the tax, the assessment of £6,820 by no means represents the total annual value of Essex land in 1412. The sum assessed merely represents what was probably a low estimate of the total annual value of the richer gentry estates generally, because they could afford them, the most productive manors. It cannot be ascertained from other sources whether all land eligible for the subsidy was included in the list; tax avoidance and tax evasion, by whatever means, seem to be indicated on a significant scale and this is discussed below. The proportion of the total value of all Essex land represented in the subsidy list can only be estimated being probably less than twenty per cent of the whole. Bearing in mind the total number of manorial estates which was about 1400 and the number taxed which was three hundred and forty or twenty-four per cent, the tax seems to have been selective and relatively unproductive, particularly as the manors taxed were the most productive ones. It is also apparent that generally only the richer members of county society were taxed, many others, in most cases the lesser gentry (who in 1412 numbered more than two hundred individuals), holding land valued between about five pounds and twenty pounds per annum but they were not required to pay the subsidy even on a proportional basis (the subsidy of 1428 was collected on knight's fees and proportions of knight's fees). One of the effects of this was that valuable manors worth, or declared to be worth, less than twenty pounds per annum enabled the owners, if they had no other property, entirely to escape taxation. It is not known why the tax was aimed solely at the richer gentry; had the tax been on property valued at ten pounds or more per annum the product would have been very significantly higher, at least double

what was collected. Similarly, had tax evasion and tax avoidance been countered more rigorously the revenue would have increased accordingly.

It needs to be made clear at this point that despite the foregoing comments the subsidy was not assessed exclusively in respect of the gentry and higher nobility land as a number of ecclesiastics or ecclesiastical corporations were also assessed for the subsidy. The church was assessed at a figure of four hundred and sixty-nine pounds or seven per cent of the total – this compares with the fourteen per cent assessed for the church in the county of Kent in the same year.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, as all land purchased into mortmain before 1291 and all land purchased in free alms by spiritual lords and religious after that date were exempt (and it is not known what proportion of ecclesiastical land fell into these categories) the degree to which church lands are undervalued in the 1412 assessment cannot be accurately estimated. Simply as a reference point for an evaluation of this problem, Domesday shows that the church (including ecclesiastics) held no less than one hundred and fifty-three manors in Essex in 1086 and this figure may in reality have increased to three hundred manors by 1412. In fact the subsidy shows a mere twelve taxable manors in the hands of the church though many more must have been worth at least twenty pounds. Fig. 6.1 shows those parishes in which one or more manors were subject to the 1412 taxation.

The higher nobility whether residential or non-residential held very much more land in Essex in 1412 than is attributed to the church. One hundred and ten manors

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<sup>8</sup> B. Webster, 'The community of Kent in the reign of Richard II' *Arch.Cant.* 100 (1984), pp.217-229.



FIGURE 6.1 PARISHES INCLUDED IN 1412 TAXATION

worth £1845 or twenty-seven per cent of the total subsidy assessment were in the hands of the higher nobility as compared with eleven per cent in Kent (the reverse of the proportions attributed to the church in each county). This presents a picture of the higher nobility and clergy owning between them thirty-four percent of the assessed land in many cases, because like the gentry they could afford them, the most productive manors. As has been said, the remainder of the assessed manors in Essex were in the hands of the richer gentry. Hundreds of minor landlords holding between them more than six hundred manors individually valued at less than twenty pounds per annum are not included in the assessment. In theory, though it is doubtful whether if only for administrative reasons, it happened in practice, that an individual holding four manors worth five pounds each was taxed at the same rate as an individual with a single manor worth twenty pounds. It is estimated therefore that the fourteen hundred manors in Essex were held as follows: higher nobility two hundred, the church three hundred, the principal and greater gentry three hundred, and the lesser gentry six hundred. An unknown proportion, perhaps twenty percent of manorial proprietors were not exclusively resident in Essex.

The resident magnates who held the most valuable estates in Essex in 1412 were, in ascending order of wealth, the countess of Hereford (£173), the earl of Oxford and his mother (£252) and Lord Bourghier and his brother (£507). Unaccountably Lord Fitzwalter of Woodham Walter is omitted from the subsidy list even though his Essex estates included twelve manors.<sup>9</sup> Of the twenty-nine magnates holding land in Essex

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<sup>9</sup> Walter Fitzwalter inherited the Essex manors of Burnham, Woodham Walter, Creeksea, Cage, Shenfield, Wimbish, Ashdon, Little Dunmow, Sheering, Henham, Lexden and Great Tey. *Cal.I.P.M.* 15, pp.136-138.

only the countess of Hereford, the earl of Oxford, lord Bourghier (and Fitzwalter) were resident in the county. Together, Oxford and Bourghier held forty-four per cent of all assessed magnate land, that is eleven per cent of all assessed Essex land. Each of these magnates also held land outside Essex so the 1412 taxation for Essex only represents a proportion of their wealth.

The bulk of Essex land assessed in 1412 was held neither by the church nor the higher nobility but the gentry (resident and non-resident), knights, esquires, gentlemen and in some cases their widows. One hundred and sixty two individuals are named in the taxation list including seventeen women, who between them held sixty-six per cent of assessed land. This figure represents only a small proportion of the land (largely untaxed) held by the gentry and sub-gentry who between them held about nine hundred manors. The proportion of assessed land held by the higher nobility compared with the gentry is 3:7, an indication of the relative wealth and power of the two most significant groups in the county. The subsidy return appears to give support to the view that there was in Essex a rich and powerful though not numerous resident nobility counter-balanced by a group of relatively rich gentry who shared power to their mutual advantage. There was also an even larger group of individuals who undoubtedly ranked as gentry but whose lack of group cohesion and individual wealth greatly restricted their power. The extent to which these groups acted together is a question the subsidy assessment does not enable us to answer, neither does it shed any light on the extent to which the minor gentry were independent of the magnates and greater gentry.



Of the gentry taxed in 1412 the majority had patrilineal ancestors who were taxed in the 1327 subsidy on moveable property whilst others, generally the richest families such as Coggeshall, Tyrell, Marney and Tey, could claim an unbroken descent in the same locality from at least the thirteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Continuity and longevity are a feature of the richer, more successful families of Essex gentry. The origin of many such families is nonetheless obscure and it is in most cases possible to determine the point at which they entered the land-owning class but not how they managed the transition. No doubt marriage and or the steady accumulation of small amounts of land were the key to social mobility at this level, movements first from peasant to landowner and in the course of another generation to the gentry as in the case of the Hawkwood family described above. The longer a family had been settled in Essex the greater were its prospects of gaining wealth and power in the county. The county elite, the core of gentry families who between them held the richest manors, also had the majority of the lucrative and high-status county offices in almost hereditary succession; these families are almost without exception represented in the 1412 return. The same men were often leading members of magnate affinities, prominent in the royal household and, through ties of kinship, marriage and friendship, were bound to one another.

A number of statistics relating to the prominent gentry families can be quoted here : fifteen of the men assessed in 1412 were serving JPs, a further fifty of them had been or were to become JPs. Almost all the families of the forty-three individuals (twenty-three of them belted knights) who were knights of the shire between 1369 and 1460 are

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<sup>10</sup> Families such as Marney, Malgreff, Newport, Cloville and Mandeville had ancestors whose liability to scutage and other taxes was recorded in the early Pipe Rolls. See D.M.Stenton ed., Great Roll of the Pipe 1199 (1933), as well as being taxed in 1327. For details of individual taxation in 1327 see J.C.Ward ed., The Medieval Essex Community. The Lay Subsidy of 1327. E.R.O. Publication No.88 (1983).

represented in the 1412 taxation, as are most of the families of the one hundred and eleven individuals who were sheriffs and/or escheators of Essex and Hertfordshire between 1380 and 1460.

Within the gentry group named in the subsidy a number of sub-groups are clearly identifiable. First were the non-active county gentry such as the Mounteneys who were rich but played no part in county life, generally avoiding for successive generations any county office, knighthood or military service. There are also the arrivals from the north of England, there being clear evidence of considerable north/south immigration which brought a number of lesser gentry families to Essex between 1350 and 1400 probably on account of the county's proximity to the capital and the centre of power. Another identifiable gentry sub-group comprises the merchants who left London for Essex in order to settle on their country estates, purchased no doubt as a sound investment. Robert Chichele held Gidea Hall and Bedfords in Havering, William Walden held Dovers in Havering and Sir Adam Fraunceys held land in West Ham and Leyton. It is noticeable that these estates were within easy distance of London and that they were held by Londoners of mercantile origin. Thomas Mackwilliam, citizen and grocer of London who was apparently of Irish descent exemplifies the social rise of the merchant class; he settled in Stambourne having bought three manors in the vill and his family flourished there as gentry for another two hundred years.

In order to analyse the taxation data it was necessary to compile a list of the 1400 manors or reputed manors in Essex, on average 3.5 manors to a parish. It is often difficult to identify individual manors, many of which overlapped parish boundaries,

either by name or exact location.<sup>11</sup> Only two hundred and seventy manors can be identified in the 1412 return, a mere nineteen per cent of the total numbers of manors known at this date. In all, one hundred and ninety-nine parishes are shown in the return to have contained a manor worth twenty pounds per annum that is forty-eight per cent of the total parishes in Essex. A map showing the distribution of these manors illustrates that the smaller parishes in Essex were less likely to contain rich manors than larger parishes, most of the latter having at least one such manor within their boundaries. However, the largest parishes such as Finchingfield, Toppesfield, Sible Hedingham and Hatfield Broad Oak had no manors in the taxation. The areas with the smallest number of productive manors are the Uttlesford and Tendring hundreds, parishes on the western and northern boundaries of the county and in the Rodings. Conversely the highest concentration of the richest manors is found in the Rochford, Barstable, Witham and Chelmsford hundreds; almost a north/south divide.

How accurate and reliable is the information contained in the return of 1412? The information appears to be both inaccurate and incomplete in many respects although the degree to which this was deliberate is not known. The compilation was apparently supervised by Sir Robert Litton and five other members of the gentry whose qualifications for the task, other than their gentry rank, are not clear and may have been inadequate for this detailed work. The escheator John Rasch, the only serving county official on the tax commission (who would have had his own office and clerks, together with records of previous survey), was a Hertfordshire man; Sir Robert Litton was

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<sup>11</sup> P.Morant History and Antiquities of the County of Essex (2 vols, 1763-1768 repr., 1978): W.R.Powell, Essex in Domesday Book E.R.O. Publication No.103 (1990): Essex Feet of Fines 1182-1547 (4 vols., 1899-1964).

elderly and the still formidable sheriff Sir William Coggeshall absented himself from the whole business. It is not known how the taxation was conducted and who actually provided the information to the taxers but a likely method is that juries from each hundred were sworn to give evidence about local landowners either at the hundred court or at the county court in Chelmsford. The resulting returns were then organised on a hierarchical basis rather than in topographical order (the latter being the usual formula for tax returns such as feudal aids and subsidies as for example the 1327 and 1428 taxations).<sup>12</sup> The entries deal with taxpayers in rank order beginning with the Queen and other members of the royal family, followed by female then male members of the higher nobility, widows of knights, churchmen, knights, widows of esquires and then esquires, gentlemen, townsmen and minor clergy. A similar hierarchical method was subsequently employed for the 1436 income tax.<sup>13</sup>

Descriptions of the manors taxed in the subsidy list range from the vague 'Bardfield' which could have been Bardfield Saling, Great Bardfield or Little Bardfield to precise details of Thomas Mackwilliam's three manors in Stambourne (Grenvilles, Moon Hall and Stambourne Hall). These and other inconsistencies can be contrasted with the more accurate formula used in the 1428 return.<sup>14</sup>

In fiscal terms there is no reason to accept at face value any of the figures shown. The vast majority of manors are assessed at what is obviously the notional value of twenty pounds, some are shown at fifty pounds and a few between five and fifty marks, the latter group being superfluous to the return as they are below the taxable limit.

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<sup>12</sup> Ward, *Medieval Essex Community: Feudal Aids* 2, pp.180-233.

<sup>13</sup> H.L.Gray, 'Incomes from land in England in 1436' *E.H.R.* 49 (1934), pp.607-639.

<sup>14</sup> *Feudal Aids 1285-1431* 2, pp.180-233.

There is no internal evidence that indicates who assessed these values and on what basis. It seems unlikely that manorial accounts were produced for the taxers' inspection so it was probably the lord's own estimate of value which was presented as sworn testimony by the hundred juries. If this was the case, if things were indeed so unsophisticated then there was every opportunity for lords to undervalue their property when it suited them so as to evade tax or even, in a few instances perhaps, to overvalue it in order to enhance their own status. It may have been a comparatively simple matter for lords to persuade juries to comply with their wishes. In the absence of evidence this may perhaps be a cynical view of the process, and there may in practice have been a less prejudiced assessment by local juries based on accurate local knowledge. The twenty pounds limit had quite considerable significance for it was the minimum income required to qualify for important county offices and the level at which gentry status in shire society could no longer be called into question. In most cases it would have been apparent when someone had 'arrived', for in a small community his income could be estimated by his neighbours with reasonable accuracy. It is not clear whether there were penalties for false declarations in respect of the subsidy but it seems that there were none.

There are a number of significant omissions from the 1412 return. It is curious, for example, that none of the huge village of Finchingfield's seventeen manors is mentioned. It is unlikely that despite their large number, they were all worth less than twenty pounds per annum. Richard Kemp's non-manorial holdings in the parish were worth twenty pounds per annum whilst John Helion (representative of a long-established Essex family) had non-manorial land in the contiguous parishes of

Finchingfield and Toppesfield with a combined value of thirty pounds per annum. Could the Finchingfield situation be an example of an orchestrated tax evasion with a number of lords declaring a false value for their property? By contrast, no less than thirteen individuals were taxed in respect of a knight's fee or portions of a knight's fee in Finchingfield in the 1428 subsidy return.<sup>15</sup>

As has been said above another significant omission is the property held by Lord Fitzwalter. He is known to have inherited twelve manors in Essex from his father (as well as manors in other counties); it is not credible that none of the Essex manors was worth twenty pounds per annum in 1412.<sup>16</sup> Of the gentry known to have held valuable land in 1412 some relatively rich families are also inexplicably missing from the subsidy return. Neither the Bataill, Baynard, Rolf and Torell families nor Lewis John the rich Welsh vintner who was lord of West Horndon is included or taxed. Tables 6.2 and 6.3 show that in 1436 Thomas Bataill was taxed on an income of forty pounds, Grace Baynard eighty pounds, Thomas Rolf eighty pounds, Thomas Torell one hundred and fifty pounds and Lewis John three hundred and fifty pounds, an indication that some or all of them were probably undertaxed in 1412.<sup>17</sup>

Positive rather than negative information is also forthcoming from the 1412 tax return. For example, some light is shed on gentry kinship groups, particularly Sir William Coggeshall and his kin. Sir William and three of his four sons-in-law held between them an enormous amount of land and probably wielded more power than any

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<sup>15</sup> *Feudal Aids 1285-1431* 2, pp.180-233.

<sup>16</sup> *Cal.I.P.M.* 16, pp.136-138.

<sup>17</sup> Gray, 'Incomes from land', pp.607-639.

other gentry family grouping in the county. His daughter Blanche married John Doreward, Speaker of the House of Commons, sheriff and JP, another daughter, Alice, married John Tyrell (later knighted) who held precisely the same offices as his brother-in-law John, and a third daughter, Margaret, married William Bateman, who was sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire.

Six citizens of London are each shown to have held land in Essex in 1412 worth twenty pounds per annum but this number is surprisingly small bearing in mind the heavy dealing by Londoners in land recorded in the Feet of Fines during the previous years. Furthermore, some thirty-three citizens of London were heavily taxed on Essex land the 1436 tax and it therefore seems unlikely that these same manors were worth so much less in 1412 – or were landowners also adept at declaring artificially low values?<sup>18</sup> In 1412 this group is recorded as holding only seven high value manors between them, just two and a half per cent of the total manors listed. The extent to which magnates and the established county gentry held urban land is partially revealed by the return. Only the king's son Humphrey amongst the higher nobility held land in Colchester but the Prior of St.Botolph's and the Abbot of St.John's held land in the town valued at fifty pounds between them, some sixteen per cent of the town's overall assessment. Two knights held land valued at seven <sup>pounds</sup> in the town whilst two widows, probably of Colchester men, held forty pounds in aggregate – twelve per cent of Colchester's overall assessment. A group of five men, probably citizens of Colchester, but not distinguished as such or as gentry, held land to the value of one hundred and thirty pounds in aggregate, or forty per cent of the assessed urban land. In 1436

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<sup>18</sup> Gray, 'Incomes from land' pp.607-639.

**TABLE 6.2 INCOME TAX 1436: ESSEX TAXPAYERS**

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	£
Sir Edward Bensted	20
Sir Maurice Bruyn	148
Sir John Fitzsimon	100
Sir Thomas Flemming	66
Sir John Montgomery	310
Sir John Tyrell	396
Thomas Bataill esq.	40
Robert Darcy esq.	360
John Doreward esq.	255
John Godinston esq.	80
John Godstone esq.	60
John Helion sen esq.	133
Thomas Heveningham esq.	26
Lewis John esq.	350
Thomas Knyvet esq.	80
Henry Langley esq.	133
Hugh Naylinghurst esq.	30
Geoffrey Rokele esq.	60
Thomas Rolf esq.	80
William St Clere esq.	30
Roger Spice esq.	133
Thomas Stockdale esq.	33
Edward Tyrell esq.	135
Thomas Tyrell esq.	40
John Tey esq.	75
Thomas Brown of Roding	50
Thomas Bassett	50
Grace Baynard	80
Roger Deyncourt	50
Robert Higham, feoffees of	40
John Malton	50
John Marney	80
Richard Prior	66
John Picot	133
John Roppeley	90
William Rellington	40
John Rochester	40

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**TABLE 6.2 (CONTINUED)**

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Thomas Torell	150
James Ormond	200
Richard Wetherton	75

Source: H.L.Gray, 'Incomes from land in England in 1436' E.H.R. 49 (1934), pp.607-639.

**TABLE 6.3 INCOME TAX 1436 : GENTRY IN ORDER OF WEALTH**

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	£
Sir John Tyrell	396
Robert Darcy esq.	366
Lewis John esq.	350
Sir John Montgomery	310
John Doreward esq.	255
James Ormond	200
Thomas Torell	150
Sir Maurice Bruyn	148
Edward Tyrell esq.	135
Roger Spice esq.	133
Henry Langley esq.	133
John Helion sen esq.	133
John Picot	133
Sir John Fitzsimon	100
John Roppeley	90
John Godinston esq.	80
Thomas Knyvet esq.	80
Thomas Rolf esq.	80
Grace Baynard	80
John Marney	80
Richard Wetherton	75
John Tey esq.	75
Sir Thomas Flemming	66
Richard Prior	66
John Godstone esq.	60
Geoffrey Rokele esq.	60
Thomas Brown of Roding	50
Thomas Bassett	50
Roger Dencourt	50
John Malton	50
Thomas Bataill esq.	40
Thomas Tyrell esq.	40
Robert Higham, feoffees of	40
William Rellington	40
John Rochester	40
Thomas Stockdale esq.	33
Hugh Naylinghurst esq.	30
William St Clere esq.	30
Thomas Heveningham esq.	26
Sir Edward Bensted	20

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John Godstone of Colchester was taxed on an income of sixty pounds, a level that he or others might actually have enjoyed in 1412. No property is assessed in the county town of Chelmsford or in the borough of Maldon.

Returning to the higher nobility, but excluding the royal family, twenty-six magnates held between them one hundred and eight out of the two hundred and seventy manors listed (thirty-eight per cent), and a very high proportion of the county's wealth. The magnates' land was concentrated in several strategic areas : along the Thames estuary around Chelmsford (the county town, then rapidly increasing in importance and wealth), in the fertile valley of the river Roding and in other valleys to the north-west of the county. Such holdings are conspicuously absent in the south-west and north-east of the county as well as along the east coast. Notable too are the strategically placed castles they held at Ongar, Saffron Walden, Pleshey, Hedingham, Clavering, Colchester, Rayleigh and Stansted; much of the very best land quite obviously lay in their hands. It is also apparent that if for no other reason than administrative convenience, many of the manors are concentrated in clusters. The four resident Essex magnates who had capital manors in the county were the earl of Oxford (de Vere), lord Bourghier, the countess of Hereford and lord Fitzwalter at Hedingham, Halstead, Pleshey and Woodham Walter respectively. Between them, their Essex honors comprised forty-two manors, that is fifteen and a half per cent of the total number of manors listed in the 1412 subsidy return.

The church was exempt from the tax in respect of much of its land but the Bishop of Winchester, five priors, three members of colleges or hospitals and eight abbots held

between them thirteen manors that were taxed in 1412.<sup>19</sup> Two clerks are also listed in the return, probably as feoffees, but they may have held land in their own right. A further indication of how much untaxed land the church might actually have owned can be taken from the fact that, apart from some four hundred parish churches and approximately seventy chapels; there were forty-six Essex religious houses in 1412 consisting of eight abbeys, twenty-two priories, three nunneries, three colleges and ten hospitals.

Knights and widows of knights are a rich group in the 1412 taxation of whom twelve were resident in the county (compared with the six knights assessed for income tax in 1436 and the eight knights required to take the Peace Oath in 1434).<sup>20</sup> The twelve knights of 1412 held fifty-nine manors between them, some twenty-two per cent of all manors assessed. Much of this was prime land in the Stour Valley and in a broad band running from the central south of the county to the north-east as shown in Fig.6.2. Surprisingly perhaps, there are few knights' estates in the west or north-west though there were some in the approaches to London. As with the higher nobility, the knightly class tended not to own manors in the coastal parishes, the explanation being that such land, generally used for sheep and cattle rearing, but sometimes with high profits from mixed farming, was less valuable. The proverbially unhealthy marshland zone was a place where few of the richer gentry cared to settle.

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<sup>19</sup> For the taxation of the church in Essex see W.E.Lunt ed., *The Valuation of Norwich* (1926); R.C.Fowler 'An early Essex subsidy [1237-38]' *T.E.A.S.* 19 n.s. (1930), pp.27-37; R.C.Fowler, 'Fulk Basset's Register and the Norwich Taxation [c.1259]' *T.E.A.S.* 18 n.s. (1928), pp.15-134; the subsidy of 1428 in *Feudal Aids* 2 pp. 180-233.

<sup>20</sup> Gray, 'Incomes from land' pp.607-639.

It is also clear from the tax list that with two exceptions the knights' wealth in land came from manors. Sir William Coggeshall held the largest number of manors in the assessment of the gentry (eight) and these were worth a total of eighty pounds; his total wealth in 1412 including land held in other counties was one hundred and twenty-six pounds per annum. Sir Thomas Erpingham was richer than Coggeshall but he was a non-residential knight whose two manors and extensive property in Colchester gave him a taxable income of ninety pounds per annum in Essex. Sir John Howard, who was only occasionally resident in Essex, had three manors and was worth, like Sir William Coggeshall, eighty pounds per annum in Essex. It is not clear why Sir Gerard Braybroke of Bedfordshire, who held the manor of St Clere's in Danbury, was assessed at all as the annual value of the manor is included at a mere ten marks per annum; his other Essex real estate was assessed at only seven pounds. The twelve widows of knights assessed for the subsidy were not a wealthy group; they held eleven manors in all representing only four per cent of total manors assessed; perhaps the richest widows were soonest remarried. The richer knights and esquires were by reason of their London connections best placed to pick up land when it came on the market centred there. It is probable that the marriage market operated in parallel with the land market though both must also have been active in Chelmsford where the gentry appear often to have met on business. The richer gentry were well placed to secure opportune marriages for their children and other relatives as well as the most profitable manors. The longest established families had in general proportionally more land than new arrivals in Essex but often dispersed amongst a number of cadet branches of the family. The gentry below the status of knight are rarely identified with a title in the return; only John Crispin is called *armiger* though clearly the majority of those holding land to the value

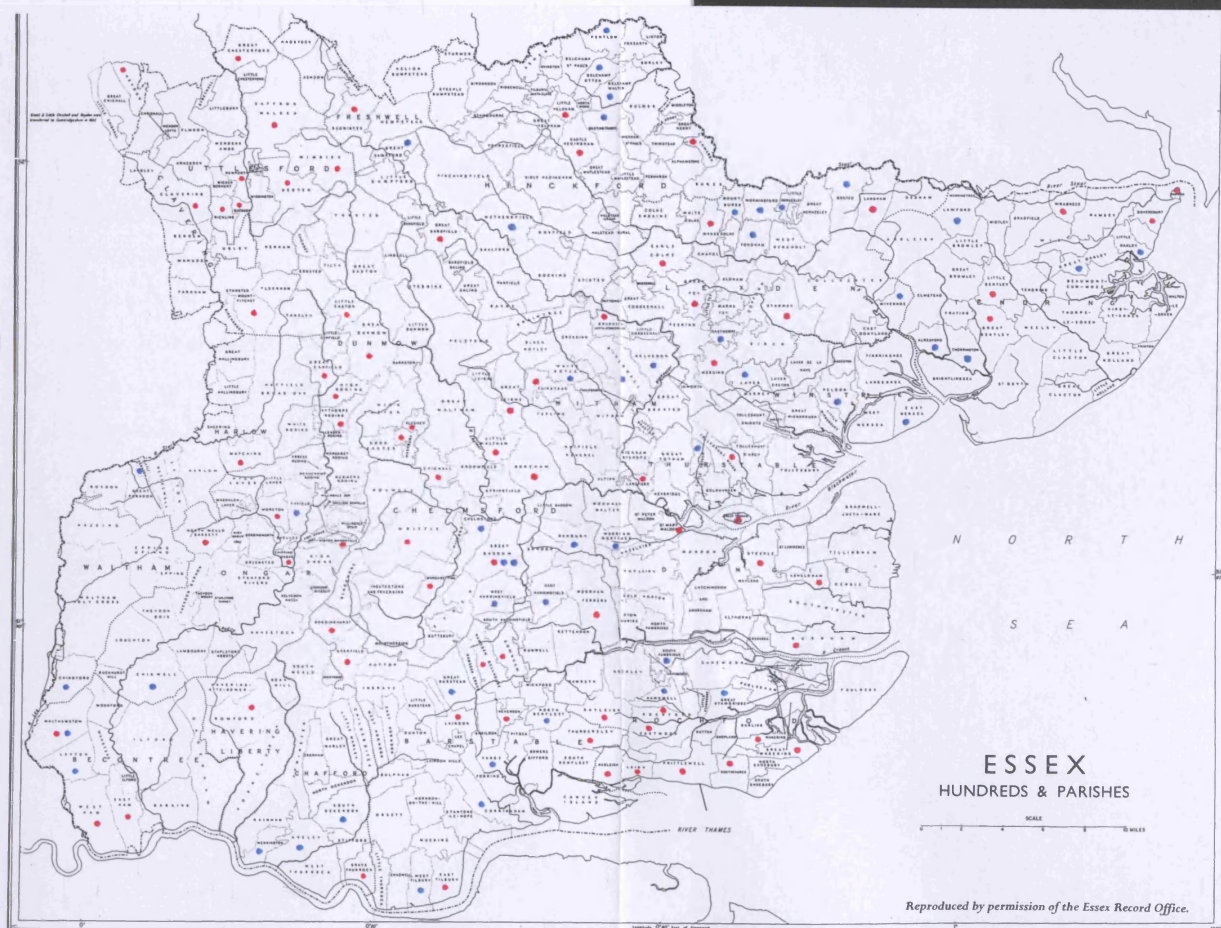


FIGURE 6.2 TAXATION 1412 : MAGNATE ● KNIGHT ●

of twenty pounds per annum aspired to this rank and were generally entitled to it. A feature of the subsidy list is that comparatively little land was held by knights or esquires resident in the adjacent counties of Middlesex, Kent, Suffolk, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. There are some important exceptions however, Heveningham and Waldegrave in Suffolk, Haute and Brockhole in Kent, and de la Lee in Hertfordshire. No Cambridgeshire gentry held land in Essex but Richard Haute of Kent held land there as well as in Essex and Kent.

Despite the obvious failings of the assessment in terms of accuracy and honesty it does tell us a number of things about the accumulated wealth of the Essex gentry as expressed in terms of the annual income from their land. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the tax list is that it demonstrates that the Essex gentry as a group had vastly more wealth than the resident magnates, that the greater gentry alone had twice the magnates' wealth. If the gentry's wealth is measured against the magnates' and we take into account the amount of time the magnates were absent from the county or a particular magnate family was headed by a minor, the relative power of the two groups is brought more sharply into perspective.

## 6.2 THE TYRELLS AND THE ACQUISITION OF WEALTH: A CASE STUDY.

Having discussed the wealth of the Essex gentry in terms of the taxation assessment for 1412 I now turn to the means by which their wealth was acquired. Clearly, the wealth of the gentry was generally judged in terms of land, or more particularly in manors. A number of families in our period that had acquired a manor in the remote past, as for example the Markshalls of Markshall or the Boxteds of Boxted, managed to cling on to their estates for centuries with few increases or subtractions from it in terms of acreage from generation to generation.

In 1381 the Boxted family held the manor of Boxted (Plate 6.1), probably since 1086, as tenants in chief and of the honour of Boulogne by service of a knight's fee being obliged (in theory anyway) to do suit at the honour court every three weeks. Remarkably, as a succession of inquisitions *post mortem* show, they held the manor and little more or less in terms of land, until 1441. John de Boxted (d.1265) held the manor together with a small amount of land in Alphamstone; he was succeeded by his son Ralph who held the same land until his death in 1303.<sup>21</sup> His son Peter died in 1325 having acquired some land in parishes adjacent to Alphamstone and the family continued until 1441 when Richard Boxted, the last male member of the family died.<sup>22</sup> Such a pattern of stasis may have been common, particularly with the lesser or parish gentry who seldom owned more than a single manor and a few outlying acres of land. Neither the Boxted nor the Markshall family was politically or financially

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<sup>21</sup> Cal.I.P.M. 1, p.192 and 4, p.95.

<sup>22</sup> Cal.I.P.M. 6, p.400. Morant, History of Essex 2, pp.239-240.





**PLATE 6.1** BOXTED HALL.

active in our period; their heyday had been the thirteenth century and earlier fourteenth century.<sup>23</sup>

There were other families such as the Baynards of Messing, the Torells of West Thurrock then Willingale Doe and the Coggeshalls of Wethersfield that steadily increased their patrimony generation by generation. Jennifer Ward has shown how the minor gentry Coggeshall family, mainly through piecemeal purchase and fortuitous marriages, accumulated a considerable estate in land which came into the possession of Sir John Coggeshall who died in 1361.<sup>24</sup> Sir John's son Sir Henry Coggeshall (d.1375) continued the process of acquiring wealth when he married the heiress Joan de Welle, but it was with Sir Henry's son Sir William Coggeshall (the Coggeshalls are the only Essex family known to have produced three knights in direct lineal succession in this period) that the Coggeshall family reached its most successful position in county society. Sir William Coggeshall was for a long period the leader of Essex political society and for much of his adult life the richest member of the gentry.<sup>25</sup> He exerted enormous influence in the county from his capital manor at Codham Hall both in his own right and through his sons-in-law. Unfortunately for the Coggeshalls the male line ended with Sir William in 1426 (his only son had died young) and rather than entail the patrimony in favour of his brother's son (as Edward Tyrell was to do in 1442) he allowed it to be divided between his four daughters, each of whom had married a

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<sup>23</sup> Ralph Boxted was sheriff in 1288; Peter Boxted sheriff and escheator in 1348 and 1349. The Markshall family appear never to have held significant public office.

<sup>24</sup> J.C. Ward, 'Sir John Coggeshall: an Essex knight of the fourteenth century' *E.A.H.* 22 (1991), pp.61-66.

<sup>25</sup> Roskell, Clark and Rawcliffe eds, *History of Parliament* 2.

distinguished member of the gentry.<sup>26</sup>

The Baynards' acquisition of land was slower and less spectacular than the Coggeshalls' and they were never in quite the same rank either in political terms or in terms of wealth. The Baynards' slow climb has an identifiable beginning with Thomas Baynard who married the heiress of Messing Hall, Ismannia de Messing in 1217.<sup>27</sup> On her death she held Messing Hall (which probably always contained the sub manor of Harborough Hall) the family seat until 1508 and a messuage in Rayne. This entire property passed to her son Roger on her death in 1272 and he held it, together with some land he acquired in St Lawrence, until he died in 1295.<sup>28</sup>

Roger Baynard's male heir was his nephew Thomas who died in 1344 after enjoying the family patrimony for nearly fifty years adding to it just a marsh (probably used for grazing sheep) in Burnham.<sup>29</sup> Thomas was succeeded by his son John who had acquired, almost certainly by marriage the manors of Birch and Knipsoe (now Nipsell's Rayments) in Mayland by the time he died in 1349.<sup>30</sup> During most of his life the St Lawrence property, never more than a few acres, was enjoyed by his brother Roger and sister Alice, a life interest in the property having been granted by their father Thomas Baynard.<sup>31</sup> John's estate passed to his son Thomas who acquired the manor of the Castle in Birch and held it jointly with his wife Katherine at the time of his death in

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<sup>26</sup> His daughters married as follows: Blanche married John Doreward (d.1420) sheriff, MP (Speaker) and JP; Alice married Sir John Tyrell (d.1437) sheriff, MP (Speaker) and JP; Margaret married firstly William Bateman, sheriff and secondly John Roppeley; and Maud married firstly Robert Dacre and secondly John St George.

<sup>27</sup> *Cal.I.P.M.* 1, p.261.

<sup>28</sup> *Cal.I.P.M.* 3, pp.170-171.

<sup>29</sup> *Cal.I.P.M.* 8, pp.366-367.

<sup>30</sup> *Cal.I.P.M.* 9, p.144.

<sup>31</sup> *Cal.I.P.M.* 9, p.144.

1375 together with the manors of Messing Hall, Birch Hall and Knipsoe. Thomas had entailed the estate so that following his wife's life interest there were successive remainders of his mother Isabel (d.1375) and his sons John, Robert, Thomas and Richard. When he died in 1375, Thomas Baynard's heir was his son Richard then aged four years.<sup>32</sup>

Katherine Baynard subsequently married the rich London draper John Hende (d.1418) and enjoyed her life interest in the estate until her death c.1406 when it reverted to her son Richard.<sup>33</sup> Despite his relatively successful career as a lawyer, in local government and as part of countess Joan's affinity Baynard added little to the family patrimony. It was a very similar estate to the one he inherited that he passed to his eldest son Richard on his death in 1434.<sup>34</sup> Richard the son died in 1473 not having acquired any more land; his only son having died young the Baynard inheritance passed to Grace his only daughter and then on her death in 1508 to the Daniel family.<sup>35</sup>

Families that managed to survive for many generations (few families survived in the male line for as much as a hundred and fifty years in Essex) were more likely to acquire wealth than those that were short-lived. There is no evidence in our period that many families failed economically; the worst that happened was the stagnation that gripped families like the Markshalls and Boxteds. Of all the families that endured, none lasted longer or rose more swiftly than the Tyrells, the subject of the following case

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<sup>32</sup> Cal.I.P.M. 14, pp.92-93.

<sup>33</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1392-1396, p.54 and ERO D/DH VB 51.

<sup>34</sup> Morant, *History of Essex* 2, p.176.

<sup>35</sup> Morant, *History of Essex* 2, p.177.

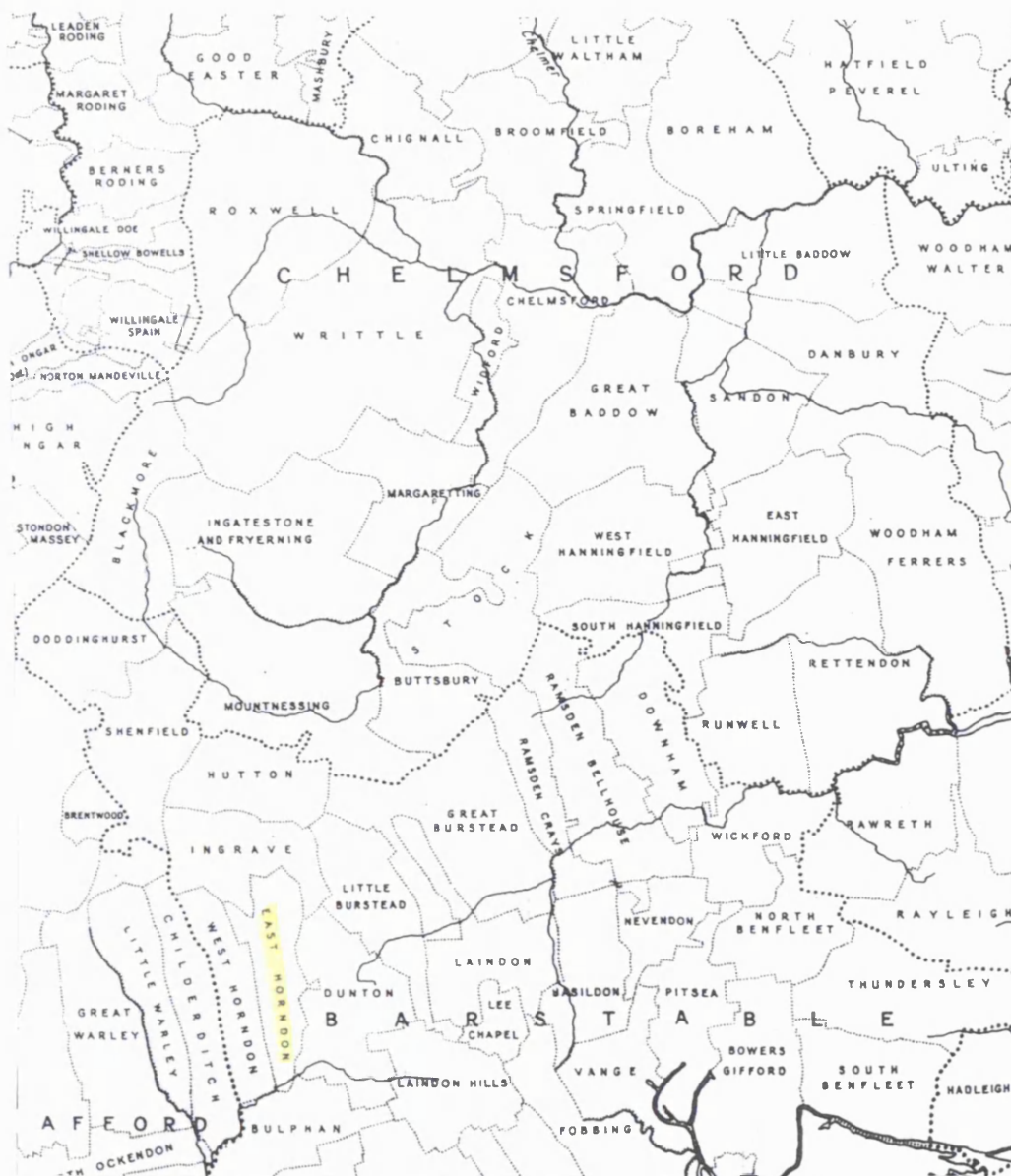


FIGURE 6.3 THE TYRELL ESTATES

study, and taxed in 1436 as the richest family in the county.<sup>36</sup> Fig. 6.3 shows the extent of the Tyrell family's estates.

We now turn to the Tyrell family of East Horndon which in 1436 was taxed as the richest family in the county. I will show how the family faded from knightly status in the eleventh century to relative obscurity in the thirteenth then increased rapidly in status during the fourteenth to reach its medieval apogee in the fifteenth century. In the absence of detailed records, the progress of the Tyrells can be measured by its acquisition of land, this being the measure of their economic status. 'The mere possession of land was not a road to wealth, it was rather the evidence that so much wealth had been achieved'.<sup>37</sup> The first known Tyrell in Essex was Walter who held the manor of Langham in 1086.<sup>38</sup> He was related to the earl of Hertford through his wife Adelaide Fitzgilbert and this may account for his acquisition of the manor.<sup>39</sup> After his implication in the murder (or accidental death) of William Rufus, Walter Tyrell fled the country and died abroad. His son Hugh retained the manor of Langham until c.1148 when he sold it to Gervase of Cornhill for one hundred marks. The stated purpose of the sale was to raise money to finance Hugh's journey to Jerusalem but nothing more is known of his activities.<sup>40</sup>

A number of documents dated at approximately the end of the twelfth century show that a Walter son of Walter Tyrell was then economically active in the Hanningfield

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<sup>36</sup> H.L.Gray, 'Incomes from land in England in 1436', *E.H.R.* 49 (1934), pp.607-639.

<sup>37</sup> K.B.McFarlane, *The Nobility of Late Medieval England* (1975), p.10.

<sup>38</sup> A.Rumble, *Domesday Book: Essex* 32 (1983), p.23.

<sup>39</sup> J.H.Round, *Feudal England* (1895), pp.468-479.

<sup>40</sup> L.C.Lloyd and D.M.Stenton eds, *Sir Christopher Hatton's Book of Seals* (1950), pp.58-59.

area, and he appears to have been a minor landlord who was in a position to sell an acre or two at time.<sup>41</sup> A document dated with rather more precision to 1190-1200 shows a Baldwin Tyrell, possibly the younger Walter's son, granting with his wife Agatha an acre of land in Buttsbury (at that time the vill was adjacent to Hanningfield) to the knights of St John of Jerusalem.<sup>42</sup> This may be the same Baldwin Tyrell who is found as a witness to two Buttsbury deeds dated c.1240.<sup>43</sup> The Thomas Tyrell who witnessed a deed for the abbess of Barking regarding land in Writtle c.1225 and for St Bartholomew's Hospital relating to land in Lambourne c.1245 may have been Baldwin's son.<sup>44</sup> Thomas Tyrell had a daughter Maud who granted five acres of land to the wife of Godfrey de Fristling, lord of Fristling manor in Buttsbury c.1250.<sup>45</sup> There is no indication of the Tyrells' status at this time save that they appear to have been small landowners, almost certainly of free status and operating within a limited geographical area.

The first Tyrell to emerge from relative obscurity is the James Tyrell who witnessed a document for Joan, widow of Walter atte Hole in 1302 relating to land in West Hanningfield.<sup>46</sup> James may have been the son of an earlier James (who was perhaps the son of Thomas fl.c.1225-c.1250) who witnessed deeds in the Buttsbury area c.1270.<sup>47</sup> By 1305 James Tyrell had married, and there are indications that this marriage made his fortune. His wife Alice was a member of the Blunt family, descendants of London

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<sup>41</sup> C.R.Cheney 'Medieval charters relating to the manor of Montpellers, Writtle' No.70. E.R.O. T/A 139, unpublished typescript; Cat.Anc.Deeds 3, p.234.

<sup>42</sup> M.Gervers, ed., The Cartulary of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem in England. Secunda Camera. Essex (1982), p.178.

<sup>43</sup> E.R.O. D/DCM Z25/5 and Z25/6.

<sup>44</sup> E.R.O. D/DP TI 653 and N.J.M.Kerling Cartulary of St Bartholomew's Hospital (1973), p.142.

<sup>45</sup> E.R.O. D/DT TI/639.

<sup>46</sup> E.R.O. D/DP TI/609.

<sup>47</sup> E.R.O. D/DP TI/697.

merchants who had invested in Buttsbury land during the late twelfth century, eventually superseding the ancient manorial family of Ginges.<sup>48</sup> The Blunts, chief of whom at the beginning of the fourteenth century was Sir Hugh le Blunt, were widespread in Buttsbury and at the time of the marriage; Alice may have been the heiress of one of the senior members of the clan. In 1305 a fine was sued out between James and Alice Tyrell and a clerk named John Bacon regarding 216 acres of land in Buttsbury and a quarter share of the advowson of Buttsbury church.<sup>49</sup> This appears to be the establishment of title to land settled on James and his wife at the time of their marriage (perhaps a year or two before) presumably by the Blunt family. This small estate can almost certainly be identified with White Tyrells, then or shortly afterwards a manor (Plate 6.2). James Tyrell was a man of substance by 1305, having risen from the sub-gentry to the status of manorial lord. This is perhaps the most critical moment in the Tyrells' history, their transition to the gentry, and it is unusual that such a moment can be identified as well as the means by which it occurred. James maintained the family connection with Hanningfield for, after the famine years of 1315-1317 he and others broke into the manor of West Hanningfield and carried off the goods of William de la Beche.<sup>50</sup> This act of theft does not seem to have been the result of need on Tyrell's part as in 1319/20 he was taxed at 2s. in Buttsbury and in the contiguous parish of Great Burstead 5s, second only to Nicholas de Morton, the manorial lord.<sup>51</sup> Taxed again in 1327 he had moveables in three parishes; Great Burstead where he heads the

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<sup>48</sup> The Blunts seemed to have arrived in Buttsbury when Robert Blunt, son of Bartholomew Blunt of London bought land in Buttsbury from Roger de Ginges in 1197. *Essex Fines* 1, p.11 and E.R.O. D/DP Z25/10.

<sup>49</sup> *Essex Fines* 2 p.100.

<sup>50</sup> *Cal.Pat.Rolls*. 1317-1321 p.91.

<sup>51</sup> E.R.O. T/A 564. Lay Subsidy 1319/20.





**PLATE 6.2 WHITE TYRRELLS, BUTTSBURY.**

list of taxpayers, Ramsden Cray where he is second and Buttsbury where he is fourth.<sup>52</sup>

By whatever means, James had increased his personal fortune once again. He may have had many sources of income which are unknown to us; the rental of Philip de Fristling manor of Fristling Hall c.1330 does however show that James Tyrell, the abbeys of Barking and others were tenants of the manor.<sup>53</sup> Tyrell paid rent of 13d per quarter. It is not known when he died but it was c.1350; his name is not, however, amongst the 13 tenants of Fristling Hall listed as having died 1348-49, presumably of plague.<sup>54</sup>

James Tyrell's successor was his son Thomas, usually called Thomas the elder or senior to distinguish him from his brother and namesake.<sup>55</sup> Thomas is first mentioned as a charter witness in 1326 but by at least 1332 he was buying land on his own behalf when he added 19 acres to the Tyrell patrimony in Buttsbury.<sup>56</sup> It is not known when he married, but in 1344 Thomas Tyrell senior and his wife Joan rented land, pasture and meadow in Fryering for 52s 10d per annum.<sup>57</sup> In 1347 Thomas senior bought 8 more acres of land in Buttsbury and there may have been other purchases of land of which we know nothing.<sup>58</sup> In 1340 Thomas was one of four tax collectors in Buttsbury and one of five in Great Burstead (in each case he heads the list) charged with the collection of the *Nonarum*.<sup>59</sup> This relatively ordinary civic duty, which nonetheless gave him a certain authority amongst his neighbours, probably served to increase the Tyrells'

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<sup>52</sup> Ward, *Medieval Community*, pp.85 and 101-102.

<sup>53</sup> E.R.O. D/DP M1411 Rental of manor of Fristling Hall, Buttsbury. c.1330.

<sup>54</sup> E.R.O. D/DP M717. Rental of manor of Fristling Hall, Buttsbury, 1348/49.

<sup>55</sup> He is referred to as Thomas Tyrell senior, son of James Tyrell, in a surrender of land dated 1348. E.R.O. D/DP TI/306.

<sup>56</sup> E.R.O. D/DP TI/348: *Essex Fines* 3, p.26.

<sup>57</sup> M. Gervers ed., *Cartulary of Knights of St John of Jerusalem: Prima Camera* (1996), p.183.

<sup>58</sup> *Essex Fines* 3 p.86.

<sup>59</sup> *Nonarum Inquisitiones in Curia Scaccarii temp Regis Edwardi III* (1807), pp.309-324.

prestige and would perhaps have brought them to the attention of patrons with more powerful offices in their gift.

In 1343, Thomas senior and a James Tyrell appear together as witnesses to an assignment of dower.<sup>60</sup> James may have been his son or his younger brother, and he was frequently a witness in his own right for example to documents relating to the Travers family of Basildon, but is not heard of after 10 March 1349.<sup>61</sup> It is possible that this James was the father of Thomas but unlikely, as Thomas takes precedence amongst the witnesses. Having survived the plague of 1348-1349 Thomas senior was in the fortunate position of being a member of the greatly depleted group from which county office-holders were customarily drawn. With the number of eligible candidates drastically reduced, and the number of vacant county offices increased as a result of plague, it was almost inevitable that Thomas was offered positions for which his qualifications in term of experience and land tenure might otherwise have been inadequate.

Thomas senior seems to have grasped the opportunities that came his way and during the 1350s he served on a number of local commissions before attaining the much-prized office of JP.<sup>62</sup> It is probable that the technically unfeud offices held by Thomas Tyrell would have brought him substantial profit such that he could well have taken the opportunity to invest his available capital in the post-Black Death land market. In 1355 Thomas senior reached the high watermark of his career when elected

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<sup>60</sup> E.R.O. D/DHf T41/31

<sup>61</sup> E.R.O. D/DHf T41/40

<sup>62</sup> Cal.Pat.Rolls 1350-1354, p.289.

as knight of the shire for Essex.<sup>63</sup> This, together with his appointment as JP, must have signified a status and influence in the locality that put him firmly among the gentry (following his father's shaky start). He was evidently a success as an MP as he was re-elected in 1357 and 1360.

Thomas senior seems never to have moved from the family's modest home at White Tyrells in Buttsbury and it may have been there that he died shortly after 1360, perhaps in 1361 when plague returned to Essex. He was succeeded by his brother and namesake at a time when the younger man had already achieved a considerable measure of success. Like his older brother, Thomas Tyrell probably grew up in Buttsbury during the years when James Tyrell was most active in extending the family's land and local influence. Also like his elder brother, he may have benefited from the patronage of his kinsmen the Blunts. Thomas Tyrell's subsequent career suggests that he acquired a legal training at one of the Inns of Court and afterwards, perhaps through his brother's connections, Thomas the younger became a member of the royal household. By 1351 he was 'king's yeoman' in the service of Isabel, countess of Bedford.<sup>64</sup> In 1354 and 1356 he was granted separate annuities of ten pounds from the king for his 'good service to the king and his daughter Isabel'.<sup>65</sup> By 1362 he was steward of Isabel's household with an annual salary (including the annuities) of forty pounds, in accordance with his income and status he was knighted the following year.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1354-1358, p.229.

<sup>64</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1350-1354, p.97.

<sup>65</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1354-1358, pp.48 and 410.

<sup>66</sup> Cal. Pat. Rolls 1361-1364, pp.140 and 146.

By Christmas 1366 Sir Thomas had become one of the king's 'knights of the chamber', a member of the king's affinity and a trusted retainer.<sup>67</sup> Clearly he was now in a position of considerable power and influence and his experience of estate administration would have enabled him to exploit his own land to the full. Locally, Sir Thomas was appointed to a succession of progressively more important offices which led him from coroner in 1360 to commissioner of enquiry, commissioner of array, collector of the subsidy, JP and knight of the shire for Essex in 1365 and on four further occasions until 1373.<sup>68</sup> As to his family estates, the first transaction involving Thomas Tyrell the younger occurred in 1335 when he and his wife Alice sued out a fine relating to the purchase of 354 acres of land in Great Burstead, Laindon and Ramsden Crays from William and Isabel de Boyland who may have been relatives.<sup>69</sup> It is possible that this fine represents a settlement of land following the marriage of Thomas and Alice; the Boylands may have been her parents.

In 1363, the newly knighted Sir Thomas Tyrell took the important step of transferring the family seat from Buttsbury where it had been for generations to Heron Hall in East Horndon where it remained until the male line became extinct in 1766. In establishing Heron Hall as his capital manor Sir Thomas obtained a royal licence to impark 400 acres of meadow, pasture and wood in the parishes of Ingrave and East Horndon adjacent to the existing manor of Fouchers.<sup>70</sup> It is not known how the 400 acres were acquired or whether they had previously constituted a single estate, the

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<sup>67</sup> C. Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household and the King's Affinity* (1986), p.208.

<sup>68</sup> *Cal.Pat.Rolls 1361-1364*, p.553 : *Cal.Pat.Rolls 1367-70*, p.345 : *Cal.Pat.Rolls 1354-1360*, p.417 : *Cal.Pat.Rolls 1360-1364*, p.56.

<sup>69</sup> *Essex Fines* 3 p.36.

<sup>70</sup> *Cal.Pat.Rolls 1361-1364*, p.408.

manor of Heron Hall only came into being after the 1363 imparkment. The Heron Hall estate has shrunk a little in the last six hundred and fifty years but it still clearly identifiable as the land imparked by Sir Thomas Tyrell. His next purchase was a small piece of land, just two acres, in nearby Little Warley, together with the advowson of the church.<sup>71</sup> This otherwise insignificant purchase represents the limit of the westward territorial expansion of the Tyrells of Heron Hall. Five years later Sir Thomas and his wife bought a small estate of 76 acres in Buttsbury from Robert de Ramsey a citizen and fishmonger of London who, with the Blunts, had joined the gentry after a mercantile career.<sup>72</sup> This estate subsequently became the manor of Ramsey Tyrells. In 1369 the Tyrells bought the manor of Ramsden Crays a parish where they already had land, and this began their expansion eastwards along the valley of the Crouch.<sup>73</sup>

Notwithstanding his considerable territorial gains in Essex, Sir Thomas was able to afford some significant purchases of land in Hampshire in an area where other, but unrelated, Tyrells had held land since the thirteenth century. In 1364 he bought an estate comprising the manors of Milton, Chilworth, North and South Avon, Mainsbridge, Lyndhurst and Pennington – though he quickly sold Pennington, Mainsbridge and Chilworth.<sup>74</sup> A major significance of the purchase is that in 1370 Sir Thomas and his wife settled the manor of North Avon (later Avon Tyrell) on his brother Walter Tyrell and his wife Eleanor, perhaps at the time of their marriage and

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<sup>71</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1360-1364, p. 344.

<sup>72</sup> Essex Fines 3, p. 150.

<sup>73</sup> Essex Fines 3, p. 157.

<sup>74</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1364-1368, p. 44.

thereby recognised that the younger brother was heir apparent.<sup>75</sup> In 1376, the apparently childless couple Sir Thomas and Lady Alice took further steps to ensure that the Tyrell estate passed to an heir of their choice. By means of a fine they placed almost the entire Tyrell patrimony in Essex in the hand of feoffees, reserving a life interest for themselves but no doubt arranging that their property passed on their death in accordance with the provisions of their respective wills (neither of which has survived).<sup>76</sup> It is clear from the 1376 fine that there were two manors not previously recorded in the Tyrell's possession; thus there is a *terminus a quo* for the acquisition of the manor of Fremnells in Downham and Beeches in Rawreth. Sir Thomas died at an advanced age c.1382, his death probably hastened by the rebellious peasants who broke into his manor-house at Downham (the manor of Fremnells in Downham was apparently his preferred home), threatening him and stealing his money.<sup>77</sup>

Sir Thomas was succeeded by his younger brother Walter, a lacklustre figure who, unlike his brothers, neither entered royal service nor held local office in Essex.<sup>78</sup> He does not seem to have purchased any land but his wife Eleanor, sole heir of her parents John and Elizabeth Flambard of Harrow, inherited a cluster of five manors in Cambridgeshire which passed to her second son Edward Tyrell of Downham on her death. On the failure of Edward's male line it returned to the Tyrells of Heron. Walter Tyrell's principal contribution to the upward progress of the family was his five sons,

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<sup>75</sup> The Inquisition *post mortem* on the lands of Eleanor Haute, formerly wife of Walter Tyrell refer to a settlement of 1370 which by means of a royal licence conveyed the manor of Avon from Sir Thomas Tyrell to his brother Walter. PRO C.138/63/29a. I am grateful to Dr Linda Clark for drawing this crucial reference to my attention.

<sup>76</sup> Essex Fines 3, p.180.

<sup>77</sup> W.H.Liddell and R.G.Wood eds, Essex and the Great Revolt of 1381 E.R.O. Publication No.84 (1982), p.89.

<sup>78</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1381-1385, p.272 refers to Sir Thomas Tyrell as 'now deceased' 10 June 1382.

they ensuring the continuance of his posterity for generations. We do not know when Walter Tyrell died but his successor was his eldest son John who had inherited at least part of his father's estate by 1412. In that year he was taxed as the proprietor of Heron Hall and was also taxed on the manor of Broomfield, possibly his first wife's dower. His possession of only a small part of his patrimony in 1412 (when he was about thirty years old) is due to it having been settled on his mother for life, and she survived for many years.<sup>79</sup> Worse still for Tyrell, his mother subsequently married Sir Nicholas Haute of Kent who would have controlled the Tyrell manors in his wife's name. Fortunately for John Tyrell, Sir Nicholas died in 1415 whilst campaigning in France and the manors became his mother's responsibility again. On Eleanor's death in 1422 the patrimony was divided, the bulk of the Essex and Hampshire land going to John Tyrell and the Cambridge land to his brother Edward.<sup>80</sup>

During the early part of the fifteenth century when he was a reversioner with potentially many years to wait for his inheritance, John Tyrell had married wisely. His first wife may have been a de Mandeville who died shortly after their marriage but his second wife was Alice, daughter and co-heiress of Sir William Coggeshall, the richest knight in Essex. Alice died in 1422 her tomb is at East Horndon (Plate 6.3) and her father in 1426. In the absence of male heirs, Sir William's manors of North Benfleet and Great Sampford, together with land elsewhere, passed to his son-in-law. Tyrell's third wife was Katherine Spenser, already twice widowed, she had not only inherited a life interest in land in Suffolk from her father Sir William Burgate but also from her first husband's estate which included manors in Norfolk and Suffolk. All this property

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<sup>79</sup> *Feudal Aids 1284-1431*, 6 p.445.

<sup>80</sup> See note above.





ALICE, LADY TYRELL, A.D. 1422.

PLATE 6.3 LADY ALICE TYRELL : EAST HORNDON

was effectively under Tyrell's contract during his wife's lifetime, to the exclusion of the son of her first marriage. In addition to the life interest, John Tyrell was able to recover some seven hundred pounds on Katherine's behalf, which Henry V had owed John Spenser her second husband.<sup>81</sup>

Eventually John Tyrell rose to a pre-eminent position in Essex county society, the richest knight (in succession to his father-in-law), the holder of many prestigious offices and eventually the patriarch of a huge clan centred on the family seat at Heron Hall. Between 1411 and his death in 1437 he was elected knight of the shire thirteen times and on three occasions he was chosen Speaker. He was sheriff on three occasions, a JP and served in the army at Agincourt. By 1418 he had been appointed steward to Anne, countess of Stafford and in 1427 he obtained the office of Chief Steward to the Duchy of Lancaster north of the Trent. He was a member of the king's council and then appointed treasurer to the Household; in 1431 he was knighted.<sup>82</sup>

In 1436 Sir John was assessed for income tax on an income of three hundred and ninety-six pounds per annum when four hundred pounds was considered to be sufficient income to maintain a baron.<sup>83</sup> Had he lived a little longer he might have been awarded a barony for his services as for example was his contemporary and fellow royal servant Sir John Hotoft.<sup>84</sup> Where did Sir John's income come from? Clearly the manors he held in six counties – Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk, Hertfordshire,

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<sup>81</sup> For a biography of Sir John Tyrell see J.S.Roskell, Parliament and Politics in Late Medieval England (3 vols, 1981-1983).

<sup>82</sup> Further biographical material relating to Sir John Tyrell is in J.S.Roskell, L.Clark and C.Rawcliffe eds, The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1386-1421 4 (1993), pp.683-686.

<sup>83</sup> H.L.Gray, 'Incomes from land in England in 1436' E.H.R. 49 (1934), pp.607-639.

<sup>84</sup> Roskell, Clark and Rawcliffe, History of Parliament 3, pp.427-429.

Cambridgeshire and Hampshire - would have accounted for much of his wealth. In addition to the profits from these manors there were the fees and annuities from clients whom he served as steward or lawyer, including the royal family. He could almost certainly have turned his appointments as sheriff, MP and JP to his financial advantage and may have benefited from his military service in terms of spoils of war. As the treasurer of the Household and member of the Council he would have received further fees or honoraria.

As has been said Sir John did not use his vast income to make many significant purchases of land (unlike his uncle Sir Thomas Tyrell) but he did enlarge his Essex estate between 1423 (after his second marriage) and 1428 when, by a succession of relatively minor purchases, he accumulated land around the manor of Springfield Hall.<sup>85</sup> In 1425 he built up his holdings in the Broomfield area when he bought a miscellaneous collection of properties which included 10 messuages, 6 shops, 9 shambles and about 314 acres of land in the parishes of Chelmsford, Writtle, Little Waltham, Springfield and Broomfield itself.<sup>86</sup> He also bought a portion of the manor of Hunsdon in Hertfordshire in 1423 and the manor of Mark Hall, Latton at about the same time.<sup>87</sup> What Sir John's ancestors had acquired by a combination of purchase, good fortune and the spoils of a career at court, had proved to be a good investment and he ensured that it stayed in the hands of the family albeit dispersed amongst his sons. Neither contracting nor expanding the patrimony significantly, Sir John was able to support himself and his family in a lifestyle that matched his considerable status.

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<sup>85</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1422-1429, p.128.

<sup>86</sup> Essex Fines 4, p. 7.

<sup>87</sup> Cal. Close Rolls 1422-1429, pp.125, 281, and 385.



**PLATE 6.4 MOAT : HERON HALL , EAST HORNDON.**





**PLATE 6.5 CURTAIN WALL : HERON HALL, EAST HORNDON**

In view of his frequent visits to London, Sir John must have had a house there (his brother Edward had a house on Dowgate Hill); he more than any other Tyrell before him, made Heron Hall (Plates 6.4 and 6.5) the hub of his estate.<sup>88</sup> Like his Essex friends and contemporaries, Sir Lewis John of West Horndon, Sir John Montgomery of Faulkbourne and Richard Baynard of Messing, Sir John Tyrell took the opportunity to build in brick, the cheap and plentiful new material that had recently become available for domestic use. The completed manor house with its imposing towers and wide quadrangular moat, together with the park pale, would have been the principal outward show of the family's prestige.<sup>89</sup> Sir John Tyrell provided for each of his sons long before his death. His eldest son and heir Sir Thomas was to inherit the core of the patrimony; William the elder had been established at Gipping in Suffolk, Sir William the younger received the manor of Beeches in Rawreth and the manor of North Benfleet; both his sons named John were no doubt provided for in other ways.<sup>90</sup> Clearly Sir John can be seen as the consolidating proprietor of the Tyrell estates.<sup>91</sup> Rather than invest his income in land as his predecessors had done, he chose to spend it in maintaining an impressive and expensive lifestyle which included the rebuilding of Heron Hall and the endowment of his sons with landed estates.

Sir John was succeeded by his eldest surviving son Thomas who had probably been a student at Lincoln's Inn and by 1427 had married Anne, daughter of Sir William Marney of Layer Marney.<sup>92</sup> During his father's lifetime Thomas followed a military

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<sup>88</sup> Will of Edward Tyrell (d.1442).P.C.C. 16 Rous.

<sup>89</sup> See chapter 5 above.

<sup>90</sup> Sir John's eldest son Walter evidently died young and is only known from the inscription on his mother's tomb.

<sup>91</sup> Writs of *diem clausit extremum* issued for Hampshire, Essex and Hertfordshire show that Sir John Tyrell had placed his land in the hands of feoffees long before his death. Cal.Fine Rolls 1437-1445, p.1.

<sup>92</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1422-1429, p.408.

career and was successful in many confrontations with the French. On at least one occasion he and his troops returned to England 'with great booty' such that in 1436 his declared annual income was forty pounds.<sup>93</sup> Following his father's death in 1437 Thomas began to emulate his career. He became steward of the Duchy of Lancaster lands in Essex, sheriff in 1440, and in 1442 was elected knight of the shire. In 1443 he was made JP and then, together with his two brothers William senior and William junior, was appointed to the king's household as *scutifer aule et camerae regis*, such service being almost hereditary in the Tyrell family.<sup>94</sup> In 1444 he was sheriff again, he was knighted in 1446 and MP in 1447 and 1449. Like his father, Sir Thomas added comparatively little to the family patrimony. In 1445 he bought the manor of Bobbingworth but sold it in 1464.<sup>95</sup> In 1447 he bought a tiny piece of common land in Buttsbury from his cousin Phillipa and her husband Thomas Cornwallis; this was the first new acquisition by the Tyrell family of land in Buttsbury since 1347.<sup>96</sup>

The next few years brought Sir Thomas mixed fortunes. He was defeated by the French in 1450 but came home to help crush Cade's rebellion in Kent.<sup>97</sup> In 1452 he was made knight of the Household and received from the king the advowson of East Horndon church *pro bono servitio suo nobis impenso*. A year later he was a Privy Councillor.<sup>98</sup> In these two years he acquired a total of 116 acres of land in Horndon-on-the-Hill whilst in 1459 he bought 32 acres in Ingrave adjacent to Heron Hall.<sup>99</sup> In the

<sup>93</sup> Polydore Vergil *English History* (1844) pp.51-79 and Gray, 'Incomes from land', pp.607-639.

<sup>94</sup> Both K.B.McFarlane in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Collected Essays*. (1981), pp.16-17 and E.F.Jacob in *The Fifteenth Century 1399-1485* (1961) draw attention to the hereditary element in Henry VI's household represented by the Tyrell family.

<sup>95</sup> *Essex Fines* 4, p.36 and *Cal.Close Rolls 1441-1447*, p.379.

<sup>96</sup> *Essex Fines* 4, p.39.

<sup>97</sup> Polydore Vergil, *English History*, p.79: *Acts of the Privy Council 1443-1461*, p.96.

<sup>98</sup> *Cal.Pat.Rolls 1446-1452*, p.529: *Acts of the Privy Council 1443-1461*, p.163.

<sup>99</sup> *Essex Fines* 4, pp.46-47, 54.

same year he was appointed sheriff for the third time and was again elected to Parliament. In 1460 he nearly lost his life defending the king at the Tower of London when besieged by the Yorkist army. He subsequently went into retirement to emerge briefly in his old age during the Readeption of the king in 1470.<sup>100</sup> He died in 1476 much concerned with such pious works as the reconstruction of the tower of East Horndon church (Plate 6.6).<sup>101</sup> Using the political know-how gained in a lifetime's experience at Court, Sir Thomas was able to avoid attainder by the Yorkists and thereby to preserve the family's estates which had been carefully accrued by his ancestors.

## CONCLUSION

It is not suggested that the Tyrells were typical of the late medieval gentry in Essex but this study of the means by which they acquired their estates shows how wealth was the key to a family rising in three generations from the ranks of yeoman and husbandman to head the county's gentry elite.

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<sup>100</sup> J.C. Wedgwood, History of Parliament: Biographies of the Member of the House of Commons 1429-1509 (1936) asserts that Tyrell may briefly have been Speaker during this period.

<sup>101</sup> Will of Sir Thomas Tyrell (d.1476). P.C.C. 31 Wattys.





**PLATE 6.6 EAST HORNDON CHURCH**

The originator of the Tyrells' success accumulated small amounts of land on a piecemeal basis, mainly by purchase or exchange. By good fortune he acquired manorial lordship through marriage to an heiress. His sons were educated and successively grew rich, probably practising as lawyers. More land was purchased by the family, first by the eldest son then by his brother who was also his heir. This brother was able to accumulate sufficient capital through royal and public service to purchase numerous manors in Essex and Hampshire. He probably also married an heiress and certainly established an impressive imparked capital manor as the family seat. His land passed to his younger brother who was able to acquire land in Middlesex and Cambridgeshire through an heiress marriage. His son became the next proprietor who, despite his enormous income from his land, royal and public service did little to increase the size of the estate. Instead he consolidated it and began a programme of domestic rebuilding. Whilst retaining the most valuable of his manors, he set up several of his sons as independent manorial lords, with estates in the vicinity of his own. He was succeeded by his son who not only continued to consolidate rather than expand the estate, but also preserved it from the consequences of civil war. His own income was relatively modest but he may have augmented it with the spoils of war. He completed the domestic building programme and passed the estate to his grandson, his son having predeceased him.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

The period chosen for this study of the late medieval Essex gentry is defined by two serious outbreaks of civil disorder, the Great Revolt of 1381 and Jack Cade's rebellion of 1450.<sup>1</sup> Two decapitations epitomise the drama of the events, the first is of Simon, Archbishop of Canterbury who was executed on Tower Hill by a mob of peasants largely from Kent and Essex and the second is of John Smith, rector of Sible Hedingham who was murdered in his home by a religious zealot during the unrest of 1450. The years between our two reference points were marked not only by other bouts of civil unrest but also of significant and lasting social, economic and political change in Essex and elsewhere. It is important to remember the general background to gentry life when studying the particular, and to bear in mind the brevity of their lives in comparison with our own. To put this in context one can give the example of a man born in 1381; his life expectation was forty years but if he was unusual and lucky enough to live until he was seventy, he would have survived his children and perhaps seen the baptism of his great-grandchildren. When we consider the lives of the gentry in our period we should not forget that theirs was a society that had been deeply traumatised by the appalling loss of life consequent upon pandemic outbreaks of plague. In 1381 old men could remember a population which had been twice its present size and younger men could remember the death of parents and siblings in

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<sup>1</sup> I.M.W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion* (1991), pp.142-143.

1348/49 and perhaps their spouse and children in 1360/61. There are other factors which it is useful to bear in mind but difficult to evaluate. What, for example, was the effect on children of the high levels of mortality among parents which caused some individuals to become what I have described as serial spouses? Did it perhaps contribute as much to the gentry's obvious ability to adapt to change, as their equally obvious unease about such matters as their origins and their life in the next world?

### **THE PARTICULARITY OF THE ESSEX GENTRY.**

The seventy years which span the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries have not previously been studied in depth in relation to the Essex gentry. The outstanding historians of medieval Essex include Jennifer Ward, who has concentrated on the higher nobility and gentry in the earlier fourteenth century, and Lawrence Poos whose work has largely been about the sub gentry in the period 1350-1525. It is therefore in illuminating the lives of the gentry in the period 1381-1450 that this work aims to achieve originality and to complement the work of others.

There have been many studies of the medieval county gentry over the last twenty-five years but it will be seen from Fig.7.1 that less than half of England has so far been covered. It is to be hoped, however, that a national picture of the gentry at least in terms of published work and completed theses, will emerge. It is possible that with the growth of interest in the *pays* and the region as areas of study, the county will gradually



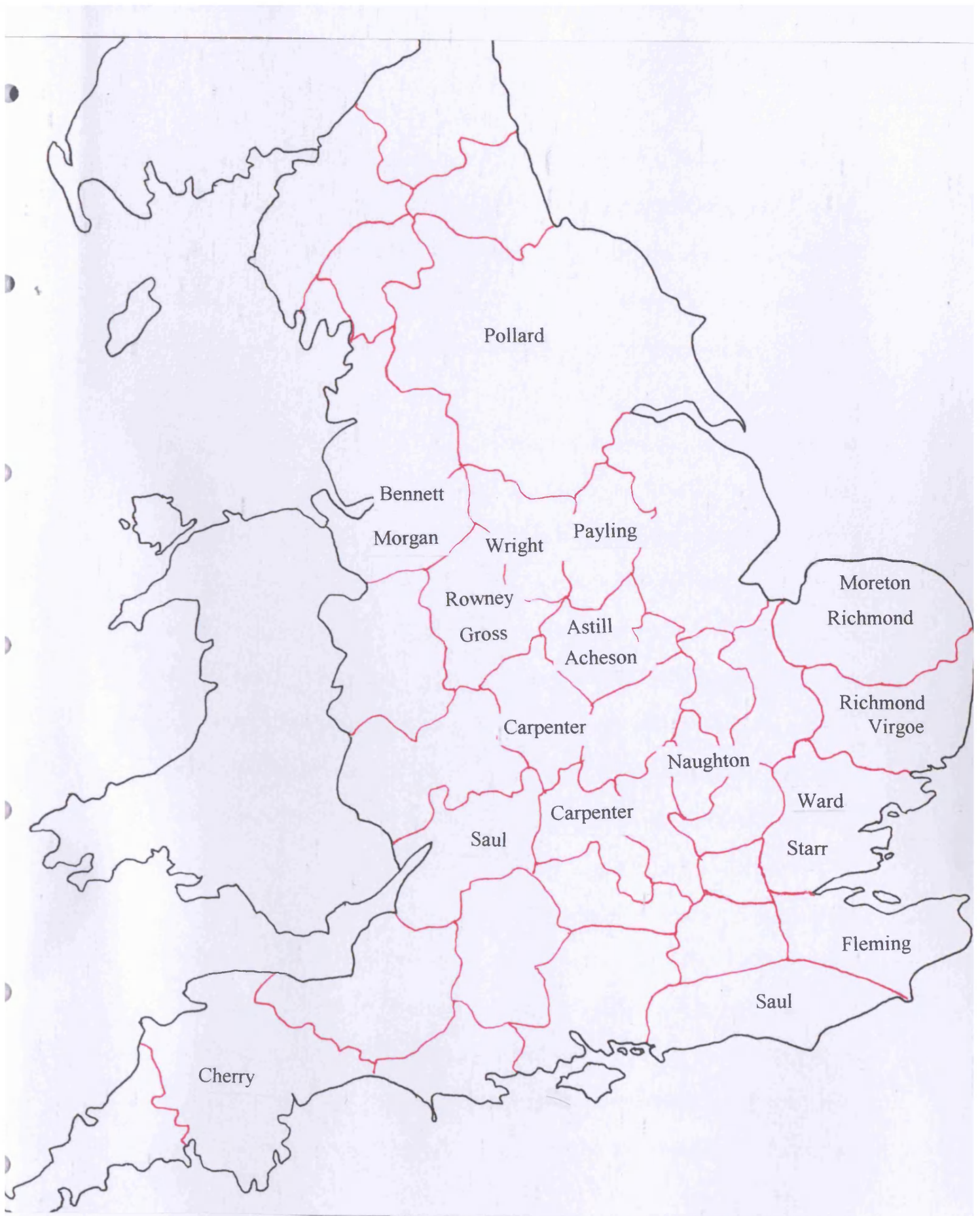


FIGURE 7.1 COMPLETED MEDIEVAL COUNTY GENTRY STUDIES.

assume less importance as the basis for future studies. However, in order to relate the present work to what has gone before, it is necessary to discuss the particularity of Essex and its medieval gentry. An honest appraisal would have to admit that in terms of its component parts, Essex had little that was unique in our period. However, in the sum of these parts the county had its own character and the gentry their own style.

As has been said in chapter one above, the boundaries of Essex are largely defined by nature in terms of rivers and the sea, and these have fixed the customary and administrative boundaries of the county for more than a thousand years. In order to discuss the dynamics of the county, two sets of internal boundaries have been employed in this thesis – for some purposes the ancient hundredal boundaries have proved useful, particularly in relation to taxation and population statistics. More broadly it has been found helpful to devise four regions which approximately correspond to the county's principal geographical features and these are the Essex Uplands, Lowlands, Heathlands and Marshlands. The latter two had greater significance in the medieval period than they do now; there is for example, little to be seen of the Heathlands. Within the county, either contained by or overlapping the geographical regions just described, were separate countrysides or *pays*, two of the most distinctive being the Rodings and the Dengie peninsula, both of which had retained their particular character since at least the Conquest. The analysis of economic data in chapters one and six has shown how localities within the county varied in terms of prosperity and population and it has been suggested that such variations were partly determined by the geography of these areas.

These variations would clearly have had consequences for the gentry in terms of their choice of residence, productivity of estates and the availability of human resources.

Much of Essex was what Oliver Rackham has described as 'Ancient Countryside', but extensive areas were 'planned', much of them in the remote, prehistoric past. The recent controversy regarding planned countrysides is discussed in chapter one above. A significant aspect of the Essex landscape is the almost total absence of visible monuments from the pre-medieval past, as compared with a county such as Wiltshire. Despite the enormous changes in the countryside since 1450 it is likely that much of Essex would be recognisable to the late medieval gentry. Areas such as the Dengie peninsula and the forests in the south-west of Essex have changed least of all. This thesis has not been much concerned with trade and industry in our period and research has yet to be done regarding the gentry's interest in the wool and cloth trade.

In chapter two the gentry were defined as the group of middling landowners between the higher nobility or magnates, and the sub gentry or peasants; for the purposes of our study the non-resident gentry are generally disregarded. In Essex as elsewhere there had been a class of landowners who, since the eleventh century, had the privileges and responsibilities of knighthood. Gradually knighthood lost its appeal such that by the end of the thirteenth century those landowners who were rich enough to qualify as knights but chose not to do so, began to be defined as a class that took the title esquire or *armiger*. A hundred years later there was pressure from the smaller landowners, those below the rank of esquire, to have their social status recognised;

gentlemen thus came into being. In Essex, as in most other counties, these titles or ranks were adopted gradually.

Members of the knightly class and the richer esquires developed as the county elite because of their wealth and the power it gave them, and they secured a virtual monopoly of prestigious county offices such as sheriff, MP and JP. These individuals were not constrained by administrative borders; their interests lay not only in adjacent counties where many held land, but in London where they participated in government. They found their wives, bought their manors, held office and resided where it was convenient or expedient. In a sense they can be regarded as regional rather than county gentry, but we claim them for Essex as their primary interests, residence and usually their origin, lay in the county. I have named this group the principal gentry though the term regional gentry is also appropriate. It would not be going too far to suggest that some of them who were important in government and at court could be termed national gentry. Below the principal gentry were the esquires whose activities were more generally confined within the county, though many of them were associated with friends and kin in neighbouring counties. The offices they held tended to be second rate, and they were much less likely to be members of magnate affinities than the principal gentry. The term greater gentry has been employed to describe them although county gentry could equally have been used. The third group, which came into its own in the second decade of the fifteenth century were the poorer esquires, gentlemen, franklins and yeomanry with an income of about five pounds a year who held at least one manor. These were the lesser gentry, otherwise the parish gentry, whose focus was



on their home manor rather than on the county. They were by far the largest group, just as the principal gentry were smallest. We can ask how much these gentry identified with their county; clearly it must have varied considerably. Most of the principal gentry with their capital manor in Essex, were born in the county and may have regarded it as their *patria* though they may have had divided loyalties.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the lesser gentry were more inclined to think in terms of their 'country' meaning their immediate neighbourhood. The wills and correspondence of the middling Essex gentry esquires suggest that they at least, identified with their county.<sup>3</sup>

As has been said, neither administrative boundaries, physical geography nor county affiliations prevented the gentry from mixing with their equals in other counties. The western border of Essex was particularly transparent in this respect, the gentry interpenetrating each other's society in terms of marriage, land holding, kinship and friendship. This would have been assisted in purely political terms by the joint administration of Hertfordshire and Essex in respect of the shrievalty and escheatry. These offices of sheriff and escheator were held by gentry from both counties though the gentry of Essex predominated. No doubt members of the gentry who held such offices would have been well known on either side of the Lea/Stort boundary and would themselves have got to know the gentry in both counties. This joint administration was not a feature of local government in many other counties. As to Suffolk, there was also a good deal of contact between their gentry and the Essex

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<sup>2</sup> Places of birth are given in proof of age inquests.

<sup>3</sup> Wills frequently specify that charitable donations are to be made in particular localities with which testators clearly identify.

gentry and no evidence of tension between the two communities; individuals such as Sir Richard Waldegrave of Smallbridge, Suffolk were sought after as feoffees and executors by the Essex gentry in much the same way as they trusted their Essex neighbours. Contact with the Cambridgeshire and Middlesex gentry was much more limited, possibly because the mutual border was small. Communication with Kent, separated by the Thames, appears to have been almost negligible and there are few instances of marriage, friendship or kinship across the southern border of Essex.

If we look at the internal dynamics of Essex gentry society a complex picture emerges. This society was quite small, perhaps three hundred and fifty to four hundred heads of families at any time, and the county was relatively compact for, having no particular geographical obstacles, there was no village or manor which was more than a day's ride from any other in the county. What is also clear about the gentry is that they were a dynamic group that adapted to social, economic and political changes in order to survive. The downshift from knighthood and the arrival of gentlemen took place at a time when attrition rates were high; few families lasted for five generations in the direct male line so replacements were constantly needed.

There were several sources of supply; from outside the county came cadets of gentry families who married Essex heiresses and were quickly assimilated into Essex gentry society: Sir Robert Swinburne and Poncius Pointz for example. Other gentry simply moved to Essex as a matter of convenience. There was also another group, comprising London-based lawyers and merchants who found it convenient to invest their capital in

an estate within easy reach of the capital. Essex was often chosen, but so too were the other counties surrounding London particularly Kent.<sup>4</sup> Others who provided replacement were franklins, yeomen and husbandmen who had accumulated sufficient wealth to acquire a manor in the county. Lordship enables them to demand *worship* – perhaps from their former peers. Such men climbing the first few rungs of the social ladder were prone to invent myths which accounted for their rise and we will return to this subject later. For Essex gentry in our period there is very little evidence of economic failure, comparatively few manors were sold by their lords; manors generally changed hands by descent. What was relatively common was biological failure after an average of three to five generations, perhaps one hundred to one hundred and fifty years. Clearly Essex gentry society was permeable, and if parvenus could support the lifestyle they craved, they appear to have been tolerated by the longer-established families.

As has been said, many replacements for Essex society came from London, but the capital also had many other influences on the county. As a result of its proximity, the south of Essex was able to supply London with food and fuel more easily than the north and perhaps largely for this reason the south gradually overtook the north in terms of economic prosperity.<sup>5</sup> London had a wider influence however for, to judge from the Essex surnames to be found in London in our period, a substantial number of men (and

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<sup>4</sup> A. Brown, 'London and north-west Kent in the late middle ages: the development of a land market' *Arch.Cant.* 92 (1976), pp.145-156.

<sup>5</sup> Jennifer Ward has shown that the 'combination of trading potential and agricultural development was crucial' in determining the economic success of the Essex hundreds. J.C. Ward, 'Peasants in Essex c. 1200-c. 1340: the influences of landscape and lordship' *E.A.H.* 29 (1998), pp.115-121.

probably women) went there to look for work. Some of them went as apprentices, others as servants and labourers, and some possibly as craftsmen. Some apprentices clearly prospered, as their wills were to show, and at the end of their lives they remembered with charitable bequests the village where they had been born.<sup>6</sup> It is possible that some returned as manorial lords. There was also immigration in reverse; Essex appealed to those who wanted to invest their capital in an estate within easy reach of London. Lawyers and merchants settled in the county and their children were born with gentry status; they did not have to achieve it. In some instances these families prospered, Clement Spice's family being an example which may be cited, his grandson and namesake represented Essex in Parliament and the family continued for several generations. John Hende's sons, both named John, were successively chosen as sheriff (though neither had a son to follow him). Londoners appear to have taken an interest in Essex manors held by serjeanty, the exercise of which brought some social aspirants into the king's presence at his coronation by giving them the right to participate in its ceremonial.<sup>7</sup> John Wiltshire acquired Heydon and Richard Lyons acquired Liston on such terms and in Lyon's case, he is known to have exercised his rights at Richard II's coronation.<sup>8</sup> However, we do not know how the long-established gentry, most of whom did not hold their land on such extravagant terms, regarded the social pretensions of these newcomers.

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<sup>6</sup> R.R.Sharpe ed., Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Hustings, London 1258-1688 (2 vols, 1889-90).

<sup>7</sup> J.H.Round, The King's Serjeants and Officers of State, with their Coronation Services (1911).

<sup>8</sup> A.R.Myers, 'The wealth of Richard Lyons' in T.A. Sandquist and M.R.Powicke eds, Essays in Medieval History Presented to Bertie Wilkinson (1969), pp.301-329.

Essex was a dynamic county with a population of some three hundred and fifty resident gentry of all ranks: it was also a busy place. There were some eighty markets,<sup>9</sup> one hundred parks, fifty religious houses, fifteen boroughs, four hundred villages, five hundred churches and chapels, fourteen hundred manor-houses as well as innumerable hamlets, farms and small settlements; its total population was about 70,000 in our period. Much of the county was sparsely inhabited, particularly the wooded area in the south west and the coastal marshlands. Many of the gentry would have known each other well, particularly the principal gentry who would have met on social and business occasions. The parish gentry are unlikely to have seen many of their kind except perhaps on market days or meetings of the shire and hundred, but no doubt also at the celebration of rites of passage. As has been described in Chapter three above, Essex society, particularly gentry society, was an immensely complex organism and the county community did not simply consist of the political elite as has been suggested in relation to other counties. It was much more the case that gentry society consisted of a network of communities which overlapped and interpenetrated one another.<sup>10</sup>

Another aspect of Essex gentry life which differentiates it from other counties is the influence exercised by its resident magnate families, the Bourghiers, de Veres, Fitzwalters and Bohuns (Countess Joan). There were of course many other magnates with landed interests in the county but these appear to have been infrequent visitors

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<sup>9</sup> R.H.Britnell, 'Essex markets before 1350' *E.A.H.* 13 (1981), pp.15-21.

<sup>10</sup> Eric Acheson recognised this phenomenon in relation to the fifteenth-century gentry of Leicestershire: 'This shire community stood at the hub of a series of interlocking social and political circles, some of which were parochial and narrow, some of which extended beyond the county border into neighbouring shires and some of which could be regarded as national in scope.' *A Gentry Community: Leicestershire in the Fifteenth Century c.1422-c.1485* (1992), p.202.

rather than residents. If we consider the impact these families had on the Essex gentry it is interesting to compare it with the single magnate domination experienced by the gentry of Devonshire and the weakness of the Derbyshire higher nobility.<sup>11</sup> In Essex there seems to have been a balance between magnate and gentry interest. As has been shown in chapter five above the Essex gentry had vastly more income at their disposal than the resident magnates, this perhaps contributing to the gentry's sense of independence. Another important factor in the equation is the amount of time the residential aristocracy actually spent in Essex; an analysis of this situation sheds further light on the situation of the independence of the gentry. Of equal importance in this context is that due to high mortality rates among the Essex magnate group; minorities were frequent and long; clearly an absentee or under-age aristocracy is bound to be less influential than one which is adult and usually resident.

If we consider the three long-established families, de Vere, Bourghier and Fitzwalter, the statistics are as follows. Between 1381 and 1450 the 9<sup>th</sup> earl of Oxford died in 1392, the 10<sup>th</sup> earl in 1400, and the 11<sup>th</sup> in 1417; the 12<sup>th</sup> earl survived until 1462. The succession of earls includes a total of twenty-seven years when there was a minority, at least seven when the earl was mainly abroad or otherwise absent, giving a total of thirty-four missing years of adult influence in the county. The case of the Fitzwalters is similar; between 1381 and 1432 when the last lord died, there were four adult lords. During this fifty-two year period, eighteen were taken up with minorities

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<sup>11</sup> M.Cherry, 'The Courtenay earls of Devon: the formation and disintegration of a late medieval aristocratic affinity' *Southern History*, 1, (1979), pp.71-97: S.M.Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry in the Fifteenth Century* Derbyshire Rec.Soc.8 (1983).

and thirteen with the head of the family absent abroad, a total of thirty-one years' absence. The Bourghier family only lasted thirty-nine of the seventy years in question, the second lord being succeeded by his son in 1400 and he died in 1409. From the total of thirty-nine available years, three years' absence needs to be subtracted, leaving a total of thirty-six. Out of one hundred and sixty-one possible years of adult residence by the heads of three families, only ninety-three were achieved, an average of thirty-one years per family during the seventy years between 1381 and 1450. The fourth resident magnate family presents a different picture: the Bohuns were represented by a single individual, Countess Joan, who was supported for sixteen years by her powerful son-in-law Thomas of Woodstock. It was Countess Joan who gave Essex a measure of political continuity and stability during the reign of Richard II. The dowager countess had been widowed in 1373 when her husband Humphrey Bohun earl of Hereford, Essex and Northamptonshire died. For the rest of her long life (she died in 1419) she was based at Pleshey. Her daughter Eleanor married Thomas of Woodstock in 1376 when her husband was given custody of Pleshey and other Essex properties. Eleanor came of age in 1380 and subsequently had livery of Bohun estates. Her husband died in 1397, she and her only son Humphrey in 1399. The Bohun inheritance then passed to her daughter Anne, subsequently countess of Stafford. Countess Joan's other daughter was Mary who married Henry Bolingbroke. As mother-in-law to one king and grandmother to another, Countess Joan would undoubtedly be expected to use her influence on behalf of her affinity, and be in a position to do so.

The wealth of the resident magnates and gentry in Essex has been contrasted in chapter six above. However, an analysis of Essex advowsons during the period 1381-1450 provides additional evidence of their comparative wealth. Newcourt records three hundred and sixty-nine benefices for the late medieval period in Essex and of these, two hundred and five (56 percent) were held by the clergy, forty-four (11 percent) by magnates, one hundred and six (29 percent) by the gentry, and fourteen (4 percent) by the Crown. One hundred and thirty-five of the benefices were vicarages and almost all of these (one hundred and twenty-seven) were held by the church (Fig. 7.2).

Almost half of the advowsons (one hundred and five) held by the clergy were held by religious orders in Essex, Austin Canons (thirty-nine) and Benedictines (forty-two). Three religious houses; Barking Abbey, St. Osyth Abbey and Prittlewell Priory held eleven advowsons each. Outside Essex, the Bishop of London presented to twenty-five livings and the Dean of St. Pauls to nine. The remainder were from a variety of religious houses including Clare and Stoke-by-Nayland across the Suffolk border. Many of these advowsons had been granted to religious orders at an early date, some of them by the founders of religious houses.

It is indicative of the comparative wealth that the gentry retained one hundred and six advowsons and the magnates forty-four. Most of the gentry who were patrons of livings were resident in the county and held the advowson of their own parish church. Advowsons usually formed part of the estate of a capital manor and were additional to advowsons of manorial chapels. The right to present to a particular living clearly gave



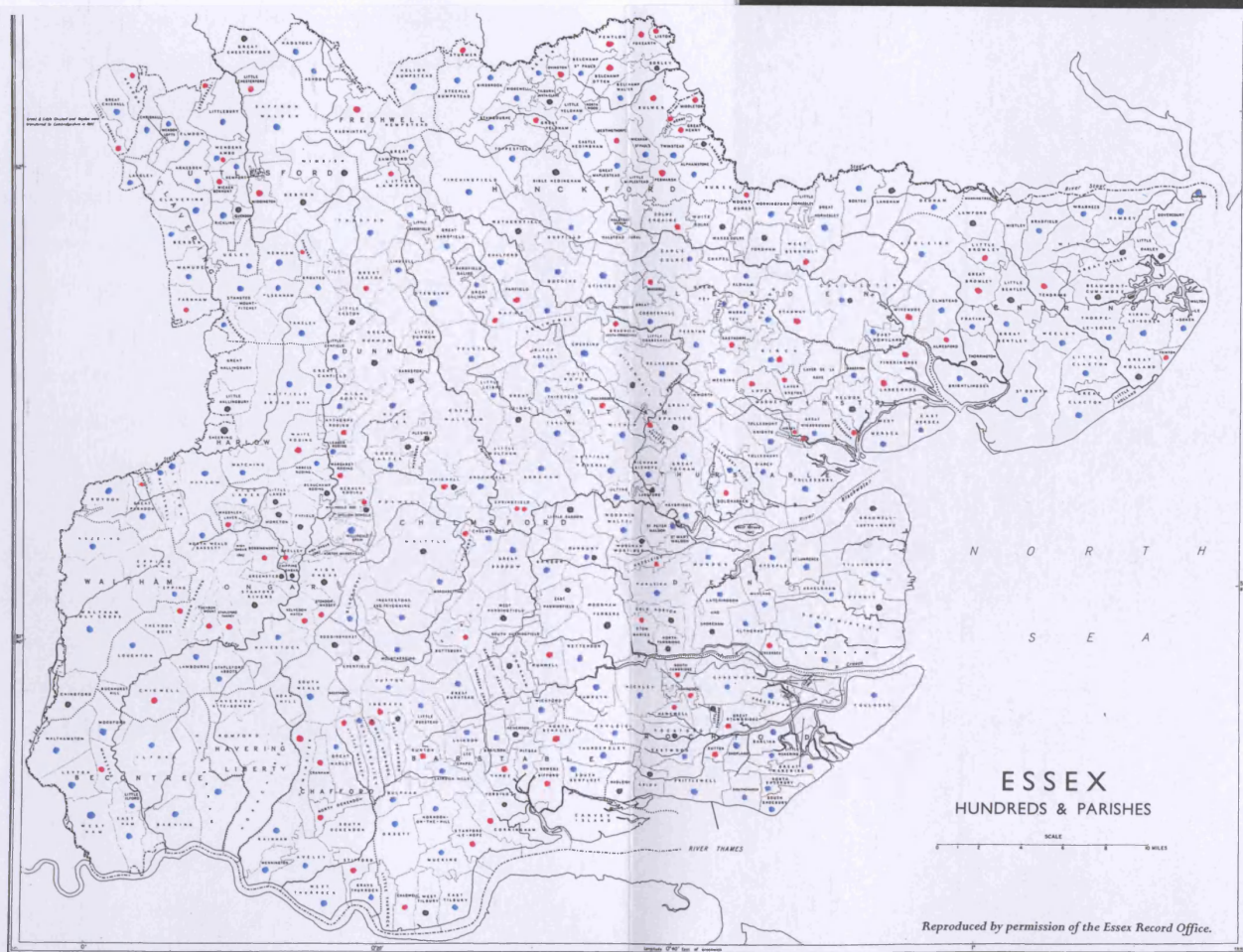


FIGURE 7.2 ESSEX ADVOWNSONS 1381 – 1450

MAGNATE ● GENTRY ● CHURCH ●

gentry additional authority in that parish and were probably sought after for that reason. It is significant that mercantile families moving from London seldom obtained rights of patronage despite the advantages they would bring them. Patronage tended to be exercised by the long-established families whose advowsons descended with their estates; they seem seldom to have been sold on the open market. The subject of advowsons draws attention to the general question of the relationship between the Essex gentry and the clergy but it has not been considered in this thesis.

One of the most distinctive features of the Essex countryside during the late medieval period was the church/hall complex. The majority of Essex villages were so organised as to have the parish church and the principal manor in close proximity to one another. Churches which were completely isolated from the hall and village such as Beauchamp Roding and Little Canfield were rare; it was more often the case that if church and manor were separated, the church was in the village and the manor outside, as at Bradfield, Bradwell and Helion Bumpstead. The area that has the highest proportion of such separations is the Tendring hundred. In some cases where a church is now a long way from what was the capital manor there may, as at Little Parndon, have been a former manor house on a now deserted site close to the church.

Where church and hall are in close proximity, the average distance is about 200 metres. Some are within 50 metres, as at Lindsell, where it is necessary to walk through the farmyard to approach the church, and at Berners Roding and East Mersea where, on each site, the church and hall are surrounded by the same moat. In this context there are

many moated rectories in Essex, as at Great Hallingbury, Great Tey, Little Canfield and Pebmarsh. In a few areas, the manor still seems to exercise proprietary rights over the church as at Ovington (Plate 1.3) and Great Braxted where the church and hall are in a large park surrounded by a high brick wall.

A number of church/hall complexes also include a motte as at Great Easton, Mount Bures and Stebbing whilst others were in close proximity to a castle as at Clavering, Ongar and Pleshey. The origin of church/hall complexes lies in the remote past at a time when local lords gave priests permission to build a church next to the hall for mutual convenience. Throughout our period it suited both priest and lord to continue this relationship and in many cases it complemented the exercise of patronage of the living.

Before leaving the subject of manor houses it is worth making the point that in the absence of suitable building stone in Essex the majority of Essex houses which survive from the late medieval period were constructed with timber and brick. Such houses are not peculiar to Essex but they are characteristic of the homes of the gentry during our period.

We have seen how families attained gentry status and how, having done so, they nevertheless seemed to have been sufficiently insecure about their arrival that they fashioned for themselves what Philip Morgan has called 'lineage myths' and by such means, he remarks, 'the gentry invented themselves'. He sees the county gentry as a

cultural, rather than an economic construct, and in some cases it was their cultural aspirations that separated them from the yeomanry or sub-gentry. The gentry he says, 'maintained their exclusivity by means of a pattern of inherited and invented traditions'.<sup>12</sup> Despite this argument it is not possible to ignore the fact that what generally defined the gentry, what differentiated them from their humbler neighbours, was their lordship over men.

Those families whose admission to gentry society was initially dependent upon an heiress marriage were particularly prone to invent a story which endorsed their right to gentry status. Lawyers, perhaps due to the proverbial unpopularity of their profession, seem only grudgingly to have been accepted as gentry; everyone knew where they had come from, and how they had made the money that enabled them to buy an estate. It was manorial proprietorship rather than their professional status that entitled them to enter gentry society. One can sense the disapproval of contemporaries which was passed down to Leland a hundred years later, in the following description of the distinguished lawyer Robert Darcy of Maldon (d.1448) whose lineage was doubtful but whose rise was explained as follows: 'One Robert Darcy clerke, as I hard, to a gentilman or lawier, married a riche marchauntes wife of Maldon that had of 3 or 4 shippes, and apon that purchasid landes'.<sup>13</sup> For other men, some of whom were perhaps just a generation or two from servile birth, the key to gentility was proven lineage and military experience. It was not necessarily enough for them that they occupied the

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<sup>12</sup> I would like to thank Dr Philip Morgan for allowing me to read during a Keele University Summer School, notes for his lectures entitled 'Distaffs and inkwells: women in the Middle Ages' and 'Lineage myths and the education of the English gentry' from which the above quotations are taken.

<sup>13</sup> L.T.Smith, The Itinerary of John Leland 4 (1909), p.87.

houses of their local predecessors and legitimated their status by preparing tombs in manorial chapels; they had to demonstrate by other means that they were entitled to *worship*. There were families who had almost certainly held their land in Essex since soon after the Conquest such as the Markshalls of Markshall, the Mounteneys of Mountnessing and the Marneys of Layer Marney who, as far as is known, did not produce spurious lineage myths. Of even greater antiquity were the Barringtons of Hatfield Broad Oak whose descent can in fact be traced before the conquest, but they still claimed the fictitious Sir Odinell Barrington, Saxon forester of the Forest of Essex as their ancestor.<sup>14</sup> They were wrong in detail but right in principle. In 1604 Robert, Lord Rich was well aware of the Barringtons' origins when he wrote ' the aunciente name of Barrington....whose auncestors I canne averre to be knightes before Englishe was in England, or anie name of knightes that I knowe were in the countrye, that now make greate shew and are newe comers in amonge us'.<sup>15</sup>

A family that went to some lengths to mask its obscure origins, apparently unaware of its plausible descent from Norman ancestors, was Tyrell of East Horndon. Their scant genealogical knowledge, combined with the need to account for their spectacular rise to prominence, led to the invention of a lineage myth which persisted in family tradition until the seventeenth century and beyond. As has been said in chapter six above, the Tyrells owed their enormous prosperity in the late fourteenth century to the efforts of James Tyrell of Buttsbury fl.1280-1330 who fortuitously married the daughter of a long-established gentry family. It was his wife's connections and her

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<sup>14</sup> Morant, History of Essex 2, p.503.

<sup>15</sup> A.Searle, ed., Barrington Family Letters 1628-1632 Camden 4<sup>th</sup> ser. 28 (1983), p.1

manorial dowry that launched Tyrell into the gentry. This was not good enough for his descendants who put it about that their seat in East Horndon had come to them through the marriage of 'Sir' James Tyrell and the heiress of Sir William Heron of Heron Hall. The truth is different, for as we saw in Chapter six above, Heron Hall was purchased by James Tyrell's son Sir Thomas about 1376 and there is no evidence that there was ever a Heron family at Heron Hall. Not content with this much invention, the family related the tale that 'Sir' James had killed and decapitated a 'great serpent' which had been preying on passers-by in East Horndon churchyard.<sup>16</sup> This feat of arms gave him the right credentials as far as his descendants were concerned, they even went so far as to put a stained glass window in Heron Hall that showed the redoubtable warrior in action 'thereby causing the tradition to be often mentioned'.<sup>17</sup> When in the seventeenth century the Tyrells were questioned by visiting officers of the College of Arms they produced family trees that showed a largely imaginary succession of knights connecting them with Walter Tyrell who killed William Rufus in the New Forest.<sup>18</sup>

The Bourghchiers' rise from obscurity to magnate status was so rapid that it seems to have failed to make them immune from the need to create a lineage myth to support their claim to ancient gentility. Weever describes a painting in Little Dunmow which may reflect their insecurity: 'In the hall of the manor house of Newton-hall, in this parish, remaineth an old painting, two postures, the one for an ancestor of the

<sup>16</sup> E. Ward, *All Saints Church, East Horndon* (1962), p.5. The late Revd. Ernleigh Ward quotes 'a curious tradition' written down in 1695 by John Tyrell of Billericay but he does not give further details of his source.

<sup>17</sup> Ward, *All Saints Church*, p.6

<sup>18</sup> W.C.Metcalf ed., *Visitations of the County of Essex* Harleian Soc. 13 & 14 (2 vols, 1878-1879). The Tyrells apparently recognised their descent from the Clare family, (Richard Fitzgilbert, lord of Clare d.1136) by adapting the Clare arms (or, three chevrons gules) for their own use.

BOURCHIER combatant with another, being a pagan king, for the truth of CHRIST, whom the said Englishman overcame, and in memory thereof, his descendants have ever since bore the head of the said infidel, as also used the surname BOWSER, as I had it out of the collection of AUGUSTIN VINCENT, Windsor herald, deceased'.<sup>19</sup>

There are similarities here with the Tyrell legend of East Horndon, as there are in the lineage myth of the Heveninghams of Little Totham which Morant describes; 'Another Sir William, was with Richard I at the siege of ACON (*sic*), where he overcame and slew Sapher, the govenor of the castle there, who had challenged him to a single combat'.<sup>20</sup>

There are many other examples of the unease in which the gentry lived in respect of their origins. Probably the best known is the case of the Paston family who for several generations were haunted by accusations of the servile origin of their ancestors. Sir Lewis John (d.1442) faced similar difficulties in Essex but he was able to clear his name by producing affidavits confirming his gentry birth sworn by men of good standing in his native county of Wales.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps there is no better illustration of fear of exposure than that which must have overtaken members of the Bendish family (named from a small eponymous hamlet in the village of Helion Bumpstead) in which the Helion family had been manorial lords since at least 1086.<sup>22</sup> As the Bendishes grew prosperous and the Helions began to fade, the Helions spitefully brought an action to

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<sup>19</sup> J. Weever, Ancient Funerall Monuments (1631), p.391.

<sup>20</sup> Morant, History of Essex 1 p.386.

<sup>21</sup> A.D.Carr, 'Sir Lewis John – a medieval London Welshman' Bulletin of Board of Celtic Studies 22 (1967-1968), pp.260-270.

<sup>22</sup> J.H.Round, 'The Helions of Helion's Bumpstead' T.E.A.S. 8 n.s. (1903), pp187-191.

court in 1415 to determine whether the brothers Thomas and John Bendish were *nativi* of John Helion.<sup>23</sup> We do not know the outcome of the case although we can presume the Bendish brothers were successful in proving their free status particularly as Thomas Bendish had served as escheator in 1408. It was the Bendish family that triumphed over the Helions in the long term for we know that the Helions were extinct a generation after the court action whilst the Bendish family was rich and prosperous until the eighteenth century. Plate 7.1 shows the memorial proudly erected at Steeple Bumpstead in the sixteenth century to successive generations of Bendish ancestors by the then head of the family.<sup>24</sup>

In the sixteenth century, the Pointz family of North Ockendon (originally from Gloucestershire) descended from a fourteenth-century parvenu member of the Essex gentry, highlighted their long tenure of the manor by placing in their family chapel in the parish church a series of mural monuments, each one depicting (in dress appropriate to the period) a different generation of their ancestors. They seem to have gone to great lengths to satisfy their need for appropriate gentry ancestors even after two hundred years as manorial lords in the parish. Was this a measure of their insecurity or merely a celebration of their ancestry? Plate 7.2 illustrates part of this series of monuments in the Pointz chapel.

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<sup>23</sup> P.R.O. Chancery Miscellanea, Bundle 58. Essex. File 1. C260/127/4.

<sup>24</sup> John Helion, the last of his line in direct male descent from the Domesday tenant of their manor died childless in 1450. Sir Henry Bendish, 4<sup>th</sup> baron of Helion Bumpstead died childless in 1717. John Helion's sister Isabel was his heir and she married (as her second husband) Thomas Drake, who was of villein origin but rose to be Clerk of the Peace in 1462. His son, Thomas Drake of Colchester, gentleman, who was MP for Maldon 1467-68, the heir of the Helions was therefore only one generation removed from unfree status.





PLATE 7.1 BENDISH MONUMENT : STEEPLE BUMPSTEAD





Joan Armburgh, writing to her opponent in 1429/30 in the course of a bitter dispute over land which she claimed should have descended to her from her ancestors plays the lineage myth card for all it is worth when she refers to Radwinter Hall 'that hath ben an habitation and a dwellyng place for many a worthi man of myn antisetters from the conquest in to this tyme and long tyme befor'.<sup>25</sup> It seems that even families that moved away from Essex still clung to a rosy image of their ancestors in the county, 'Master Estsax of Barkshire cummith oute of the house of Estsaxis long sins knighttes of fame yn Estsax. The landes of Estsax of Estsax were disparkelid, and the glorie of that familie was almost exetincid'.<sup>26</sup>

Having considered the gentry's insecurity, how close can we really get to them? A few of their letters survived, some muniments with their seals and court rolls that they must have seen written down while the manor court was in session. We know from proof of age inquisitions when and where they were born but in only a single case (if we exclude Sir John Hawkwood who died in Italy) do we know how they died. Richard Baynard is the case in point and he is described in an anonymous account of c.1443/8 of a dispute regarding an inheritance that included land in Essex. According to the writer, Baynard took a partisan approach to the case and 'wolde not cesse thereby but toke with him gentill men of that contre ye which hadde no maner knowleche of ye trouth of the mater'. No doubt it was a judgement of God that 'with inne a while after as he went a huntyng with my lady of Bergeveny sodenly he felle downe and dyed

<sup>25</sup> C. Carpenter, ed., *The Armburgh Papers* (1998), p. 121.

<sup>26</sup> Smith, *Leland's Itinerary* 2, p. 16.

with owte howsill and shrifte'.<sup>27</sup> Baynard can hardly have been surprised by death as he was about sixty-three years old and had already drafted at least six versions of his will.<sup>28</sup>

Sadly there are virtually no surviving artefacts that are known to have belonged to identifiable members of the Essex gentry. There are, however, a few items of jewellery that they wore. It is thought that the silver brooch inscribed *IHS est amor cordis mei* may have belonged to the Lady of Little Bromley Hall; it was found in Little Bromley churchyard by a grave digger in 1892.<sup>29</sup> Almost as personal as such a brooch are the impressions of personal seals, sometimes from finger rings, attached to documents; occasionally the wax bears a thumb print, perhaps of the owner of the seal.

We do not know how they spoke English although it was, in most cases, the dialect of Chaucer. As to the gentry who had moved to Essex from other parts of England, did Sir Robert Swinburne from Northumberland have difficulty in understanding Clement Spice from Suffolk? Did they always find it easier to communicate in French rather than in English? There are a few instances, other than in court records, of the reported speech of the gentry which bring us close to them; there is one vivid piece in the Armburgh manuscript: Richard Fox the lawyer from Arkesden had a change of heart during the proceedings and attempted to persuade Sir John Tyrell, Richard Baynard and

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<sup>27</sup> Carpenter, *Armburgh Papers* p.62. Lady Bergavenny was the widow of Sir William Beauchamp, Lord Bergavenny (d.1411) and niece of Countess Joan (d.1419) in whose affinity Baynard had acted as lawyer.

<sup>28</sup> E.R.O. D./DH VB 45A, VB 45, VB 52 A, VB 57, VB 58, VB 59.1.

<sup>29</sup> C.Starr, *St Mary the Virgin Little Bromley, Essex* (1991), p.1.

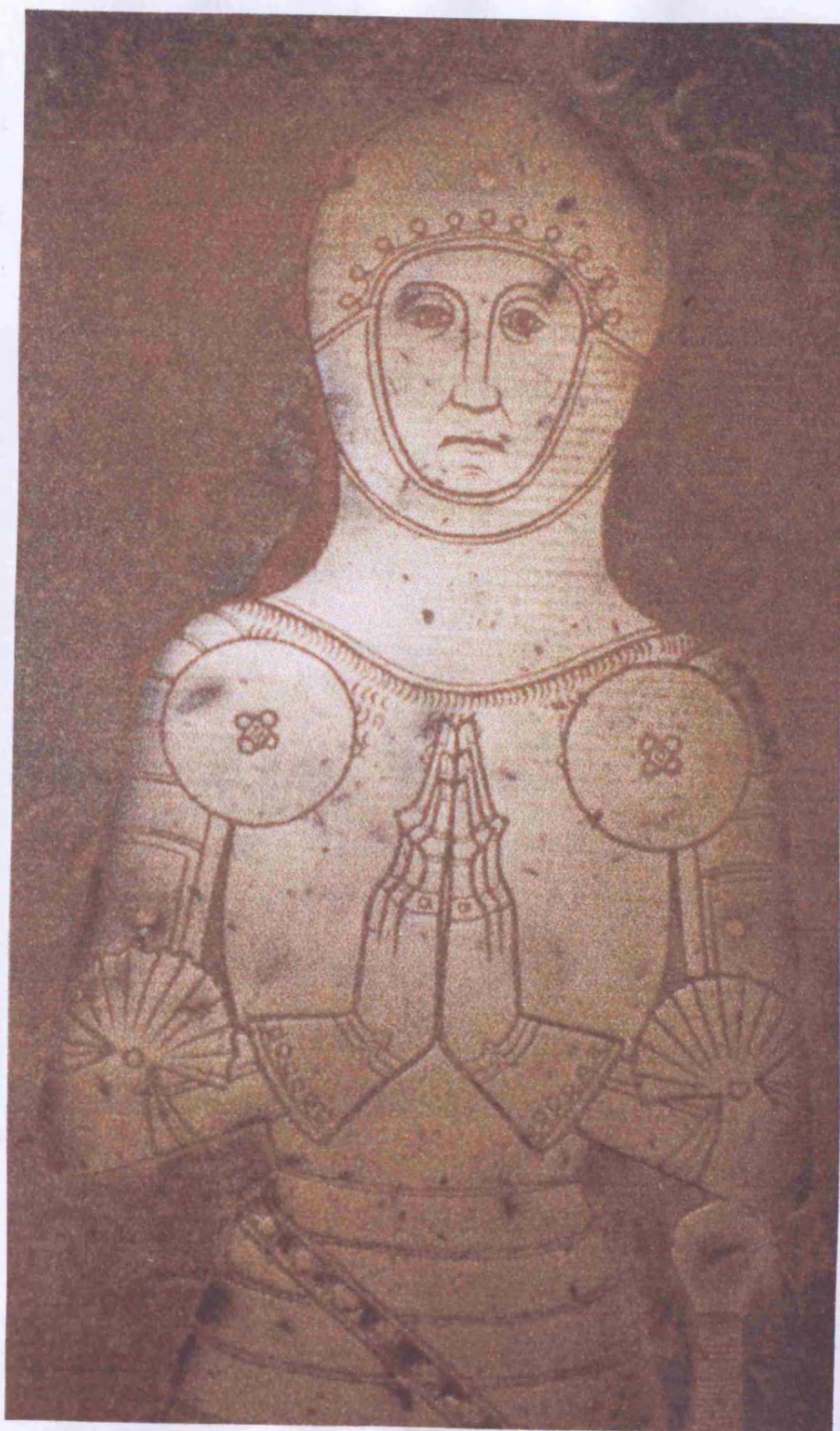
Robert Darcy to change their minds too: 'than Ffox seyde these wordes, "In the peyne of my lyfe, this gentil woman schall over lyve vs alle and have her lyflode maugre oure hedys"''.<sup>30</sup>

Do we know what the gentry looked like? As has been said in chapter five above, the brass 'portraits' of the gentry in parish churches were not portraits at all; they are stylised representations. However, it can be assumed that families were not generally unhappy with the image, and that it provided at least a conventional view of the deceased's appearance. The armour, the clothes, the hairstyle, these at least were authentic. Thus Thomas Coggeshall at Springfield (Plate 7.3) and Thomas Torell at Willingale Doe (Plate 7.4) provide us with an 'identikit' picture of the gentry in our period. Similarly, the portrait of Lady Alice Tyrell at East Horndon and the painting of a woman at Park Farm, St Osyth (Plate 7.5) seem to show us how a noble lady would have dressed, in the case of Lady Alice, in some detail. The stained glass at Long Melford showing Lady Elizabeth Tyrell, the daughter of Robert Darcy of Maldon has so much detail that it may tempt us to think it is a real portrait. (Plate 7.6) Perhaps the closest we can really get to this is in the roof bosses found in many parish churches that may well be caricatures of local dignitaries. Plate 7.7 shows a roof boss in Fingringhoe church that may represent John Doreward, (d.1420), lessee of the manor.

We can in fact take the question of the appearance of individual members of the gentry a little further. In 1779 a coffin buried beneath a stone slab (Plate 7.8) in

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<sup>30</sup> Carpenter, Armburgh Papers, p.63.



**PLATE 7.3 THOMAS COGGESHALL: SPRINGFIELD**





**PLATE 7.4 THOMAS TORELL: WILLINGALE DOE**





**PLATE 7.5 LADY FROM PARK FARM: ST OSYTH.**





PLATE 7.6 LADY ELIZABETH TYRELL: LONG MELFORD



**PLATE 7.7 ROOF BOSS : WIVENHOE.**





**PLATE 7.8 GERARD BRAYBROOKE MONUMENT: DANBURY**

Danbury church was brought to light during the preparations for a new burial.

When the coffin was opened it was found to contain the body of a young man floating in a liquid 'somewhat resembling mushroom catchup' which was duly tasted and found to be 'aromatic, tho' not very pungent, partaking of the taste of catchup and of the pickle of Spanish olives.' The body was examined and found to be 'tolerably perfect, no part appearing decayed but the throat and part of one arm'. The body 'was covered with a kind of shirt of linen' and 'the limbs were of excellent symmetry: the general appearance of the whole body conveyed the idea of hearty youth, not in the least emaciated by sickness. The whole length of the corpse very little exceeded five feet'. Finally, 'when the jaws were opened, they exhibited a set of teeth perfectly white, which was likewise the colour of the palate, and all the inside of the mouth.'<sup>31</sup> If the corpse discovered in 1779 was the man commemorated by the grave slab he was Gerard Braybrooke (d.1422) son and heir of Sir Gerard Braybrooke of Danbury.

In more recent times the bodies of Richard Fox and his wife were brought to light in Arkesden church. According to a manuscript of c.1640 'Betwixt ye body of the Church, and the South yle stands an Altar Tombe couered with a Marble Stone'.<sup>32</sup> This stone survives but the rest of the tomb was destroyed when the church was restored in 1855. The manuscript has a note in a later hand that describes how the altar tomb of 'Squire' Fox was examined in 1855, 'digging under it were found two Skeletons - a

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<sup>31</sup> T.White, 'Curious leaden coffin found at Danbury Essex.' *Gentleman's Magazine* (1789), pp.337-338.

<sup>32</sup> F.W.Steer, 'The Arkesden heraldic manuscript' *Essex Review* 239 (1951), pp.135-142.

Man & Woman. The Mans legs were crossed – but neither of the bodies had been buried in a Coffin. The bodies did not lie parallel with the Walls of the Church but were pointed diagonally across the Chancel thus obtaining a due East and West position.’ The brass commemorating Richard Fox and showing him in a full suit of fashionably modern armour (Plate 7.9) remains at Arkesden and it is to be hoped that his worst fears, expressed during the Armburgh dispute, ‘we lyke fooles have put our soules in jepardye for other mennes avantage’ will not be realised.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Carpenter, Armburgh Papers, p.63.





**PLATE 7.9 RICHARD FOX: ARKESDEN.**

## **APPENDIX 1 : ESSEX ARMORIAL 1381 - 1450.**

ARDERNE :	Paly or and gules, a chief argent with three lozenges gules therein, on the middle lozenge a chess rook or.
ASPALL :	Azure, three chevrons or.
BARDFIELD :	Argent, a bend azure with three fleur-de-lis thereon.
BARLEY :	Barry wavy of six, ermine and sable.
BARRINGTON :	Argent, 3 chevronels, gules, in chief a file of 3 lambeaux or, a label of 3 points, azure.
BATEMAN :	Sable, 3 lions couchant, 2 & 1, argent.
BAUD :	Gules three chevrons argent.
BAYNARD :	Gules, three chevrons ermine with a label of five points, or.
BELHOUSE :	Argent, crusily sable with three lions, gules.
BENDISH :	Argent, a chevron sable between three rams heads razed, azure.
BERNERS :	Quarterly or and vert, with a crescent for difference.
BIGOD :	Argent, a chief gules with two crescents or therein.
BLOUNT :	Quarterly argent and gules, on a bend sable, three eagles or.
BOURGCHIER :	Argent, a cross engrailed gules between four water-bougets sable.
BOUTETORT :	Or, a saltire engrailed sable.
BOYS :	Gules, a griffon voltant and rampant or within a bordure engrailed, sable.
BOXTED :	Quarterly argent and gules on a bend sable besant.
BRAY :	Argent, a chevron between three roundels sable, within a bordure engrailed gules
BRAYBROOKE :	Argent, six voided lozenges gules.

BRETON :	Quarterly or and gules, within a bordure, azure.
BROCKHOLE :	Gules, a cross argent, between twelve cross crosslets, fitched.
BRUYN :	Azure, a mill-rind cross, or.
BUMSTEAD :	Azure, a fesse and two chevrons, or.
BURGATE :	Paly, argent and sable.
CAVENDISH :	Sable, three bucks heads caboshed, argent attired, or.
CHAMBERLAIN :	Argent, frette, on a chief sable, three plates or torteaux.
CHANCEAUX :	Argent, a chevron between three annulets gules.
CLAVERING :	Quarterly or and gules, on a bend sable three mullets or.
CLOPTON :	Sable a bend ermine between two cotises dancetty, or.
CLOVILLE :	Argent, two chevrons sable powdered with cloves, or.
COGGESHALL :	Argent, a cross between four scallops, sable.
COLT :	Argent, a fesse azure between three galloping colts, sable.
COMYNS :	Azure, a chevron ermine, between three jarbs, or.
CORNBURGH :	Argent, three boars passant per fesse vert and or, on a chief sable, a saltire or.
DARCY :	Argent, three cinquefoils, sable.
DEYN COURT :	Argent billetty and a fesse dancetty sable.
DOREWARD :	Ermine, a chevron sable with three crescents thereon.
ENGAYNE :	Azure, crusilly or and a dance or and a bend gules.
FILIOLL :	Vair, a canton gules.
FINDERNE :	Argent, a chevron between three cross-crosslets fitched, sable.
FITZ LANGLEY :	Argent, a fesse between three oak leaves vert.
FITZ RALF :	Or, three chevronels, gules, on each three fleur-de-lis, argent.



FITZ WALTER :	Or, a fesse between two chevrons gules.
FLAMBARD :	Gules, a chevron engrailed argent charged with three dolphins vert.
FLEMMING :	Or, a chevron azure, between three bulls sable, gutte d'or.
FOX :	Party vert and sable, a cross potent argent.
FRAUNCIS :	Per bend sinister, sable and or, a lion rampant, countercharged.
GENT :	Ermine, on a chief indented, sable, two eagles developed or.
GERNON :	Pily, wavy argent and gules.
GOLDINGHAM :	Barry nebuly of six, a label of three points.
GREENE :	Gules, a lion rampant, countercharged, argent and sable.
GREY (CODNOR) :	Barry of six, argent and azure.
GREY (WILTON) :	Barry of six, argent and azure a label of five points gules.
HANNINGFIELD :	Or, a chevron sable.
HARLESTON :	Argent, a fesse ermine, between two bars gemelles, sable.
HAWKWOOD :	Argent, a chevron sable with three scallops argent thereon.
HELION :	Gules, fretty argent a fesse or.
HENDE :	Azure, on a chevron azure three escallops of the first, a chief of the second, thereon a lion passant gardant of the field.
HERON :	Azure, three herons argent.
HEVENINGHAM :	Quarterly or and gules, a bordure engrailed sable charged with eight scallops argent.
HUNTERCOMBE :	Ermine, two cotises gules.
JOHN (FITZ LEWIS) :	Sable, a chevron between the trefoils, argent.
JOSSELYN :	Azure, a wreath argent and sable, with four hawks bells conjoined thereto in quadrangle or.

KEMPE :	Argent, a chevron engrailed gules, between three stars, azure.
KIRKEBY :	Argent, two bars gules, on a canton conjoined of the second a cross moline or.
LAMBOURNE :	Argent, two chevrons sable.
LAMPET :	Argent, three goats heads coupéd sable.
LANGHAM :	Argent, a fesse gules, a label of three points, azure.
LANGLEY :	Paly, argent and vert.
LEGET :	Ermine, a lion rampant gules.
LEVENTHORPE :	Argent, a bend gobony gules and sable cotised gules.
LOVAINE :	Gules, billetty and a fesse or.
LOVENEY :	Or, on a fess between three cocks gules, as many mullets of the field.
MACWILLIAM :	Patty per bend, argent and gules, three roses in bend countercharged.
MARK :	Gules, a lion argent within a bordure engrailed or.
MARKSHALL :	Argent, a bend dexter cotised sable, charged with a nebule or, of the last : in the sinister quarter, an estoile sable, pierced argent.
MARNEY :	Gules, a leopard rampant argent.
MARTEL :	Gules, three hammers argent, headed, or.
NAILINGHURST :	Gules, a cross engrailed, or.
NORTHWOOD :	Ermine a cross engrailed gules with a boars head sable in the quarter.
NORTOFT :	Sable, a lion rampant, or.
OCKENDON :	Gules a lion barry argent and azure.
PATESHULL :	Argent, a fesse between three crescents gules.

PIKENHAM :	Argent, a fesse ermine, cotised sable.
POLE, DE LA. :	Azure, two bars wavy or.
POWER :	Argent, upon a bend sable, three boars heads coupéd or.
POYNTZ :	Or, barry of eight, or and gules.
PRAYERS :	Gules a bend argent cotised or.
RADCLIFFE :	Argent, a bend engrailed sable.
ROCHESTER :	Chequy argent and gules, on a fesse vert three ecallops or.
ROCHFORD :	Quarterly or and gules, a border engrailed sable.
ROKELL :	Gules, a fesse indented ermine, between three martlets argent.
ROLFE :	Argent, a raven sable.
ROOKWOOD :	Argent, six chess rooks; 3,2,1 sable, bordered, or.
SAMPFORD :	Barry wavy argent and azure.
SAMKIN :	A fesse between three cinquefoils pierced.
SCARGILL :	Ermine, a saltire engrailed gules, charged with a fleur-de-lys or, a bordure of the last.
SERGEAUX :	Argent a saltire sable between twelve cherries gules.
SHENFIELD :	Vert, an eagle or.
SPICE :	Quarterly, per pale argent and gules.
SUTTON :	Or, three chevrons sable.
SWINBURNE :	Gules, three boars heads coupéd, between six crosses-crosslet botonne, 3,2,1 argent.
TANY :	Azure, three bars argent.
TEWE :	Azure, a fesse charged with three plates, between two chevronels, argent.
TEYE :	Argent a fesse between three martlets in the chief and a chevron

in the foot azure.

TIPTOFT :	Argent a saltire engrailed gules.
TORELL :	Gules, a fesse between three bulls heads coupéd, or.
TYRELL :	Argent, two chevronels azure, within a bordure engrailed gules.
URSWYK :	Argent, on a bend sable three lozenges argent each charged with a saltire gules.
VERE :	Quarterly gules and or with a molet argent in the quarter.
WALDEGRAVE :	Party argent and gules with a border gules.
WALDEN :	Sable, two bars with three cinquefoils argent in the chief.
WALTHAM :	A cross florie, countercharged, within a bordure charged with two trefoils, slipped.
WAUTON :	Argent, a chevron sable.
WOLFRESTON :	A fess nebuly between three wolves heads coupéd.
WESTON :	Argent, on a chief azure five bezants.

## APPENDIX 2: PRINCIPAL COUNTY OFFICES 1381-1450.

	MP (ESSEX)	SHERIFF (ESSEX & HERTS)	ESCHEATOR(ESSEX & HERTS)
1381	John de Sutton Thomas de Mandeville	William Lewyn Walter Godmanston	Nicholas Fitz Richard
1382 (a)	William Berland Alexander Goldingham	Geoffrey Dersham	John Bradford
	(b) Robert Swinburne Robert Marney		
1383 (a)	Sir John Gildsborough Sir William Berland	Thomas Bataill	John Bataill
	(b) Robert Marney Alexander Goldingham		
1384 (a)	Ralph St Leger John Fitzsimon		Henry Helion John Rokele
	(b) Robert Swinburne Robert Marney		
1385	Sir John Gildsborough Sir John Fitzsimon	John Walton Sir Geoffrey Brokhole	Robert Lenham
1386	Sir Robert Marney Edmund Brokesbourne		Thomas Firth Nicholas Fitz Richard
1387		John Ruggewyn	John Rokele
1388 (a)	Sir John Gildsborough Thomas Coggeshall	Sir Robert Swinburne	William Kimberley

	(b) Sir Alexander Walden Sir John Fitzsimon		
1389		Henry English Sir Walter Lee	
1390	(a) Robert Swinburne Sir Robert Marney	Geoffrey Michel	Henry English
	(b) Sir Alexander Walden Thomas Bataill		
1391	Sir William Coggeshall Sir Walter Lee	Sir William Coggeshall	
1392		Sir Adam Fraunceys	Thomas Coggeshall William Geldrich
1393	Sir Walter Lee Sir Thomas Swinburne	Thomas Coggeshall	
1394	Sir Walter Lee Thomas Bataill	Thomas Samkyn	Clement Spice
1395	Thomas Coggeshall John Doreward	William Bateman	
1396		Sir Robert Turk	
1397	(a) Sir William Coggeshall John Doreward	William Bateman	
	(b) Sir John Howard Robert Tey		
1398		William Bateman	

1399	Thomas Coggeshall John Doreward	John Doreward Robert Tey	Robert Ramsey Richard Baynard
1400	Sir William Coggeshall Robert Tey	John Howard	William Geldrich John Ruggewyn
1401		Sir William Marney	Helming Leget
1402	Sir Gerard Braybrooke Sir William Coggeshall	Helming Leget	John Squyry
1403	Sir William Bourghier John Doreward	Sir Thomas Swinburne	
1404	Sir William Coggeshall Sir Robert Litton	Sir William Coggeshall	Helming Leget
1405		Edward Bensted	
1406	Helming Leget Richard Baynard	Sir Gerard Braybrooke	Robert Rikedon
1407	Sir William Marney Helming Leget	Helming Leget	John Squyry William Cloville
1408		William Loveney	Thomas Bendish
1409		John Walden	Thomas Aspoll
1410	Not known	Thomas Aston	William Loveney
1411	Sir William Coggeshall John Tyrell	Sir William Coggeshall	John Rasche

1412		Philip Inglefield	Robert Writtle
1413	John Doreward John Tyrell	John Tyrell	Philip Inglefield
1414(a)	Sir William Coggeshall John Doreward	Sir John Howard	Robert Darcy
	(b) William Swinburne Richard Baynard		
1415	Not known	Sir Thomas Barre	John Godstone
1416	Not known	Lewis John	
1417	Sir Gerard Braybrooke John Tyrell	Reginald Malyns	William Fyndern Nicholas Rickhill
1418		Sir John Howard	Reginald Malyns
1419	John Tyrell Robert Darcy	Robert Darcy	John Hotoft
1420	Sir William Coggeshall Lewis John	Lewis John	Robert Darcy
1421(a)	John Tyrell Robert Darcy		
	(b) Sir William Coggeshall Richard Baynard		
1422	Sir William Coggeshall John Tyrell	William Loveney	John Kirkby



1423	Richard Baynard Robert Darcy	John Tyrell Maurice Bruyn	Richard Baynard
1424		John Barley	Thomas Stockdale
1425	John Tyrell Robert Darcy		
1426	Lewis John Robert Darcy	John Doreward Conan Aske	William Flete Edward Tyrell
1427	Richard Baynard Edward Tyrell	Thomas Torell	Robert Darcy
1428		John Hotoft	Thomas Stockdale
1429	John Tyrell Thomas Torell		
1430		Nicholas Rickhill Henry Langley	John Kirkby William Rokesburgh
1431	John Tyrell Lewis John	Sir Nicholas Thorley	John Barley
1432	Robert Darcy Edward Tyrell	John Doreward	Geoffrey Rokele
1433	Sir John Tyrell Richard Baynard	Robert Whittingham	Thomas Stockdale
1434		Geoffrey Rokele	John Edwardby

1435	Edward Tyrell Thomas Torell	Sir Maurice Bruyn	John Santon
1436		Edward Tyrell	Peter Poule
1437	Sir John Tyrell Lewis John	Richard Alrede	John Kirkby
1438		Robert Whittingham	Nicholas Morley
1439		Richard Witherton	Thomas Stockdale
1440		Thomas Tyrell	Thomas Knyvet
1441		Ralph Asteley	John Thornbury
1442	Thomas Tyrell Thomas Torell	Nicholas Morley	Thomas Thorp
1443		John Hende the yngr.	Roger Legh
1444		Thomas Tyrell	James Cresacre
1445	Not known	Thomas Pigot	Thomas Scargill
1446		Thomas Baud	Geoffrey Rokele
1447	Thomas Tyrell Thomas Fynderne	John Hende the yngr.	John Paddington
1448		George Langham	John Skrene

1449(a)	Sir Thomas Tyrell John Godmanston	Geoffrey Rokele	Richard Stukeley
	(b) Clement Spice William Tyrell jun.		
1450	William Tyrell Robert Darcy	Philip Botiller	Walter Writtle

(a) (b) : Represents two Parliaments in one year.

### APPENDIX 3 : TAXPAYERS IN 1412.

	£	Marks
Queen Joan	10	
Prince of Wales	40	
Prince John	60	
Prince Humphrey	100	10
Edward Duke of York	70	
Bishop of Winchester	60	
Joan, Countess of Hereford	173	160
Matilda, Countess of Oxford	62	40
Elizabeth, Countess of Norfolk	74	
Countess of Somerset	20	
Countess of Kent	50	40
Richard, Earl of Warwick	20	
Countess of Suffolk	40	
Ralph, Earl of Westmoreland	40	
Richard, Earl of Oxford	190	40
Earl of Arundel	60	54
Thomas, Lord Morley	20	
Lord Cobham	40	
Lord Wells	40	
Lord Grey of Codnor	51	
Lord of Little Waltham	-	20
Richard, Lord Grey	45	
Hugh, Lord Burnell	60	
Lord of Echingham	20	
William, Lord of Groby	24	40
Henry son of Lord William de Ferrers	30	40
Hugh de Stafford, Lord Boucher	224	130
Sir William Boucher	110	80
Philipp Lord Despenser	32	20
Countess of Hereford & William Marney	20	
Lady Bergeney formerly wife of Sir William Beauchamp	60	40
Lady Dale former wife of Sir Thomas Dale	20	
Lady Coitif	20	
Lady de Roos	20	
Lady Margaret de Peyton	20	
Lady Alice de Morwell	20	
Lady Margaret de Baddow	20	40
Lady Elena de Brokhole	40	
Lady Joan de Swynbourne	40	
Lady Brian	20	
Lady Rose Cavendish	20	
Lady Nerford	-	40
Prior of St John of Jerusalem	120	

Master of Sudbury College	20	
Master of Newport Hospital	-	8
Master of Pleshey College	60	
Abbot of St Peter's Westminster	50	
Abbot of Stratford	20	
Prior of Dunmow	20	
Abbot of Tilty	20	10
Abbot of St Osyth	15	
Abbot of Waltham	30	12
Prior of St Botolph, Colchester	26	10
Abbot of Coggeshall	4	24
Abbot of St John's, Colchester	44	
Abbot of Evesham	20	
Prior of Leighs		10
Prior of Canterbury	20	
Sir Walter Goldingham	20	
Sir John Curson	40	
Sir Nicholas Haute	15	20
(Sir) John Colville	-	20
Sir Robert Litton	20	25
Sir Adam Fraunceys	20	
Sir John Eynesford	20	
Sir Henry Scrope	20	40
Sir Thomas Swynbourne	40	2
Sir Thomas Sakeville	30	
Sir Richard Waldegrave	20	
Sir William Galthorp	10	
Sir William Langham	20	
Sir John de Boyn (sic)	20	
Sir Henry Percy	-	20
Sir John Tiptoft	20	
Sir Thomas Ailesbery	20	
Sir William Coggeshall	80	60
Sir Thomas Erpingham	90	5
Sir John Howard	80	24
Sir John Heveningham	40	
Sir Edward Bensted	30	
Sir Edward (sic) Braybroke	7	10
Sir William Marney	40	
Sir Walter de la Pole	20	
Sir William Botiller	20	
Sir Baldwin Straunge	20	
Thomasine, former wife of John Barrington of Rayleigh	20	
Mariota Fordon	20	

Agnes Brussyngham	20	
Alice Charlhill	20	
Alice Goshalme	20	
Isabella Walden	20	
Isabella Lampets	30	
Katerina Elyon	20	
Agnes Mertele	20	
Alice who was wife of Elming Leget	40	
William Godmanston	20	20
Robert Merbery	10	1
Thomas Hous	22	
John Crispin Esq	20	
John Cornwallis	8	12
Clement Spice	20	25
John Lowdham	20	
John de Boys	80	
John de Grey Lord Ruthin	-	20
John Chaucer	-	10
John Doreward	108	40
Robert de Teye	60	1
John Goldington	10	20
William Chertesey	20	5
Robert de Water	20	
Thomas Apilton	20	
John Levynthorp	20	42
Robert Blossum	20	
Roger Recham	8	
Thomas St Nicholas	20	
William Clere	20	
William Cloville	20	
William Kreket	-	42
William Gascoigne	20	
William de Hanningfield (feoffees)	20	
John Ramsey	30	20
William Mounteney	40	
John Berdefeld	40	
John Bray of Felsted	33	24
John Leghes	20	
William Stourton	20	
John Cambridge	20	
William Waldren, citizen of London	20	
Henry Popham	40	
John - field, clerk	15	
Robert Chichele, citizen of London	10	
Peter de Boxted	20	

Robert Tirwhit	-	10
John Walden	30	10
William Marney, William Henningfield et als (feoffees)	-	70
William Rokell	25	
John Constantine	10	
Richard Holbech		20
John Roundell	30	
John Chaumber of Epping	40	
Ralph Hamlyn	20	
Robert Newport	40	10
John Helion	30	
Richard Kemp	20	
Thomas Bendyssh	22	
John Lihtfoot et als (feoffees)	20	
Thomas Makewilliam	24	
John Hawkwood	50	
Nicholas Talbot	20	
Drugo Barrington	20	
John Fitz Ralf	40	
Hugh Naylinghurst	20	
John Barley	30	
William Loveney		40
Nicholas Berners	30	
John Green	20	
Thomas Garnon	20	
Reginald Malyns	21	
Nicholas Bradshagh	20	
Thomas Rous	20	
Thomas Walden	24	
John Barrington of Hatfield Broad Oak	30	
Edmund Priour	20	
John Godston	40	
Thomas Ferby, clerk	50	
Roger Dencourt	20	
Robert Arnold	20	
John Poyntz		1
Maurice Broyn	40	
Ralph Chamberlain	-	40
John Baude	15	40
James Priour of Prittlewell	-	5
Thomas Pynchon	25	
Philip Inglefield	25	34
William Totham	69	
William Segryth	10	
Robert Knyvet	40	
John Hende	55	40

John de la Rokell	22	
Thomas Flemming	20	
John Maldon	-	50
Goslyn ?		26
William Skrene	25	10
Thomas Heveningham	30	
William Ancoby?		10
John Tyrell	20	
John Podde	20	
William Nottingham	20	
Thomas Shephey	10	
William Seagrave	10	
-----	10	
William Bateman	20	
-----	10	
Robert Hoberd	20	
William Rokesburgh	10	
Richard Rede	10	20
John Wynter	20	
Thomas Godston	40	
Thomas Fraunceys of Colchester	30	
Thomas Horkesle		5
Stephen Flist	20	
John Bray of Tilbury		40
Robert Rickedon	nil	
John Chance	20	
---- Goldyngham	-	20
John Doun of Bradwell	30	
John Martyn	30	
-----	10	
Edmund Bibbesworth	22	
Richard Kemp (Duplicated entry)	20	
John Frere	20	
John Martin	22	
John Lane	20	
Roger Andrew	20	
William Fyndern	20	
Robert Darcy	20	

Source: Feudal Aids 6, pp.443-447. Spelling of surnames not modernised.



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           T 46/12  
           T 46/15  
           T 46/26  
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           X 27  
D/DH     PI  
D/DH     VB 2-33  
           VB 47  
           VB 49  
           VB 51  
           VB 61  
D/DHf    T 41/3  
           T 41/40  
D/DK     T 229/1  
           T 233/1  
           T 233/2  
D/DL     T1/248  
D/DO     T1/4  
           T1/5  
D/DP     M 717  
           M 1082  
           M 1086

	M 1411
D/DP	T1/306
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D/DP	T56/10
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