

## NOTES AND QUERIES

### FAMILIES AND HOUSEHOLDS IN STAPLEHURST, 1563-64<sup>1</sup>

Michael Zell

Sixteenth-century household listings are extremely rare. The 1599 census of the village of Ealing, Middlesex, which includes the ages and occupations of the entire population, is probably unique.<sup>2</sup> Given the scarcity of early listings, it may be of some value to describe and analyse household surveys or lists which are less informative than that for Ealing but which still contain useful data. Lists of communicants probably survive in some numbers from the 1560s, when parishes were frequently asked to provide such information for archidiaconal visitations or episcopal surveys. Sometimes the returns made on these occasions do no more than give the totals of communicants and non-communicants, without the detailed listing household by household upon which the return was based. But even the bare numerical totals yield useful information about the age structure of the population by indicating the proportions of communicants and non-communicants.<sup>3</sup> Occasionally, however, the original household enumeration has survived, and one such is that for Staplehurst compiled during 1563 and 1564.<sup>4</sup>

Staplehurst is a typically large Wealden parish (almost 6000 acres) whose population in the sixteenth century was spread out in a number of hamlets. It was a thoroughly rural community but one where many inhabitants were involved in the manufacture of Kentish broadcloth. The nearest markets lay at Goudhurst and Cranbrook, a few miles distant. It is possible to give a rough estimate of the total population of Staplehurst on the basis of several returns of the numbers of households or of communicants made both before and after the listing under discussion here. There were said to be 400 communicants at the time of the diocesan visitation in 1557.<sup>5</sup> The 1563 diocesan survey shows a total of 120 households,<sup>6</sup> and the return made to a visitation in 1569 recorded the parish as having 120 households with 440 'parishioners' (i.e. communicants).<sup>7</sup> On the basis of the familiar 4.75 multiplier for households, there were about 600 people in Staplehurst in the early 1560s. But that multiplier may not be applicable to all times and all communities. Other evidence suggests that the total population in Staplehurst may well have been higher than 600, and that the 4.75 multiplier is too low. The mean number of **communicants** per household on the listing is 3.5; there were about 120 households in the parish, and if the non-communicant population numbered 35 per cent of the total (see note 3), then there were closer to 650 people in Staplehurst. And, since the mean number of baptisms per annum recorded there during the 1560s was over thirty p.a. (and assuming a crude birth rate between thirty five and forty per thousand), the population may have been as high as 750 or 800.<sup>8</sup>

The manuscript which contains the Staplehurst listing is incomplete, for the text breaks off without giving totals which were normally included in this kind of return. Comparison of the communicant list with the contemporary parish register suggests that another eight to ten households

existed in the parish during the year or so when the listing was written up. Given the high degree of mobility shown in the register around this time, it would be pointless as well as impractical to say that Staplehurst had 120 or 125 or 122 households 'in' 1563. At the margins, some households were being formed and others disappearing relatively frequently, the turnover due more to immigration and emigration than to mortality. The turnover was even greater among non-householders, the young men and women who served in Staplehurst households and frequently moved elsewhere before marriage.<sup>9</sup> In a sense, the manuscript listing reflects the fluid situation in the parish, in that it is not an exact list of communicants at a single date (such as an Easter communion), but a description of the households during 1563 and 1564. In all, 399 persons are recorded, including the local squire, Walter Mayney, and his wife, 'who never received Holy Communion at Staplehurst'. The communicants were distributed in households as follows:

Households with:	Number	%	Contain in all:	
1 communicant	6	5.3	6	(1.5%)
2 communicants	39	34.2	78	(19.5%)
3 communicants	24	21.1	72	(18.1%)
4 communicants	13	11.4	52	(13%)
5 communicants	19	16.7	95	(23.8%)
6 communicants	3	2.6	18	(4.5%)
7 communicants	6	5.3	42	(10.5%)
9 communicants	4	3.5	36	(9%)

The structure of households in Staplehurst was typical of what historians and demographers have come to expect for early modern England, although a larger share of Staplehurst's households than usual contained servants. The majority of households were relatively small, but more people lived in larger than in smaller households. The sixty nine households of three communicants or less accounted for only 39 per cent of the total number of communicants, while the 40 per cent of households with four communicants or more contained more than 60 per cent of the total. No household contained more than one married couple. One hundred and two out of 114 (90%) were headed by a married couple,<sup>10</sup> nine by a widow (7.9%), two by a widower (1.8%) and one by a solitary male, the schoolmaster. Most of the households with three or more communicants included persons with a surname different from that of the head of household. In the document, the phrase 'servant' appears next to the last name in all the larger households, but an occupational or status addition is not given for most of the names in each household. Thus it is impossible to be certain about the exact number of servants. Some households contain persons with surnames different from that of the householder but not recorded as 'servants', while some households have 'servants' who share the householder's surname. It was, after all, not uncommon for cousins and nephews and nieces to serve in their relations' households. It can be shown, by comparing the listing with the parish register that at least twelve of the 114 households on the listing contained servants who shared the surname of the head of household but who were not his children. In many of these cases these kin-servants lived in house-

holds where the householder and his wife had one or more young children. In addition, some of the 'servants' with different surnames from that of the householder were probably also relations of the householder or his wife. The only thing that can be said with certainty about Staplehurst in 1563-4 was that between 55 and 60 per cent of all households contained servants of communicant age. This compares with 39 per cent of households having servants in Richard Wall's sample of thirty settlements in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.<sup>11</sup>

'Servant' could mean many different things in the sixteenth-century Weald, and it is almost certain that in a number of large Staplehurst households, especially those of clothiers or tanners, the 'servant' contingent included apprentices and journeymen as well as domestic and farm servants. The great majority of households with servants had only one or two, but the dozen or so large households contained five, six or even seven servants. Only a single household contained an inmate who was not designated as a regular member of the household: the household of Walter Mascall and his wife included five other persons, including a John Goldsmith, 'sogener' (?sojourner). Although it is occasionally difficult to distinguish servants from children, nevertheless it is clear that there were more 'servants' in the larger households than there were offspring. If two children are notionally added to each household headed by a husband and wife (to represent their children under the age of thirteen or fourteen, then the balance between children and 'servants' in most of the medium-sized households would be about equal. Only in the very large establishments (of six to nine communicants each) did servants outnumber the householder's children.

The economic structure of the larger households in Staplehurst may have been somewhat different from that of large households in other rural areas. In Staplehurst many of the large households were dual function economic units, e.g. tanning plus farming or clothmaking and farming. These therefore contained both farm servants and craft servants, as well as a few domestic workers. There was only one gentry household in the parish and it was no larger than three other, non-gentry households. The family and household structure outlined in the Staplehurst listing is quite typical of this region in the sixteenth century: uniformly nuclear families, few older children at home and a relatively large proportion of households with servants. It typifies a region with a high population growth, rapid geographical mobility and a mixed economy of husbandry and labour-intensive manufacturing. A number of characteristics suggest that setting up as a householder in the Weald was relatively easy. There were small parcels of land available to purchase or to lease, most medium-sized landholders divided their estates among their sons (as their wills regularly show) and there was available locally alternative sources of income as wage workers in rural clothmaking.

#### NOTES

1. The research for this paper was carried out as part of a research project on the Kentish Weald in the sixteenth century, supported by the Social Science Research Council.

2. K. J. Allison, 'An Elizabethan "census"', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, xxxvi 1963.
3. In the returns for six Kentish parishes (Burmars, Charlton, Dymchurch, Eyethorn, Waldershare and Alkham) in 1565, where the totals of both communicants and non-communicants are given, the number of communicants varied from 61 to 67 per cent of the whole population. The average was about 65 per cent: Kent Archives Office (hereafter KAO) PRC 43/13/7, 8, 10, 12, 16, 1.
4. KAO PRC 43/13/31. Comparison of entries in the marriage and burial registers for Staplehurst shows that the listing was not made at a single point, but was compiled between autumn 1563 and summer 1564. The register gives evidence of the eight to ten families missing from the manuscript.
5. Catholic Record Society, *Archdeacon Harpsfield's Canterbury Visitations*, 1950-51, p. 184.
6. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge MS. 122, pp. 311-3. The MS which is normally cited for the 1563 survey, British Library, Harleian MS 594, gives only one hundred households for Staplehurst (at fos 71-3) and has been rejected.
7. Bodleian Library, Tanner MS 240, fo. 29sqq.
8. On changing size of households see Richard Wall, 'Regional and Temporal Variations in English household structure from 1650' in J. Hobcraft and P. Rees (eds), *Regional Demographic Development*, 1977 and Tom Arkell, 'Multiplying Factors for Estimating Population Totals from the Hearth Tax', *LPS*, no. 28, 1982.
9. An attempt was made to trace the 399 people listed in the manuscript over subsequent decades in Staplehurst: 243 (61 per cent) were certainly **not** buried in Staplehurst; 138 (35 per cent) were recorded in the Staplehurst burial register, and a further eighteen I have listed as uncertain.
10. The MS in fact only lists 101 married couples as heads of household, but I have added one because Richard Sare's wife was not buried until July 1564, although the document records him as a single head of household.
11. Wall, p. 94. Similarly, in the village of Ealing in 1599, only about a third of households contained servants: Allison.

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**Transcript of one full opening of Staplehurst Listing**

(Kent Archives Office PRC 43/13/31: begins with heading: 'The names of all householders and ther servaunts wtin the parishe of Stapleherst whiche are of age to receive the holy communion'.

(pp. 4-5)

James Buckherst  
 Mary his wif  
 Wyllm Tayler  
 John Byshop  
 Thomas Elfyke  
 Steven Rycard  
 Wyllm Provyce  
 Margery Allyn  
 Margret Elfyke, servants

James Watson  
 Jhonne his wif  
 John Carter, servant

Lawrance Bourne  
 Jhone his wif  
 Catryn Byshope, servant

Lyoneyll Selye  
 Anne his wif  
 Lawrance Welsh, servant

Mathew Medherst  
 Agnes his wif  
 John Austen  
 James Cotes  
 Robert Coty  
 George Wodye  
 Wyllm Grenell  
 Elyzabeth Moore  
 Denys Medherst, servants

Markus Benett  
 Agnes his wif

Matheu Newnam  
 Catryn his wif

Mathew Man  
 Alys his wif

Mychaell Draner  
 John Jeffery  
 Walter Draner  
 Walter Gybbes  
 John Harold  
 Amy Swan  
 Alys Genyng, servants

Mychaell Hodge  
 Elyzabeth his wif  
 Luke Brabrok  
 Rychard Webly  
 Catryn Robens

Nycho!as Hilles  
 Catryn his wif  
 Catryn his daughter

Nycholas Buddes  
 Elyzabeth his wif  
 Wyllm Buddes  
 James Clagat  
 Mary Buddes, servants

Nycholas Master  
 Jane his wif  
 Mathew Cotes  
 Nycolas Chaplyn  
 Jhonne Austen, servants

Osbert Usbourne  
 Margret his wif  
 Dorythe Graylyng  
 John Reden  
 Wyllm Baker

Peter Bredgland  
 Alyce his wif  
 Thomas Whysbrok  
 Peter Swan  
 Jhonne Chynting  
 Tomsyn Marchaunt

Peter Marden  
 Anne his wif  
 Wyllm Marden  
 Godlyf Marden, servant

Rychard Lynckfeld  
 Julyan his wif  
 Robert Hausnode  
 Julyan Coop(er), servants

Rychard Rabett  
 Alys his wif

Rychard Water  
 Elyzabeth his wif  
 Jhonne Earle  
 Agnys Goldham, servants

Rychard Austry  
 Alys his wif  
 Agnes Gylbert, servant

Rychard Sare  
 Robert his sonne

Rychard Grombrydge  
 Katryn his wif

Rychard Todkyl  
 Jhonne his wif  
 Edeth Hayse, servant

(p. 5)