

The structure of landownership and land occupation in the Romney Marsh region, 1646–1834

by Stephen Hipkin

Abstract

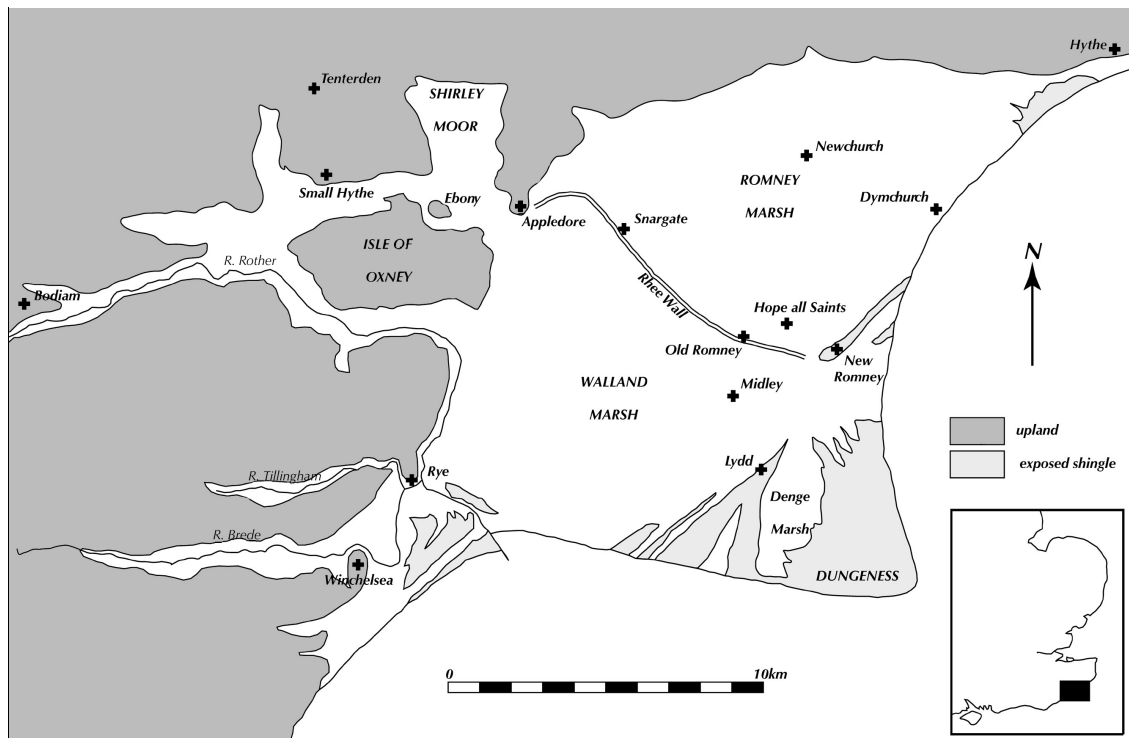
This article offers a contribution to the long-running debate about the causes and chronology of the emergence of large-scale commercial tenant farming in England. Remarkably comprehensive evidence covering 44,000 acres in Romney Marsh (Kent) discloses a consolidation of landownership and the increasing dominance of large tenant farms during the century after the Restoration, but also demonstrates conclusively that these trends were unconnected, and that they were reversed during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when there was a notable revival of owner-occupation on the marsh. It is argued that tenant initiative and shifts in the level of consumer demand were the forces driving developments throughout the long-eighteenth century.

On 18 May 1769, almost a year after his departure as deputy clerk of the Level of Romney Marsh, Thomas Maylam finally completed his general survey of ‘the proprietors and tenants’ within the jurisdiction of the drainage authority ‘as they stood charged at Lady Day 1768’. The survey to which, that day, Maylam added an explanatory preface, was the fruit of almost a decade’s labour, occasioned by the need to provide a new set of reference materials for sewers’ commission bureaucrats to replace that resulting from the previous general survey, which had been completed more than a century earlier, in May 1654. Like its mid-seventeenth century predecessor, the survey had involved the commissioning of a completely new set of maps covering the 17 waterings (administrative sub-divisions for purposes of levying sewerage rates) within the 24,000 acres under the jurisdiction of the Level. Every field was measured and the results, together with the ownership of every parcel of land, were detailed on the maps, which all survive as testimony to the skills of the local surveyor and cartographer, Thomas Hogben. Maylam’s task had been to produce a comprehensive manuscript schedule which not only reproduced all the information contained on Hogben’s maps and linked it with that contained on the maps they replaced, but also took into account changes of landownership post-dating Hogben’s work, and supplied the name of the occupier of every field in March 1768.¹

The purposes of the general survey, Maylam explained, were to ensure that land occupiers were ‘duly and equitably scotted and charged’ towards the maintenance of sewers and sea-defences, and to provide an authoritative point of reference ‘which may at one view inform the enquirer of the particulars of any parcel of land, and how it stands charged, without the trouble of overlooking or inspecting the maps’.² Contemporaries may have thanked him, and historians

¹ East Kent Archive Centre, Whitfield (hereafter EKAC), S/Rm/FSz 10, /FS 6; S/Rm/P/1/2–8, /2/1–5, /4/1–6, /5/1–4, /6/1–5; S/Rm/SM 7.

² EKAC, S/Rm/FSz 10, unfoliated, preface.



MAP 1. Romney Marsh Region.

certainly should, for Maylam's survey enables the structure of landownership across the Level in 1768 to be recovered and compared with that in 1654, the pattern of land occupation in 1768 to be analyzed, and the incidence of owner-occupation to be determined. But Maylam's survey is just one source, albeit the best, within the richly revealing archives generated by the tax-collecting bureaucracies of the three commissions of sewers exercising authority in the Romney Marsh region.

Previous publications have discussed the nature of the local taxation evidence in some detail, and employed the earliest surviving tax schedules (scot books) to analyze late-sixteenth and seventeenth-century trends in land occupation within the Level of Romney Marsh, which, as Map 1 shows, embraced the northern half of the region.³ In this paper, scot-book data spanning the two centuries preceding the tithe surveys are examined, and the geographical scope of analysis is broadened to include the near 20,000 acres under the jurisdiction of sewers' commissions for Denge Marsh and Walland Marsh. The data allow trends within each part of the region to be compared, but, more important, such is the pattern of surviving evidence that it is also possible to analyze land occupation across the whole of the Romney Marsh region –

³ S. Hipkin, 'The structure of land occupation on the Level of Romney Marsh during the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries', in J. Eddison, M. Gardiner, and A. Long (eds), *Romney Marsh: environmental change and human occupation in a coastal lowland* (1998), pp. 147–63; id., 'Tenant farming and short-term leasing on Romney Marsh, 1587–1705', *ECHR* 53 (2000), pp. 646–76.

more than 4 per cent of the land in Kent – in seven years spanning 1699–1834. It is also possible to configure the structure of landownership, as well as of land occupation, across the whole region in 1768 and 1834, while the survival of information on landownership and land occupation on the Level in 1654, in Denge Marsh in 1646, and in Denge Marsh and Walland Marsh in 1686, enable study of the changing structure of landownership and of the incidence of owner-occupation – albeit on smaller canvases – to be extended back well into the seventeenth century.

The scot books produced by the three commissions of sewers offer an opportunity, rare in the context of English agrarian history, to examine, on a regional scale, long-term changes in the structure of landownership and land occupation, and in the balance between owner-occupation and leasehold tenancy. Among much else, they provide answers to a number of questions that have long exercised historians. When and to what extent was the small landowner expropriated? When and to what extent did large tenant farms develop, and was their emergence dependent upon the consolidation of landownership in the hands of sponsoring proprietors? Finally, did the proportion of land in the hands of larger occupiers increase throughout the long-eighteenth century?

To anticipate what follows, it will be argued that there were two distinct phases in the development of the agrarian economy of the Romney Marsh region between 1620 and 1820, and that the principal agents of structural transformation were tenant initiative and shifts in the level of consumer demand. The earlier phase, which lasted until the mid-eighteenth century and was characterized by stasis/deflation in the pastoral economy, witnessed consolidation of landownership, the squeezing of the small proprietor, a low and falling incidence of owner-occupation and the increasing domination of the marsh landscape by large tenant farms. But if this all seems like grist to the mill for historians in the grand tradition that has followed Marx in seeing the post-Restoration century as a critical period of transition that smoothed the way for agrarian capitalism, it should be added that the growth of large tenant farms on the marsh took place *entirely* independently of the consolidation of landownership in the region.⁴ The sponsors of large tenant farms were low and fluctuating agricultural prices and weakening competition for holdings, not rentiers. Forces squeezing the small proprietor (depressed rents), and the small producer (low product prices), paved the way for the relatively cheap accumulation of holdings in the hands of the limited pool of tenants who were able and willing to invest in economies of scale. The later phase (c. 1760–1820), by contrast, was characterized by growing consumer demand for the produce of the marsh, which in turn stimulated stronger competition for tenancies and a marked revival of owner-occupation across the region. Improved rents eased the pressures on surviving smaller proprietors and – since rentiers sought to maximize their income and smaller units could be let at a premium – larger tenant farmers found their extensive holdings more difficult to defend. The resulting redistribution of land was sufficient to effect a noticeable reduction in mean acreage per occupier across the region between 1768 and 1800. This reversal of the previous trend towards the consolidation of land in the hands of fewer farmers is not what we might be led to expect from the conclusions in

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 646–50; J. V. Beckett, ‘The pattern of landownership in England and Wales, 1660–1888’, *EcHR* 37 (1984), pp. 2–4; *id.*, ‘The decline of the small landowner in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England: some regional considerations’, *AgHR* 30 (1982), pp. 97–100; G. E. Mingay, *Enclosure and the small farmer in the age of the industrial revolution* (1968), pp. 28–9.

studies of estates in Staffordshire, Shropshire, Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and the south Midlands, all of which postulate increases in farm size throughout the eighteenth century.⁵ But nor is it *necessarily* evidence of a contrasting trend, for it is important to stress that 'mean acreage per occupier' is not a synonym for 'mean farm size'.

Romney Marsh was richly fertile, and, prior to the Black Death, had also been one of the most densely populated areas of Kent, with much land devoted to arable production. But the late medieval period had brought a profound agrarian and demographic transformation, and, by Elizabethan times, Romney Marsh was not only largely given over to pasture, but was also one of the most thinly inhabited regions of southern England.⁶ That it remained so throughout the early modern period was due in no small measure to the prevalence of malaria, which, 'either acting alone or in conjunction with other factors, was the one distinctive disease that differentiated the mortal marshland environments from other areas of south-east England'.⁷ The unhealthiness of the marsh deterred many clergymen and landlords from living on it, and, throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, more than one-third of marsh farmers lived in upland parishes. Of these, an uncertain but clearly significant proportion not only lived on the uplands, but farmed there as well, running their marsh and upland holdings in conjunction so as to exploit the fertile marsh while protecting vulnerable stock from its exposed winter climate by moving lambs up-country between September and April.⁸ For such dual-region farmers, the evidence in the scot books reveals the size of just one facet of their enterprises.⁹

Research in progress may, in time, produce a clearer picture of long-term trends in the number of dual and multi-regional farming enterprises in which holdings on Romney Marsh were one component.¹⁰ However, it will not be an easy matter to uncover the full extent of such farming, not least since it is becoming clear that there were many marsh-dwelling farmers like Daniel Langdon, one of the largest tenant farmers on the Level during the early eighteenth century, who owned or formally leased little if any upland pasture, but who depended on the

⁵ J. R. Wordie, 'Social change on the Leveson-Gower estates, 1714–1832', *EcHR* 27 (1974), pp. 593–609; R. C. Allen, *Enclosure and the yeoman: the agricultural development of the south Midlands, 1450–1850* (1992), pp. 73–5, 78–85; G. E. Mingay, 'The size of farms in the eighteenth century', *EcHR* 14 (1962), pp. 480–3.

⁶ M. Gardiner, 'Settlement change on Denge and Walland Marshes, 1400–1550', in Eddison, Gardiner, and Long (eds), *Romney Marsh*, pp. 129–45.

⁷ M. J. Dobson, 'Death and disease in the Romney Marsh area in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries', in Eddison, Gardiner, and Long (eds), *Romney Marsh*, p. 179.

⁸ There were also extensive institutional links between the marsh and its upland hinterland. Aldington, for example, was one of many manors receiving quit rents from freeholds on marshland and upland alike, while the Level of Romney Marsh contained detached portions of a number of upland parishes. Hipkin, 'Land occupation', p. 154; M. Teichman Derville, *The Level and the Liberty of*

Romney Marsh (1936).

⁹ Mingay was conscious of similar problems with respect to estate surveys for Nottinghamshire villages, noting that 'owing to the great difficulty of ascertaining whether individual farmers owned or rented additional acreages in neighbouring villages, it is impossible to be certain that the figures obtained from surveys really represent the true extent of all the tenants' lands'. By contrast, Wordie concluded that 'the danger of any Leveson-Gower tenant owning' (or renting) 'additional land just outside the boundaries of the estate is a very remote one indeed', and that, 'there is good reason to believe that the farm sizes specified in' the estate surveys are 'entirely accurate, down to the last acres, rood and perch'. Mingay, 'Size of farms', p. 480, n. 4; Wordie, 'Social change', pp. 593–4 and n. 5.

¹⁰ A. Davison, 'The agrarian economy of Romney Marsh and surrounding regions, 1680–1830', (forthcoming PhD thesis, Canterbury Christ Church University College).

willingness of those farming away from the marsh to agist livestock on their land during winter.¹¹ Agistment ought properly to be understood as a particularly flexible species of sublease, and the resources released to purchasers viewed as contributing to the size of their farms, whether cyclically or occasionally. But even where detectable, the contribution of agistment to effective farm size is very difficult to estimate. It could therefore be argued that even if there were data for the upland hinterland of the marsh equivalent to that contained in the scot books examined here, there would still remain formidable obstacles in the way of any accurate measurement of *functional* farm size.

I

How reliable are the data? The unique value of the taxation evidence for the Romney Marsh region derives from the fact that local scots fell on whoever *occupied* the land, that is to say, whoever was farming it, whether he or she were its owner, its formal tenant, or a subtenant. It is, of course, impossible to be absolutely certain of the accuracy of any written source, but scots were frequently levied – in some years as often as weekly – and marsh bureaucrats had developed mechanisms designed to keep pace with changes on the ground. Although only those for the Level of Romney Marsh have survived, the clerks of each commission kept working notebooks, known as ‘calendar scot books’, which were organized alphabetically by occupiers’ surname, and in which were recorded all the parcels held at any one time by each occupier within the commission’s jurisdiction. Changes of land occupation were noted and dated in the calendars (most occurred at Michaelmas), and were then incorporated in the formal taxation schedules (the main series of scot books) that were, during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, updated and completely re-written on an annual basis.¹² The ability of officials to collect scots on the land depended on their keeping abreast of changes of occupier, and wherever it has been possible to make direct comparisons, information in the scot books is consistent with that contained in private estate accounts. There is, therefore, reason to be confident of the accuracy of data for occupiers.

Information on landownership, on the other hand, may be regarded with a degree of circumspection, if only because its accuracy was of less consequence to marsh administrators concerned to collect taxes from land occupiers. Indeed, although systematic information on landownership was gathered for the general surveys of the Level of Romney Marsh in 1654 and 1768, and for inclusion in a new series of scot books commencing in 1834, eighteenth-century scot books for the Level provide information only on taxpayers. Scot books for Denge Marsh and Walland Marsh, on the other hand, identify landowners as well as occupiers in many years during the eighteenth century, but the information on owners may not always have been entirely up to date. Thomas Maylam implicitly accepted the possibility that errors may have escaped detection in the final version of the 1768 survey of the Level. ‘I have’, he wrote in the preface,

¹¹ For further discussion of these points see S. Hipkin, ‘The worlds of Daniel Langdon: public office and private enterprise in the Romney Marsh region in the early-eighteenth century’, and A. Davison, ‘A “particularly convenient and useful” arrangement: the symbiotic agrarian economy

of Romney Marsh and the surrounding region in the eighteenth century’, in A. Long, S. Hipkin, and H. Clarke (eds), *Romney Marsh: coastal and landscape change through the ages* (2002), pp. 181, 196–201.

¹² EKAC, S/Rm/FSc 1–9.

in general copied after the surveyor for the proprietors names, not doubting but, as it was his business to insert them properly and truly, he had, as far as consisted with his knowledge and the inquiries, done it. Such alterations therefrom as have since occurred to my knowledge I have made, and likewise corrected such of his mistakes as I have met with in the maps.

The most likely occasion for error was where owners were confused with tenants who had contracted long leases with the intention of subletting the land. Thus a note appended in the private estate accounts of Sir Edward Knatchbull of Mersham in 1760 explains that

the several parcels of marshland occupied by John Waddell at the rent of £67 10s. ... are leasehold from the archbishop of Canterbury by lease of 21 years commencing 25 December 1754, and must be renewed at the end of every seven years upon a fine to be paid to the archbishop. The annual rent payable to the archbishop is £8.

The only land in the occupation of John Waddell identified in Maylam's 1768 survey is 89 acres ascribed to Knatchbull's ownership, so it is likely that the formal tenant had been mistaken for the owner.¹³ On the other hand, many arrangements similar to that by which Knatchbull was subleasing land to Waddell *were* detected in Maylam's survey, so if it is sensible to allow some margin for this and cognate errors, and for others resulting from a degree of administrative inertia, there are no grounds for assuming that the data on landownership contained in the surveys and scot books are generally wide of the mark.

II

As Tables 1 and 2 show, there was a significant reduction in the number of private owners on the marsh between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries. Within the Level, the number of private owners fell by over 17 per cent between 1654 and 1768, and on Walland Marsh and Denge Marsh a 13 per cent reduction occurred between 1686 and 1768. The drop in the number of private owners with less than 50 acres was particularly marked, and, as more land came into the hands of fewer owners, so mean acreage per private owner rose, from 50 acres to 60.5 acres on the Level, and from 70.6 acres to 88.4 acres on Walland and Denge Marshes. By 1768, as Table 3 shows, across the whole region there were 39,889 acres in the hands of 520 private landowners, but two-thirds of this land was in the hands of the 89 owners possessing more than 100 acres, and more than half was held by the 46 owning more than 200 acres. Heading the list were three prominent Kentish gentry – Sir Edward Knatchbull (1920 acres), Sir Edward Dering (1501 acres), and Sir John Honeywood (1180.5 acres) – who together owned more than one-tenth of the land in the region. But if these men were exceptional in the scale of their investment in marshland, their motives were both typical and traditional.

Landowners on the marsh had long been, for the most part, rentiers. On Denge Marsh just 13.7 per cent of the 2527.5 acres scotted in 1646 was owner-occupied, and only 14.6 per cent of the 23,443 acres taxed on the Level of Romney Marsh in 1654 was farmed by its owners.¹⁴ But the predominance of rentiers intensified as the number of private owners contracted during the century after the Restoration. By 1686, only 9.9 per cent of the land taxed on Walland Marsh

¹³ EKAC, S/Rm/FSz 10, preface; Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone (hereafter CKS), U951 C 67 (unfoliated).

¹⁴ EKAC, S/D/FS 1; Hipkin, 'Tenant farming', p. 658.

TABLE 1. Landownership on the Level of Romney Marsh, 1654–1834

	1654				1768				1834			
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>acres</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>acres</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>acres</i>	%
Private owners												
<10 acres	97	21.7	445.5	2.0	79	21.4	334.0	1.5	90	23.6	358.5	1.6
10–<20	91	20.3	1294.5	5.8	59	15.9	886.5	4.0	64	16.8	950.5	4.1
20–<50	136	30.4	4238.0	18.9	117	31.6	3673.5	16.4	103	27.0	3378.0	14.7
50–<100	75	16.7	5396.5	24.1	65	17.6	4385.5	19.6	65	17.0	4460.5	19.4
100–<200	31	6.9	4007.0	17.9	28	7.6	4005.0	17.9	37	9.7	5113.5	22.2
200–<500	14	3.1	3950.0	17.6	17	4.6	5006.0	22.4	18	4.7	4869.0	21.2
> 500 acres	4	0.9	3083.0	13.8	5	1.4	4097.5	18.3	5	1.3	3880.0	16.9
TOTAL	448	100.0	22414.5	100.1	370	100.1	22388.0	100.1	382	100.1	23010.0	100.1
<20 acres	188	42.0	1740.0	7.8	138	37.3	1220.5	5.5	154	40.3	1309.0	5.7
20–<100	211	47.1	9634.5	43.0	182	49.2	8059.0	36.0	168	44.0	7838.5	34.1
>100 acres	49	10.9	11040.0	49.3	50	13.5	13108.5	58.6	60	15.7	13862.5	60.2
Mean acreage per private owner			50.0				60.5				60.2	
Corporately owned land			1028.5				1586.0				979.0	
Total taxed acreage			23443.0				23974.0				23989.0	
Owner-occupied land			3413.0	14.6			1832.5	7.6			4906.5	20.5

Sources: EKAC, S/Rm/FS 6, 173; /FSc 1, 2; /FSz 10.

and Denge Marsh was owner-occupied, and by 1768 the proportion had fallen to 8.3 per cent. On the Level of Romney Marsh just 7.6 per cent of the land in 1768 was owner-occupied, and across the whole marsh less than one acre in twelve was farmed by its owner. Ninety-six per cent of the land belonging to the 46 largest private owners in the region in 1768 was in the hands of tenant farmers, and only eight of the largest owners had any direct interest in farming on the marsh.

However, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed a reversal of both these trends. By 1834, there had been a modest recovery – to 547 – in the number of private owners in the region, though since this was accompanied by a reduction in the amount of corporately-owned land, the period saw little alteration in mean acreage per private owner. More striking is the increase in the amount of owner-occupied land, which had risen to 19.8 per cent of the 44,076.5 acres taxed, a significantly higher proportion than at any earlier date for which calculations can be made. Proprietors drawn from the ranks of long-established Kentish gentry – the Knatchbulls, Derings, Honeywoods and their like – remained pure rentiers, but the ranks of the largest owners in the region now included a number of practising farmers such as Samuel Finn, who occupied 390.75 of the 919 acres he owned, and John Holman who owned all of the 397.5 acres he farmed. Altogether, 12 of the 44 proprietors of more than 200 acres in 1834 were directly farming a total 3012.5 acres (14.3 per cent of the land on larger estates), while 26.3 per cent of

TABLE 2. Landownership in Walland and Denge Marshes, 1686–1834

	1654				1768				1834			
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>acres</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>acres</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>acres</i>	%
<i>Private owners</i>												
<10 acres	55	24.1	248.0	1.5	28	14.1	104.75	0.6	54	24.4	221.5	1.1
10–<20	30	13.2	425.5	2.6	26	13.1	364.5	2.1	23	10.4	318.5	1.6
20–<50	64	28.1	1996.0	12.4	50	25.3	1648.0	9.4	64	29.0	2115.25	10.7
50–<100	39	17.1	2803.75	17.4	50	25.3	3708.0	21.2	27	12.2	1995.75	10.1
100–<200	22	9.6	3018.0	18.7	20	10.1	2603.0	14.9	28	12.7	3920.0	19.9
200–<500	12	5.3	3102.0	19.3	20	10.1	5754.75	32.9	20	9.1	6448.75	32.7
> 500 acres	6	2.6	4509.5	28.0	4	2.0	3318.0	19.0	5	2.3	4695.0	23.8
TOTAL	228	100.0	16102.75	99.9	198	100.0	17501.0	100.1	221	100.1	19714.75	99.9
<20 acres	85	17.5	673.5	4.2	54	27.3	469.25	2.7	77	34.8	540.0	2.7
20–<100	103	45.2	4799.75	29.8	100	50.5	5356.0	30.6	91	41.2	4111.0	20.9
>100 acres	40	37.3	10629.5	66.0	44	22.2	11675.75	66.7	53	24.0	15063.75	76.4
Mean acreage per private owner			70.6				88.4				89.2	
Corporately owned land			1320.75				1900.5				372.75	
Ownership unknown			30.0				0.0				0.0	
Total taxed acreage			17435.5				19401.5				20087.5	
Owner-occupied land			1734.25	9.9			1613.75	8.3			3807.75	19.0

Sources: EKAC, S/W/FSz 2; /FS 5A, 6B, 7A, 8, 39; S/D/FS 2, 6, 7.

the land belonging to smaller owners was owner-occupied. That farming on Romney Marsh had become a more attractive proposition during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is further suggested by the evidence for patterns of land occupation to which we now turn.

Tables 4–6 show long-term trends in the pattern of land occupation in areas under the jurisdiction of sewers' commissions for the Level of Romney Marsh, Denge Marsh and Walland Marsh. As is evident, the most significant changes occurred before the eighteenth century. On the Level, larger farmers (those occupying more than 200 acres), doubled their share of the land during the seventeenth century, and the more limited data for Denge Marsh and Walland Marsh also indicate rising proportions of land in the hands of larger occupiers. For the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there are variations in detail, but a broadly similar pattern of development is evident in each part of the region. However, since tenant farmers on Romney Marsh were, in the words of one invaluable late-eighteenth-century observer, accustomed 'to hire their land of different owners in any parcels, and at any distance, neither the compactness of their business, nor the distance being any object to them', it follows that the broadest possible canvas is likely to offer the most reliable guide to long-term changes on the marsh.¹⁵

¹⁵ D. Jones, 'Sheep on Romney Marsh in the eighteenth century', a letter sent in 1786 and transcribed by D. Skilbeck, *Wye College Occasional Publications* 7 (1956), p. 6.

TABLE 3. Landownership in the Romney Marsh Region, 1768 and 1834

	1768				1834			
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>acres</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>acres</i>	%
Private owners								
<10 acres	97	18.7	389.25	1.0	131	24.0	518.0	1.2
10–<19.5	79	15.2	1182.5	3.0	80	14.6	1163.25	2.7
20–<49.5	156	30.0	5001.0	12.5	141	25.8	4585.75	10.7
50–<99.5	99	19.0	6842.0	17.2	81	14.8	5648.5	13.2
100–<200	43	8.3	6012.5	15.1	70	12.8	9740.5	22.8
200–<500	35	6.7	10555.25	26.5	32	5.9	9429.25	22.1
> 500 acres	11	2.1	9906.5	24.8	12	2.2	11639.5	27.2
TOTAL	520	100.0	39889.0	100.0	547	100.1	42724.75	99.9
<20 acres	176	33.9	1571.75	3.9	211	38.6	1681.25	3.9
20–<99.5	255	49.0	11843.0	29.7	222	40.6	10234.25	24.0
>100 acres	89	17.1	26474.25	66.4	114	20.8	30809.25	72.1
Mean acreage per private owner			76.7				78.1	
Corporately owned land			3486.5				1351.75	
Total taxed acreage			43375.5				44076.5	
Owner-occupied land			3446.25	8.0			8714.25	19.8

Sources: 1768: EKAC, S/Rm/FSz 10, S/W/FS 5A, 6B, 7A, 8, S/D/FS 6; 1834, EKAC, S/Rm/FS 173, S/W/FS 39, S/D/FS 7.

Table 7 shows the structure of land occupation in the seven years spanning 1699–1834 for which it is possible to integrate comprehensive data covering Denge Marsh, Walland Marsh and the Level of Romney Marsh. Like the evidence for landownership, they suggest that the period may be divided into two distinct, if somewhat overlapping phases. Already prominent by 1700, between the late seventeenth and the mid-eighteenth centuries larger tenant farmers further increased their share of the land, and by 1746 they occupied 60 per cent of the region.¹⁶ Meanwhile, the number occupying 20–100 acres fell from 210 in 1699 to 178 in 1746 and to 165 by 1768, by which time their share of the land had dropped to below 20 per cent. The decline in the number occupying less than 20 acres was even more marked. In 1699 there were 186 smallholders on the marsh, and by 1746 just 106 remained. However, since the average holding

¹⁶ Evidence of the size of leasehold farms advertised ‘to let’ in the *Kentish Post* between 1729 and 1764 led Baker to conclude that ‘proportionately the greatest changes in farm size in Kent took place during the 1730s and 1740s’. By 1760–4, ‘more than two-thirds of the advertised farms in Kent were 100 acres or more in size’, and they averaged 140 acres. However, since such units may have been added to existing enterprises, the advertisements are an insecure basis on which to reach conclusions about farm size. Those farming more than 100 acres within the Romney Marsh region in 1768 held, on average 267.5 acres, but they were, overwhelmingly, compound holdings. D. A. Baker, *Agricultural prices, production, and marketing, with special reference to the hop industry: north-east Kent, 1680–1760* (1985), pp. 132–9.

TABLE 4. Size of holdings in the Level of Romney Marsh, 1587–1834

a) percentage distribution by acreage

	<i>0–<20</i>	<i>20–<100</i>	<i>100–<200</i>	<i>≥200</i>	<i>Total acreage</i>
1587	7.2	45.6	23.8	23.4	22,943.0
c. 1608–12	10.1	46.9	21.3	21.6	23,136.0
1650	6.9	32.1	24.4	36.7	23,414.0
1654	7.5	34.6	24.5	33.4	23,443.0
1699	5.0	30.9	19.8	44.2	23,420.0
1705	4.9	31.5	22.8	40.7	23,182.0
1746	3.0	24.7	19.6	52.7	23,460.0
1768	3.5	29.5	16.7	50.3	23,974.0
1775	3.0	31.5	21.2	44.3	23,894.0
1790	3.0	31.7	26.7	38.6	23,915.5
1800	3.0	32.5	27.2	37.3	23,928.5
1820	3.7	34.5	31.1	30.7	23,915.5
1834	3.6	34.3	27.2	33.7	23,989.0 ^a

^a includes 295 acres of unknown occupation.

b) percentage of occupiers by acreage

	<i>0–<20</i>	<i>20–<100</i>	<i>100–<200</i>	<i>≥200</i>	<i>Total occupiers</i>
1587	37.3	50.6	8.9	3.2	472
c. 1608–12	45.2	44.9	7.0	2.9	557
1650	43.0	41.2	10.1	5.7	405
1654	44.5	41.3	9.2	4.9	445
1699	38.9	44.0	9.4	7.7	350
1705	37.1	45.1	10.6	7.2	359
1746	30.0	45.0	11.4	13.5	282
1768	33.5	46.5	9.4	10.6	310
1775	32.2	46.0	11.6	10.3	311
1790	29.5	46.4	14.3	9.8	315
1800	29.3	47.5	14.0	9.3	335
1820	31.8	46.7	14.6	6.9	362
1834	33.0	47.9	12.9	6.3	349

among this group was below eight acres, the impact of their retreat from the marsh on the overall structure of land occupation in the region was slight. As we have seen, over the same period the number of private owners – and particularly of smaller proprietors – also fell significantly, and owner-occupation on the marsh declined to less than one acre in every twelve.

c) mean acreage per occupier holding ≥ 20 acres

1587	71.9
c. 1608–12	68.2
1650	94.4
1654	87.8
1699	103.9
1705	97.5
1746	115.6
1768	112.3
1775	109.8
1790	104.5
1800	97.9
1820	93.3
1834	97.5

Sources: EKAC, S/Rm/FS 3, 5, 6, 10, 13, 18, 56, 123, 173, /FSz 10, /FSc 1, 2.

TABLE 5. Size of holdings in Denge Marsh, 1646–1834

a) percentage distribution by acreage

	0–<20	20–<100	100–<200	≥ 200	Total acreage
1646	7.4	43.8	12.9	35.9	2619.25
1677	5.1	32.4	32.2	30.4	2752.0
1688	5.2	33.3	23.2	38.3	2823.0
1698	6.5	30.6	19.7	43.2	2921.0
1708	6.0	36.0	13.2	44.9	2912.0
1718	6.1	31.6	20.1	42.2	2912.0
1723	4.5	33.6	19.3	42.6	2912.0
1736	4.0	41.0	4.8	50.2	2912.0
1746	4.3	41.0	5.2	49.5	2912.0
1768	2.5	35.3	15.9	46.3	2912.0
1800	4.2	29.0	17.5	49.3	2912.0
1834	6.1	22.5	16.6	54.8	2910.5

During the 1760s and 1770s these trends gradually reversed, and, in addition to the marked increase in the amount of owner-occupied land already noted, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed a fall in the proportion of land in the hands of larger tenant farmers, from the 60 per cent reached in 1746 to 53 per cent by 1800, and to 51 per cent in 1834. Meanwhile, the number of, and the proportion of land held by 20–100-acre occupiers recovered

b) percentage of occupiers by acreage

	<i>0-<20</i>	<i>20-<100</i>	<i>100-<200</i>	<i>≥200</i>	<i>Total occupiers</i>
1646	40	49.1	5.5	5.5	55
1677	38.8	44.9	10.2	6.1	49
1688	39.6	42.0	10.4	8.3	48
1698	45.8	37.5	8.3	8.3	48
1708	42.9	42.9	6.1	8.2	49
1718	40.4	42.6	8.0	8.0	47
1723	35.7	45.2	8.0	8.0	42
1736	34.2	53.7	2.4	9.8	41
1746	34.1	54.6	2.3	9.1	44
1768	25.6	53.8	10.3	10.3	39
1800	32.5	47.5	10.0	10.0	40
1834	46.5	34.9	7.0	11.6	43

c) mean acreage per occupier holding ≥20 acres

1646	75.5
1677	87.1
1688	92.2
1698	105.0
1708	97.8
1718	97.7
1723	103.0
1736	103.6
1746	96.1
1768	97.9
1800	103.3
1834	118.8

Sources: EKAC, S/D/FS 1-7.

to late-seventeenth-century levels, while farmers of 100-200 acres increased their presence on the marsh. During the early-nineteenth century there was also a notable revival in the number of smallholders, though not to any significant extent in the proportion of land they occupied on the marsh.

The most striking finding to emerge from this analysis is that large tenant farmers occupying more than 200 acres held a smaller proportion of the land on the marsh in 1834 (51 per cent) than they had in 1699 (57 per cent). But the clearest measure of significant trends within the region is, perhaps, provided by the mean acreage statistics for occupiers holding more than 20 acres on the marsh, that is, for those whom we might reasonably suppose to have been farming

TABLE 6. Size of holdings in Walland Marsh and Denge Marsh combined, 1686–1834

a) percentage distribution by acreage

<i>Date</i>	<i>0–<20</i>	<i>20–<100</i>	<i>100–<200</i>	<i>≥200</i>	<i>Total acreage</i>
1686	3.7	23.0	27.0	45.1	17,453.5
1699	3.2	23.4	23.5	49.9	19,525.75
1705	3.0	23.3	24.6	49.1	19,590.0
1746	1.4	22.8	22.7	53.1	19,419.5
1768	1.2	18.7	23.4	56.7	19,401.5
1775	1.2	19.4	22.7	56.7	19,401.5
1800	1.8	19.0	24.1	55.1	19,400.0
1834	2.2	21.8	15.7	60.1	20,087.5

b) percentage of occupiers by acreage

<i>Date</i>	<i>0–<20</i>	<i>20–<100</i>	<i>100–<200</i>	<i>≥200</i>	<i>Total occupiers</i>
1686	35.8	38.5	16.1	9.6	218
1699	34.9	39.3	14.0	11.8	229
1705	35.7	38.8	14.1	11.5	227
1746	23.7	44.1	17.7	14.5	186
1768	22.0	40.2	20.1	17.7	164
1775	22.8	41.3	18.6	17.4	167
1800	26.8	38.8	19.1	15.3	183
1834	33.0	41.8	11.2	14.1	206

c) mean acreage per occupier holding ≥20 acres.

1686	118.5
1699	126.8
1705	130.1
1746	134.9
1768	149.7
1775	148.7
1800	144.3
1834	142.2

Sources: EKAC, S/W/FS 1A, 2, 5A, 6, 6A, 6B, 7, 7A, 8, 9, 39, /FSz2, /D/FS 2, 3, 5, 6, 7.

according to a commercial agenda. As Table 7 shows, mean acreage rose from 127 in 1699, to a peak of 146 in 1768, and then fell back to 130 by the close of the eighteenth century. The ‘progressive and widespread increases in farm sizes’ that, according to one recent text book, accompanied ‘pressures of increased commercialism’ in England throughout the eighteenth

TABLE 7. Size of holdings in the Romney Marsh Region, 1699–1834.

a) percentage distribution by acreage

	0–<20	20–<100	100–<200	≥200	Total acreage
1699	3.4	23.3	16.1	57.2	42,945.75
1705	3.5	23.2	19.2	54.1	42,772.0
1746	1.6	20.3	18.3	59.8	42,879.5
1768	2.0	19.7	19.7	58.6	43,375.5
1775	1.9	22.0	21.0	55.1	43,295.5
1800	2.0	22.2	22.9	52.9	43,324.5
1834	2.7	24.4	21.1	51.1	44,076.5

b) percentage of occupiers by acreage

	0–<20	20–<100	100–<200	≥200	Total occupiers
1699	36.3	40.9	9.9	12.9	513
1705	36.7	39.7	11.4	12.2	507
1746	25.6	43.0	14.0	17.4	414
1768	29.0	40.2	15.1	15.8	411
1775	28.6	41.4	14.9	15.1	423
1800	27.1	42.2	16.2	14.4	450
1834	33.3	42.8	13.1	10.8	498

c) mean acreage per occupier holding ≥20 acres.

1699	126.8
1705	128.6
1746	136.9
1768	145.6
1775	140.7
1800	129.5
1834	128.3

Sources: EKAC, S/Rm/FS 6, 10, 13, 56, 173; /FSz 10; /W/FS 1A, 2, 4, 5A, 6, 6A, 6B, 7, 7A, 8, 9, 39; /D/FS 3, 5, 6, 7.

century were, *within* the Romney Marsh region, confined to the period before 1770.¹⁷ However, as signalled earlier, one very important caveat attends all the results set out in Table 7. Many marsh holdings were run in conjunction with upland holdings, and the scot-book evidence only tells us about what was happening *within* the marsh region.

¹⁷ M. Overton, *Agricultural revolution in England: the transformation of the agrarian economy, 1500–1850* (1996), p. 173. For more cautious textbook comment stressing that ‘the tendency towards an increase in farm size is one more easily asserted than measured’, and that ‘practice varied from estate to estate’ see J. Rule, *The vital century: England’s developing economy, 1714–1815* (1992), pp. 63–4.

III

Writing in 1976, Kain extolled the virtues of the ‘unique record of land occupiers provided by the tithe surveys’. Clearly, as evidence for land occupation *within* the Romney Marsh region, the tithe surveys are neither unique nor the best available source, but they do offer an invaluable opportunity to assess the role of marsh holdings in a wider context. Drawing on evidence for 22 parishes in the Romney Marsh region, Kain analyzed 232 holdings of more than ten acres, and was able to show that, *circa* 1840, 55.8 per cent of this land was occupied by 125 farmers holding land elsewhere in the county of Kent, and that it was larger upland farmers – those with more than 500 acres – who ‘took most advantage of holding land in both upland and marsh regions’. As Kain noted, ‘it is likely that some of the fragmented holdings were run as quite separate farms’, but most were probably not.¹⁸ Although it is not possible to provide reliable estimates of the size or number of such dual-region farming enterprises at earlier dates, there is no doubting their significance. There is, moreover, evidence within the archive of the Level of Romney Marsh that suggests that the extent to which upland farmers invested in tenancies on the marsh varied considerably during the long-eighteenth century, and did so in accordance with the distinct phases already identified with respect to patterns of landownership and occupation within the region.

Scot books compiled in 1699 and 1705 contain information about the domicile of the great majority of those farming on the Level of Romney Marsh. This information, extensively tabulated in a previous article, is summarized here within Table 8.¹⁹ Also summarized in Table 8, and set out in detail in Table 9, are the results of an analysis of available data for the domicile of occupiers on the Level in 1768 and 1834. Data for 1768 are drawn from Maylam’s survey, and from contemporary calendar scot books, within which, by the mid-eighteenth century, it had become routine practice for the clerk to record details of occupiers’ places of residence. Information for 1834 is likewise derived from entries in calendar scot books, which have been correlated with the names of the occupiers on the Level listed in the local tax schedules for that year. It must be stressed that the results set out in the tables are at best suggestive, since the fact that a farmer lived on the marsh in no way precludes the possibility that he or she also held land on the uplands. Nor, equally, should it be assumed that *all* occupiers on the Level who lived away from the marsh also farmed on the uplands, though it seems reasonable to suppose that most did.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, slightly fewer than one in three occupiers on the Level resided on the marsh, and one-quarter lived in parishes on rising ground at its edge. As might be expected, those living on the marsh or marsh-edge included a large proportion of the Level’s smallest occupiers. In 1699 and 1705, two-thirds of occupiers of known residence holding fewer than 20 acres were marsh or marsh-edge dwellers. But, as Table 8 shows, at the turn of the seventeenth century, 45 per cent of all occupiers lived in upland parishes, and together they held 53 per cent of the land on the Level. During the first half of the eighteenth

¹⁸ R. J. P. Kain, ‘Tithe surveys and the study of land occupation’, *Local Historian* 12 (1976), pp. 88–92; id., ‘The land of Kent in the middle of the nineteenth

century’ (PhD thesis, University of London, 1973), pp. 310–16.

¹⁹ Hipkin, ‘Tenant farming’, pp. 664–5.

TABLE 8. Place of residence of land occupiers in the Level of Romney Marsh, 1699–1834
(percentage distribution by occupier and acreage)

	<i>Marsh and marsh edge parishes</i>		<i>Upland parishes</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>acres (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>acres (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>acres (%)</i>
1699						
<20 acres	21.4	2.6	12.2	1.6	33.6	4.2
20–<100	23.3	15.4	25.2	16.0	48.5	31.4
100–<200	5.7	11.7	3.4	6.4	9.1	18.1
≥200 acres	3.4	17.3	5.3	28.8	8.7	46.1
Total	53.8	47.0	46.1	52.8	99.9	99.8
1705						
<20 acres	22.3	2.7	10.4	1.5	32.7	4.2
20–<100	24.2	14.9	24.2	15.4	48.4	30.3
100–<200	5.9	12.3	4.8	9.3	10.7	21.6
≥200 acres	3.4	16.8	4.8	27.1	8.2	43.9
Total	55.8	46.7	44.2	53.3	100.0	100.0
1768						
<20 acres	24.7	2.3	6.5	1.0	31.2	3.3
20–<100	25.4	15.9	22.3	13.5	47.7	29.4
100–<200	5.4	9.4	4.5	7.5	9.9	16.9
≥200 acres	6.9	31.9	4.1	18.4	11.0	50.3
Total	62.4	59.5	37.4	40.4	99.8	99.9
1834						
<20 acres	25.6	2.6	6.9	1.0	32.5	3.6
20–<100	25.0	18.5	23.8	16.5	48.8	35.0
100–<200	6.0	12.8	6.0	13.0	12.0	25.8
≥200 acres	3.6	17.7	3.0	17.9	6.6	35.6
Total	60.2	51.6	39.7	48.4	99.9	100.0

Sources: EKAC, S/Rm/FS 6, 173, /FSz 10,/Fsc 6, 7, 9.

century, when the overall number of occupiers on the Level fell significantly, those domiciled on the uplands withdrew in disproportionately large measure. The proportion of land on the Level in the hands of upland dwellers fell even more sharply, the decline in the amount of land in the hands of larger occupiers living off the marsh being particularly notable. By contrast, between 1705 and 1768 the number of known marsh residents occupying more than 200 acres rose from nine to 20, and the proportion of the Level in their hands virtually doubled. Hence, in 1768, those whom we might reasonably assume to have been, in the main, larger specialist marsh graziers, occupied one-third of the Level. However, this situation did not last, and by 1834 there had been a modest recovery in the proportion of upland dwellers among those

TABLE 9. Place of residence of land occupiers in the Level of Romney Marsh, 1768 and 1834

	<i>Whole-marsh parishes</i>		<i>Marsh-edge parishes</i>		<i>Contiguous upland parishes</i>		<i>Within 10 miles</i>		<i>Beyond 10 miles</i>		<i>Residence unstated</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>acres</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>acres</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>acres</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>acres</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>acres</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>acres</i>
1768												
Unknown		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		11.0
<10 acres	28	111.5	18	64.0	3	14.0	3	18.5	0	0	11	38.0
10–<20	16	230.5	10	135.0	5	75.0	8	115.5	0	0	2	35.0
20–<50	26	848.0	15	476.0	19	648.0	15	477.0	6	213.5	4	135.5
50–<100	20	1447.5	13	946.0	8	598.5	16	1144.5	1	85.0	1	51.5
100–<200	9	1230.0	7	985.0	5	662.5	5	655.0	3	463.0	0	0
≥200 acres	12	4477.5	8	3008.5	5	1929.5	5	1624.0	2	767.5	1	252.5
TOTAL	111	8345.0	71	5614.5	45	3927.5	52	4034.5	12	1529.0	19+	523.5
mean acreage per tenant		75.2		79.1		87.3		77.6		127.4		
1834												
Unknown		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		295.0
<10 acres	35	134.0	26	107.5	3	12.0	7	38.0	1	9.5	5	12.0
10–<20	15	220.0	9	136.0	4	53.5	4	55.0	4	63.0	2	29.0
20–<50	22	711.5	22	742.5	9	273.5	25	809.5	16	556.5	2	49.0
50–<100	22	1535.5	17	1215.5	7	548.5	12	836.5	10	719.0	3	225.0
100–<200	14	2091.0	6	817.0	6	924.0	10	1419.0	4	614.5	5	651.5
≥200 acres	11	3735.5	1	289.5	6	2166.5	4	1893.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL	119	8427.5	81	3308.0	35	3978.0	62	5051.5	35	1962.5	17+	1261.5
mean acreage per tenant		70.8		40.8		113.7		81.5		56.1		

Notes: Whole-marsh parishes are defined as Brenzett, Brookland, Burmarsh, Dymchurch, Hope, Ivychurch, Lydd, New Romney, Newchurch, Old Romney, Snargate, Snaive, St Marys; marsh-edge parishes: Aldington, Appledore, Bilsington, Bonnington, Ebony, Kennardington, Lympne, Orlestone, Ruckinge, Warehorne, West Hythe; contiguous upland parishes: Hythe, Kingsnorth, Mersham, Saltwood, Sellinge, Smeeth, Stanford, Woodchurch, Tenterden; and parishes within 10 miles: Ashford, Barham, Biddenden, Braborne, Brooke, Cheriton, Crundale, Elham, Folkestone, Great Chart, High Halden, Hinxhill, Kennington, Lyminge, Newington, Pluckley, Postling, Sevington, Swingfield, Westwell, Willesborough, Wye.

Sources: 1768, EKAC, S/Rm/FSZ 10, /FSC 6, 7; 1834, S/Rm/FS 173, /FSc 9.

farming on the marsh, and a much more substantial increase in the proportion of land they occupied on the Level, which rose from 40 to 48 per cent. This revival of upland investment in tenancies on the marsh provides the key to explaining why commercial farm sizes *within* the Romney Marsh region did not continue to increase during the later-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

IV

The developments described above were shaped not only by shifts in the level of demand for the produce of the marsh, but also, crucially, by certain characteristics of the economic culture of severalty that prevailed in Kentish rural society. The same combination of influences had contrived to produce the precocious mid-seventeenth century context against which subsequent developments within the region must be measured. In 1654, 85 per cent of the land on the Level of Romney Marsh was in the hands of tenant farmers, a high proportion of the deals struck between owners and tenants were for short-term leases or tenancies-at-will, rentiers were as apt to be small freeholders as county gentry, and larger tenant farms were already a prominent component of the agrarian economy of the region. Apart from the small freeholder as landlord, these are traits usually associated with English rural economies of a much later era. But the absence of customary, tenurial and organizational constraints had brought them to the marsh at an early date.²⁰

If there were data for the turn of the sixteenth century equivalent to those for the Level in the early 1650s they would probably confirm other indications that short leases and tenancies-at-will were common and ancient currency on the marsh, and that in the late Elizabethan period, as in the 1650s, landlords came in all sizes. There was probably a higher incidence of owner-occupation among small freeholders on the marsh in the late-sixteenth than in the mid-seventeenth century, since improved wool and meat prices were offering encouragement to direct farming at the close of the Elizabethan period. But the choice would not always have been self-evident, and the small Kentish freeholder was no more wedded to the notion of owner-occupation or bust than was the landed gentleman. In the best of times there were many petty rentiers who took an income and deployed their own labour elsewhere, or were tenants on more conveniently located land. And competition for tenancies certainly made the rentier option attractive. In 1608, Richard Norton recalled that when he first rented land in Ivychurch, some 40 years earlier, he had given only 7s. 6d. per acre, but now the marshland was let at 20s. 0d. per acre. By the beginning of the 1620s, 23s. 0d. per acre was not uncommon, and the best pasture might command up to 30s. 0d. per acre. But the early 1620s also saw a slump in wool prices that inaugurated a prolonged and marked deterioration in the economic climate for wool-growers. Many smaller farmers suffered and withdrew, erstwhile direct farmers (probably) took the rentier option in greater numbers, and they found their tenants, increasingly, among those able and willing to take on more land in order to raise output to compensate for lower margins, and/or shift the emphasis to meat production. Tenants with the necessary capital were the more willing to expand their acreage as competition for land abated and the upward movement of rent at first decelerated and then, by mid-century, ceased altogether. During the second quarter of the seventeenth century these tenants built up and sustained larger farms – often comprising many parcels of land dispersed across the region – through a succession of market-sensitive leasehold deals made with a variety of freeholders, large and small.²¹

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 647–9, 655–9.

²¹ Hipkin, 'Land occupation', pp. 150–2, 160–1; *id.*, 'Tenant farming', pp. 661, 666–7, 669–71. One of the most important consequences of the fragmentation of

freeholds caused by gavelkind was that 'Kent was a county of mostly small landowners', but 'not a county of owner-occupiers'. C. W. Chalklin, *Seventeenth-century Kent* (1978), p. 58.

That the vast majority of large tenant farms across the region continued to be assembled and sustained in this manner throughout the next two centuries is immediately obvious from the many hundreds of pages of crowded entries in the calendar scot books. From these entries the land-occupation biographies of countless tenants on the Level may be reconstructed. The farming enterprise of Daniel Langdon provides a typical example. Langdon had spent his youth in New Romney, but by 1699 he had migrated the short-distance to St Mary-in-the-Marsh. Langdon did not own any land in the region, but he was already a wealthy man, occupying a total of 270 acres comprising 11 parcels ranging in size from three to 41.5 acres, scattered over six waterings on the Level, and held by leases agreed with six different owners. But Langdon's farm did not long retain this configuration. At Michaelmas 1703 he vacated two parcels of seven and nine and one-half acres in Great Sedbrook, and at Michaelmas 1704 he gave up a three-acre parcel in Sheaty. Meanwhile he took out leases on three parcels of 7.5, 11.0 and 127.5 acres in Jefferstone watering (though from three different owners), and a further seven-acre parcel in Sheaty. By the following year he had vacated his 41.5-acre parcel in Sheaty, but this still left him occupying 362 acres in 1705, and a much reconfigured as well as larger farm, dispersed across five waterings. In 1705, as in 1699, Langdon had ongoing leasehold agreements with six landowners, but contracts with only three of them had spanned the whole period. Thereafter, the size and distribution of his holdings oscillated as existing tenancies came to an end and new leases were taken out, but right up to his death, in January 1751, the total acreage of his leaseholdings at any one time remained well above 200 acres. It was not necessary for Daniel's eldest son to await a deathbed inheritance before following in his father's footsteps, for in 1722, at the age of 21, Robert Langdon began his own career as a commercial tenant farmer, leasing 79 acres in Jefferstone and Sheaty that his father had previously occupied. By 1732, Robert had built up his tenant farm to 167 acres, comprising seven parcels dotted across Jefferstone, Paternosterford and Sheaty waterings, which he leased from three different owners. By 1739, 'Mr Robert Langdon' had retraced his father's footsteps and joined the ranks of the gentleman-grazier inhabitants who dominated the town of New Romney.²²

Data for 1768 provide a snapshot of the configuration of holdings across the region. Of the 13 tenant farmers occupying more than 500 acres, none were contracted solely with one owner, seven simultaneously held leases from more than six different owners, and Henry Nickoll's 624-acre farm comprised 10.5 acres of owner-occupied land, and 613.5 acres leased from no less than 14 different owners, in parcels ranging in size from half an acre to 143 acres. The half-acre Nickoll leased from Stephen Goldfinch was Goldfinch's sole proprietary interest on the marsh; a *very* petty rentier. In 1834 the picture across the region was much the same.²³

Far from sponsoring the development of large tenant farms in the belief that they would offer higher rent returns over the medium to long-term, proprietors on the marsh were accustomed to seeking the best *immediately* available deal for their land, and so to dealing (and

²² EKAC, S/Rm/FS 6; /FSc 4, p. 221; /FSc 5, pp. 182, 186; /FSc 6, p. 349; Hipkin, 'Daniel Langdon', pp. 174–83.

²³ EKAC, S/Rm/FSz 10, /FS 173; /W/FS 5A, 6B, 7A, 8, 39; /D/FS 6, 7.

haggling) with a variety of tenants at any one time.²⁴ One of Henry Nickoll's many landlords in 1768 was George Carter, the owner of 409.5 acres scattered across 11 waterings in the region. Besides the 53.5 acres he leased to Nickoll, Carter had eight other tenants to whom he leased between one acre and 98 acres. And Carter also owner-occupied 20.5 acres in 1768. Among the largest owners on the Level in May 1654, Sir Edward Hales's 884 acres were in the hands of 11 tenants, Sir John Fagge's 713.5 acres were leased to 10, Sir William Sidley's 551.5 acres to nine, John Austen's 457.5 acres to six, and the 372 acres belonging to Edward Honeywood were also distributed among half a dozen tenant farmers. Of the 11 largest private owners in the region in 1768, three each had four tenants, one had six, one had eight, one had ten, David Papillon's 604.5 acres were occupied by a dozen tenants, John Mascall's 690.5 acres were farmed by 13, Sir John Honeywood's 1180 acres were distributed among 17 tenants, and Sir Edward Dering had leasehold agreements with 18 tenants occupying the 1501 acres that he owned on the marsh. The Duchess of Marlboro was exceptional in having only two tenants on her 738 acres on Walland Marsh. Larger institutional proprietors such as All Souls College or the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church Canterbury sometimes opted for convenience and let in large blocks to tenants who sublet all or part of their holding (data for 1768, for instance, indicate that 57 per cent of the Dean and Chapters' land was sublet), and private owners living far from the marsh sometimes did the same. But neither of Marlboro's tenants was subletting. Thomas Denne, who leased 550 acres from her, also farmed 226 acres leased from two other owners, plus 22 acres of glebe and 161 acres that he owner-occupied, all of which combined to make Denne the second biggest farmer on the marsh. Marlboro's other tenant, Thomas Shoesmith, farmed, in total, 504 acres, including 56 acres which he owner-occupied.²⁵

The units in which land might be offered on the leasehold or freehold markets were often very small, and are identified in Thomas Maylam's 1768 survey as 'pieces', which comprised closes bounded by ditches or post and rail fences. For example, 146 'pieces' of land are specified within the 1029.5 acres covered by Abbatriidge watering (on average, seven acres per piece), and 300 'pieces' are specified within the 3514 acres of Brenzett watering (on average, 11.7 acres per piece). These 'pieces' were let or sold singly or in multiples, though, as scrutiny of the survey maps shows, albeit any number of 'pieces' might be let together, often they did not lie together. The 146 'pieces' Maylam identified in Abbatriidge watering were held by 27 farmers in configurations ranging from the one 'piece' measuring one acre let to John Scoones by Sir Edward Knatchbull, to the 19 pieces comprising, in total, 256.5 acres, let to William Munk senior by Francis Despencer. In 1768, the 300 'pieces' in Brenzett happened to be dispersed among 74 farmers.²⁶ But within any given watering the number of tenants, and the configuration of 'pieces'

²⁴ Thus, on 9 June 1740 we find Sir Wyndam Knatchbull recording that he had 'promised to give Luckhurst an answer' whether or not he would renew his five-year lease on one parcel of 150 acres (Luckhurst was offering just £180 per annum for the renewal, a £20 per annum reduction on the agreed annual rent for his existing lease, and he also wanted 'a new washing tun' thrown in). Three days later he noted that 'Farnell and Barnell' had offered £185 per annum, and 'I promised them, if no one offered more ... to let them have it'. On 18 June

Knatchbull noted that Luckhurst 'came again and offered £180 for the land, without a new tun. Refused him, but promised to let him have the refusal if no more was offered; he in the meantime to be at liberty to provide for himself elsewhere'. The following day Knatchbull finally 'agreed with Jer. Reed to hire him the above mentioned land at £190 per annum ...'. CKS, U951 E12. I owe this reference to Anne Davison.

²⁵ EKAC, S/Rm/FSz 10; /W/FS 5A, 6B, 7A, 8; /D/FS 6.

²⁶ EKAC, S/Rm/FSz 10.

in which land was let to them, was constantly changing. Indeed, the hallmark of the method by which land on the marsh was made available to tenants was its flexibility and ready adaptability to changing market conditions. Like bits of lego, individual ‘pieces’ of marsh pasture might form one relatively insignificant part of a large tenant-constructed assemblage one year, and the major or even the only component of something much smaller the next.

V

The practice of offering size-adjustable units of land on short leases or tenancies at will enabled landlords to maximize rents when there was plenty of competition for tenancies on the marsh, but it also exposed proprietors to chillier winds when tenants found profits harder to come by. How chilly was the post-Restoration climate? The 1660–1750 period was characterized by falling grain prices and very poor returns for wool, which, producers in Romney Marsh and elsewhere regularly (though to no avail) protested, were a consequence of the continuing export ban. Wool prices fell by almost 33 per cent between 1640–79 and 1710–49. On the other hand, low grain prices released money for the purchase of meat and dairy products. Hence the ‘price of livestock moved upwards in almost direct proportion to the fall in grain prices throughout the period 1640–1749 ... and while the prices of animal products in general declined they did so rather less markedly than the prices of grain’. This has led recent scholars to seek to modify the perception ‘well established in the literature that in the period 1660–1750 agriculture suffered a long-term decline in prosperity’. With respect to the early eighteenth century, Beckett and others have emphasized that experience varied in different regions, and, in particular, that whilst there was an ‘agricultural depression’ in some (arable) regions during the 1730s and 1740s, ‘demand for meat and dairy products ... was sufficient to protect the pastoral regions against agricultural depression, and to ensure for them a measure of prosperity’. In turn, in some of these regions, rents were perceptibly rising after 1690.²⁷ The evidence for Romney Marsh, however, suggests that while some larger tenant farmers may have enjoyed a ‘measure of prosperity’ during the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, this was partly the product of weak competition for tenancies in the region.

Low prices certainly made conditions difficult for smaller wool-growers in the Romney Marsh region throughout the later-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. That the resulting decline in their demand for tenancies was not, prior to the 1690s, balanced by increasing demand from larger tenant farmers is indicated by the evidence of rents, which fell by as much as 40 per cent on some parts of the marsh between the 1650s and 1670s. During the 1680s, proprietors on Denge Marsh had to assume responsibility for scot payments in order to retain tenants. A temporary improvement in wool prices brought some stabilization of rents during the 1690s, but at levels no better – and perhaps generally somewhat lower – than those obtained in the mid-Jacobean period.²⁸ For the early decades of the eighteenth century, payments authorized

²⁷ P. J. Bowden, *The wool trade in Tudor and Stuart England* (1962), pp. 185–217; *Id.*, ‘Agricultural prices, wages, farm profits, and rents’, in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Agrarian History of England and Wales V* (ii) (1984), pp. 1–2, M. E. Turner, J. V. Beckett, and B. Afton, *Agricultural rent*

in England, 1690–1914 (1997), pp. 226–32; G. E. Mingay, ‘The agricultural depression 1730–1750’, *EcHR* 8 (1956), pp. 323–38; J. V. Beckett, ‘Regional variation and the agricultural depression, 1730–50’, *EcHR* 35 (1982), p. 50.

²⁸ Hipkin, ‘Tenant farming’, pp. 670–1.

by the Lathe of Romney Marsh to compensate owners of land excavated to provide earth to repair Dymchurch wall offer reasonable indications of what were probably regarded as average commercial rents on the marsh. Without exception, between 1700 and 1720, the Lathe offered compensation at rates of between 20s. *od.* and 24s. *od.* per acre.²⁹ Among the packages approved were two (in 1704 and 1705) for land belonging to Peter Godfrey and occupied by Daniel Langdon, on both occasions 23s. *od.* per acre was granted. Two decades later, at Michaelmas 1723, Langdon recorded a payment of £40 to John Sawbridge, his landlord on 34 acres in Jefferstone watering, suggesting a very similar rent. Other entries in Langdon's 'almanac' (his rather haphazard financial notebook) would appear to indicate somewhat lower rents of between 16s. *od.* and 22s. *od.* on his holdings elsewhere, but such variations may reflect not only differences in the quality of land but also in the precise terms of leasehold agreements. Langdon paid the land tax and manorial quit rents on land leased from 'landlord Godfrey', but not – it would appear – on other lands he occupied. It is therefore likely that some, but not all, of his rent payments reflected reductions to compensate for additional liabilities that had been agreed at the original negotiation of leases.³⁰ Further research may modify the picture, but the indications so far are that marsh rents during the first half of the eighteenth century remained fairly flat, depressed at levels first achieved a century earlier. Indeed, during the late 1730s, Henry and Jeremy Read, both of whom were among the most substantial tenants on the marsh, were negotiating rent abatements from Sir Wyndam Knatchbull, and in June 1739 another of Knatchbull's tenants, Mr Stace, offered to renew his lease on one parcel of marsh for a further five years, but only if there was some abatement of the rent. Stace, wrote Knatchbull, 'complained chiefly of the low price of wool, of which he told me he usually sheared 25 packs, but could not get more than £4 or £4 10s. *od.* at most'.³¹ Since, as we have seen, smaller farmers were retreating from the marsh during the early eighteenth century and, it would seem, fewer upland farmers were active in the mid-eighteenth century market for tenancies, those who were prepared to remain and able to invest found that they could expand their acreage relatively cheaply, at the expense of proprietors in a weak position to defend their rent income. It is therefore hardly surprising that the regional data for 1768 show that a significant number of proprietors – particularly smaller owners – had, over the course of the previous century, sold out to those better equipped to weather the climate.

Judging by contemporary comment, demand for tenancies was much more buoyant by the

²⁹ EKAC, S/Rm/SO 3, pp. 25, 32, 36, 38, 39, 42, 45, 47, 66, 70.

³⁰ EKAC, S/Rm/Z 2, fos 24, 27v, 30r, 32r; /Z 3, fos 23v, 24, 40v–41r. During the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries the high quality of pasture on the marsh guaranteed significantly – at least 50 per cent – higher average rents than for upland pasture. The gap may have narrowed somewhat after the mid-seventeenth century as the introduction of artificial grasses on uplands increased their relative attractiveness, but it was far from extinguished. In his scrutiny of farm advertisements in the *Kentish Post* between 1729 and 1764, Baker found 24 instances where annual rents and

acreages in various parts of the county are together stated unambiguously. The average rent for farms of 50 acres or less was 16.7s. per acre, and that for farms of more than 50 acres was 10.1s. per acre. Average marsh rents may have been flat in the first half of the eighteenth century, but clearly they were well above these levels, and this was probably significant in discouraging investment in the marsh by upland farmers. Hipkin, 'Land occupation', pp. 160–1; id., 'Tenant farming', pp. 670–1; Baker, *Agricultural prices*, pp. 129, 142–3.

³¹ CKS, U951 E 12. I owe this reference to Anne Davison.

early 1770s. In a letter to his kinsman in November 1773, Josias Pattenson reported on the efforts of potential tenants to outbid each other for marsh holdings. On getting wind of the availability of one estate, he wrote, 'no less than four graziers ... substantial men, went to London ... on purpose either to buy or hire the same ... and you know how the graziers ride after every parcel of land that is to be let in the marsh'.³² By 1786, according to the Reverend Daniel Jones of New Romney, rents for marsh pasture were 'in general from 20s. to 35s. per acre, but some prime fattening pieces so high as 40s. and even 50s. per acre', while 'the few acres that are ploughed let from 40s. to £3 per acre'. Grazing, Jones thought, was 'the prettiest and most gentlemanlike business', provided

one has money at command and can get a tolerable parcel of good land at a moderate rent ... But the evil of it is, that it is exceedingly difficult to get land for it requires almost as much interest to get at, as it would to procure a place at court, and besides, of late years it is become so excessively dear as to be hardly worth the hazard of using.

Here is glowing contemporary testimony to the efficiency with which marsh proprietors were, at least in a buoyant market for tenancies, capable of transferring the bulk of any increases in farm income into their own pockets.³³ And competition for tenancies further intensified with the advent of the Napoleonic wars. Writing in 1809, Daniel Price offered enough contemporary examples to suggest that breeding land on the marsh usually fetched at least £2 per acre, and that first quality fattening land easily commanded £3, and sometimes £4 per acre. The 'grazing land in Romney Marsh', Price observed, 'appears in general to be rented above its real value, which is owing to the number of competitors', but his examples also suggest that such rent levels were sustained by rentiers taking advantage of the premiums to be had from letting in small units.³⁴

If the 1770s signalled the end of the long lean period for rentiers, greater demand for tenancies was not brought about by any improvement in the prospects for wool-growers, since wool 'prices were flat, possibly even on a falling trend, from 1750 to the mid-1780s'. On the other hand, the pressure exerted on supply by population growth after 1750 was pushing up food prices, and although conditions may have favoured cereal producers rather more than pasture farmers, the money price of meat rose by 'about 52 per cent' between 1750–64 and 1790–4, and by 88.5 per cent between 1790–4 and 1810–14.³⁵ This was not going to tempt many more small farmers to compete for holdings on the marsh, for meat production favoured those with capital

³² CKS, U2140 E 25.

³³ Jones, 'Sheep farming', pp. 4–7.

³⁴ D. Price, *A system of sheep-grazing and management as practised in Romney Marsh* (London, 1809), pp. 264–287. In the absence of considerably more data it is not possible to reach any firm conclusions about the comparative movement of rent on Romney Marsh and other regions of Kent. While stressing the extent of local variations, John Boys reckoned 'the average rent of the county to be 15s. per acre' in 1796, and 20s. per acre by 1805. More recently, Hunt calculated that aggregate rent for 'farms' on the estate of Lord Darnley in

north-west Kent rose by 'about 100 per cent' between 1788 and 1820. It is probable that marsh rents rose, on average, by at least as much over the same period. J. Boys, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Kent* (sec. ed. London, 1805), pp. 38–9; H. G. Hunt 'Agricultural rent in south-east England, 1788–1825', *AgHR* 7 (1959), p. 100.

³⁵ B. A. Holderness, 'Prices, productivity and output' in G. E. Mingay (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, VI, 1750–1850 (1989), pp. 110–11, 118; J. D. Chambers and G. E. Mingay, *The agricultural revolution, 1750–1880* (1966), p. 111.

to invest, but it was enough to cause graziers 'to ride after every parcel of land that is to be let in the marsh', and to encourage more monied upland farmers to rejoin the chase. Herein lies the core of the explanation for the reduced dominance of those with larger holdings on the marsh after the mid-eighteenth century. Specialist marsh graziers no longer enjoyed the luxury of weak competition for holdings that had previously enabled them to assemble large farms at low rents. Moreover, as the prospects for commercial meat production improved, not only did they face stiffer competition for tenancies from upland farmers with renewed appetites, they also had to compete in a contracting leasehold sector as more proprietors were seduced by the rewards of direct farming and the proportion of owner-occupied land within the marsh region grew.³⁶

On the old-enclosed land of the Leveson-Gower estates the great losers during the eighteenth century were the 'intermediate farmers proper with 20–200 acres, who probably became poorer as well as decidedly less numerous'.³⁷ In purely statistical terms, *within* the similarly old-enclosed Romney Marsh region there was no decline over the course of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries either in the number occupying 20–200 acres or in the proportion of land they farmed.³⁸ But the fortunes of intermediate farmers who occupied land on the marsh cannot be determined from scot-book evidence alone, for the simple reason that so many were dual-region farmers. To judge from domicile data for the Level, approximately half of those holding 20–200 acres were upland dwellers, and thus probably occupiers of land beyond Romney Marsh. Indeed *more* than half of the tenants holding 20–50 acres within the jurisdiction of the Level in 1834 were upland dwellers (Table 9), so it is likely that much of the increase in the number of occupiers farming 20–50 acres on the marsh between 1775 (when there were 80) and 1834 (by which time there were 118), reflected decisions by upland farmers to add marsh tenancies to their enterprises as incomes improved. There was also, probably, something of a revival of the genuine small commercial wool-grower during the Napoleonic wars. The average wool price between 1795 and 1820 was only double that of 1750–1775 (whereas general prices increased by about 160 per cent), but as Holderness comments, 'to judge from the bitter reaction among farmers to the fall of the 1820s, the levels of price achieved in the wartime inflation *were* regarded as profitable'.³⁹

Fortunately, since upland dwellers did not bulk large among them, it is possible to be more categorical about the smallest occupiers on the marsh. The late-eighteenth century brought no change in the number of smallholders, but, between 1800 and 1834 the number occupying less than 20 acres rose from 122 to 166. A few of these smallholders may have been looking to profit from dairy produce, prices for which rose 'quite precipitately until 1814', but most of those

³⁶ The revival of owner-occupation during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries was not peculiar to the marsh. John Boys commented on the increasing number of yeomanry 'by the estates which are divided and sold to the occupiers ... Many in the eastern part of this county have been so sold, within these few years, for forty, and some for fifty years purchase, and upwards. A remarkable instance of this change of property has occurred, in my own vicinity [Betshanger] since I began the farming business in the year 1771; at

that time ... ten farms around me ... were all severally occupied by tenants; but now, 1803, the whole, except the last, are in the hands of their respective purchasers, among which are only two of the old tenants'. Boys, *General view*, pp. 27–8.

³⁷ Wordie, 'Social change', pp. 603–4.

³⁸ In 1699, 261 20–200-acre occupiers held 39.4% of the land in the region, in 1800 263 held 45.1%, and in 1834 there were 278 such occupiers holding 45.5% of the land.

³⁹ Holderness, 'Prices', pp. 118–9.

occupying less than 20 acres were, as Wordie has put it, ‘not primarily farmers ... indeed ... most were not farmers at all’. As on the Leveson-Gower estates, the majority of under-20-acre occupiers on Romney Marsh were in fact under-five-acre occupiers, and their interest in land was primarily as a source of produce for the home table.⁴⁰ They mainly comprised agricultural labourers, town-dwellers (principally in New Romney and Lydd) who rented a few acres to supplement incomes derived from fishing, manufacturing crafts or the service sector, and small freeholders who had opted to work rather than let a modest inheritance. If their number increased in the early-nineteenth century it was probably because more sought shelter from the vagaries of the food market during the unprecedentedly volatile and inflationary conditions that persisted throughout the period of the Napoleonic wars.⁴¹

VI

In summary, the greater efficiencies achieved by those with capital to invest in measures to improve productivity and the leasing of additional pasture doubtless added to the difficulties experienced by smaller producers on the marsh after 1620. Nevertheless, large tenant farms came to dominate the Romney Marsh landscape by the mid-eighteenth century not so much because they had forced out those renting smaller acreages as because they filled the space vacated by the latter’s retreat in the face of weak consumer demand, particularly during the century following the Restoration. If larger tenant farmers enjoyed a ‘measure of prosperity’ between 1660 and 1750 it was partly because they were able to drive hard bargains with rentiers, and thus to pass on some of the costs of increasing their output. But as consumer demand revived after 1750, so competition for tenancies on the marsh became sufficiently robust and widespread to prevent any further drift towards the consolidation of land in the hands of fewer tenants. Indeed, as has been shown, after the mid-eighteenth century the regional trend was in the opposite direction, and by 1834 those farming more than 200 acres occupied 3113 acres less marshland than they had in 1746. That rents rose particularly rapidly during the period of the French wars is evident from contemporary comment, though whether they tripled, in line with the Turner-Beckett-Afton rent index, is a matter for further research.⁴²

Allen’s analysis of south Midland estates during the eighteenth century led him to the emphatic conclusion that ‘large farms were not being created by leasing up many small properties. Instead, large farms were the creation of large proprietors ... (who) ... were usually the owners of great estates’.⁴³ This paper concludes equally emphatically that the opposite was the case in the Romney Marsh region. Throughout the early modern period, large proprietors did next to nothing to promote the growth of large farms. The initiative lay almost entirely with tenants who assembled large (if not consolidated) farms by leasing land, often in small quantities, from a number of owners, some of whom had as little as half an acre to let. Henry Nickoll, with his 624 acres and his 14 landlords in 1768, was simply a notable exponent of the common art. But it was not just the large holdings that were constructed by tenants. In 1768, Henry Tilbe

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 115; Wordie, ‘Social change’, pp. 601–2.

⁴¹ Chambers and Mingay, *Agricultural revolution*, p. 112.

⁴² Price, *Sheep grazing and management*, pp. 264–287;

Jones, ‘Sheep farming’, p. 4, later marginal comment; Turner, Becket, and Afton, *Agricultural rent*, pp. 178, 192–3, 236–7.

⁴³ Allen, *Enclosure and the yeoman*, p. 88.

occupied 99 acres comprising land held directly from five owners, plus one parcel of five and one-half acres that he sublet from the formal tenant. Edward Carpenter, meanwhile, owner-occupied three acres, but, as a result of deals reached with four owners, farmed 84.5 acres dispersed across four waterings. In the same year, William Hunt and John Ashby each occupied 53 acres, and both had three landlords. Furthermore, it is clear that many tenant farmers on the marsh had upland holdings and other landlords to consider. Only by further investigation of the dual-regional context in which large numbers of holdings on the marsh were farmed may it be possible to reveal more fully the extent of tenant accumulation, and the size of farms they assembled during the long-eighteenth century. It is, however, clear that if scot-book data reveal trends in the structure of landownership and land occupation *within* the Romney Marsh region, they also indicate that these trends were heavily influenced by decisions reached in farmhouses well away from the marsh.

The dominance of livestock farming may have meant that Romney Marsh was host to exceptional numbers of large enterprises, but there is no reason to suppose that the methods by which they were constructed were unusual in eighteenth-century Kent, or, for that matter, England. Baker's examination of advertisements in the *Kentish Post* shows that 'there was always a very large number of plots or parcels of land available' to those seeking to expand their operations by rent or purchase from owners, some of whom, in turn, were far less wedded to the virtues of consolidation than historians have sometimes led us to suppose. In 1730, the owner of one farm in Sturry, near Canterbury, comprising '“a small tenement . . . for a labouring man, and 200 acres of arable, pasture and meadowland”, as well as “a very good dwelling house and convenient barns and stables”', advertised 'that “if not all let at Michaelmas the same will be let in parcels for one year”'. Likewise, the proprietor of Plumpton farm at Ashford was quite happy to advertise, in 1746, that the property 'was “very convenient to be used together or to be divided in two”'. Farm advertisements raised tenant awareness (if it needed raising) of the potential for expansion beyond the home or adjoining parish, and, like the scot-book evidence, should remind historians (when they need reminding) of the dangers of assuming that 'farm size' can accurately be determined from manorial or estate accounts. Single farming enterprises could be spread over surprisingly wide areas. In 1749, two parcels of land, one of 92 acres near New Romney, and one of 40 acres at Seasalter near Whitstable, some 25 miles distant on the North Kent coast, were advertised 'to be let separate or together'.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Baker, *Agricultural prices*, pp. 164–7.