

## SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN KENT 1480-1660

### V. THE IMPACT OF LONDON ON THE COUNTY

KENT was bound to London by the closest of ties. Not only was its northwestern corner already part of the great urban complex which was the Stuart metropolis, but the whole of the county was tightly linked to the capital economically and culturally. Important lines of land communication ran from London to Canterbury and to the Kentish coast, while the Thames was an all-important route of communication and trade defining the northern border of the county. The closeness of these contacts was strengthened by the fact that throughout the years under survey there was a constant and an important migration of young men of the county to London, seeking employment and, as apprentices, feeding talent and an aggressive ability into the livery companies and into the various crafts and trades of the capital. Of all the counties in the realm, Kent was perhaps the principal supplier of men for the inexorable need and the limitless opportunity which the city presented. And, almost as important, Kent, lying as it did within an easy day's journey from London, was a favourite county for the investment of the surplus capital of rich London merchants and tradesmen who had reached that stage in their careers when they had begun to think of retiring, of diversifying their assets, or of founding a landed family estate. There was a constant and a steadily inflationary demand for land by these London entrepreneurs who looked somewhat greedily on this pleasant and fertile countryside. These new lords of the manor, whether Kentish born or not, were, as we have so frequently observed, disposed to establish themselves as quickly as possible in the community of their choice, and one of the most effective means of so doing was to found a substantial and a needed charitable trust there, even though such benefactions did not immediately lend them the precious perquisites and prestige of which they dreamed as they arranged with their agents in London for the purchase of Kentish manors. But these new men of the gentry spawned in trade were at once aggressive and intelligent, and they were as a group to make a most important contribution to the framing and the endowment of the social and cultural institutions of the county.

The impact of London wealth and of London aspirations on the institutions of Kent was almost unbelievably great. It is not too much to say that in quantitative as well as qualitative terms a few score Londoners, principally Kentish born and still Kentish rooted, were to be of decisive importance in building the institutions of the county and in the definition of its aspirations for the future. London bene-

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factors during the course of our period provided the great total of £102,576 4s. of the charitable funds of the county. We have observed that the impact of London's wealth and almost prodigal generosity were important in the endowment of the charitable institutions of every county in the realm ; in Kent this wealth was to be decisive. The London benefactions account for 40·74 per cent. of all the charitable funds of the county, by far the largest proportion for any county in England,<sup>1</sup> and, it must be observed, these gifts were particularly effective since almost the whole of them (93·64 per cent.) were in the form of endowments.

This massive total was provided for the charitable needs of Kent by 290 benefactors, of various classes, a large proportion of whom made their gifts or bequests after the accession of Elizabeth, when the economic and social ties between London and Kent became close indeed. This means, of course, that in average terms these were very large gifts, the average amount of £353 14s. 3d. being quite sufficient to found a modest grammar school or almshouse. The scale and the impact of these London benefactions is suggested by the observation that while the London donors comprised not more than 4·35 per cent. of all Kentish donors, they gave slightly more than 40 per cent. of all the charitable funds of this rich county. Of these 290 London donors, considerably more than half were sons of Kent who had made their fortunes in the capital but who had maintained close ties with their native parish and who had in many cases built up considerable landed estates in the neighbourhood of their birth. A surprising number, seventy-four, had been born in other parts of England, but had by the time of their death either retired as gentry, or quasi-gentry, on Kentish estates purchased for a whole complex of reasons during their lifetime, or, as was the case with a few very rich merchants, held extensive Kentish properties as part of huge landholdings scattered over much of England. The birthplaces of the remaining forty-nine donors are unknown, though a fair proportion of this group were linked to Kent by landholdings or because the county was the birthplace of an ancestor or, more commonly, a wife.

Among the London benefactors to Kent there was a group of seventy-five men, or their widows, who were members of the twelve great livery companies. This relatively small group of merchants alone gave

<sup>1</sup> The proportion of London benefactions in the charitable wealth of the several counties follows :

	%		%
Bristol	19·73	Norfolk	13·21
Buckinghamshire	17·04	Somerset	26·05
Hampshire	29·23	Worcestershire	23·01
Kent	40·74	Yorkshire	12·09
Lancashire	28·03		

£35,375 lls. to the various charities of the county, with a very heavy proportion of this sum being dedicated to the relief of the poor or to the educational needs of Kent. There were fifty-one tradesmen, almost all of whom were natives of Kent, who provided the surprisingly large total of £10,307 6s. for charitable uses, while seventeen Londoners drawn from the several professions gave a total of £8,341 7s. to varied Kentish charitable needs. There were in all twenty men who at least deemed themselves as of the gentry, most of whom we should suppose were retired merchants, who gave a total of £3,074 8s., while almost as many, eighteen in number, who can be no more accurately described than as "additional burghers", are credited with benefactions totalling £2,674. The remaining sum of £42,803 12s. was given by four of the nobility resident in London at the time of their death, by five Londoners who were members of the upper gentry, by three of the lower clergy, one of whom made a very large gift, by two public officials, by fifteen artisans, and by a large group of eighty men whose status, unfortunately, cannot be exactly determined but the size of whose gifts would strongly suggest that they were in fact merchants.

It is particularly important to note that the spectrum of London interests and aspirations differed notably from that of the county as a whole. The facts may best be set out in a brief table stating the proportions of total benefactions provided under the several charitable heads for the county at large as compared with those vested by London benefactors :

	<i>County at large</i>			<i>London gifts to the County</i>		
	£	s.	%	£	s.	%
Poor	102,519	7	40·72	50,466	16	49·20
Social rehabilitation	12,043	4	4·78	7,454	0	7·27
Municipal betterment	11,558	15	4·59	2,130	18	2·08
Education	58,255	16	23·14	31,425	10	30·63
Religion	67,389	10	26·77	11,099	0	10·82

It is very apparent, indeed, that London's concern with the affairs of the county was intensely secular, not much more than a tenth of all benefactions having been made for religious uses as contrasted with substantially more than a fourth for the county as a whole. Almost 80 per cent. of all London's gifts to Kent were made for the relief of the poor, and most particularly for almshouse foundations, or for the betterment of educational opportunities. This intervention by London wealth could be decisive. Thus nearly half of all the county's endowments for the several forms of poor relief was furnished by London generosity, while substantially more than half of all the funds devoted to education and to the various plans for social rehabilitation were drawn from this comparatively small group of London benefactors who knew quite precisely how to implement their aspirations for England with effective instruments for their attainment.

It is even more dramatically evident in Kent than in other counties that these London gifts were so extraordinarily important historically because of their great qualitative strength. They were not spread thinly and ineffectually over the whole of the county : they were not dissipated pointlessly in the form of outright doles ; they were, rather, very heavily concentrated in favoured communities as substantial and well-disposed endowments for almshouses, scholarships, grammar schools, apprenticeship schemes, and other carefully framed and administered trusts which could and did transform the communities in which they were vested. The incidence and impact of these great charitable sums can perhaps best be examined by noting the disposition of London benefactions in the parishes, observing first a group with substantial charitable funds of £400 or more in which there was little or no London influence and then a second group in which London wealth and London aspirations bore very heavily indeed on the social and cultural development of these communities. [See Table A, p. 136.]

In these thirty-eight towns and rural parishes, the impact of London charitable benefactions, while by no means insignificant, was in no sense decisively important in shaping institutional development. These parishes, a preponderance of which lay in parts of Kent rather distant from London, held charitable wealth by the close of our period amounting to slightly more than 40 per cent. of the whole disposed by the county, while, considering the group together, only about 12 per cent. of their charitable funds had been drawn from London sources. These more self-reliant towns and parishes, all with substantial charitable endowments, had built their institutions under the leadership of local gentry, or, as was the case in the six larger market towns included in the group, by the efforts of the local burgher aristocracy.

There was, at the same time, quite as large a group of towns and rural parishes in which the impact of London wealth was decisive. In most cases these parishes were lifted into modernity by the generosity of a native son who had made a considerable fortune in trade in London and who when the time came to dispose his affairs and to implement his aspirations remembered the place of his birth. In still others, and especially in a considerable group of rural parishes, a London merchant family which had by its purchase become the leading local landowners sought by its endowments to fabricate those bonds of local responsibility which were still conceived to be vested in the title of lord of the manor and by a veritable explosion of generosity to accomplish in one generation the translation from the aristocracy of trade to the aristocracy of land. In this group of parishes there are a fair number within a radius of twenty miles from St. Paul's. These parishes lay in a corner of Kent, a portion of which has long since been absorbed as part of metropolitan London, in which London wealth and

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TABLE A.

PARISHES WITH SUBSTANTIAL CHARITIES RELATIVELY UNAFFECTED BY LONDON GIFTS

	<i>Charities from local or county sources</i>		<i>Charities from London sources</i>		<i>Totals</i>	
	£	s.	£	s.	£	s.
Ash (next Sandwich)	813	5			813	5
Ashford	1,736	18	324	7	2,061	5
Aylesford	5,958	14	91	7	6,050	1
Benenden	792	3	10	0	802	3
Biddenden	1,804	11	140	0	1,944	11
Bromley	659	16	140	5	800	1
Canterbury	39,824	7	8,780	15	48,605	2
Chart, Great	631	6	241	5	872	11
Chiddingstone	1,538	0	30	0	1,568	0
Chislet	451	2			451	2
Cobham	2,351	5			2,351	5
Dover	2,853	15	135	0	2,988	15
Eastry	659	13	1	0	660	13
Faversham	9,351	2	863	13	10,214	15
Folkestone	540	8	200	0	740	8
Fordwich	823	11	43	0	866	11
Frindsbury	492	12			492	12
Hoo Allhallows	477	4			477	4
Hothfield	852	8			852	8
Hythe	1,836	11			1,836	11
Ightham	337	18	52	0	389	18
Lenham	1,042	4			1,042	4
Malling, West	1,478	18	123	5	1,602	3
Milton (near Gravesend)	631	7	253	0	884	7
Rainham	323	5	82	0	405	5
Reculver	738	11	52	0	790	11
Romney, New	1,284	18			1,284	18
Sandwich	2,244	11	660	0	2,904	11
Sellinge	846	19			846	19
Sittingbourne	449	15	31	5	481	0
Smarden	666	13			666	13
Sutton-at-Hone	615	15	127	0	742	15
Throwley	548	6			548	6
Wateringbury	638	8	48	0	686	8
Wickhambreaux	733	0			733	0
Woodchurch	479	9			479	9
Wrotham	549	4	100	0	649	4
Yalding	487	17	50	0	537	17
	£88,545	9	£12,579	2	£101,124	11

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influence had as early as 1600 spilled over in what can only be described as an economic and cultural inundation. [See Table B.]

The forty-four communities in this group included nine of the larger towns in seventeenth-century Kent, as well as the cathedral

TABLE B.  
PARISHES WITH SUBSTANTIAL CHARITIES DECISIVELY AFFECTED BY  
LONDON BENEFACTIONS

	<i>Charities from local or county sources</i>		<i>Charities from London sources</i>		<i>Totals</i>
	£	s.	£	s.	
Beckenham	250	8	153	0	403 8
Bexley	447	19	2,920	0	3,367 19
Boxley	428	4	494	0	922 4
Chatham	227	11	1,518	0	1,745 11
Chilham	136	0	650	11	786 11
Cranbrook	2,958	14	1,799	0	4,757 14
Dartford	2,501	6	2,362	11	4,863 17
Deptford	756	6	1,515	6	2,271 12
Ebony	27	4	800	0	827 4
Eltham	1,272	12	1,089	13	2,362 5
Erith	235	3	252	2	487 5
Farningham	26	0	400	0	426 0
Gravesend	856	5	395	0	1,251 5
Greenwich	1,400	3	10,743	12	12,143 15
Greenwich, East	296	14	336	10	633 4
Harrietsham	147	3	4,198	0	4,345 3
Hawkhurst	188	7	1,070	0	1,258 7
Herne	1,717	3	1,438	0	3,155 3
Horsmonden	163	10	531	0	694 10
Lee	94	15	861	1	955 16
Lewisham	658	13	2,149	7	2,808 0
Lullingstone	679	0	892	3	1,571 3
Lydd	636	13	537	0	1,173 13
Maidstone	2,043	13	1,805	6	3,848 19
Mereworth	44	3	413	7	457 10
Milton Regis	923	5	796	8	1,719 13
Northbourne	7	1	2,500	0	2,507 1
Ospringle	159	16	1,400	0	1,559 16
Ripple	81	5	440	0	521 5
Rochester	7,979	12	6,823	15	14,803 7
St. Lawrence Intra	129	8	84	0	974 8
St. Nicholas at Wade	359	18	300	0	659 18
Sevenoaks	1,145	14	1,406	0	2,551 14
Snave	1	0	590	0	591 0
Southfleet	1,277	11	604	11	1,882 2
Speldhurst	57	6	1,000	0	1,057 6
Sutton, East	185	18	227	0	412 18
Sutton Valence	10	15	1,700	0	1,710 15
Tenterden	917	7	759	7	1,676 14
Tonbridge	723	13	6,190	0	6,913 13
Whitstable	752	4	457	0	1,209 4
Wickham, West	487	17	380	10	868 7
Woolwich	811	10	629	19	1,441 9
Wye	996	2	1,006	0	2,002 2
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	£35,200	11	£67,379	19	£102,580 10

city of Rochester. It happens that the total of the charitable funds disposed by these parishes, dominated as they were by London benefactions, is very nearly the same as for the communities relatively unaffected by the charitable aspirations of the capital. But nearly two-thirds (65·68 per cent.) of the whole of the great charities with which these forty-four favoured communities were vested was the gift of interested Londoners. It is clear that in this large and representative group of communities, disposed in every part of Kent, the impact of London on local institutions and development was at once dominant and decisive. It will be observed, as well, that the whole weight of the immense contribution made by London to the charitable needs of Kent was heavily and certainly effectively concentrated in these most favoured communities, almost two-thirds (65·69 per cent.) of the whole sum having been dedicated to the institutional needs of these forty-four parishes. Eighteen of these communities lay within a radius of twenty-six miles from St. Paul's, and these communities, particularly those in Blackheath Hundred, tended to be almost completely dominated by the great outpouring of charitable wealth from the metropolis. But what was true of Greenwich and Deptford was almost equally true of large and substantial communities such as Chatham, Sevenoaks, Maidstone, and Tonbridge, which, like hundreds of communities across the length and breadth of England, happened to have sent to London a poor youth who, his fortune made, repaid his native parish by generous and carefully ordered benefactions which revolutionized its institutions and lifted it into the modern world.