

MARRIAGE ALLIANCES, HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION AND THE ROLE OF KINSHIP IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FARMING

P.J.F. Betts

Philip Betts returned to academic study after a long career in the City of London, recently completing a PhD at the University of Kent, and is now a part-time teacher of local history.

Introduction

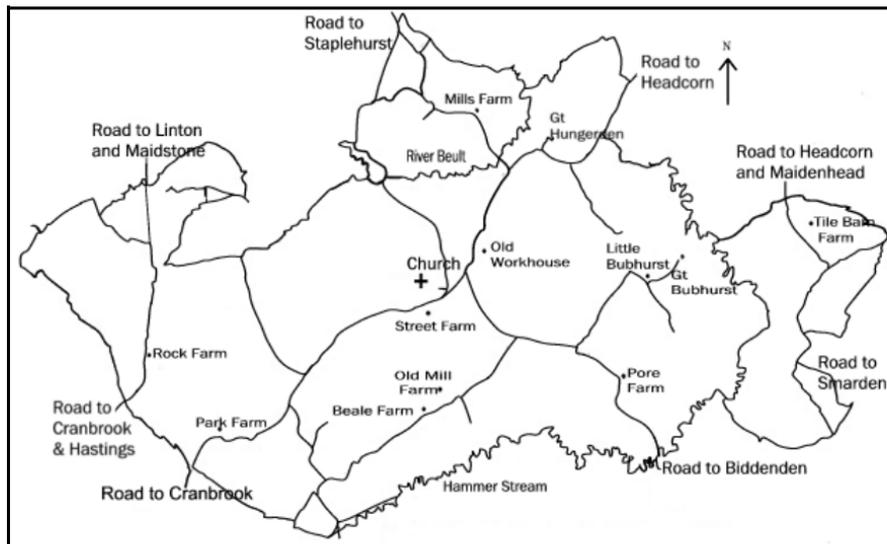
The two most outstanding studies of family structure and kinship in a nineteenth-century context have a strongly urban and working-class focus, and published work of this nature on nineteenth-century rural society remains comparatively sparse.¹ There are, however, now some notable studies carried out on localities in Norfolk and elsewhere by Hinde;² and there is an increasing appreciation of the strong survival powers of small family farms, notably in recent studies of nineteenth-century Lancashire by Winstanley and on the Blean area of North Kent by Reay.³ This article engages with issues raised by these and other authors with reference to farmers' families, kinship links and marriage alliances.

The farmer, particularly the tenant and smaller farmer, remains a much overlooked constituent of nineteenth-century communities. Writing 30 years ago, Jones considered that, of the three main agricultural classes it was surprising that, despite its central economic function in the countryside, we knew least about the economic condition of the farmer.⁴ There is an increasing appreciation that 'small-scale owning and farming was not obliterated' writes Beckett 'but what happened to the people who operated at this level deserves greater attention'.⁵ Holderness considers that questions of inheritance, migration, recruitment and upward (or downward) social mobility are difficult to answer from surviving records.⁶

The locality

The parish of Frittenden lies in the Low Weald or Vale of Kent. The village itself sits prominently on a low ridge, dominated by the church of St Mary, and runs from east to west approximately central to the parish. The parish is bounded by a turnpike road to the east, Maidstone to Biddenden (1805), and to the west, Maidstone to Cranbrook (1760).⁷ While the few inhabitants adjacent to these roads must have been influenced by their proximity, the village itself was, as a result of its location, relatively remote from social and

Figure 1 Parish of Frittenden, Kent: based on 1806 Survey by J.Grith



cultural influences outside the parish boundaries. The extent to which even these new roads improved communications with surrounding districts is questioned by Hasted who, writing in 1798, described the Maidstone to Cranbrook road as being so deep and miry as to be nearly impassable in wet weather.⁸

Hasted's topographical description portrays Frittenden as

very narrow from east to west and contains seventy houses. It has an unpleasant and forlorn aspect. The soil is deep, stiff clay, very wet and unkindly for tillage, inasmuch that, in a rainy season, the occupiers have but little produce from their lands, which consequently keeps them very poor.⁹

These qualities, the geophysical constraints and the remoteness of the place, were difficult to alter and, in a sense, were abiding features of the parish of Frittenden. Likewise, the village remained overwhelmingly dependent on agriculture as a source of livelihood.¹⁰

In many respects Frittenden ran counter to expectations based on traditionally accepted national, county and indeed regional trends. Employment patterns, contrary to some regional assessments, displayed the continuation of live-in labour, not only throughout the nineteenth century but well into the twentieth.¹¹ The role of the extended family and familial alliances through

Table 1 Population growth in Frittenden, 1801 – 1871

	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871
Total Pop.	51	593	799	816	804	908	898	949
% increase	–	+7.6	+37.7	+2.0	-1.4	+12.9	-1.1	+5.7
Overall % Increase 1801-71								+72.2

Note: There is no comment in the 1821 return to explain why the population increase for 1811–21 was so substantial.

Source: Population censuses at dates stated and George S.Minchin, 'Table of Population, 1801–1921', *The Victoria County History of Kent*, 3 (1974 reprint).

marriage (though not necessarily by 'arrangement'), were also factors throughout the period for not only the larger farmers but for relatively small farmers, be they owner-occupiers or tenants.

Frittenden was not the place of residence of a noble family but one estate, that of Mann/Cornwallis (later Holmesdale), dominated the parish. The seat of the estate was eight miles away at Linton. Apart from a partial disposal in 1805 the estate increased its Frittenden landholdings from just over 33 per cent in 1814 (which may well have been unchanged from 1806) to just over 40 per cent in 1869.

Population

There was a significant if somewhat erratic increase in population in the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, as shown in Table 1. The relatively static population levels from 1821 to 1841 may well reflect the extent of emigration from the parish. This was very common in the Weald and its extent in Frittenden can be observed from the comment in 1851 of Edward Moore, rector 1842–1869 (having been curate from 1839), that 'some 200 souls' must have emigrated to America from Frittenden during the course of the previous 30 years.¹²

Work on the parish registers of Kent suggests that in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries Kentish rural couples were by no means backward in joining the trend towards earlier marriage.¹³ At Frittenden, a survey of 48 marriages in the parish register of St Mary through 1792–1837 shows the husbands averaged 24.5 years of age (compared with 25.3 for southern counties) and their brides 21.9 (23.4).¹⁴ Thereafter, the all-important female age at first marriage was beginning to show signs of rising, if not in any consistent fashion from one decade to the next. From the same marriage register it can be

ascertained that ages at first marriage were, for males, 26.5 (1841–1850), 24.8 (1851–1860) and 26.6 (1861–1870); and for females, 25.1, 22.2 and 24.2.¹⁵ Both sexes, nevertheless, appear to have continued to marry somewhat younger than in the Kent population at large during these decades and, looking across the 70 years as a whole, there can be no doubt that these patterns of nuptiality were sufficiently high to sustain a brisk rate of procreation.¹⁶

Farmers' marriage alliances

While in England marriage partners seem to have been free to choose one another there is abundant evidence that they chose brides or grooms whose social station was roughly similar to their own. Marriage was an act of social reproduction by which members of each group in society reconstituted themselves in the next generation. There is little evidence of parental arrangements although parental consent was eagerly sought out and valued, not least because an unfavourable match could jeopardise the inheritance which was technically at the discretion of the lifetime holder of the property.¹⁷ Writing of nineteenth-century farmers, Thompson suggests that they 'observed conventions which were partly those of class, with their concern for conserving property through social compatibility, and partly those of craft, with their concern with practical and functional couplings'. He continues by observing that according to their position in the hierarchy, farmers tended to marry daughters of farmers of similar rank, usually from the same local district, a custom rooted in social and business contacts and well calculated to bring appropriate skills into the farmhouse and perhaps the farmyard too. In practice no distinctions seem to have been made between tenant-farmer and owner-farmer families.¹⁸ In the same vein, on the basis of her study of a northwest Essex village, Robin notes that such marriages could occur as a result of

certain farmers wish[ing] to cement relations with a working colleague; because marriages were sought with families which held a comparable social status; or simply because the offspring....were likely to have known each other from childhood.¹⁹

To this end, Everitt has observed the tendency toward intermarriage among the farming elite in Victorian East Kent.²⁰

Frittenden marriages 1800–1837

The parish church of St Mary saw 189 weddings between 1800 and the first services recorded under the new system of registration in 1837, following the Marriage Registration Act of 1836. These included some 21 grooms with surnames that appeared in the 1806 tithe list of occupiers.²¹ Of these, 8 (38 per cent) married brides with maiden names which also appeared in the 1806 tithe list. If we include surnames which were subsequently to appear as farmers in other sources these figures increase to 36 and 17 (47 per cent). Some notable family alliances appeared during this period. In 1815 two long-established families were linked when George Day married Martha Bates, and this couple

Table 2 Marriage alliances by socio-economic category, 1837–1871

Daughters of:	Gentry/ professional	Farmer	Trades & crafts	Labourers	Total
Gentry/professional	3	2	2	–	7
Farmers	–	36	8	20	64
Trades & crafts	2	13	13	17	45
Labourers	-	6	11	103	120
Total	5	57	34	140	236

- Notes:**
- (i) A few parents denoted as servant are here included under trades and crafts. This is an arguable decision, but the numbers concerned are tiny and will not affect the conclusion drawn.
 - (ii) Individuals are allocated to the first named occupation unless farmer is shown as one of the occupations when it is always allocated there.

Source: Frittenden Parish Registers of St Mary's, 1837–70.

were still farming at Street Farm in 1841. The Hickmotts, more recently arrived, established a series of farming alliances. In 1819 Ann Hickmott had married Edward Munk who farmed at Great Bubhurst. Hannah Hickmott married Reuben Sharp, who farmed land at the Old Workhouse in 1834; and Thomas Hickmott married, in January 1836, Elizabeth Judge whose father, Joseph, farmed at Great Hungerden from 1827 to 1850. This last couple occupied Pore Farm (today Stone Court). A long-term alliance was established between the Pullen and Orpin families when Robert Orpin married Elizabeth Pullen who then farmed Mills Farm (later Pullen Farm).

The Wise family also appear to have been fairly recent incomers to the parish and married into the Taylor and Bridgland families, both long-established tenant farmers. Joseph Wise, who succeeded to William Taylor's tenancy with the Mann/Cornwallis Estate at part of Park Farm in 1818, married Ann Taylor in 1808. Thomas married Harriet Bridgland in 1837.²²

Frittenden marriages 1837–1870

From late 1837 Frittenden's parish registers began to record the occupation of the brides' and grooms' fathers and during the years to 1870 a total of 236 marriages took place. As a first approach, we have set out the marriage links by socio-economic status, based on the stated occupations of the fathers of

brides and bridegrooms, in Table 2. Because the numbers in some cells of this contingency table are quite tiny (for example, there were only seven marriages involving sons of fathers in the category gentry/professional, and five such daughters), and because the categories used are necessarily rather broad, comments are restricted to the main features of the table.

First, it comes as no great surprise to see that offspring of labourers of either sex were highly likely to find marriage partners in families of like socio-economic status: this applied to 103 out of 140 of labourers' sons and to 103 out of 120 labourers' daughters. Second, a clear majority of farmers' sons coming to the altar (36 out of 57) married farmers' daughters. Also a majority of farmers' daughters (36 out of 64) married farmers' sons. Thus, the level of assortative mating was high, though not so marked as among the offspring of labourers. Third, assortative mating within these two broad categories was not in evidence to the same extent among the offspring of tradesmen and craftsmen. Only 13 out of 34 sons in this category formed alliances with daughters drawn from the same category, some 'moving up', some 'down', assuming, for the purposes of this discussion, that the socio-economic categories used here correspond to a social hierarchy. Likewise, only 13 out of 45 daughters from that category married into its equivalent, again with some 'moving up', some 'down'.

The figures just quoted need to be qualified in various ways. No doubt the marriage horizons of persons at various social levels would have varied: the higher the ranking, the less likely was it that partners would be confined to the narrow geographical range of Frittenden itself. That is to say, farmers would tend to have a wider circle of business and social contacts outside the village, and those of a still higher status (that is, landlords, gentry and the like) one that was still broader, often with metropolitan links. Also, in order to figure at all in these statistics, the marriage had to take place in the parish: some sons, no doubt, escape because their marriages were celebrated elsewhere. We cannot – within the scope of the present study – go in pursuit of them. However, there is one refinement that can be usefully invoked. While the incidence of marital alliances between the offspring in both the farming and labouring category was clearly high, it remains to be identified whether these simple percentages establish a case for concluding that this was inordinately so. Some years ago, Foster proposed and used a method of exploring the incidence of occupational endogamy in marriage, and here we shall make some (limited) use of it.

Foster's approach relied, as does this study, on identifying the socio-economic background of couples marrying in terms of those of their respective parents. The aim was to measure how far the number of marriages taking place either within an occupational category (A marrying A), or across categories (A marrying B, or C and so forth) exceeded or failed to reach the number expected had marriage taken place on a purely random basis. Where the number of marriages exactly equalled the number 'predicted' by taking account of *all* available partners the resultant 'index of association' would stand at unity (or 100 in Foster's tables). The expected figure for the 'random expectation' of

intermarriage between occupations A and B is calculated by multiplying the incidence of all occupation A sons and daughters in the total marrying population by the incidence of occupation B sons and daughters and then multiplying up by the total number of marriages for all occupations.²³ The actual number of intermarriages is then divided by this. Thus there were 64 daughters and 57 sons of farmers married between 1837 and 1870 and a total of 236 marriages of which there were 36 where a farmer's son married a farmer's daughter (see Table 2). The expected number of marriages of farmer's sons marrying farmer's daughters would be:

$$(((57 + 64)/472) \times ((57+64)/472)) \times 236 = 15.5$$

The index of association would therefore be:

$$(36/15.5) \times 100 = 232 \text{ (unity being 100).}$$

Foster was able to draw on data for several thousand marriages, in Oldham, Northampton and Shields; even then, he could not altogether escape the problem of the emergence of very small values in some of the cells produced by his analysis. This problem is compounded in the case of Frittenden since we are using only 236 marriages altogether: it is feasible to apply the method only to the two largest categories here, and then with some circumspection. As shown above the index of association for 'all farmers' emerges at 232, and by a similar calculation for labourers at 144. It would be good to be able to compare the figures with indices for other rural communities, but none are available at this time. For the present, it will suffice to observe that, first, the index of association for labourers' offspring at Frittenden (144) was broadly the same, though if anything a little lower than among labourers at Oldham (200) and Northampton (218).²⁴ And secondly, the index for farmers at Frittenden, the figure of 232, fell well short of the astronomical figures of 18,700 put forward by Foster for 'big employers' at Oldham, at Northampton (6,200), or Shields (2,028) – all of these, by the way, resting on cell frequencies that were below five. On the other hand it was not vastly different from, for example, shopkeepers at Northampton (258), 'farm occupations' at Oldham; or in shipyard and metal crafts at Shields (200 and 246 respectively).²⁵

However, the chief value of invoking the index of association in the present context is to modify the impression given by the simple percentages given above. From these it appeared that the level of assortative mating was lower among farmers than among labourers. What we have now established, using the index of association, is that *once account is taken of the presence of available partners in the relevant groups* the picture is reversed. Given the relatively large numbers of both labourers' sons and labourers' daughters, a great many marriages would involve couples from the same social background; on a random basis, following Foster's method, we would 'predict' 71 such unions. In fact there were 103. Farmers' sons and farmers' daughters were relatively scarce, and had they married randomly, only 15 or 16 unions involving both would be predicted; in fact there were 36.

Table 3 Marriage contingency tables for farmers' sons

Sons (from farming families of various acreages):

	Large (100+ acres)	Middling (50-100)	Small (less than 50)	Acres not known	All farmers' sons marrying
Marrying daughters of:					
Gentry/professional	–	–	–	2	2
Large farmer	3	2	3	1	9
Middling farmer	2	–	–	–	2
Small farmer	4	1	2	1	8
Farmers acres not known	2	–	–	15	17
All farmers	(11)	(3)	(5)	(17)	(36)
Trades & crafts	–	–	–	13	13
Labourers	–	–	–	6	6
Total	11	3	5	36	57

From this point on, in keeping with the main focus of this article, we shall concentrate exclusively on the experiences of farmers' sons and farmers' daughters, entering into some detail and where possible adding some flesh and blood to the discussion of marriage propensities. Table 3 is a contingency table which shows the range of acreage categories into which the sons of farmers married, and Table 4 gives corresponding data for farmers' daughters. Acreage sub-categories of the parents are not drawn from the parish registers but derived from other sources and, in a number of cases, are not available.

Marriages of farmers' sons

From Table 3 it can be seen that, in all, 57 farmers' sons were married in the period, 36 of these alliances being with farmers' daughters. The inference to be drawn from Table 3 is that the sons of the larger farmers were not especially fastidious, showing some willingness to 'marry down' within the farming community. For the sons of middling and small farmers, it was not uncommon for marriage with the daughters of more substantial farmers to take place. However, none of the sons of farmers with identifiable acreages chose brides from a trade or labouring background. This leads us to the fourth and unfortunately the largest category: the sons of farmers for whom no acreage figures are available. Seventeen married daughters of farmers, of which 15 were also farmers of unidentified acreage. Twenty-one married non-farmers. Of these, two-thirds married tradesmen's daughters and the other third those

Table 4 Marriage contingency table for farmers' daughters

Daughters (from families of various acreages):					
	Large (100+ acres)	Middling (50-100)	Small (less than 50)	Acres Not known	All farmers' daughters marrying
Marrying sons of:					
Gentry/professional	–	–	–	–	–
Large farmer	3	2	4	2	11
Middling farmer	2	–	–	–	2
Small farmer	3	–	2	–	4
Farmers acres not known	1	–	1	15	17
All farmers	(9)	(2)	(7)	(17)	(35)
Trades & crafts	1	–	1	6	8
Labourers	–	1	1	18	20
Total	10	3	9	41	63

of labourers. The explanation almost certainly lies in the likelihood that these were very small 'farmers' indeed, perhaps better described as smallholders, who were barely distinguishable in social terms from the families of the brides that they married. One example stands out in the parish registers: William Hayward, recorded in the 1851 Census as 'Farmer/Labourer', saw his daughter Sophia marry John Gurr, himself a labourer, in October 1866 when William described himself as a labourer.²⁶

Marriages of farmers' daughters

If a similar table and commentary is now provided for farmers' daughters, Table 4, it can be seen that in all 63 farmers daughters were married at Frittenden, 35 of these alliances involving farmers' sons. While the incidence of farmers' daughters marrying farmers' sons was not quite as prevalent as farmers' sons marrying farmers' daughters, it was still the norm, and even where daughters married outside of the community of farmers they were likely to marry within the agricultural community.

Maintaining the same status after marriage was not especially easy for the daughter of a large farmer (or, rather, for all his daughters) for the obvious reason that over the years the number of marriageable daughters produced by such farmers considerably exceeded the number of holdings of that size in Frittenden. However, daughters of the middling and small farmers found it easier than their male counterparts to marry partners from families farming

larger acreages. Before commenting further on these findings, some further insights into the operation of the marriage market in Frittenden are derived from observations on the role of inheritance.

The role of inheritance and succession

Between 1837 and 1870 there were 14 cases where the bridegroom of a marriage (where one of the partners was the child of a farmer) recorded *himself* as a farmer/grazier at the time of his marriage. This suggests that at least six achieved and eight maintained the status of farmer. It is not clear whether they immediately took over the farms from either their father or father-in-law, or had established themselves on another farm. In two cases the marriage was of the eldest identifiable son, but in neither did they succeed to their fathers' farms. One, Richard Boorman, appears to have left the parish (even though his younger brother had died), and the other, Thomas Hickmott, became an agricultural labourer.

In another 16 instances, census data confirms that the bridegrooms subsequently became farmers (only seven described themselves as farmers at the time of their marriage). Seven were cases of farmer assortative mating but only four resulted in the inheritance of one of the marriage partners' fathers' farms. Five sons of tradesmen/labourers became farmers following their marriage to farmers' daughters. One of these, George Worsley, took up the occupation of his father-in-law's farm, Little Bubhurst.

Where we can identify the acreages of the fathers of the bridegrooms, six were of over 100 acres and four of these were assortative matings. In two of the 16 instances, the oldest identifiable son married. Edward Munk took over the tenancy of Great Bubhurst from his father. It was also possible to enhance a holding by the merging of two holdings after a marriage. An alliance was made between Beale and the adjacent Old Mill Farm by the marriage of Louise Dann and John Cox in 1843. However, by the time of the marriage of John's sister, also called Louise, to Thomas Breakfield six years later, John, had become the occupier of both Beale and Old Mill Farms.

Susannah Wise was particularly unfortunate if she aspired to become a farmer's wife. Her first marriage, to Benjamin Boorman, the second son of Thomas Boorman, ended with Benjamin's death. Her second marriage, to John Taylor, eldest son of the occupier of Park Farm, was to endure but John, already a carpenter at the time of his marriage, continued to follow his trade, and his younger brother James came to succeed to the tenancy of the farm.

Thus the outcome, over a period of years, in respect of the prospects of newly married couples succeeding to the farming businesses of either the groom's or the bride's father was by no means assured.²⁷ In cases involving the second, third and successive sons or daughters the prospects of their doing so might be classed as rather low, in the absence of the kind of sub-division practised in, say, France. But even the succession of an eldest son, or a son-in-law acquired as the result of the marriage of one of a farmer's daughters, was by no means guaranteed.

Table 5 Household composition in Frittenden, 1851

Mean no. of persons per 100 households, 1851				
	Frittenden	Arable (Norfolk)	Pastoral (Shrops.)	Rural England
Head and spouse	182	175	166	171
Offspring	240	215	184	210
Relatives	22	35	47	33
Servants	63	29	76	33
Lodgers & others	23	21	18	24
Total	530	475	491	471

Sources: C.K.S./P152/1851/27, *Enumerators' Returns for the Parish of Frittenden 1851*, and Hinde, 'Household Structure, Marriage and the Institution of Service in Nineteenth-century Rural England', *Local Population Studies*, 35 (1985), 43-51. Following the style adopted by Hinde, all figures are adjusted to the base of 100 households.

In some circumstances farmers who retired were succeeded by single women, or by their widows. Thus three unmarried daughters took on the farms of their parents. Jane Hickmott had taken on Friends/Weaversden from her widowed mother by the time of the 1871 census and continued to run the farm for many years. Jane and Susanna Orpin had taken on Mills Farm by the time of the 1871 census, again from their widowed mother. Jane continued to run the farm, which increased from 100 to 250 acres, and remained unmarried for over 20 years. There were also a number of cases where the widows of farmers took control of the farming business: the census records two in 1841, two in 1851 and four in both 1861 and 1871, the acreage under their control rising from 145 in 1851 to 228 in 1861 and 414 in 1871. Two also recorded second occupations: Elizabeth Dapson combined the retailing of beer with the farming of 15 acres while Ann Orpin, recorded in both 1861 and 1871, ran the watermill and farmed 55 acres. The tenure of widows delayed the succession of their sons in the case of Br(e)ackfield at Tile Barn and Hayward at Rock Farm. Similarly, the entering into the tenancy of his father-in-law's farm (Beale) by John Cox may have been influenced by the retention of the tenancy of Old Mill Lane Farm by his mother, Mary.

Household size and composition: Frittenden in the round

We begin with some aggregated statistics for the parish of Frittenden, set out according to what have become conventional, or standardised, procedures for analysing data drawn from the mid-nineteenth century enumerators' books. Mean household size in Frittenden in 1851 stood at 5.3. This figure is decidedly higher than those put forward by Hinde for Mitford (an arable

Table 6 Mean number of persons per 100 households

	Frittenden 1851	Frittenden 1881
Head and spouse	182	182
Offspring	240	251
Relatives	22	29
Servants	63	37
Lodgers & others	23	24
Total	530	523

Sources: C.K.S./P152/1851/27, *Enumerators' Returns for the Parish of Frittenden 1851*, C.K.S./P152/1881/nn, *Enumerators' Returns for the Parish of Frittenden 1881*. Following the style adopted by Hinde, all figures are adjusted to the base of 100 households.

district of Norfolk, 4.5), by Goose for the rural parishes in the Berkhamsted and St Albans regions of Hertfordshire (both arable, 4.7 and 4.8 respectively) and Atcham (a pastoral district of Shropshire 4.7).²⁸ It is also higher than the mean figure for 'rural England' in 1851 estimated by Wall and others to be 4.7.²⁹ At Frittenden the average household size remained virtually the same in 1881 (5.2). Mean household sizes, it has been suggested, can all too easily become 'meaningless' averages.³⁰ That can be so, unless close attention is given to the composition of households. It has become conventional to distinguish between heads (by definition, any community will yield an average of 1.0 per household); spouses; offspring – that is co-residing children – of any age; other relatives of the household head, by blood or marriage; servants (domestic or otherwise, including apprentices); lodgers; and a handful of 'others' whose relationship to the household head is not stated in the census, together with a small number whose precise relationship to the household head is ambiguous or difficult to determine.

In Frittenden as a whole the relatively large mean size of households just mentioned was not sustained by the presence of an undue proportion of lodgers or relatives. There is an indication in Table 5 (arising from the dual presence of both head and spouse), that longevity of spouses was a shade better than in the two districts taken by Hinde and than in rural England as a whole. Above all, in 1851, a relatively high mean household size was ensured by a marked propensity for offspring to remain at home, and by the presence of a much-above average incidence of servants – in which respect Frittenden came close to reaching the level found at Atcham in Shropshire.

Between 1851 and 1881 changes in the make-up of these rural households varied considerably. At Mitford in Norfolk, the presence of co-residing offspring, relatives and servants all fell away, so that average household size

Table 7 Household comparison in Frittenden, 1851 and 1881

	Frittenden 1851			Frittenden 1881		
	Farmers	Other	Whole parish	Farmers	Other	Whole parish
Head and spouse	178	183	182	164	188	182
Offspring	238	240	240	223	260	251
Relatives	31	19	22	48	23	29
Servants	171	25	63	106	14	37
Lodgers & others	8	28	23	25	23	24
Number of households	45	126	171	44	133	177
Mean per 100 households	626	495	530	566	508	523

Sources: C.K.S./P152/1851/27, *Enumerators' Returns for the Parish of Frittenden 1851*, C.K.S./P152/1881/nn, *Enumerators' Returns for the Parish of Frittenden 1881*.

30 years on had fallen quite considerably, to 4.2. At Atcham, Shropshire, relatives and servants melted away in these years but the ratio of offspring remaining at home was unchanged, thus limiting the fall in mean household size.³¹ Frittenden was different from either: there was, by this time, a definite fall in the incidence of servants but the presence of offspring and other relatives actually rose to (almost) compensate.

A series of points of interest emerge from Table 7, which are perhaps best presented as a sequence of numbered points, amplified as necessary by additional information.

(i) Mean household size

As might have been predicted, farmer-headed households were rather larger than the parish average in 1851. Thirty years on, the average size of these households – though still above the parish norm – was lower by 60 per hundred households or 0.6 of a person.

(ii) Heads and spouses

The presence of both a head and a spouse was marginally less frequent on the farms than in the parish as a whole in 1851, and rather more obviously so in 1881. This we can associate with a higher ratio of widows and widowers in farmer-headed households: 5.1 per cent of widows among farmer-headed households in 1851 and 15.4 per cent in 1881; and also with a tendency to ageing. This latter point is significant for the demographic profile of the parish. The average age of farmer household heads, by 1881, had advanced by 2.5 years: the mean age of

Table 8 Incidence of servants living-in, per 100

Farmer-headed households, 1851-81

	1851		1861		1871		1881	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
(a) described specifically as farm servants	118	7	76	9	52	–	57	–
(b) all those described as servants	120	54	80	49	67	58	57	61

Source: C.K.S./P152/1851/27, *Enumerators' Returns for the Parish of Frittenden 1851*, C.K.S./P152/1861/18-19, *Enumerators' Returns for the Parish of Frittenden 1861*, C.K.S./P152/1871/nn, *Enumerators' Returns for the Parish of Frittenden 1871*, C.K.S./P152/1881/nn, *Enumerators' Returns for the Parish of Frittenden 1881*.

household heads enumerated as farmers was 52.2 in 1851 and 54.7 in 1881.

(iii) Farm and domestic servants

A clear line between these categories is difficult to draw because – at least in farmers' households – a male 'servant' confined to purely domestic duties must have been a great rarity, while the great majority of female servants, however described in the census, would be expected to turn their hands to farm as well as domestic activities.³² Table 5 has already informed us that the incidence of co-residing servants in 1851 was considerably greater at Frittenden than in rural England as a whole, or than arable Norfolk in particular – though somewhat lower than in pastoral Shropshire. Thus a decline in live-in service was relatively late in making itself apparent in Frittenden and even by 1881 it was nowhere near so complete as in arable Norfolk. Nevertheless, there are clear signs of a definite decrease in its incidence between 1851 and 1881.

Confining attention exclusively to farmer-headed households, we can observe from Table 8 the total disappearance of females *specifically* described as farm servants after 1861, but a modest increase in the incidence of *all* female servants. The women concerned may have been 'reclassified' without the balance of their duties necessarily changing a great deal. However, there was quite a dramatic decline in the incidence of live-in males. The incidence of males specifically defined as *farm* servants halved in 30 years, and in their case taking a broader definition of service does little or nothing to moderate what was, in fact, quite a major fall. While in 1881 the institution of farm service still had some life left in

Table 9 Mean number of offspring per 100 farmer-headed households in Frittenden, 1851 and 1881

Age group of children	1851	1881
0–9	96	88
10–14	60	36
15–19	33	36
20–24	27	32
25–29	11	16
30 and over	13	20
All aged 15 and over	84	104
All children	240	228

Source: C.K.S./P152/1851/27, *Enumerators' Returns for the Parish of Frittenden 1851*,
C.K.S./P152/1881/nn, *Enumerators' Returns for the Parish of Frittenden 1881*.

it, the implication is that, while there was some increase of labourers in cottages, farmers would need to rely increasingly on the help of their own offspring, or other relatives or kin.

(iv) Co-residing offspring

There was a marginal decline between 1851 and 1881 in the overall incidence of offspring remaining at home in Frittenden's farmer-headed households. This contrasts with the position in the parish as a whole, where the position was stable (see Table 7). A more detailed examination of co-residing offspring by age group is given above, in Table 9.

From this table it appears that the fall in the incidence of co-residing children in these farming households is entirely accounted for by a decline in the presence of younger children, aged below 15. The number of farmer-headed households was relatively constant (44 and 45) as was the mean age of the head of household (53.2 and 53.2). The significant change was the number of households containing children of 10 to 14 years of age (16 to 11). The explanation could lie in a slight fall in fertility (either deliberate or, more probably, as a consequence of shifts in the age or marital composition of the household heads concerned); or it is possible that some farmers' children were either working elsewhere or, as appears perhaps more likely, were sent elsewhere for a boarding school education, for the fall in co-residing children aged 10–14 was especially noticeable. But the most striking feature of the table is an increasing incidence of co-residing children at all

ages above 15. Quite clearly, Frittenden's farmers depended increasingly on the assistance of their immediate offspring.

(v) Other kin (relatives)

Reay observed that it was relatively common for farming households to go through an extended phase.³³ Table 7 highlights quite a substantial rise in the incidence of co-residing kin to the point where, in 1881, nearly one-half of a person in the average farming household in Frittenden fell into this category. This figure includes the farmer's grandchildren, sometimes those born to still co-residing offspring, sometimes not. Co-residing kin, we may infer, made a useful contribution to the running of Frittenden's farms and one that may be somewhat understated. It is quite possible, indeed likely, that the more shadowy element in farmers' households, those classed as 'lodgers' or others (usually 'visitors'), which likewise rose between 1851 and 1881 (Table 7), conceals a number who were in fact kinsfolk of the farmer or his wife, even where this was not explicitly shown in the census returns. The contribution made by kin to the running of a farm need not be confined to those in residence in the farmhouse: various examples can be given of the hiring of non-resident kin in order to accomplish particular tasks. These sources of assistance no doubt included at times direct (but non-resident) offspring, a fact also recorded by Reay in East Kent.³⁴

Conclusions

The limitations of what has been attempted in this article are fairly obvious: the use of information on a single parish with the resultant small numbers, reliance on parish registers in an area of high nonconformity, reliance on census data which fails to capture movements at inter-censal periods. As a result it is not particularly easy to draw firm conclusions about the marriage alliances of farmers' sons and daughters. Some, however, can be advanced with reasonable confidence.

First, there was quite a high degree of assortative mating in regard to the marriages of the offspring of farmers. This is shown by simple percentages (63.2 per cent of farmers' sons marrying farmers' daughters, and 56.3 per cent *vice versa*), and by an index of association standing at 232. This index would rise a good deal higher were we to confine the analysis to the sons and daughters of farmers of known acreage, that is, excluding the sons and daughters of persons whose claims to be farmers were perhaps more marginal.³⁵

Second, farmers and the farming community were, nevertheless, not a closed caste. 22.8 per cent of farmers' sons married tradesmen's daughters, and 10.5 per cent married labourer's daughters; of their daughters, 12.5 per cent married the sons of tradesmen and craftsmen and 31.3 per cent the sons of labourers.³⁶

Third, the acreages held by parents, where known, do not appear to have been a very powerful influence on who married whom within the farming element

of the community. There was some scope for the prospects of both sons and daughters of small farmers to 'rise' as a consequence of marriages with the offspring of large farmers and, likewise, for 'falls' in status, measured by this criterion, to take place. In other words, the high levels of assortative mating for the class of farmers as a whole concealed a fair amount of 'churning', within the various gradations of acreage.

Fourth, the outcome of any particular union, whether it involved an element of calculation or not, is difficult to predict from the sources alone. Much depended on the situation prevailing at any particular farm. In some cases, the father might be close to retirement and willing to pass on the farm to his just-married son, or son-in-law, subject (where appropriate) to the landlord's assent. In others, he would still be in the prime of life and set to continue. This might well mean that his eldest (first-born) son would need to find another farm, perhaps by moving away, or that he might even become a labourer. In some cases neither the eldest son, nor an acquired son-in-law, was deemed the obvious successor, and the father might be succeeded by his unmarried daughter(s), or his widow, for a period of years. Thus, being a farmer's son did not guarantee becoming a farmer (though it probably helped initially); nor did a girl's marriage to the son of a farmer – even his eldest son – give complete assurance that she would become, either immediately or in the future, a farmer's wife. In the last analysis a rich variety of individual experience is concealed by percentages and by indexes of association.

No attempt has been made to trace in any detail the marriage alliances other than those involving the offspring of farmers, nor to evaluate the significance of kin contact in the *wider* village community, after the style of Anderson or Dupree. Instead, the focus has been on links between farming families by marriage, and on the role of children and of kin in supporting the work of farming businesses, insofar as this can be established through the investigation of patterns of co-residence. Nonetheless, what has emerged is by no means of negligible value, particularly when set against the background of Winstanley's recent work on Lancashire, which establishes that in that county farms tended to be decidedly on the small side by English standards; that the farmers of that region were definitely not 'peasants' aiming only at self-sufficiency but, rather, strongly market-orientated; and that there was a heavy, indeed an increasing, reliance on family labour coupled with farm service.³⁷ In the round, from the evidence reviewed in this article, the situation at Frittenden echoed that of Lancashire as Winstanley has described it. For here also the farms were generally on the small side, and market-orientation was much in evidence and, here too, we find evidence of a noteworthy and increasing reliance on family labour. Such a profile was not confined to Lancashire, the northwest, or Wales, but existed in the southeast also, at least in enclaves. In these respects Frittenden perhaps had more in common with Lancashire than with regions such as East Anglia, and indeed other parts of the county itself, such as Thanet.

NOTES

1. M. Anderson, *Family structure in industrial Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1974); M. W. Dupree, *Family structure in the Staffordshire Potteries 1840–1880* (Oxford, 1995).
2. P.R.A. Hinde, 'Household structure, marriage and the institution of service in nineteenth-century rural England', *Local Population Studies*, **35** (1985), 43–51; P.R.A. Hinde, 'The marriage market in the nineteenth-century countryside', *Journal of European Economic History*, **18**, (1989), 383–92.
3. M. Winstanley, 'Industrialisation and the small farm: family and household economy in nineteenth-century Lancashire', *Past & Present*, **152** (1996), 157–95; B. Reay, 'Kinship and the neighbourhood in nineteenth-century rural England: the myth of the autonomous nuclear family', *Journal of Family History*, **21** (1996), 87–104; B. Reay, *Microhistories: demography, society and culture in rural England, 1800–1930* (Cambridge, 1996). See also M. Reed, 'The peasant of nineteenth-century England: a neglected class?', *History Workshop Journal*, **18** (1984), 53–76 and M. Reed, 'Nineteenth-century rural England: a case for 'peasant studies'?', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, **14** (1986–7), 78–99; and J. V. Beckett, 'The peasant in England. A case of terminological confusion?', *Agricultural History Review*, **32** (1984), 113–23.
4. E.L. Jones, *The development of English agriculture, 1815–1873* (London, 1968), 25.
5. J.V. Beckett, 'The decline of the small landowner', in F.M.L. Thompson ed., *Landowners, capitalists and entrepreneurs* (Oxford, 1994), 90 and 112.
6. B.A. Holderness, 'The Victorian farmer' in G. E. Mingay ed., *The Victorian countryside*, I (London, 1981), 227, and in G. E. Mingay ed., *The vanishing countryman* (London, 1989), 7.
7. Dates relate to the first Act of Parliament. See B. Keith-Lucas, 'Kentish turnpikes', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, **100**, (1984), 368.
8. Edward Hasted, *The history and topographical survey of the county of Kent*, VII (2nd edn, reprint, Wakefield, 1972), 52.
9. Hasted, *History of Kent*, 113–18.
10. P.F.J. Betts, 'Farming and landholding in a Wealden parish: a study of farmers in Frittenden 1800–1860', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Kent, 1999), 27 and 286–95.
11. Betts, 'Farming and landholding', 17. See also B. Short, 'The decline of living-in servants in the transition to capitalist farming: a critique of the Sussex evidence', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, **122** (1984), 147–64. It should be noted that Snell records that Anderson's National Sample data disclosed that in 1851 25 per cent of nineteen-year-old girls and 17 per cent of nineteen-year-old boys were living-in-servants or living-in apprentices in Britain. K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor: social change and agrarian England* (Cambridge, 1995), 321.
12. Betts, 'Farming and landholding', 190.
13. See Barry Reay, 'Sexuality in nineteenth century England: the social context of illegitimacy in rural Kent', *Rural History*, **1**, (1990), 219–47 and A.E. Newman, *Old Poor Law in east Kent 1606–1834: a social and demographic analysis* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Kent, 1979), 323.
14. Centre for Kentish Studies, P152/1/6,7, Register of Marriages St Mary's Church Frittenden, 1754–1812, 1813–1837. Ages in the 1841 census were recorded only in bands of five years. Where the individuals appeared in a later census that age was used to compute their age at marriage.
15. The numbers on which this is based are 56 (note the church was being rebuilt for about 18 months during this period), 78, and 77, in the three successive decades.
16. By inference from Armstrong's county figures as reported in W. A. Armstrong, 'The population of Victorian and Edwardian Kent: (II) natural increase: births, marriages and deaths', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, **114** (1994), 29. The county marriage ages were (for males) 27.4 in 1851, 27.2 in 1861 and 27.2 in 1871; and for females 25.3, 24.7, and 24.6 respectively. Note though that Armstrong's figures are derived in a different way (singulate mean age at marriage), that is, from censuses rather than directly from parish registers.
17. D. Levine, *Reproducing families: the political economy of English population history* (Cambridge, 1987), 74; L. Stone, *The family, sex and marriage in England 1500–1800* (London, 1979), 51, notes that in Kent in the first half of the seventeenth century about half of all knights, gentry, yeoman,

- and husbandmen married girls from the same status group. More recently Alan Everitt, in *Landscape and community in England* (London, 1985), 319–22, has demonstrated the intensely local nature of the outlook and connection of farming dynasties in Victorian Kent.
18. F.M.L. Thompson, *The rise of respectable society: a social history of Britain 1830–1900* (London, 1988), 100.
 19. Jean Robin, *Elmdon: continuity and change in a northwest Essex village* (Cambridge, 1980), 144.
 20. A. M. Everitt, *Transformation and tradition: aspects of the Victorian countryside* (Norwich, 1984), 10–11.
 21. Only holders of more than one acre in the 1806 list are included here.
 22. C.K.S./A2/8, *Mr Groom in Account with James Mann Esqre for half a year's rent of his Estates in the counties of Kent and Sussex due Lady Day 1818*.
 23. C.K.S./P152/1/7, *Register of Marriages St Mary's Church Frittenden, 1813–1837*.
 24. John Foster, *Class struggle and the Industrial Revolution: early industrial capitalism in three English towns* (London, 1974), 260–9.
 25. Foster, *Class struggle*, 267–9.
 26. C.K.S./P152/1851/27, *Enumerators Returns for the Parish of Frittenden Census 1851; St. Mary's Church Vestry Records, Marriage Register 1837–1925*.
 27. It is perhaps of note that Snell categorises farmers as a non-familial occupation, that is, one where children did not 'frequently' follow the occupation of the father: Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor*, 343–6.
 28. Hinde, 'Household structure', 43–51; N. Goose, *Population, economy and family structure in Hertfordshire in 1851: vol. 1, the Berkhamsted region* (Hatfield, 1996), 61; N. Goose, *Population, economy and family structure in Hertfordshire in 1851: vol. 2, St Albans and its region* (Hatfield, 2000), 149.
 29. Richard Wall, J. Robin and P. Laslett, eds, *Family forms in historic Europe* (1983), Table 16.2, 497.
 30. L.K. Berkner, 'The use and misuse of census data for historical analysis of family structure', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 4 (1975), 737.
 31. Hinde, 'Household structure', 47–8.
 32. Higgs outlines the problems of classification in this area: E. Higgs, *Making sense of the census: the manuscript returns for England and Wales, 1801–1901* (London, 1989), 86–9.
 33. Reay, 'Kinship and the neighbourhood', 91–2 and Reay, *Microhistories*, 162–3.
 34. Reay, 'Kinship and the neighbourhood', 96–7 and Reay, *Microhistories*, 168–70.
 35. If the index is confined to marriages involving sons and daughters of farmers of known acreage the index rises to 1441.
 36. Again, these figures alter if we confine attention to sons and daughters of those farmers whose acreages are known. They become 0 per cent and 0 per cent for farmers' sons, and 20 per cent and 20 per cent for farmers' daughters. But the numbers of cases on which these percentages are founded diminishes to only 19 sons and 23 daughters in all (see Tables 3 and 4).
 37. Winstanley, 'Industrialisation and the small farm', 192–5. Snell also notes that 'the south had developed by 1850 a stronger village "community" ...than in the past two centuries, with greater familial stability in the same place': Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor*, 337.