

MOBILITY AND STABILITY IN LONG MELFORD, SUFFOLK IN THE LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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People researching migration in early modern England have a wide variety of sources to call on, whether they are looking for theoretical descriptions of factors influencing migration or local, regional or thematic studies, which have migration as their focus. But what of the researcher who is interested in the stayers? David Hey has recently emphasized the need to study the stayers as well as the movers: 'The statistics which point to a constant crossing of parish boundaries should not lead us to believe that all the population were mobile.....the 'core families' of a local society remained rooted in their particular places over the generations.'¹ The concept of core or dynastic families, the development of closer links between family history, local history and demography, and work on family reconstitution and record linkage have all emphasized the stability which existed alongside migration.² To be able to compare communities of different types and sizes in terms of the mobility and stability of the local population, and even between different areas within a parish or township, requires substantial information. This study compares data from the parish of Long Melford in Suffolk, in the 1670s and 1680s, with data from other parish studies and speculates on the apparent differences.

Long Melford, a parish of around 5,000 acres, is on the Suffolk/Essex border in the Stour valley, very close to Sudbury. In the later seventeenth century this was one of England's major cloth producing areas, concentrating on the 'new draperies'.³ It was on a major route from London to Bury St Edmunds and Norwich. Melford cloth had been sold in and exported from London for well over 250 years, and links with the capital were strengthened by the long-term presence in the town of three major gentry families and a growing number of 'urban' gentry. The gentry and the highway together gave Melford a stronger service sector than many parishes, although agriculture was still vital, with stock rearing and gardening for the urban markets increasingly important.

This mixture of industry and agriculture is central to the nature of the parish and the question of whether it was a town or village. Writing about eighteenth century Melford, Christopher Pond called it 'this town village' and wrote of its inns and shops having a 'quasi-urban function'.⁴ The documents of the period refer to Melford as a parish and a town with equal regularity. Although most of the population lived in its 'urban' areas,⁵ and many worked in the cloth industry and

the service sector, the yeomen farmers and the traditional gentry were very prominent in the local elite. Other places with a similar population at this period are regarded unreservedly as towns.⁶ If it had stood by itself, Melford might have developed more 'urban' institutions, but it was immediately outside Sudbury, a borough which included a far larger mix of occupations.

Sources

An important source of evidence for population turnover and mobility in Melford comes from the records of Nathaniel Bisbie, the rector from 1660 to 1689. Bisbie recorded full and precise details of his income, which included tithes, fees and fines from his manorial court, rents, fees from marriages, churchings, burials and baptisms.⁷ Amongst this income was the money raised each year by the Easter Offerings from most adult residents in the parish. Usually only the total is recorded but in 1676 and 1680–1684 Bisbie recorded all individual payments, person by person, household by household, street by street. It is possible to establish who was living where, with whom, whether they stayed in the same place in the parish or whether they moved. This series of listings over a short period, with geographic locations, is one of the strengths of these records, but the fact that they do not list the whole adult population is a major disadvantage.

Richard Burn in *The Ecclesiastical Law* described Easter Offering payments as 'those small customary sums commonly paid by every person when he receives the sacrament of the Lord's supper at Easter, which is in many places by custom 2d from every communicant'; by law everyone should pay whether they were Anglican, nonconformist or recusant and the money raised usually went to the incumbent.⁸ Communicants were usually those aged 16 and over, and are referred to in this article as 'adults'.⁹ Records of Easter Offering (hereafter 'Offering') payments seem to have survived more often in urban areas than rural ones; certainly Susan Wright's listing identifies more from towns.¹⁰

The payment in Melford was the customary 2d a head, although occasionally gentry paid in kind. The parish was divided into seven geographic areas and households were listed on a standard route, so that it is possible to identify where people were living and when they moved. The lists are indented to distinguish households; close relations of the head of household are sometimes named but more commonly described only by their status; others in the household are normally listed after the family of the household head. Status descriptions are most commonly given for servants if they are not named, for example, in the following extracts from the 1676 listing:

Willm Ray & wife	4d
Susan Snell	2d
John Oakley, wife and mother	6d
Wid Sparke at Ford Hall	2d
Her 2 sons & daughter	6d
Her maid servt	2d
Henry Ambrose and wife	4d
Wid Myles	2d
John Firmin and wife	2d

Thomas, Giles & Sarah Firmin	6d
Edward Drew and wife	4d
John Sheppard	2d
Abram Nelson	2d
A maid servant	2d.

Susan Snell was almost definitely a servant to William and Elizabeth Ray, who were elderly. Susan was living just a few doors away from her parents and her brother and his wife; she married in 1682 just after her father's death and later moved into the tenement he had occupied. Widow Sarah Myles was Henry Ambrose's mother-in-law and John Oakley's mother was presumably his step-mother Mary. Thomas Firmin and his siblings were the adult children of John and his wife Elizabeth. John Sheppard was brother to Margaret Drew, wife of Edward. Abram Nelson was the first of his name in the Melford records but he married a Melford woman and died in the parish in 1726.

All this additional information comes from a reconstitution of the Melford population, which supplements the evidence provided by the Offering listings. The reconstitution includes evidence from a wide range of sources, alongside the basic parish register information, based on the surrounding parishes as well as Melford. The author's aim is to use all available records to establish as much information as possible about the inhabitants of the parish. The main sources used in this period are wills, tax returns, churchwardens' accounts, poor records, tithes payments, rector's accounts, maps and related surveys, marriage licences, recusant and apprenticeship records.¹¹

Although Wright suggests that some Easter Books produce listings of the whole population, this was not the case in Melford.¹² The lists look as if they are complete, with roughly the same number of people listed in the different areas of Melford from year to year, and households listed on a recognisable route round the town. However, the reconstitution provides evidence of many people present in the parish who either never paid the Offering or paid it intermittently. Bisbie remarked that paupers were sometimes excused payment of the Offering,¹³ which explains a large number of the missing households, including many of the older people who did not pay. One of the gentry households in the parish was Catholic and its inhabitants did not pay, and neither did Bisbie's own household.

The listings and the reconstitution population were compared in detail for two years, 1676 and 1684. The reconstitution was first searched for families where the husband or wife was baptized after 1600, or where the marriage took place or first children were baptized in the 1620s or later. This identified individuals, and occasionally their spouses and/or children. By also searching on burial dates, the list was expanded to include a few very elderly people born in the sixteenth century. The reconstitution was also searched for couples and individuals where there was other evidence of their presence in Melford but no record in the parish registers. Altogether these searches produced nearly 1,500 database entries for families and single individuals; those paying the Offering were noted and the remaining records were examined in detail to see whether there was evidence of an individual's presence in Melford between 1676 and 1684 or both shortly before and after it. This revealed an additional 257 adults; everyone else was excluded.

Table 1 Long Melford parish register entries 1600–1699: mean per year

Year	Baptisms	Burials	Marriages
1600–9	55.9	45.2	12.5
1610–9	63.1	42.9	11.4
1620–9	62.4	51.4	11.8
1630–9	49.8	52.1	11.9
1640–9	50.0	40.5	0.5
1650–9	36.6	47.8	2.6
1660–9	38.7	38.5	10.0
1670–9	53.1	36.5	15.5
1680–9	60.0	55.6	24.1

Note: Melford seems to have been a fashionable place to marry in the late 1670s and during the 1680s, with large numbers of marriages by licence having no obvious connection with the parish before or after the marriage.

Source: Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds, FL509/4/1

The majority of the evidence used for the 1676–84 period came from the parish registers, apprenticeship records and Bisbie's own records.

The quality of the parish register fluctuated during the seventeenth century. Table 1 gives the figures. Baptismal records appear complete in the 1640s, but in the 1650s and 1660s appear low, with the most significant possible gaps in the records being in 1659/60. For burials there are incomplete records in 1643–1646, and again in the late 1650s and early 1660s. Very few marriages were recorded in the Commonwealth period. In an earlier period there appear to have been gaps in the burial record in relation to paupers;¹⁴ there is some evidence that this might still have been happening in the 1670s. However, the criteria used to deduce residence in the parish during 1676–1684 for those not paying the Offering minimises the effects of gaps in the records. As people were only included if there was a record of their presence shortly before, during or immediately after the 1676–1684 period, gaps in the burial records in the 1650s do not affect the numbers estimated to be present in the later 1670s, neither does the gap in the baptisms. However, the gaps in the marriage and baptismal records do affect calculations of the number of generations a family has been established in the parish, and the percentage of marriages where one or more partner was baptized in the parish. Fortunately, in several cases there is other evidence which helps to confirm a connection to a family even if there is no baptism. Susan Snell's baptism, for example, is not recorded, but she and her husband later lived in a tenement previously occupied by her probable father, and next door to her probable brother and his wife. There must be some errors in the identification of non-Offering payers present in the parish, but it is as likely to be in omission as in overcounting; just as some people who were present in 1672 and 1678 may not have been in the parish in 1676, there will be others whose presence in the parish at the time was unrecorded. The Offering lists themselves give some evidence of the extent to which the reconstitution has 'captured' the actual population. In 1676 one married couple and five named servants paid the Offering who do not appear in any other source that year, earlier or later. Between 1680 and 1684 there are

Table 2 Melford 1676–1684: the population from the Easter Offering lists and the reconstitution

	1676	1680	1681	1682	1683	1684
A Households pay EO	258	235	236	229	230	241
B Adults paying EO	613	604	607	621	598	636
C Adults also identified as present	257					265
D Total adults	870					
E Children likely in parish	502					566
F Overall total from sources	1,372					
G Probable additional adults, around (Compton Census)	130	Presumably an equivalent number in later years				
H Adults paying EO as % of all adults	68					71
I Adults paying EO as % of total identified inhabitants	44					43

Notes: These numbers include unnamed servants who paid the Offering. Servants at the three large gentry households did not pay the offering and probably account for much of the shortfall compared to the Compton Census figures.

Sources: SROB FL509/3/1: 1676, 313–6; 1680, 414–7; 1681, 541–4; 1682, 566–70; 1683, 605–8; 1684, 643–6. Information about adults not paying the EO and children from the reconstitution. Parish register SROB FL509/4/1.

another six married couples, two widows, two women presumably gentlewomen ‘companions’ and thirty-four named servants who appear in no other source. Out of 1,129 people who appear in any of the Offering lists, just these 57 (5 per cent of the total), and probably some of the unnamed servants, appear in no other record source used in the reconstitution. The 18 non-servants in this group form around 1.5 per cent of the non-servants who paid the Offering. There is no way of knowing what proportion of the unnamed servants were people who appear in other records, but these figures suggest that the reconstitution includes information about a high percentage of the non-servant population, with a lower percentage of the servants in the parish.

Population estimates

The 1664 Hearth Tax return listed 329 households; while the 1674 Hearth Tax seriously under-recorded the population (listing 230 households), and for the Compton Census of 1676 Bisbie reported ‘about 1000 male and female of age to receive Holy Communion’ (including 30 recusants and 4 nonconformists).¹⁵ This estimate is about 130 more than the total of adults derived from the Offering and reconstitution that year. Groups missing from the Easter Offering include

Table 3 Marital status of Melford household heads: known and assumed households

	1676		1684	
	Offering paying households %	Assumed households %	Offering paying households %	Assumed households %
Married man	80	68	78	72
Widow/widower	15	28	17	22
Single person	4	5	4	6
	n=258	n=125	n=241	n=136

Sources: SROB FL509/3/1: 1676, 313–6; 1680, 414–7; 1681, 541–4; 1682, 566–70; 1683, 605–8; 1684, 643–6. Information about adults not paying the EO and children from the reconstitution.

servants in the three big gentry households (servants elsewhere paid the Offering) and the recusant adults. Another group probably missing are unmarried young people over 16. People over 16 are only counted if they paid the Offering or if there is other evidence of their presence. There is ample evidence of the extent to which many young adults moved away from home for service or apprenticeship, with general agreement that most moved within a 15–20 mile radius of their home parish.¹⁶ There is less evidence of how many stayed away and how many returned to their home parishes, or of the effect of the economy of the home parish on the percentage who actually left. Apprenticeship records show that many young people stayed in their home parish for their training; the same must have been true of servants in husbandry and domestic servants, especially in a larger parish.¹⁷

There were 133 adults, baptized in Melford, who first paid the Offering several years after they were 16, for whom there is no evidence of their residence in the years before they paid. They could have moved back into Melford having lived elsewhere in service or apprenticeship, or they could have been present all along. Some were probably amongst the servants in the big gentry households. It seems likely that most of the ‘missing’ population were single young people baptized in Melford, many of whom will have been servants.

Table 2 summarises the information about the number of adults and households in each of the six listings along with the totals of other adults (16 and over) of whom there is evidence in the parish in the first and last years, obtained from the reconstitution. Line E gives estimated figures of children present in the parish; these were largely children baptized in the parish who were not recorded as having been buried there, who were under 16 and whose parents were still resident. There is no certainty that all these children were in the parish, but the totals (36 per cent of the of known inhabitants in 1676 and 38.6 per cent in 1684) are within the expected range.¹⁸ These children are not included in any of the subsequent calculations, apart from this for the overall population.

The Easter Offering lists give us the household numbers for Table 2. The known status of the heads of household who paid the Offering and the assumed status of those who did not are shown in Table 3. Married couples (85) and widows/widowers (35) are assumed to have formed their own households, along with a few single people either where there is evidence from some source that they did so or where a single woman had illegitimate children. Other single people (who had to be buried eventually in Melford to be counted) have been assumed to be living in households headed by other people. Widows and widowers form a higher percentage of the 'assumed' households than they do of the 'known' ones, as would be expected. Many of the non-payers were paupers and old age and/or widowhood were common causes of poverty. There is obviously no certainty that these 'assumed' households are the right ones; some of the widowed may have been living with children (or with other widows), but several writers have suggested that many poor elderly people were relieved in their own houses even if they had non-poor adult children in the parish.¹⁹ When population turnover is calculated these 'assumed' households appear to behave in much the same way as the 'known' households.²⁰

The total population of Melford at this period was probably somewhere between 1,500-1,600. Table 2 suggests a figure of around 1,500, derived from the Offering lists and the reconstitution search plus the additional 130 people mentioned above. It also suggests that children might have formed about 36.5 per cent of the population; applying this figure to the Compton Census total gives a suggested population of around 1,575. The method of searching the reconstitution outlined above may well have excluded people who were actually in the parish; it was designed not to overestimate the numbers.

Producing figures from numbers of households is more problematical since the mean household size is uncertain; the total from the 1664 Hearth Tax (329) suggests lower population figures, 1,414 if the multiplier is 4.3, 1,480 if it is 4.5. If there was no major population growth in the intervening twelve years, and the Compton Census figure was approximately right, children would have formed only around 30 per cent of the population. A much higher population figure, of around 1,720, can be calculated by using a multiplier of 4.5 on the 383 households known and assumed to exist in 1676. The average household size on the Offering lists (3.7 in 1676) is artificially low because of the exclusion of the servants from the big gentry households, but even so it seems that 4.5 is too high for this community.

Population turnover

Direct evidence about population turnover is much rarer than studies of migration. Peter Laslett's study of Clayworth and Cogenhoe is still the most frequently cited, partly because of the quality of the listings, which include the whole population of each community, young and old.²¹ To have two or more complete listings for a parish is of course very rare in the early modern period; listings of adults are more common.

Table 4 Persistence in Melford of adults present in 1676

Offering payers	1676	1680	1681	1682	1683	1684
Evidence of EO lists only	613	436	392	362	341	313
%	100	71	64	59	55	51
EO lists plus other evidence	613	484	447	417	402	375
%	100	79	73	68	66	61
No. buried since previous list		57	19	13	9	14
% buried (cumulative)		9	12	14	16	18
Those remaining as a % of those not buried		87	83	80	78	75
Non-payers						
Evidence from reconstruction	257	209	193	176	158	151
%	100	81	75	68	61	59
No. buried since previous list		28	16	15	17	7
% buried (cumulative)		11	17	23	30	32
Those remaining as a % of those not buried		91	91	89	87	86

Note: The original 613 includes servants identified but unnamed. They are all assumed to have left the parish by 1680, of course some of them may have remained.

Source: as Table 2

In Melford, as Table 4 indicates, just under 51 per cent of the people who paid the Offering in 1676 also paid in 1684. However, with information from the reconstitution, it is clear that another 10 per cent of them were still in Melford in the latter year. The 39 per cent of the population which disappeared in this period included 18 per cent who had died. Excluding them, an average of 2.6 per cent of the adults who paid the Offering in 1676 left the parish each year over the next eight years. By 1684, 75 per cent of those who had not been buried in the parish were still in Melford. These figures assume that all the unnamed servants who paid the Offering in 1676 left the parish alive; some may of course have stayed or been buried locally.²² Of the 257 adults thought to be in Melford in 1676 who did not pay the Offering, 59 per cent were still in the parish in 1684; slightly less than the 61 per cent of Offering payers. No more than 23 of these people appear to have moved away by 1684; when burials are excluded, over eight years this is just over 1 per cent each year. As this group contains many widows and

Table 5 Turnover of individuals, Melford, Clayworth and Cogenhoe: annual averages.

	Clayworth 1676–88 % all	Cogenhoe 1618–28 % all	Melford (all evidence) 1676–84 % adults
Exit	5.1	5.2	4.9
Entrance	5.3	5.3	5.0
Emigration	3.3	4.9	2.6
Immigration	3.3	3.6	a) 4.2 b) 3.3 c) 2.5

Note: (a) assumes that they had all moved away and then returned,
 (b) assumes that half had remained in Melford the whole time and
 (c) that they had all remained in the parish without paying their Offering.

Sources: Clayworth and Cogenhoe figures from Table 2.2, Chapter 2 of P. Laslett, *Family life and illicit love in earlier generations*, (Cambridge, 1977), 79. Melford, as Table 2.

older people, it is not unexpected that a higher percentage of them died over the eight year period. In reality there was more movement than Table 4 shows, because 20 per cent of the people whose names first appear on the Offering lists after 1676 appear to have left the parish before 1684 (63 of the 316 people who paid the Offering between 1680–1683 but not in 1676).²³

Tables 5 and 6 compare Melford turnover with that from Clayworth, Cogenhoe and elsewhere. Although the figures in Table 5 do not compare like with like (the Melford figures relate only to adults) there are strong similarities.²⁴ Exit and entrance figures show that Malcolm Kitch's estimate of turnover of around 4–6 per cent of the population of rural parishes each year seems to fit the Melford evidence.²⁵ The Melford exit figures are slightly lower than those for Clayworth or Cogenhoe; a population of adults could be expected to have proportionately fewer burials. A community in which just four or five out of each hundred adults moved away each year might well seem very stable to those who were part of it, especially if many of those leaving were servants.

Emigration and immigration figures exclude deaths, births and (in the case of Melford) people becoming old enough to feature in the listings or being included in them when they had previously been in the parish without paying their Offering. The three figures given for immigration into Melford in Table 5 are because of the young people baptized in the parish but not paying the Offering until they were well over 16. These different assumptions do not effect the emigration figure in Table 5 because the individuals are assumed to have left the parish before 1676.

In Melford, 124 people (20 per cent) were paying the Offering in 1684 who did not pay in 1676 and appear to have had no previous link with the parish; they accounted for the 2.5 per cent per year immigration figure (assumption c), in Table 5. Just over a third were part of a married couple, 38 per cent moved in to marry, or moved as the spouse of an existing resident or someone baptized in the parish and 26 per cent were servants.

Table 6 Turnover of households: Melford, Clayworth, Cogenhoe and Binfield

Place Years between listings	Clayworth 12 years 1676–88	Cogenhoe 10 years 1618–28	Binfield 10 years 1780–90	Melford 8 years 1676–84 All households	Melford 8 years 1676–84 Offering paying households
No. of households					
A in first year	98	33	134	383	258
B in last year	91	33	na	377	241
% of A persisting until the last year	61	76	72	70	73
% of A disappearing each year	3.25	2.4	2.8	3.75	3.4
Disappearing households moving away,% of total	10	24	15	10	11
Average % per year	0.8	2.4	1.5	1.25	1.4
New households	31	8		110	69
As % of B	34	24*		29	29
Average % of households 'appearing' each year	2.8	2.4		3.6	3.6
% of 'appearing' households caused by new marriages,at least one local partner				63.6	69.6
% of 'appearing' households moving into parish				36.4	30.4
% of households moving into parish, average, per year				1.3	1.1

Note: The first column of Melford evidence relates to all households, whether or not they paid the Easter Offering. The second column relates to all known and assumed households. *Laslett accepts that the Cogenhoe burial registers probably underrecord burials, so some of these 'disappearances' may in fact have been caused by death.

Sources: Clayworth and Cogenhoe figures from Table 2.2, Chapter 2 of P. Laslett, *Family life and illicit love*, 98–99. Cranbrook figures from Zell, *Industry in the countryside*, 81. Binfield figures from Tables 2 and 3, Escott, *Residential Mobility*, 23–4. Melford figures from Offering lists (see Table 2) and reconstitution.

Although the Clayworth and Cogenhoe results were regarded as 'startling' when they were first reported, Laslett and others knew that turnover of individuals does not equate automatically with instability of household, neighbourhood or community.²⁶ This is emphasized by the figures in Table 6 on household turnover. The percentage of households moving out of Clayworth and Melford each year (rather than disappearing because of death or remarriage) was around one in a hundred, while for Binfield it was very slightly higher. When new Melford households created by marriage are separated from those which moved into the parish, there is a similar proportion (1.3 per cent) for households moving in. This

Table 7 Household stability

Household persistence	Periods of 10–12 years				Periods of 20 years plus			
	Total	Extinct %	Left %	Continue %	Total	Extinct %	Left %	Continue %
Melford 1674–1686	383	20	10	70				
Melford 1676–1700					383	43	15	42
Binfield 1780–1790	134	13	15	72				
Binfield 1780–1801					134	na	na	36
Binfield 1790–1801	167	18	15	67				
Clayworth 1676–1688	98	29	10	61				
Swinderby 1771–1791					na	na	na	35

Sources: Binfield figures from Tables 2 and 3, Escott, *'Residential Mobility'*, 23–4. Swinderby figures from Tinley and Mills, Population turnover, 36. Clayworth figures from Laslett, *'Family Life and Illicit Love'*, 99. Melford evidence, as Table 2 and reconstitution.

Table 8 Individual persistence in Long Melford

Individuals in Melford	Total	Dead %	Left %	Continue %
1676 Offering payers				
By 1684	636	18	21	61
By 1700	636	42	27	31
Individuals starting paying offering 1680–3				
By 1684	318	1	20	79
By 1700	318	16	42	42

Note: dead = buried in Melford; left = no record on continued existence in Melford.

Sources: as Table 2, plus reconstitution.

raises the question of how much of the apparent turnover in a population was actually 'churning'? If 5 per cent of an adult population changed each year (disregarding deaths) it does not always mean that in ten years 50 per cent of the original population would no longer be resident; because some of those who replaced the original population may have moved out themselves and many of those who replaced them may have moved and been replaced again and so on. The size of the more stable 'core' will vary between communities, and in Melford it seems to be fairly high. Churning is very difficult to measure, but some indications are possible.

Table 7 gives information about the stability of households over a longer period, and compares the evidence with that from other studies. Households present in 1676 were traced until 1700 and divided into those which became extinct following the death of the head of household, those which appear to have left the parish and those where the head of household or a survivor still continued in Melford. A widower remarrying was regarded as a continuation of a household,

as was a widow staying unmarried. When a widow remarried the original household was considered extinct. In the period until 1684, when the Offering lists show residence, a son taking over as head of household from his widowed mother when she died was regarded as a continuation. Anyone who was buried in the parish (or mentioned in other records) after 1700 was counted as still in the parish at the start of 1700.

The same analysis was then undertaken for individuals, and the results are shown in Table 8. Information is given first for those who paid the Offering in 1676 and then for the other individuals who paid for the first time at some period between 1680 and 1683. Where it was not possible to establish whether someone had died or moved out (for example where there are two people with the same name and only one burial) they were assumed to have moved out.

The prime sources of evidence are the parish register and wills, but manorial, apprenticeship, bastardy and settlement records have been used along with evidence from court cases. Some evidence is from 1700 or very close to it, but some individuals lived into the 1720s. It is assumed that a person has moved out of the parish unless there is evidence to the contrary. It is of course possible that some people or households counted as 'Moved Out' were still in the parish in 1700 but then moved elsewhere. If this was so it would increase the 'stable' part of the population at that year. Equally, some of the people who died in the parish may have moved away in the meantime and later returned. However, in this early period of the settlement laws, the chances of older people being removed to their parish of settlement for burial seem lower.²⁷

Those are just some of the dangers of using a reconstitution in place of a listing, but the method does produce some evidence of 'churn'. By 1700, nearly a quarter of a century later, only 15 per cent of households had moved out of the parish and over half that movement out had been within the first eight year period, 1676–1684. Table 7 compares these results with those from two late-eighteenth century studies, Margaret Escott's work on Binfield, Berkshire and that by Ruth Tinley and Dennis Mills on Swinderby in Lincolnshire. The results are remarkably similar considering the difference in size and type of community and period.²⁸

Turning to individuals, of the 613 who paid the Offering in 1676, Table 4 has already established that 21 per cent left Melford by 1684; by 1700 this total appears to be just 27 per cent, suggesting that 78 per cent of those who moved out did so in the first eight years. Analysis shows that a minimum of 6 per cent of the 1676 Offering payers were servants. The 318 people who appear for the first time on the Easter Offering lists of 1680–1683 seem to have behaved somewhat differently, with 42 per cent having moved out of the parish by 1700. However, nearly half this movement took place in the first four years; over the period to 1700 the average annual movement out was just 2 per cent. This group is likely to have been younger on average than the 1676 Offering payers; it includes newly married couples starting to pay the offering, those who first pay at 16 plus and a higher proportion of servants (because servants appearing in any of the years 1680–3 are included).

Table 9 Number of generations of householders (or their spouses) established in the parish

	Melford 1676 %	Terling 1671 %
1st generation	34.4	56.6
2nd generation	20.2	24.4
3rd generation or longer	45.5	18.0
Of that 45.5%:		
3rd generation	19.9	
4th generation	17.3	
5th generation or longer	8.3	
	n=383	n=122

Sources: Terling evidence: Wrightson and Levine: *Poverty and piety in an English village*, 82.
Melford evidence from the reconstitution.

Stable families

The Melford evidence gives an impression of a large stable element in the population, with continual slow movement in and out of the parish, along with higher 'life-cycle' movement of young people. This evidence can be compared with that from other studies.

In their study of Terling, Essex, an agricultural parish within twenty miles of Melford, Keith Wrightson and David Levine used their reconstitution of the population to assess how long the families of the householders resident there in 1671 had been established in the parish.²⁹ The Terling study used the direct ancestors of both husband and wife, down both male or female lines, and counted the longest established lineage. Thus 'established' means the number of generations of any direct ancestors recorded as living in the parish, not just ancestors of the same surname. Table 9 compares their results with equivalent evidence from Melford.

The Melford evidence contrasts markedly with the Terling results. Far fewer families were the first generation in the parish, and the percentage of households from families established for at least three generations is two and a half times higher in Melford. Indeed, over a quarter of Melford households came from families established for four or five generations. Many of the families counted as established for three generations may well have been there longer because much of the evidence for families established for four or five generations comes from wills rather than the parish register. Although that evidence may not have been available for Terling, the contrasts are clear even if only three generations are considered.

Were the long established families mainly of the middling sort, as has often been suggested? David Hey recently summarized the results of much research when he

Table 10 Social groupings: number of generations established in Melford

	Pauper Households 1676–84 %	All identified households 1676 %	Elite households 1676 %
1st generation	41	34	31
2nd generation	23	20	18
3rd generation	12	20	24
4th generation or longer	24	26	27
	n=65	n=383	n=84

Sources: as Table 9.

Table 11 Proportion of various groups of adults later buried in the parish

	Adults in Melford 1676 Buried in Melford %	Adults in Staplehurst, Kent 1563 Buried in Staplehurst %
Heads of household	72	66
Wives of male household heads	72	40
Other communicants	53	20

Sources: Staplehurst evidence: Michael Zell, *Industry in the countryside*, 81; Melford, as Table 2.

wrote that ‘The rich and the poor tended to be more mobile than those who occupied the “middling” ranks’; and suggested that families with a stake in land or their capital in a trade or business were more likely to remain in the same community. However, Escott’s study of Binfield suggested that by the end of the eighteenth century the settlement laws had had the effect of making labourers less mobile than those of higher status.³⁰

For Melford the reconstitution enabled the identification of both members of the local elite and some people and households defined as poor. The elite group in 1676 consisted of 99 people in 84 households, identified by office holding, land holding, wealth and the hearth tax. They include gentry, yeomen farmers, clothiers, innkeepers and traders. Identification of the very poor is difficult as no overseers’ accounts survive. It is possible partly because of Bisbie’s accounts; he was paid for baptisms, churchings, marriages and burials, along with registration, and often recorded a lower fee from paupers. More information comes from parish apprenticeship records. These two sources indicate 65 households which can be regarded as being poor in this period, although they would not have been the only poor in the parish at the time. Of the 65, just 29 paid the Offering at least once.

Table 12 Marriages, baptisms and burials in Melford amongst married couples

	1676		1684	
	No.	%	No.	%
Both husband and wife baptized in Melford	35	12	45	15
Either husband or wife baptized in Melford	130	44	130	43
Neither known to be baptized in Melford	131	44	127	42
Couples married in Melford	111	37	142	47
One or both partners buried in Melford	267	90	260	86
Both partners buried in Melford	180	61	171	57
Neither partner baptized or buried in Melford	23	8	23	8
	n=296		n=302	

Note: More of the marriages existing in 1676 would have taken place during the 1650s, when records were disrupted. The figures about baptisms do not include people who were almost definitely born in Melford during that period to existing local families. The true percentages of individuals born in the parish will therefore be somewhat higher; the effect would most likely be to increase the percentage of couples where both husband and wife were baptized in Melford.

Source: as Table 2 plus the reconstitution.

Emigration amongst the elite group was just 0.4 per cent per year in the eight year period, compared to 2.6 per cent for the overall population. However, the difference between the elite and the rest of the population is much less clear when other evidence is considered, in particular the percentage of households which came from families longest established in the parish. Table 10 compares the degree to which these groups were long established in Melford. A higher percentage of pauper households was first generation in the parish, but the difference between the paupers and the overall population was not large, and a similar proportion of pauper families appear to have been established in the parish for four generations or more. It is possible that the long established local poor were more likely than newcomers to be charged less by Bisbie. However, the apprenticeship records provide a good deal of the evidence and there seems no financial reason why the overseers should favour apprenticing children from long established families. It may be that more of each generation of the elite group remained in the parish, and a higher proportion of the sons and daughters of poorer families moved away, but in this parish the 'long rooted' include the poor.

Another approach to estimating stability or movement in a community was used by Michael Zell in his study of sixteenth century Kent. A listing of communicants for Staplehurst similar to the Melford Offering lists enabled him to calculate the percentage of householders, their wives and 'other communicants' who were later buried in the parish.³¹ Table 11 compares the results for Staplehurst and Melford, and implies that the degree of stability in the latter was significantly greater.

Many differences between these studies might account for some of this contrast. The reconstitution in Melford enables single women to be traced later as wives

Table 13 Proportion of marriages terminating in Melford (i.e at least one partner buried there)

Marriages underway each year	Percentage of marriages eventually terminated in Melford	
	1676 n=267 %	1684 n=260 %
Where both partners baptized in Melford	94	91
Where one partner baptized in Melford	91	89
Where neither partner baptized in Melford	82	82

Note: as Table 11

Source: as Table 8

and widows, as well as widows who remarried. The parish register quality may have varied, but the difference of a century is also important; the later seventeenth century was a period when population growth stalled and long distance migration seems to have become rarer.³² However, in relation to wives of household heads and 'other' adult communicants, the differences are so large that there may be a need for other explanations as well.

Although some married couples did migrate from place to place, it is widely accepted that they were much more stable than the young and the single.³³ Tables 12 and 13 give information about married couples present in Melford. Table 12 shows that for over half of the couples at least one partner was baptized in the parish, and almost nine out of ten marriages were terminated in Melford, with the burial of at least one partner there. Among over half the couples both partners were buried in the parish. The difficulty of identifying wives means that the true figures for baptism could be higher because a woman marrying outside her parish and moving back with her husband is difficult to identify unless the marriage is found elsewhere or there is other evidence such as that from a will. For this study the Boyds Marriage Indexes for both Suffolk and Essex were searched, and a proportion of marriages which took place outside Melford were identified. Whether or not the marriage started in the parish, Table 13 suggests that when Melford attracted households to move in, or when servants or others new to the parish decided to marry there, the great majority stayed until the end of that marriage; even in marriages where neither partner was known to be baptized in Melford, 82 per cent of marriages terminated there.

Differences between the various parts of Melford

The Melford evidence allows the different parts of the parish to be compared. The Offering collectors identified seven separate areas (Figure 1). The largest four were predominantly 'urban' areas on or near the main north/south road through Melford: High Street, Hall Street east and west (listed separately) and Melford Green/Westgate; two others, Cranmere and Bridge Street, were dominated by farming and are considered to be 'rural'. The seventh, Bull Lane/Rodbridge included both farms and 'urban' cottages but more of the latter, so is included as an 'urban' area in Tables 14 and 15. These areas must have had separate geographical identities, but it is also important to discover if they reflected any

Figure 1 The parish of Long Melford, Suffolk

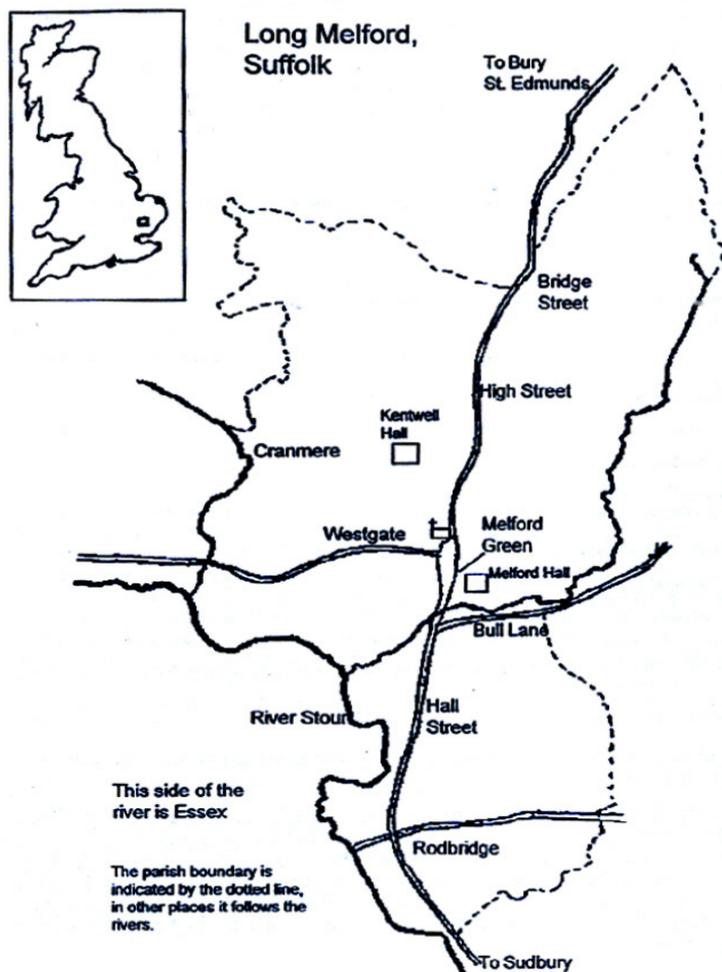


Table 14 Persistence in the different areas of Melford

	'Urban' areas %	'Rural' areas %	Total
Total adults, 1676 EO	88	12	n=613
Total households, 1676 EO	89	11	n=258
Households 1st generation	30	46	
Households 2nd generation	17	25	
Households 3rd generation or longer established	53	29	
Note:	This table relates only to Offering payers and their households; only for them can area of residence be known.		
Sources:	as Table 2.		

Table 15 Movement and stability in different areas of Melford

	'Urban' areas %	'Rural' areas %	All Melford %
1676 EO payers	n=541	n=72	n=613
Still in same area 1684	47	25	44
Still in Melford 1684	67	47	61
Those still in Melford 1684 as % of those not buried 1676–84	81	62	75
1676 households paying EO	n=230	n=28	n=258
Still in same area 1684	46	29	44
Still in Melford 1684	75	57	73

Note: This table relates only to Offering payers and their households; only for them can area of residence be known.

Sources: as for Table 2.

differences in terms of the type of people who lived there, or in the degree to which they were established in the parish.

Table 14 shows the proportion of households and individuals paying the Offering in the 'urban' and 'rural' parts of the parish in 1676, with just 11 per cent of the population (28 households) living in the latter. It is likely that the majority of people who did not pay the Offering lived in urban High Street or Hall Street. The table also gives information about the percentage of households from new and long established families; the 'urban' areas have a far higher percentage of longer established families.

It might seem surprising that there were a higher percentage of first generation families in the 'rural' areas, dominated by yeomen farmers, but many of Melford's largest farms were leased by yeomen with no known previous family connections in the area. Some of these families settled in Melford, others left once the lease was up. When these results are compared with Table 8, the rural areas of Melford seem closer to the Terling pattern in terms of the number of generations a family had been established, but even these rural areas seem more 'settled' than Terling. The more settled nature of the 'urban' areas is confirmed by the figures in Table 15, which analyses the information about movement and stability of individuals amongst the people who paid the Offering in 1676, and the households they formed.

A considerably higher proportion of individuals from the 'urban' areas were still in the same area in 1684, or still in Melford parish. The third line of Table 15 shows that 81 per cent of the individuals from the 'urban' areas who had not been buried in Melford were still in the parish by 1684, compared to 62 per cent from the 'rural' areas. Servants formed a higher percentage of the population in the 'rural' areas and servants are more likely to be mobile. What we cannot discover is the number of agricultural day labourers who lived in the 'urban' areas; although some farm servants are listed in Cranmere and Bridge Street, they do not seem to have been enough to carry out all the agricultural work. The same pattern of greater stability in the 'urban' areas is evident amongst households, both in terms of movement within the parish and movement out of it.

Conclusion

The Melford evidence is able to shed light on the differences between the various parts of the parish, but it does not explain why this parish shows such apparently high levels of stability (compared, for example, to Terling in terms of how long families had been established in the parish). Size is an obvious and major factor; the other is the range of economic activity. Melford was considerably larger than Terling, Binfield or Staplehurst; it was semi-industrial, with a strong agricultural base and important service sector, whose industry was buoyant at this period. If there was a good supply of work and housing, it is likely that more young people remained in the area or returned after a period away in service, and that families who moved into the area were more likely to stay. Keith Wrightson suggested something similar about Ryton in County Durham. 'It was economically very complex ... a parish which attracted immigrants. Perhaps it was also a place where the young felt less compulsion to move elsewhere to look for work.'³⁴

The possibility that this economic factor is a major determinant of a more settled population (at least outside London and the larger cities) is supported in the work of David Souden on 'movers and stayers'. He suggests that of the sixteen parishes he examined, those which were centres of rural industry (Gedling in Nottinghamshire and Shepshed in Leicestershire) displayed high levels of inward movement combined with relative permanency.³⁵ Steve King recently called for 'more demographic study of English rural industrial areas';³⁶ only such research will demonstrate whether or not relatively high levels of stability were invariably a feature of such industrial communities.

NOTES

- 1 D. Hey, 'The local history of family names', *The Local Historian*, **27**, (1997), xvi.
- 2 A. Mitson, 'The significance of kinship networks in the seventeenth century: south west Nottinghamshire' in C. Phythian-Adams ed, *Societies, culture and kinship, 1580–1850: cultural provinces and English local history*, (Leicester, 1993), 24–76; E. Lord, 'Communities of common interest, the social landscape of south east Surrey, 1750–1850' in Phythian-Adams ed, *Societies, culture and kinship*, 131–199; C. Phythian-Adams, *Rethinking English local history*, (Leicester, 1987); C.D. Rogers and J.H. Smith, *Local family history in England, 1538–1914*, (Manchester, 1991); C. Jarvis, 'The reconstitution of nineteenth century rural communities', *Local Population Studies*, **51** (1993), 46–53.
3. E. Kerridge, *Textile manufactures in early modern England*, (Manchester, 1985), 32–40; L. Cantor, *The changing English countryside 1400–1700*, (London, 1987), 124.; G. Unwin, 'The new draperies, woolcombing and spinning' in W. Page ed., *The Victoria history of the counties of England, A history of Suffolk*, Vol. 2, (London, 1907), 269.
4. C.C. Pond, 'Internal population migration and mobility in Eastern England in the 18th century', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1980). John Patten was also uncertain about the status of Melford at this period although he included the parish in his list of East Anglian Towns; J. Patten, 'The urban structure of East Anglia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1972).
5. See Figure 1 and 'Differences between the various parts of Melford' below.
6. The issue of 'town' status is summarised in M. Carter, 'Town or urban society? St Ives in Huntingdonshire, 1630–1740' in Phythian-Adams ed, *Societies, culture and kinship*, 77–84. The St. Ives population is estimated at under 1,200 in 1642 and 1,800 in 1674.
7. Suffolk Record Office, Bury St. Edmunds, (hereafter SROB) FL509/3/15, FL509/3/16.
8. R. Burn, *The ecclesiastical law* (8th edition), Vol 3, (London, 1824), 20; Burn states that a statute of 2 and 3 Edward 6 made it compulsory for all people to pay their offerings; S.J. Wright, 'A guide to Easter books and related parish listings', *Local Population Studies*, **43** (1989), 18–31; S.J. Wright, 'A guide to Easter books and related parish listings Part II', *Local Population Studies*, **43** (1989), 13–27; S.J. Wright, 'Easter books and parish rate books, a new source for the urban historian', *Urban History Yearbook*, (1985), 30–45.
9. A. Whiteman, 'The Compton census of 1676' in K. Schürer and T. Arkell eds, *Surveying the people*, (Oxford 1992), 81.
10. Wright, 'A guide to Easter books part II', 17–27.
11. At the time this work was undertaken the reconstitution extended from the mid–sixteenth century to 1730; it currently extends to around 1800.
12. Wright, 'A guide to Easter books', 25–6.
13. SROB, FL509/3/15, in his accounts for 1671/2, 1672/3, 1673/4.
14. L. Boothman, 'On the accuracy of a late sixteenth century parish register', *Local Population Studies*, **49** (1992), 62–6.
15. Public Record Office, London, E179/257/12; S.H.A. Hervey, ed, *Suffolk in 1674*, being the hearth tax returns, Suffolk Green Book no xi, (Woodbridge, 1905). A. Whiteman (ed. with the assistance of Mary Clapinson), *The Compton Census of 1676: a critical edition*, British Academy: Records of Social and Economic History, N.S. 10, (London, 1986), 240.
16. P. Clark and D. Souden eds, *Migration and society in early modern England*, (London, 1987), introduction, 24–6, 30–1; Laslett, *Family life and illicit love in earlier generations*, (Cambridge, 1977), 72–3.
17. The Melford records include details of 49 pauper apprenticeships of Melford children between 1663–1700. Forty-five per cent of the masters lived in Melford. Another 30 per cent lived in parishes bordering Melford. SROB FL509/7/15. Henry French's analysis of the Sudbury Coquet Books between 1656–95 shows that 53 per cent of Sudbury apprentices were from that town, 7 per cent from Melford; H.R. French, 'Chief Inhabitants and their areas of influence: local ruling groups in Essex and Suffolk parishes, 1630–1720', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1993). Laslett mentions young people leaving home and returning in his analysis of the Cogenhoe records: Laslett, *Family life and illicit love*, 74.
18. Wrigley and Schofield in *The Population history of England, 1541–1871: a reconstruction*, (London, 1981), 35 and 570 estimated 30.6 per cent and 31.2 per cent for children, but T. Arkell in *Surveying the people*,

- 98–102 argued against this, suggesting a range of 29–41 per cent. In general, the larger the proportion of children, the higher the mean household size was.
19. W. Newman Brown, 'The receipt of poor relief and family situation, Aldenham Hertfordshire 1630–90', in R.M. Smith ed, *Land kinship and life cycle*, (Cambridge, 1984), 405–22 and T. Wales 'Poverty, poor relief and life cycle, some evidence from seventeenth century Norfolk' in the same volume, 351–404.
 20. See Table 6 below.
 21. Laslett, *Family life and illicit love*, 50–101.
 22. There are 32 servants listed but not named in the 1676 Easter Offerng lists, others are named.
 23. Amongst these 63 there were just 4 married couples; the vast majority are likely to have been servants. Another 3 people had been buried before 1684.
 24. Laslett, *Family life and illicit love*, 79, 98–9.
 25. M. Kitch, 'Population movement and migration in pre-industrial rural England' in B. Short ed, *The English rural community*, (Cambridge, 1992), 62–84.
 26. L.R. Poos, 'Population turnover in medieval Essex: the evidence of some early fourteenth century tithing lists', in L. Bonfield, R.M. Smith and K. Wrightson eds, *The world we have gained*, (Oxford, 1986), 1–2.
 27. K.D.M. Snell, 'Parish registration and the study of labour mobility', *Local Population Studies*, **33** (1994), 29–43.
 28. M. Escott, 'Residential mobility in a late eighteenth century parish, Binfield, Berks 1779–1801', *Local Population Studies*, **40** (1988), 20–35. R. Tinley and D. Mills, 'Population turnover in an eighteenth century Lincolnshire parish in a comparative context', *Local Population Studies*, **52** (1994), 30–38.
 29. K. Wrightson and D. Levine, *Poverty and piety in an English village, Terling 1525–1700*, (Oxford, 1979), 82.
 30. Hey, 'The local history of family names', xvi; Escott, 'Residential mobility', 27.
 31. M. Zell, *Industry in the countryside, Wealden society in the sixteenth century*, (Cambridge, 1994), 81.
 32. Clarke and Souden, *Migration in early modern England*, 29–32.
 33. K. Schürer, 'The role of the family in the process of migration' in C.G. Pooley and I.D. Whyte eds, *Migrants emigrants and immigrants: a social history of migration*, (London, 1991), 106.
 34. K. Wrightson, 'Household and kinship in sixteenth century England', *History Workshop Journal*, **12** (1981), 151–9.
 35. D. Souden, 'Movers and stayers in family reconstitution populations', *Local Population Studies*, **33** (1984), 11–28.
 36. S. King, 'Profitable pursuits? Rural Industry and mortality in the proto-industrial West Riding 1650–1830', *Local Population Studies*, **59** (1997), 26.