

FRUIT GROWING IN KENT IN THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY

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THE nineteenth century was a formative period for the Kentish fruit industry. At the beginning of the century fruit growing was a relatively unimportant sector of the agricultural economy of the county, but by 1900 it had achieved the status of a major industry. The reasons for this sudden transformation can only partly be understood by reference to conditions within Kent. For this reason it is essential to preface any study of the Kentish fruit industry by some general remarks about the changing demand for fruit and fruit products at the national level.

The most conspicuous factor of all, of course, was the very rapid increase in national demand during the nineteenth century. Not only was population increasing, but the population was becoming increasingly urban and industrial in composition and, more important, the standard of living of that population was rising. Fruit and fruit products are typically sensitive to such trends—particularly to the level of per capita income. As individual incomes rise so expenditure on 'luxury' foods such as fruit rises relative to expenditure on more essential foods. But the demand for fruit and fruit products was also sensitive to their cost. If fruit was expensive few would buy it, if it was cheap the demand increased. The expansion of fruit production was thus partly a function of incomes and partly a function of the cost of producing and marketing the fruit. In this latter respect the cost of transporting fruit to market was critical. In the early nineteenth century Kentish fruit was so expensive in the northern markets that it was available only to the upper income classes, but with the coming of the railways the price of Kentish fruit fell in the northern markets so as to become generally available to all except the poorest classes.

The rise in demand for Kentish fruit was thus partly a result of changes in national per capita income levels and partly a function of the declining costs of getting the fruit to distant markets. This simple relationship was, however, modified by a number of factors, such as government regulations affecting fruit imports, and the price of sugar which was critical for the jam and preserve industry. The rise in demand for Kentish fruit was not, however, a simple secular trend throughout the whole of the century—certain periods were periods of stagnation in

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the fruit trade, while others were periods of very rapidly increasing demand.

It is a matter of some controversy as to how far living standards changed during the early years of the nineteenth century, but even if average incomes did not increase, the natural increase of population meant a steady increase in demand for fruit. Added to this, the home industry was protected from foreign competition during the Napoleonic Wars, and although there was a brief period of depression after the end of the Wars as fruit imports from Flanders were revived, the government imposed tariff restrictions in 1819 which eliminated this uncomfortable competition. With a protected home market, a declining price of sugar and rising demand, the acreage of fruit in Kent as a whole increased during the 1820s and 1830s. The scale of this increase is difficult to judge, although one observer thought it was a seven-fold increase. This claim is probably much exaggerated. But the evidence does suggest that fruit production expanded and that expansion was most important in apple production, for this sort of fruit could be more easily transported to distant markets than the more perishable 'soft' fruits.¹

In 1837, however, the fruit industry was plunged into a phase of crisis by the sudden reduction of the duties on foreign fruit (the tariff on apples, for example, was reduced from 4s. per bushel to a 5 per cent. *ad valorem* duty which was equivalent to between 3d. and 7d. per bushel). The effects of this change are difficult to gauge. William Harryman wrote to the *Maidstone Journal* in 1841 that 'by repealing the duty on foreign fruit, they rendered valueless the orchards which had taken all my life to raise and upon which I have expended large sums of money'.² The editor of the *Maidstone Gazette*, true to his free trade colours, maintained on the other hand that the 'prediction of ruin, low rents and land thrown out of cultivation' had not been borne out by events.³ But even the *Gazette* reported in 1842 that 'the fruit growers are now scarcely able to get a market for their fruit', while Lord Torrington voiced the opinion that 'the sooner Kent is without an apple tree the better'.⁴ In response to repeated requests minor adjustments were made in the duties but these had little effect. The *Gazette* claimed, however, that the real problem was the high price of sugar, for 'if sugar were at a price at which it could be bought, every sound apple that falls would be saleable at a remunerative price, instead of being, as at present, made into bad cider, or thrown into the hog tub'.⁵ Certainly

¹ See 'Report from the Select Committee on the fresh fruit trade', *British Parliamentary Papers* (1839), viii.

² *Maidstone Journal*, 15th June, 1841.

³ *Maidstone Gazette*, 29th June, 1841.

⁴ *Maidstone Gazette*, 2nd August, 1842; Viscount Torrington, *On farm buildings, with a few observations on the state of agriculture in the county of Kent* (1845), p. 78.

⁵ *Maidstone Gazette*, 12th July, 1842, and 27th August, 1844.

the rapid rise in sugar prices from 1838 to 1842, due to a national scarcity, meant that jams and preserves became very much a luxury. It is perhaps significant that the complaints from fruit growers diminished after 1846—the very time when new sugar duties meant a steady decline in sugar prices. But the impact of foreign competition cannot be ignored. In the main these imports were of hard fruit—particularly apples—whereas foreign imports of perishable soft fruits—such as cherries, plums and all small fruits—were not so important. Thus foreign competition challenged the English grower in precisely that form of production that had received the greatest attention since 1800. As a result of this many of the orchards that had been planted up between 1800 and 1835 were grubbed up. The Ministry of Agriculture returns record roughly 11,000 acres of orchard in Kent in 1872 which, even allowing for difficulties of comparison, does not match the 13,000 acres or so recorded in the tithe returns *circa* 1840.

But although orchards were affected, other forms of fruit production were not affected. Production of small fruit (raspberries, strawberries, gooseberries, currants, etc.) and production of some forms of tree fruit (particularly plums and damsons) increased very rapidly after 1850. This increase was partly a function of weak foreign competition, but the major factor was the falling cost of distribution. Even before the railways penetrated into Kent, the rail links between London (Covent Garden) and the rest of England allowed Kentish fruit to reach northern industrial markets relatively cheaply. As early as 1840 the *Maidstone Gazette* reported that cherry prices had been improved because of the 'great quantity sent by the railway to Liverpool, Manchester, and other manufacturing places'.⁶ Again, in the 1850s it was noticed that improved prices in Kent were 'partly due to the increased facilities afforded by railway transit for obtaining a new market in districts to which cherries rarely penetrated in any quantities hitherto'.⁷ But the increase in small fruit and soft fruit production after 1850 was not simply a function of falling costs of distribution; it was also closely related to the rise of the jam and preserve industry to importance.

During the 1850s and 1860s the price of sugar fell very substantially—and cheap sugar meant cheap jam. One commentator wrote in 1873 that 'the jam trade has, within a few years, attained a position never dreamed of years ago, when that article was considered one of the luxuries which only the rich could indulge in. So great has this trade become that small fruits, plums and damsons are not hereafter likely to go to waste for want of buyers'.⁸

The net result of all these trends was a decline in the importance of

⁶ *Maidstone Gazette*, 11th August, 1840.

⁷ *Southeastern Gazette*, 30th June, 1857.

⁸ *Southeastern Gazette*, 16th September, 1873.

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apple and pear production and a rise in the importance of soft fruits between 1840 and 1870.

But in spite of these changes the fruit industry was still not of *vital* importance to the agricultural economy of Kent by 1870. The major revolution came in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Although accurate statistics are lacking, the increase in the fruit acreage was evidently enormous, but even an enormous increase in Kentish output could not keep pace with the phenomenal growth of national demand. The rapid rise in per capita incomes, the marked fall in transport cost, and a jam industry which developed a substantial export trade on the basis of the 'cheapest sugar in the world' were the major factors accounting for the tremendous increase in demand. Certainly the home market was capable of absorbing all the home production on an increased acreage together with vast quantities of imported fruit.⁹ At the same time this was a period of general agricultural depression, and fruit farming, together with market gardening and dairying, remained one of the few consistently remunerative sectors of the agricultural economy. And in the Kentish case the depression in hop cultivation after 1878 gave an added impetus for farmers to turn over to fruit cultivation.

But the expansion of fruit cultivation in Kent as a whole was hampered by a number of features. Technical knowledge was insufficient—there were no technical research stations in those days. Undoubtedly much of the expansion in production was not accomplished with sufficient care—as one observer commented, 'the man who sticks a tree in the ground and expects, without giving proper care and attention to obtain good crops, the man who grows the wrong varieties, gathers the fruit at the wrong time, packs it in the wrong way, and sends it to market at the wrong time, will never make fruit growing pay'.¹⁰ There was plenty of shoddy speculative planting in Kent during these years, but even the serious growers were faced with difficulties, for research, particularly in orchard culture, is a long term project which cannot be expected to yield results even in a decade or so. There were also problems of land tenure. Fruit cultivation required long term capital investment—again this is particularly true of orchard culture—and without security of tenure, and adequate compensation for improvements, no tenant would take the risk involved. Many individual landlords made adequate provision for this, but general uncertainty prevailed until the legislation of 1906.¹¹ Many contemporaries complained of the inadequacies of tenurial arrangements, and pointed out

⁹ 'Report of the Departmental Committee on the fruit industry of Great Britain', *British Parliamentary Papers*, xx (1905), and xevi (1906).

¹⁰ J. Morgan, 'The fruit growing revival', *The Nineteenth Century*, xxiv (1888), pp. 881-2.

¹¹ See D. R. Denman, *Tenant right Valuation* (1942), chapter 5.

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that this often led to farmers adopting forms of production which could yield their return within, for example, 14 or 21 years, which was the typical length of lease. Again, this placed a premium on small fruit cultivation rather than orchard cultivation. The home marketing system for fruit also proved inadequate to meet the new demand. The railways were not always co-operative in providing the special facilities for getting the fruit quickly to market, Covent Garden (the central point in the national marketing system) was congested, and the 'antique rather than time honoured' marketing system proved inadequate to the new demands being made upon it. These marketing problems only began to be solved in the twentieth century.

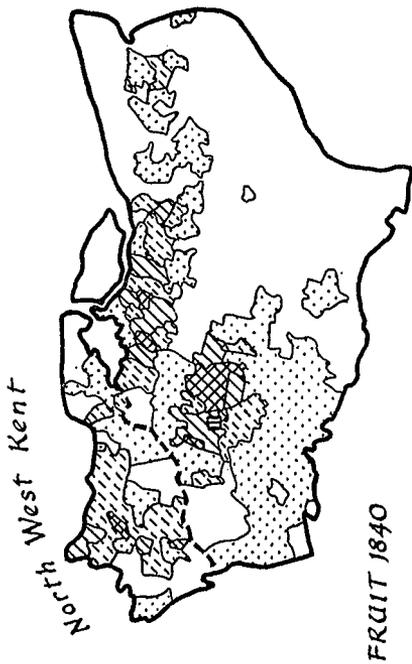
But in spite of these inhibiting factors, the widespread economic and social changes during the last three decades of the nineteenth century led to a marked expansion in the Kentish fruit acreage. Thus, by 1900 it was considered one of the major forms of land use in the county and contributed a great deal to the agricultural prosperity of the county. But not all parts of the county developed equally rapidly, and it is to this story of regional development within Kent that we must now turn.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

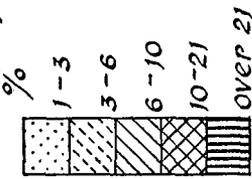
It is not easy to detail the regional development of the Kentish fruit industry. The tithe awards can be used to give a general picture of the location of the industry *circa* 1840, but no other information is available until 1871 when orchard land was first recorded in the agricultural statistics. Small fruit was not recorded until 1887, however, and even until the end of the century there was considerable confusion over the definition and classification of fruit land. The map (Fig. 1) shows the location of all forms of fruit cultivation as indicated by the tithe awards and shows also the distribution of both orchards and small fruit in 1840 and 1893. Apart from the general picture that emerges from a comparison of these maps, however, we have to rely for information upon the literary sources which are sparse at the beginning of the century but fairly voluminous towards its end. To assemble this evidence as conveniently as possible, Kent had been divided into *five* districts. The definition of these districts corresponds to the divisions usually accepted by nineteenth-century agricultural writers and their approximate boundaries are shown on Fig. 2.

Mid Kent. The deep fertile ragstone soils around Maidstone—conventionally known as Mid Kent—had a long tradition of fruit cultivation and by 1800 this area was undoubtedly the main fruit producing area in the county. 'In the management of grown orchards,' wrote Marshall, 'the district far exceeds every other I have examined.'¹² Boys

¹² W. Marshall, *Rural economy of the southern counties* (1798), p. 312.



Percentage of Agricultural Land



-- North West Kent boundary

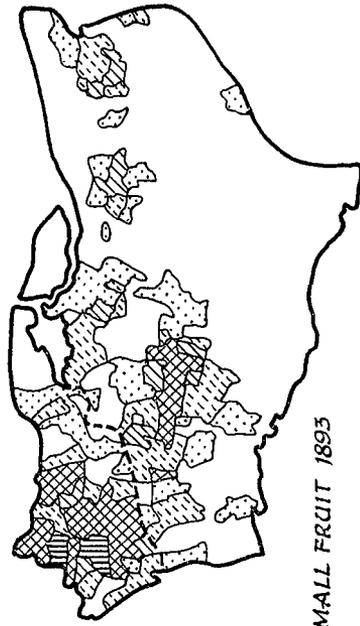
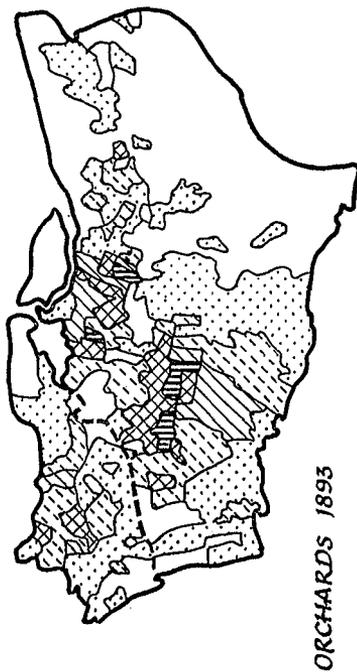
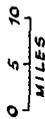


FIG. 1.
Per cent. of Agricultural Land under Fruit trees 1840, and under Orchards and Small Fruit, 1895. (Sources: Tithe Awards and Agricultural Statistics.)

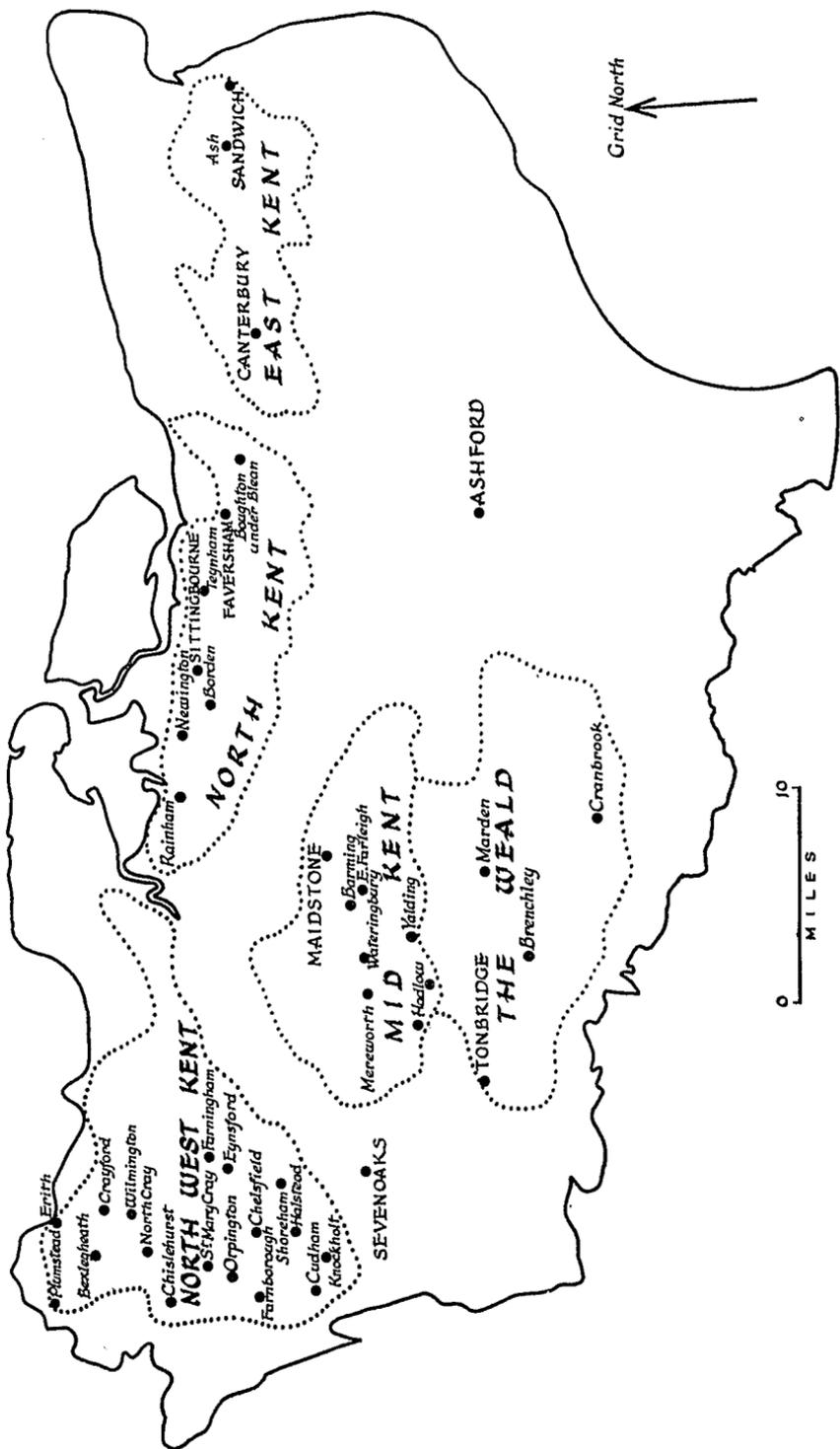


FIG. 2.
The Fruit Growing Regions of Kent in the Nineteenth Century.

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was also impressed by the 'large number of fields from one to ten acres planted with fruit of different kinds'.¹³ Apples, the main form of production, were sent considerable distances and market contacts had already been established with London, the North Kent coast, Essex, and the northern parts of England. The literary evidence thus suggests that the Mid Kent industry was well developed (for this early period at least), and the subsequent development of the district clearly took place on an already established base. In fact, with high prices and a protected home market, the industry expanded here during the period 1800 and 1840. The extent of this expansion is difficult to gauge in terms of acreage, but what is absolutely certain is that there was a great improvement in orchard culture so that a great many of the old derelict cider orchards had been replaced by 1835 with commercial apple orchards.¹⁴ Both small scale specialist holdings and large scale holdings cultivating both hops and fruit, were to be found during this period. But by 1840 the marketing of fruit had become focussed on London, where the development of Covent Garden as the major wholesale market in the country, led most Kentish growers to think of 'no other market'.¹⁵

The revision of the fruit duties in 1837 was, however, particularly serious for the Mid Kent fruit producer since his main interest had been in apple production. Most of the complaints of depression in the fruit trade came from this district. As a result many orchards were grubbed out—as Whitehead wrote in 1881, 'it was the custom 40 years ago when hops were more certain to pay, to grub up the old cherry and apple orchards . . . and to plant hops'.¹⁶ When fruit was planted up it was of a different variety—'plantations of currants, red and black, and of gooseberries have been formed, and plum and damson trees have been extensively planted'.¹⁷ Between 1840 and 1870, therefore, the traditional kinds of fruit cultivation in Mid Kent were replaced by newer forms, but the net result was that the acreage did not change a great deal.

After 1878, however, the marked prosperity of all kinds of fruit cultivation, together with the depression in the hop industry, led to a shift of capital investment from the hop industry into fruit growing. In 1889, Mr. Brassey of Preston Hall, Aylesford, 'grubbed up 140 acres of hops and planted with fruit in the belief that that crop would never pay again'.¹⁸ In the 1880s the main accent was on the extension of small

¹³ J. Boys, *A general view of the agriculture of the county of Kent*, 2nd Edn. (1796), p. 113.

¹⁴ Fresh Fruit Commission (1839), *op. cit.*, see the evidence of W. Harryman, M. Lucas, G. Langridge, R. Tassell, etc.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ 'Royal Commission on the agricultural interests', *British Parliamentary Papers*, xvii (1881), evidence of C. Whitehead.

¹⁷ C. Whitehead, 'Fruit farming in Kent', *Journal of the Bath and W. of Eng. Ag. Soc.*, ser. 3, xv (1883-4), p. 152.

¹⁸ *Southeastern Gazette*, 18th June, 1889.

fruit cultivation—either on its own or as an undercrop to the orchard land—but in this Mid Kent found it difficult to compete with the better located northwest Kent fruit industry because of higher transport costs and a rather inefficient marketing organization. By the 1890s many of the Mid Kent growers had become disillusioned with small fruit cultivation—‘one grower said emphatically, “bush fruit will never pay—soft fruit is done” and he added that orchard fruit and pastures paid best’.¹⁹ Thus the 1890s saw the Mid Kent grower revert to his traditional interest of apple cultivation, although it was precisely in this branch of production that difficulties of technical knowledge and land tenure were most serious. In spite of all these difficulties, however, the Mid Kent industry changed from being a ‘mere hedge against the contingencies of hop growing’, to a major form of land use which during the subsequent decades of the twentieth century, was to become the leading sector in the agricultural economy of the district.

The Weald. The development of commercial fruit production in the Weald—on the river gravels and clays around Yalding and Peckham and on the varied sands and clays of the High Weald—came relatively late. Even as late as 1840 there was little commercial production. The tithe awards indicate a scattered pattern of ‘home’ orchards which produced apples mainly for local consumption and for cider making. But close to Mid Kent commercial production was already under way and this spread throughout the century across the Weald. A major factor here was the development of the Wealden railway (opened in 1842) and in 1851, for example, Henry Brown of Marden was recorded as being an ‘owner and occupier of a fruit plantation employing twelve men’.²⁰ Properties classified as ‘fruit holdings’ began to be advertised for sale in the 1860s. Typical, is the advertisement for a property in Brenchley which drew attention to ‘the facilities afforded by the railway for the obtaining of manure and for the conveyance of fruit and other produce to the London market’.²¹ This extension of fruit cultivation from Mid Kent out into the Weald, became even more significant during the period of general agricultural depression after 1878. In 1887 farmers in the area were being ‘urged to cultivate apples more extensively’, and although there were many difficulties to be overcome, particularly in the remoter parts of the Weald, a considerable area of orchard land had been developed in the Weald by 1900.²² Apples were the main form of production although plum and damson orchards were also developed at this time. Very little attention was paid to small fruit production apart

¹⁹ ‘Royal Commission on agriculture’, *British Parliamentary Papers*, xvi (1894), report of Dr. Fream on the Maidstone district, para. 67.

²⁰ Original book of the 1851 Census, *Public Record Office* HO/107 ii (1616), 253.

²¹ *Southeastern Gazette*, 26th May, 1863.

²² C. Whitehead, *op. cit.* (1883-4), p. 163.

from a brief development of black currant production during the 1890s.

North-west Kent. North-west Kent had certainly possessed a fruit industry since the early seventeenth century. By 1800 there appear to have been two centres of production. The Thames-side parishes of Erith and Plumstead were famous for their cherries, while there was a more diversified form of production in the parishes of Wilmington, Sutton-at-Hone, St. Mary and St. Paul Cray.²³ The former area was gradually swallowed up by the expansion of London's suburbia during the nineteenth century, but the latter became the centre of the soft fruit producing industry in the British Isles by 1900. Cobbett noted in 1825 that the country around St. Mary Cray was 'a series of fruit gardens; cherries, or apples, or pears, or plums, above, and gooseberries, currants, raspberries or filberts beneath'.²⁴ This great variety of production was closely associated with proximity to the London market for all forms of produce were easily transported by road to Covent Garden. Other literary evidence suggests that there was a scatter of fruit production (mainly cherries) on the favourable soils between Darenth and Higham.²⁵

It is very difficult to establish the history of development in this district from 1800 to 1840, for we possess no direct evidence. By 1840, however, there were many specialist fruit holdings in the area, while many of the large farms possessed a small acreage of fruit. The tithe award for Sutton-at-Hone thus records 46 acres of raspberry plantation, while gooseberries, currants and even loganberries are also recorded in other awards. After 1840 the pattern of development can be more easily established. Certainly the depression in the fruit trade after 1838 had little effect upon this district for although orchards were grubbed up, these were quickly replaced by soft fruits.²⁶

The expansion of soft fruit production, however, mainly took place in those parishes that were within easy reach of the London market and which possessed areas of undeveloped wood or scrubland. In the district around Chelsfield, Halstead, Orpington, Chislehurst and Eynesford the fruit industry expanded rapidly over areas that had been poor scrubland or wood. As John Wood pointed out in 1906, 'wheat was then at 60s. a quarter and many of us had to take a bit of woodland to get a bit of land to begin with'.²⁷ In Eynesford it was reported that there had been extensive grubbing of woodland by 'the industrious little fruit

²³ See the comments in H. Hunter, *A history of London and its environs* (1811), ii, 187; A. Young, 'A journey to Dover', *Annals of Agriculture* vii (1786), p. 563; and J. Bannister, *A synopsis of husbandry* (1799).

²⁴ W. Cobbett, *Rural Rides* (1930 Edn. edited by G. D. H. and Margaret Cole), p. 252.

²⁵ See, e.g., R. Arnold, *A Yeoman of Kent* (1949).

²⁶ Fresh Fruit Commission (1839), *op. cit.*, questions 2183-4.

²⁷ Report on the Fruit Industry (1906), *op. cit.*, question 1535.

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growers' between 1836 and 1881.²⁸ A return for 1886 indicates that in eight parishes around the Cray valley the area under fruit had risen from 629 acres *circa* 1836 to 1,455 acres in 1886. Webb reported that over a thousand acres of raspberries had been planted throughout north-west Kent in the period 1855 to 1875. Thus although the exact details are perhaps elusive, there is no doubt that north-west Kent had become a major soft fruit producer by 1870 or so.²⁹

After 1870 the rate of expansion increased as the London jam industry rose to international importance. A report of 1882 stated that the largest additions to the soft fruit acreage in Kent 'have been in the neighbourhood of the Crays, and near Dartford, Orpington, Chelsfield and Farnboro . . . these consist in the main of raspberries, currants and gooseberries'. Another report stated that there were over 2,000 acres of strawberries in this district by 1882 and most of these had been planted up in the preceding decade.³⁰ By 1900 some of the fruit farms in this district were enormous—Messrs. Wood, for example, had nearly 2,000 acres given over to fruit production alone—and the industry was dominated by the 'highly specialized fruit grower, having possibly 500 to 1,000 acres of fruit in mixed plantations'.³¹ This scale of production was a far cry from the small scale output of a few farmers which had been characteristic of the area in 1840. By 1900 north-west Kent dominated the soft fruit production in Kent, and only later in the twentieth century did the advent of motor transport and suburban sprawl of London lead to a decline of the industry. Undoubtedly this district with the advantages of proximity to London and a large area of undeveloped land, quickly adapted itself to meet the very rapid increase in demand for fruit and fruit products during the nineteenth century.

North Kent. The development of the fruit industry on the fertile tract of soils between Rainham and Boughton-under-Blean during the nineteenth century was slow. As late as 1880 fruit cultivation, particularly cherry production, was an addendum to the large scale arable and sheep farming, rather than a specialized industry.

This district is credited as being the centre of a revived fruit industry in the sixteenth century, but although there are many subsequent references to it, there is not much evidence as to its importance in 1800. Boys does not mention it and Marshall only comments that 'the Faversham part of it excepted . . . (it) is not a fruit country'. In 1874,

²⁸ *Southeastern Gazette*, 15th August, 1881.

²⁹ G. Webb, 'Fruit cultivation and management in Kent', *Trans. of the Royal Inst. of Surveyors*, viii (1875-6), p. 44.

³⁰ See the report from the Mark Lane Express quoted in *Southeastern Gazette*, 11th September, 1882; and C. Whitehead, *op. cit.* (1883-4), p. 155-6.

³¹ W. E. Bear, 'Flower and fruit farming in England—part 3', *Journal of the Royal Ag. Soc. of Eng.*, 3rd series, x (1899), 46; and Report on the Fruit Industry (1905), *op. cit.*, para 13.

however, Hasted commented that there had been a decline in orchard cultivation within this area 'within living memory' as decaying orchards had been grubbed out and replaced by the more profitable hops.³² The evidence suggests, therefore, that fruit production was not of any great commercial significance in this district in 1800. Cultivation was probably mainly confined to cherries and these were probably marketed in London by water. Cherry production is a very long term form of investment and contemporary leases suggest that it was a landlord rather than a tenant interest. Because of this, cherry production was not easily responsive to any short-term changes in demand, and the evidence suggests that the acreage remained remarkably stable throughout the century. Traditionally the cherry orchards were laid down to grass and used as sheep pasture—still not an uncommon feature in the district. It appears that although landlords controlled cherry production, most of them did not take a great deal of interest in it; few bothered to make their own marketing arrangements and the annual fruit auctions where the fruit was sold 'off the tree' were a regular feature. In 1874 two firms of auctioneers sold the crop from over 1,000 acres in this way.³³ Thus, although there was a marked increase in demand for cherries, particularly after 1870, there was only a small increase in the cherry acreage.

The history of other forms of production is more obscure. By 1840 the tithe returns indicate two small centres of diversified fruit production—one between Rainham and Sittingbourne, and the other in and around Boughton-under-Blean. After 1870 these two areas developed even more and the Sittingbourne area came to specialize on plum and greengage production as well as on several varieties of small fruit. Most of this specialized production was in the hands of smallholders, many of whom were owner-occupiers. Only after the agricultural depression of the 1880s had bitten deep into the economy of the area did any large-scale turnover from the traditional arable-sheep husbandry begin. Thus, although the area had a substantial acreage of fruit by 1900, it was by no means the dominant form of production in the district.

East Kent. The favourable soils for fruit cultivation in East Kent—mainly around Canterbury and Sandwich—had long been given over to intensive forms of cultivation such as hop growing or the cultivation of market garden products. But even as late as 1840 fruit growing was very little developed in the area compared with other parts of Kent. In the vicinity of Canterbury small scale specialist producers could be found but the overall acreage was not very large. After 1850 a more specialized

³² W. Marshall, *A review of the reports to the Board of Agriculture (Southern and Peninsular England)* (1817), 445; and E. Hasted, *A history and topographical survey of the county of Kent*, ii (1788), 535, 560 and 568.

³³ See, e.g., the fruit sale advertisements in the summer editions of the *South-eastern Gazette* for 1874.

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fruit industry began to emerge, particularly around the parish of Ash, where it was closely related to market gardening and oriented to the needs of the rapidly developing resorts of the Thanet coast. This trend continued until the latter part of the nineteenth century and even by 1900 the East Kent district was only slightly concerned with supplying the London market. This was partly a function of heavy transport costs and poor marketing facilities. One grower complained in 1889, for example, that it was costing him 8d. or 9d. to get his plums to market when the market price was under 2s.³⁴ At the same time there were acute difficulties over tenural arrangements in this district which led one writer to remark that 'fruit would be planted largely if there were a different system of security from that which now exists'.³⁵ The development of the fruit industry in East Kent was thus not very marked during the nineteenth century, and it was not until well into the twentieth century that fruit production became of any great significance within the economy of the area. But by 1900 a small localized industry had been developed, mainly oriented to the needs of the Thanet coastal resorts.

CONCLUSIONS

Broad economic, technical, and social changes led to a rapid rise in the demand for fruit during the nineteenth century. This increase was most significant between 1870 and 1900, and during this phase expansion of home production could not keep pace with the expansion of home demand—hence the rapid rise in imports of fruit. This failure on the part of the home industry to keep pace can be explained mainly in terms of technical difficulties, problems over land tenure, and difficulties of marketing. Within Kent development was also partly controlled by these factors. North-west Kent expanded most rapidly because it had a number of advantages in its favour—particularly low transport cost to the London market, new land for development, and a form of production that was least affected by problems of technique and land tenure. On the other hand development in Mid Kent was inhibited, partly by competition from the hop industry for the use of the land, and partly by technical, tenurial and marketing problems. The Weald suffered from similar difficulties as well as having to face all the problems inherent in opening up commercial production in an area which, before 1840, had had very little experience of this form of cultivation. North and East Kent suffered most of all from the high level of transport cost to the London market, and a landholding system that could not easily be adapted to the needs of fruit cultivation. In these terms the regional

³⁴ Royal Commission on Agriculture (1881), *op. cit.*, appendix to question 56, 491.

³⁵ Report on the Fruit Industry (1906), *op. cit.*, question 1062.

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development of the fruit industry within Kent can be broadly understood.

Although the Kentish fruit industry had achieved much by 1900, it had failed to meet many of the opportunities offered by a rapid expansion in national demand. But by 1900 the basis for the subsequent expansion of the twentieth century had already been laid.