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parish described as yeomen, 4 per cent of the total population, not allowing for any change between 1624 and 1676.¹⁴ If this were to be applied over the whole county, it would produce a total of about 6000 yeomen.

If all yeomen were substantial freeholders, there cannot have been 8000 of them in Kent at any one time. There were just under a million acres in the ancient county of Kent. If this was all divided among 8000 yeomen, each would have had 125 acres – a reasonable size of farm for a yeoman, but leaving nothing for any other landholder or for urban areas, roads, waterways or common land. A search of probate records, marriage licences and assize records has produced a total of 1480 yeomen in the Diocese of Canterbury in the decade 1611–20 and 1640 in the Diocese in the decade 1621–30.¹⁵ Since the Diocese of Canterbury covered about two-thirds of Kent, the total number of yeomen in the whole county at this time was probably between 2200 and 2500, or under 2 per cent of the total population.

Not all yeomen were heads of families; Mildred Campbell wrote 'a youth who grew up in a yeoman household and had not yet settled on an occupation for himself might be known as a yeoman from the status of his family even though he himself had no land.'¹⁶ This is borne out by evidence from east Kent. The fifteen yeomen of Borden in 1624 included John Lake, Thomas Lake senior and junior and Richard Lake – possibly a father and three sons.¹⁷ Other probable family groupings among the yeomen of the 1620s include James, John junior, Robert, Thomas and William Sharpe of Westwell, John senior, Richard, Stephen and William Solley of Ash next Sandwich and John senior, John junior, Edward and Francis Taylor of Chillenden. There are many examples of three yeomen of the same family in the same parish in the 1620s, including the Collards of Alkham, the Emptages of St. Nicholas-at-Wade, the Hogbens of Elham, the Hornes of Deal, the Roses of Chislet.¹⁸

The concentration of yeomen within the diocese varied according to the quality of the agricultural land in each part of the region. The rich arable soils of the Isle of Thanet and the parishes to the west of the Wantsum Channel such as Herne, Chislet, Ash and Woodnesborough seem to have supported the greatest number of yeomen. The seven Thanet parishes had a total of 105 yeomen in the decade 1611–20. Assuming that all land was available for agriculture, each yeoman

¹⁴ CKS P35/1/1.

¹⁵ References to yeomen collected from Cockburn, *op. cit.*, Cooper, *op. cit.*, and CKS PRC10 and PRC28.

¹⁶ Campbell, *op. cit.*, 26.

¹⁷ CKS P35/1/1.

¹⁸ See note 15.

would have had about 225 acres. The areas in which yeomen were sparsest are the parishes on the North Downs south-east of Canterbury and in Romney Marsh. In fifteen downland parishes¹⁹ 45 yeomen shared 25,855 acres – 574 acres each. In 16 Romney Marsh parishes²⁰ 50 yeomen shared 28,493 acres – 570 each. These figures of course assume that yeomen only farmed land in the parishes in which they lived; this was not the case. Yeomen exploited the rich pasture land of Romney Marsh, the North Kent coast and Wantsum Channel. They just preferred not to live in those areas, because they were believed to be unhealthy.

A traditional view of the yeoman farmer is of the family owning the same freehold land for generations. Although some or all yeomen did own some freehold land, many also rented some or all of their land from various landlords. Of a sample of 738 yeomen studied, the landlords of 269 are known. Yeomen's landlords seem to have been of higher rank; the Dowager Countess Pembroke, the Countess of Thanet, Viscount Strangford, Lord Teynham, the Earl of Winchelsea, the Earl of Chesterfield and many Kentish knighted families including Austen, Filmer, Hales, Honeywood, Knatchbull and Oxinden are among the yeomen's landlords. (The seven landlords to whom George Fox of Eastchurch paid rent covered the entire social spectrum from the King, through Sir Anthony Palmer, Mr Cob, Mr Frowde and John Bilke to Goodman Fryer.²¹ The seventh landlord was the parish.) Some yeomen rented land from relatives. William Court of Waltham owed £17 rent to Stephen Court and £5 to Thomas Court.²² Jacob Dive of Headcorn owed £69 rent to Anthony Dive.²³ William Tomms of Eythorne rented a farm from his father Richard.²⁴ The number of landlords to whom each yeoman paid rent ranged from one to seven; the average number of landlords was 2.2 to each yeoman. Some yeomen were themselves landlords; Thomas Sandvide of Newington next Sittingbourne in 1683 received £24 12s. 6d. in rent from five different tenants for houses and land in Newington, Borden and Bobbing.²⁵

¹⁹ Adisham, Barfreton, Barham, Bekesbourne, Bishopsbourne, Bridge, Coldred, Denton, Eythorne, Kingston, Nonington, Shepherdswell, Tilmanstone, Waldershare, Wootton.

²⁰ Blackmanstone, Brenzett, Brookland, Burmarsh, Dymchurch, Eastbridge, Fairfield, Hope All Saints, Ivychurch, Lydd, St. Mary in the Marsh, Midley, Newchurch, Orgarswick, Old and New Romney.

²¹ CKS PRC2/21/89, 90.

²² CKS PRC2/42/139.

²³ CKS PRC2/39/166.

²⁴ CKS PRC1/3/52.

²⁵ CKS PRC1/15/106.