

The peasant land market on the bishop of Winchester's manor of Farnham, 1263–1349

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This paper explores the nature of the peasant land market on the bishop of Winchester's manor of Farnham in the period 1263–1349, as revealed by the entry fines recorded in the Winchester pipe rolls. The aim is to demonstrate, first, that inheritance was the pre-eminent means by which land was transferred from one tenant to the next. Secondly, the paper suggests that despite the large amounts of purpresture available, the visible inter-vivos land market was surprisingly muted. Purpresture was land recently brought into cultivation which lay outside the ancient tenurial structure of the manor. Nevertheless, at Farnham, this new land tended to be absorbed into the standard customary holdings and remain within the family, thereby stifling the growth of an active market in land. This was a distinctive feature of the manor's pattern of landholdings. Finally, the paper also reveals that the bishop of Winchester might intervene to prevent the accumulation or fragmentation of customary tenements. Thus, lordship appears to have been a powerful factor in the evolution of the peasant land market on Farnham manor.

Introduction

At the beginning of the 14th century the population of England was about 6,000,000. Approximately 80% of these people were peasants who were, to a large extent, dependent for their subsistence upon land held from a manorial lord in return for rent and other payments. This land might be inherited, purchased or otherwise acquired and transferred, provided that the lord of the manor was informed and a cash fine paid. An analysis of these land transfers, recorded in manorial account rolls and court rolls, provides the historian with a valuable insight into the economy and society of peasant families in various parts of the country at a time when the peasants themselves left no written records. The character of the land market frequently differed from one manor to another and from one region to another, according to the interplay of a variety of factors. This paper seeks to identify the main features of the peasant land market on the bishop of Winchester's manor of Farnham in the 80 years or so before the Black Death.

The manor of Farnham

Farnham was a manor which belonged to the bishopric of Winchester for nearly 1200 years, from the 7th century until the 19th (*VCH*, 2, 579–81). Conveniently situated about midway between Winchester and London (fig 1), Farnham was well placed to serve as one of the bishop's residences. A castle was held there by Henry of Blois in the first half of the 12th century and the site continued to be employed as a residence of the bishops of Winchester until 1927. Farnham manor, at almost 26,000 acres in extent, was one of the largest of the 60 or so manors which made up the episcopal estate (Thompson 1961, 3, 14, 22; *VCH*, 2, 582, 605, 608, 616).

In the later Middle Ages the manor, parish and hundred of Farnham were co-extensive and all were in the possession of the bishopric of Winchester. The borough of Farnham, carved out of the manor by the bishops in the 12th century, was held at farm by the burgesses from the mid-13th century; thereafter no details of its administration were recorded in the Winchester pipe rolls (*VCH*, 2, 585–6). The land transfers of the burgesses, therefore, will not figure in this paper. The manor was divided into fifteen tithings, all of which were used by the compilers of the pipe rolls to locate particular pieces of property. The tithings were

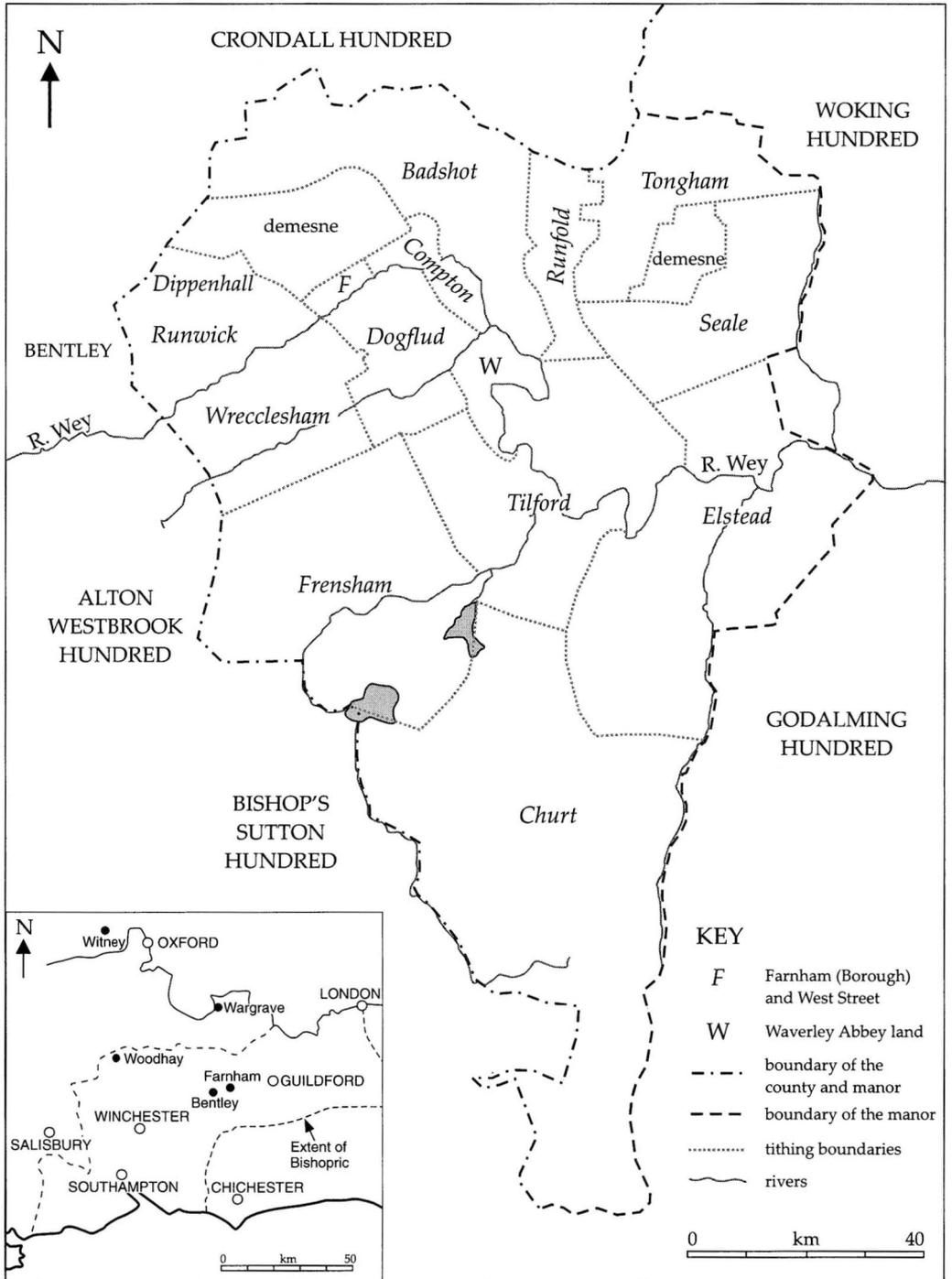


Fig 1 The titlings of the manor of Farnham and (inset) location of places outside the manor referred to in the text.

Badshot, Churt, Compton, Dippenhall, Dogflud, Elstead, Farnham (Borough), Frensham, Runfold, Runwick, Seale, Tilford, Tongham, West Street and Wrecclesham (fig 1).

Not all of the vast acreage of Farnham manor was administered directly by the bishop and his officials. The area of demesne which was sown was, in fact, very small, declining rapidly from a high of 412 acres in 1225–6 to 64½ acres in 1301–2 and remaining below 100 acres for the rest of the pre-Black Death period (Titow 1962, table 1). Instead, villein rents constituted by far the largest proportion of the manor's income, which was further augmented by the leasing out of lands, such as the sub-manor of Seale, for which William Homley paid £4 13s 4d in 1301–2 (Page 1996, xxii, 208; Titow 1962, table 5). Other lands were sub-ifeudated; for instance, those held by the le Bel family which, in the 14th century, were formed into the manor of Frensham Beale (Page 1996, 206; *VCH*, 2, 609–10).

The contraction of the demesne at Farnham, and the consequent increased reliance upon rents, was a reflection of the progressive worsening of the manor's fertility over the course of the 13th and 14th centuries (Titow 1972, 14–15, 17, 19, 22). For the peasantry, the poor state of the soil was somewhat offset by their ability to bring into cultivation large swathes of new land which could be found scattered across most parts of the manor. This purpresture, carved either out of woodland or waste, was plentiful until the end of the 1270s, after which time expansion slowed almost to a halt (Titow 1962, 83, 89). Thereafter, the purpresture remained an important, and characteristic, element of the landed holdings of the manor's customary tenants, of whom there were perhaps between 250 and 300 in the later 13th century (Titow 1962, 100; Robo 1935, 188).

The basic unit of the customary holdings of most tenants at Farnham was the virgate of 32 acres, held for rent and labour service. By contrast, purpresture, and land which was leased from the demesne, was held for rent only, in parcels of variable size. Nevertheless, after the colonization of the manor came to an end in the late 1270s, there was a tendency for purpresture to become permanently absorbed into customary holdings, to accrete to the old virgated structure. This development was not unique to Farnham but it does seem to have been more common there than elsewhere on the bishop of Winchester's estate. As a result, the peasant land market on the manor can be perceived to have evolved in a particular way.

The nature of the evidence

Detailed records of the manorial income and expenditure of Farnham survive in the Winchester pipe rolls, the fair copy enrolled accounts of the bishopric which were compiled annually for the year from Michaelmas (29 September) to Michaelmas. In all, 191 rolls survive in broken series from 1208–9 until 1454–5. Thereafter, the accounts continue from 1456–7 until 1710–11 in the form of 137 parchment volumes. For 502 years, from the reign of King John to that of Queen Anne, the audited accounts of the entire bishopric estate were copied onto parchment rolls or books, of which 328 and a few fragments survive today, in the custody of Hampshire Record Office.

Included within these accounts are details of entry fines paid by the bishop's tenants to register transfers of villein land. These fines have been used to study the peasant land market on the whole of the Winchester estate in the 80 years or so before the Black Death, and have been entered onto a computer database (Page 1999). An entry fine was due to the bishop every time a change in the tenancy of villein land occurred. In most cases the fines provide the names of both the incoming and outgoing tenants of the property, the amount and type of land being transferred, the location of the land, the amount paid to the bishop as entry fine, and any noteworthy circumstances surrounding the transfer, including stipulations made by the bishop.

With this information to hand, a number of issues may be addressed. First, how many land transfers took place at Farnham in the 80 years before the Black Death, and what does this tell us about the supply of and demand for peasant landholdings during this time? Secondly, how many of these land transfers took place within the family and how many occurred

between non-kin? Thirdly, what reasons can be adduced for the transfer of land, either within or outside the family, before the death of the sitting tenant? Fourthly, what role did purpresture play in the peasant economy and society of this manor before the Black Death? Fifthly, what was the effect of the bishop of Winchester's exercise of lordship on the peasant land market at Farnham? The answers to these and other questions are based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the entry fines recorded in the Winchester pipe rolls. Moreover, although the cursory nature of much of the evidence prevents a complete reconstitution of more than a few peasant family histories, sufficient information survives to allow us to conclude that the character of the land market at Farnham was at least partly influenced by the desire of the manor's tenants to provide holdings for their children in an era of land hunger.

The number of land transfers

In total, 2059 entry fines were recorded for Farnham manor in the 73 surviving Winchester pipe rolls between 1262–3 and 1348–9, which remain legible and possible to transcribe (table 1 and fig 2). It is almost certain that several hundred more were paid and entered in the pipe rolls but which are now sadly irrecoverable. Accounts for Farnham are missing from the rolls of 1269–70, 1272–3 and 1319–20. Entire pipe rolls have been lost for the years 1279–82 and 1294–6 and there are other lesser gaps in the series as well. The account for 1348–9 has been damaged, leading to the loss of about eight lines of writing. Other anomalies, for example, the very low number of entry fines recorded in 1304–5 and 1323, were caused by administrative disruption during vacancies in the see.

Having made due allowance for these idiosyncrasies of the evidence, it may be seen that in most years the number of entry fines recorded fell within a band ranging from 20 to 60, with a slight falling off of activity in the 1320s and 1330s. The most startling exception to this trend was the year of the Black Death, 1348–9, in which an explosion of land transfers occurred, occasioned by the unprecedented mortality resulting from the plague. In this year of crisis Farnham was clearly replicating in miniature the experience of the Winchester estate as a whole (fig 3). Here, as elsewhere, the death of the tenantry was on a truly massive scale.

Fluctuations in the number of entry fines paid from one year to the next reflect, for the most part, changes in the supply of and demand for peasant landholdings which fell vacant or otherwise became available. Most villein tenements became subject to entry fine because of the death, withdrawal or forfeiture of the previous tenant. Alternatively, new land might become available if the bishop decided to lease part of his demesne or permit the cultivation of land which had previously been waste. At Farnham a combination of these two activities increased the bishop's rent roll by £41 between 1209 and 1278. Although the standard increment of 6d an acre charged for new land was not always applied on this manor, nevertheless an increase of about 1600 acres to the amount of tenant land during this period must be envisaged (Titow 1962, 86, 88–9; Brooks & Graham 1983).

The number of peasant tenements in circulation, therefore, was far from being constant. New tenements were continually being created, at least until the late 1270s, and existing tenements might fragment into a number of separate holdings. On the other hand, previously separate tenements might be merged into one by tenants wishing to consolidate their holdings, or abandoned altogether because they were no longer profitable to farm. Examples of all these developments may be found in the pipe rolls. However, the Winchester pipe rolls cannot tell us the proportion of landholdings which were subject to entry fine in any one year. Moreover, there is no surviving survey of Farnham manor which might provide a snapshot of the tenurial situation at one particular time. Thus, it is difficult to interpret the fluctuations in the number of entry fines paid. In particular, was the general downward trend in the number of fines collected by the bishop between the 1260s and the 1340s the result of a drop in the demand for land, or a reduction in the supply of holdings, or a fall in the number of tenements held by the peasantry, or a combination of all three?

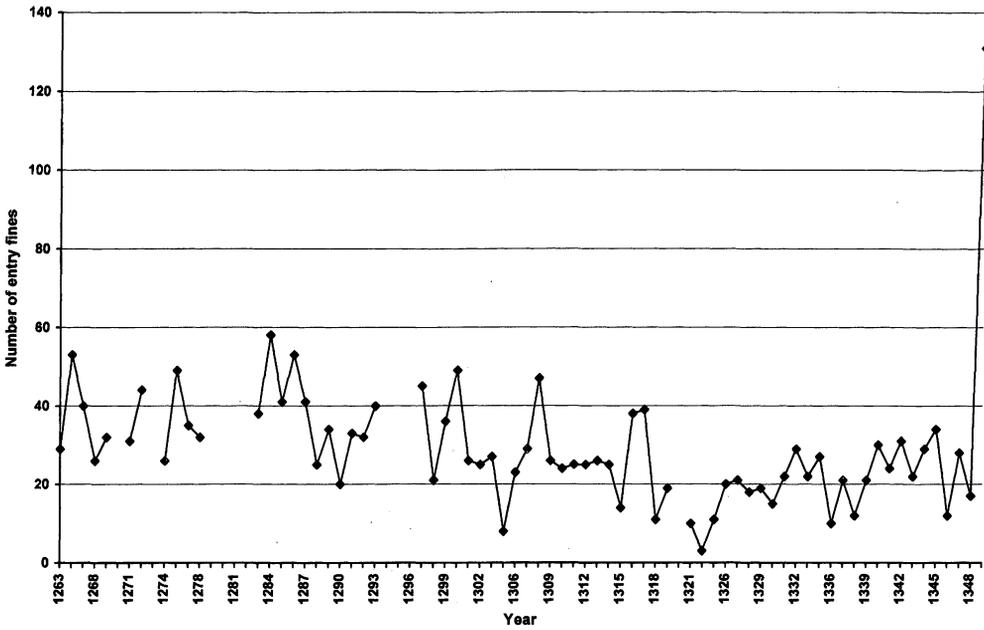


Fig 2 The number of entry fines paid on the manor of Farnham, 1263-1349.

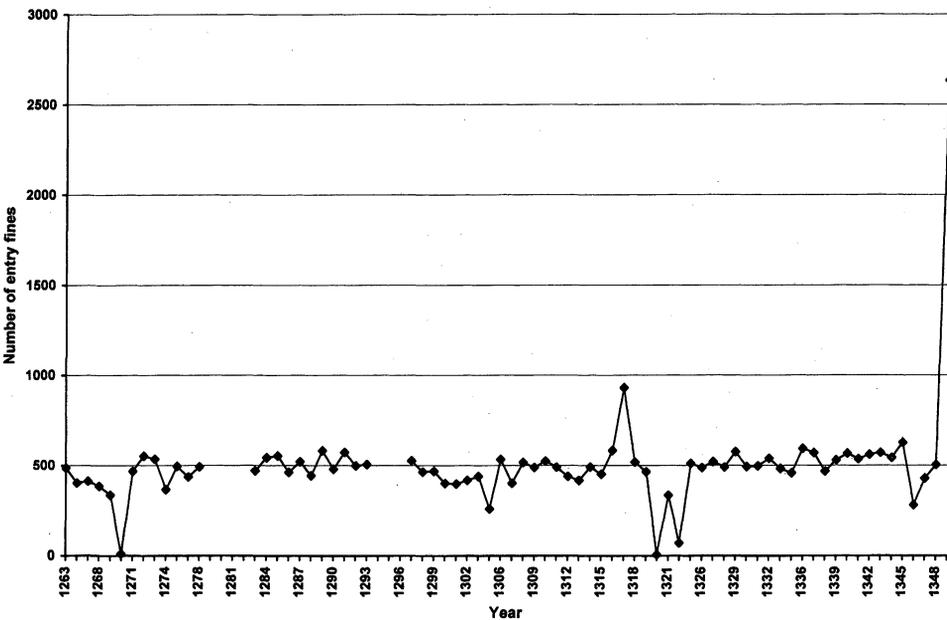


Fig 3 The number of entry fines paid on the Winchester estate, 1263-1349.

TABLE 1 The number of entry fines paid at Farnham, 1263–1349

Years	Number of entry fines transcribed	Number of relevant accounts surviving	Average number of entry fines paid per account
1263–9	180	5	36.00
1271–8	217	6	36.17
1283–9	290	7	41.43
1290–9	227	7	32.43
1300–9	260	9	28.89
1310–19	246	10	24.60
1321–9	102	7	14.57
1330–9	179	9	19.89
1340–8	227	9	25.22
1349	131	1	131.00
1263–1349	2059	70	29.41

Source HRO: 11M59/B1/29–101

There can be little doubt that there was a reduction in the number of entry fines paid at Farnham between 1263 and 1348 (table 1). It is clear too that this was not a trend experienced on the Winchester estate as a whole. Indeed, with the exception of the mortality caused by the Black Death in 1348–9, the fluctuations in land market activity at Farnham did not mirror very closely those found elsewhere on the estate. For instance, the peak in land transfers which occurred on other manors in 1316–17, a year of devastating famine in England, was relatively muted at Farnham. Similarly, the marked depression in the land market, evident across the estate in the years around 1300 and related to a run of good harvests, did not take hold at Farnham to such a noticeable degree. Instead a decline occurred later in the 14th century, in the 1320s and 1330s, at a time when the number of land transfers elsewhere was buoyant. These examples serve to make the point that conditions at Farnham did not necessarily reflect those found on manors located in other parts of the estate. It is clear that the Winchester estate was far from being homogenous.

Inheritance and the family

Across the Winchester estate as a whole, a majority of the land transfers recorded in the pipe rolls between 1263 and 1349 may be classified as intra-familial; it was either stated that the

TABLE 2 The number of land transfers recorded at Farnham, 1263–1349

Years	Intra-familial: <i>inter-vivos</i>	Intra-familial: <i>post-mortem</i>	Extra-familial: <i>inter-vivos</i>	Extra-familial: <i>post-mortem</i>	Extra-familial: by marriage	Incoming tenant only*	Total
1263–9	5	10	12	0	1	152	180
1271–8	33	64	59	4	14	43	217
1283–9	31	114	95	15	19	16	290
1290–9	30	97	72	5	12	11	227
1300–9	41	101	73	5	19	21	260
1310–19	17	159	52	3	5	10	246
1321–9	11	62	17	0	3	9	102
1330–9	15	90	33	6	21	14	179
1340–8	25	103	54	4	24	17	227
1349	5	90	3	15	8	10	131
1263–1349	213	890	470	57	126	303	2059

Source HRO: 11M59/B1/29–101

Note * Either because of a lack of information about the outgoing tenant in the pipe rolls, or because the land, usually purpresture or demesne, was granted directly to the tenant by the lord.

parties involved in the transaction were related in some way, or this can be surmised from the evidence of surnames. Farnham was no exception to this trend (table 2): the family-land bond, before the Black Death, appears to have been strong. Likewise, the bulk of these intra-familial transfers, at Farnham and elsewhere on the bishopric estate, were *post-mortem*, representing the inheritance of family holdings. More than 43% of the entry fines recorded at Farnham in this period were paid by heirs. The kin most likely to inherit land were, in order of significance, sons, widows, daughters and brothers (table 3).

The custom at Farnham, as on other manors of the estate, was that on the death of a male tenant his entire holding would pass in the first instance to his widow, who was entitled to hold this land for the rest of her life. Moreover, at Farnham, a widow was able to remarry without having to surrender her land, provided that on her death her second husband, if he lived, would give up all right in the tenement to the children of his wife's first marriage (HRO: 11M59/E2/415808, f 63). Thus would the holding pass to the next generation.

In general, therefore, a son had to await the death of both his parents before he was able to enter the family holding. For example, Richard Hatch, whose father died in 1316-17 leaving his widow Alice a messuage and 7½ acres of purpresture, only inherited his parents' land twenty years later, when Alice herself died in 1336-7. In some cases an heir might also have to await the death of a stepmother. A woman who married a widower possessed the same rights as a first wife to retain her husband's holding in the event of her own widowhood. If a man's father married for a second time to a young bride, he might have to wait a long time before he could enter his inheritance.

What is less clear is whether a father's heir by his second marriage could inherit the family holding in preference to the heir of the first marriage. It is rare for the record of an inheritance of a son to give any details at all about the marital history of his parents. At Farnham there is no case of even a stepmother being explicitly described as such, although her existence is, very occasionally, hinted at. Thus, in 1344-5 John Howard inherited the land of his father Robert which Juliana, the wife of Robert, had held in widowhood since 1341-2. Had Juliana been John's mother this would usually have been stated. The only alternative is for her to have been his stepmother.

Attempts at family reconstitution, in a bid to trace potentially tortuous paths of inheritance, frequently fall victim to lost or never extant records. Nevertheless, it has proved possible to demonstrate the descent of land of a man who was, apparently, twice a widower and who acquired land from both his marriages. William Skinner married, first, Joan Schorie in 1324-5, who provided her husband with a messuage and half a virgate in Wrecclesham. This land was inherited by William's son, John, on his death, presumably from the plague, in 1348-9. William married for a second time, in 1329-30, to Joan Comme who held a cottage and curtilage in Compton. The descent of this property was more convoluted. In 1339-40 William surrendered it in its entirety to his daughter, presumably of his first marriage. Five

TABLE 3 The number of land transfers to kin recorded at Farnham, 1263-1349

Relationship	Years	<i>Inter-vivos</i>	<i>Post-mortem</i>	Total
Widow	1269-1349	0	282	282
Son	1269-1349	78	367	445
Daughter	1269-1349	67	94	161
Brother	1263-1349	13	33	46
Sister	1272-1349	5	15	20
Nephew	1284-1349	3	19	22
Niece	1278-1347	1	4	5
Grandson	1293-1349	2	8	10
Granddaughter	1330-43	0	4	4
Kin/cousin	1300-49	1	13	14

Source HRO: 11M59/B1/29-101

years later his son, also called William, inherited half the property when his sister, or perhaps half-sister, died, before inheriting the remainder from his father in 1348–9. This case is of interest because it shows that William's two tenements remained distinct and were inherited by more than one of his children, possibly by the eldest son of each of his marriages. The two properties were not, however, combined, in accordance with the bishop's stated opposition to the amalgamation of customary holdings.

There can be little doubt that on a manor such as Farnham, where primogeniture prevailed, the eldest son of a first marriage was favourite to succeed to his parents' land. But how typical it was for an heir to inherit directly from his father or mother or stepmother is more difficult to say. The evidence of the pipe rolls is not entirely unambiguous, in that some cases which record the transmission of land from father to son misleadingly omit any mention of the widow, who can sometimes be shown to have taken possession of the land on her husband's death several years before. Nor is it clear how many and for how long adult sons were required to wait before their family holding fell vacant, and whether this affected age at marriage and rates of fertility. But that inheritance was the most common way for a son to acquire family land is clear. Fewer than one in five of land transfers from parent to son were *inter-vivos* (table 3). Nevertheless, these are of disproportionate interest because occasionally the motivation behind the transaction may be discerned.

The provision for sons and daughters

At Farnham, there were a handful of cases, all of them occurring in the 1290s, in which land was surrendered to a son in return for an agreement to look after presumably aged parents, who may no longer have been capable of maintaining the family holding. Thus, in 1296–7 Richard, son of Richard Smith, acquired a messuage and half a virgate and a small amount of purpresture from his father on condition that he would provide both his parents with food and clothes for the remainder of their lives. Similarly, in 1292–3 William Flodman resigned his land into the possession of his son on the understanding that they were to live together upon the tenement as equals.

Such maintenance agreements were common in England at this time (Dyer 1988, 673–4; Smith 1991). Some parents, however, chose not to wait until old age obliged them to hand over property to their heir. Land might be acquired long before to provide the eldest son with the means to establish his own household. For example, in 1308–9 William Hale bought a house and curtilage from Margaret, daughter of William Charity, which he immediately surrendered to his son John. Twenty years later, in 1328–9, William died and John inherited the principal family holding of a messuage and virgate.

Provision might also be made for younger sons who had no claim on the main family holding. The brothers of William Hale, Robert and John, were both granted small parcels of land by their father in 1297–8 and in the following year John received an additional $\frac{1}{2}$ acre from his mother. For a younger son to acquire a customary tenement, however, the most effective way was probably to marry an heiress or a widow. Such unions undoubtedly occurred at Farnham but are difficult to trace and cannot readily be enumerated, although Stephen Atmeare appears to have been an example. Stephen married Agnes, widow of William Thurban, in 1301–2. That he was a younger son is perhaps indicated by the fact that in 1348–9 his daughter, Cecilia, was married with land which had belonged to her uncle, John. Stephen himself does not appear to have inherited any land.

For an eldest son too, marriage was an attractive means of acquiring land before his parents died, although he then risked running foul of the bishop's prohibition on holding multiple tenancies when he finally came to inherit. In 1297–8, for example, Walter Joy married Agnes Tawyer who held a messuage and half a virgate of land. The following year, Walter himself inherited a messuage, half a virgate and 1 acre of purpresture from his father, Robert. Neither Walter nor Agnes can be shown to have reappeared in court until Walter's death, in 1324–5, when Agnes fined for a messuage, half a virgate and 8 acres, and 1 acre of purpresture. Then,

on Agnes's death in 1329-30, the family's estate was divided into three. William Carter paid the fine for a cottage and 10 acres said to have belonged to Agnes, his 'kinswoman'. Meanwhile, Juliana Mowse inherited a messuage and half a virgate, and Alice Bawcock 1½ acres of purpresture, as if directly from Walter himself, their 'kinsman'. Like the lands of William Skinner, the two tenements of Walter Joy and Agnes Tawyer appear to have remained distinct and were not inherited en bloc by a single heir.

The availability of land via an inter-tenant land market was clearly of the utmost importance in determining whether parents were able to provide for their children before their deaths. Fragmentation of standard customary holdings was not usually an option on the Winchester estate. The bishop of Winchester, like many other lords, opposed the subdivision of tenements as much as he did their accumulation (Titow 1962, 104-5; Harvey 1977, 299-300). For those tenants who did not hold a customary tenement and who lacked the prospect of inheriting any family land, access to the land market assumed even greater importance. At Farnham it permitted the establishment of often tiny holdings and made possible the equally small-scale provision of an heir. Robert Christman, for instance, may have been a tenant of this kind. He acquired two small plots from other tenants and a third from the lord on separate occasions in 1268-9, 1283-4 and 1284-5. He then surrendered land in similarly small parcels to his son, also Robert, in 1285-6, 1296-7 and 1299-1300. In total this land amounted to no more than about 5½ acres. There is no evidence that either was in possession of a customary holding.

If a family was without a son, land would pass in the first instance to the eldest daughter. Although sons were nearly four times more likely to inherit land at Farnham in the period 1263-1349, a significant number of daughters were the heirs to their parents' property. The fates of many of these women have left no trace in the surviving records. However, twenty can be shown to have married immediately upon inheriting their patrimony. The two entry fines recording first the inheritance and then the marriage, with the land passing into the possession of the husband, were registered side by side in the pipe rolls. A handful more women married later the same year or during the following year. But it was rare for the interval between inheritance and marriage to be of longer duration. The case of Agnes Sonde, who succeeded her father in 1285-6 and married only in 1290-1, appears to be a rare exception. If a woman inherited land she would either marry very soon thereafter or apparently not at all (Levett 1916, 84).

A number of daughters were already married at the time they inherited their parents' property. Thus, the land of John Highe passed jointly to his daughter Margaret and her husband, John Carpenter, in 1308-9. Others may already have been widowed by the time they entered into their inheritances. Others still either sold their lands to non-kin, sometimes after a considerable period of occupation, or died in possession and were succeeded by, occasionally distant, members of their own families. There is little problem in outlining the various possibilities of what a woman might do with her inherited land. But the evidence remains anecdotal. The inability to reconstitute the life histories of a majority of the women concerned means that it is impossible to state with certainty the most likely course of events. Clearly though marriage was a common outcome for a woman who inherited her family's property. The requirements of lord and village alike would have demanded nothing less (Hatcher 1981, 13).

Just as parents might provide for their sons during their own lifetimes, so too might they provide for their daughters. Indeed, at Farnham it was almost as common for a daughter to be granted land *inter-vivos* as it was for a son. The gap between *inter-vivos* and *post-mortem* transfers to daughters was also relatively narrow, compared to the much greater disparity in the case of sons (table 3). Such comparisons serve to underline the predominance of inheritance by the eldest son in this period. *Inter-vivos* provision for daughters was in some instances in preparation for marriage, although far fewer women can be shown to have married immediately after their acquisition of land by surrender than was the case for those who had entered into an inheritance. This is almost certainly to be explained by the fact that

the amount of land inherited tended to be much larger than that granted *inter-vivos* and therefore more attractive to potential suitors. The demands of the lord and village community on customary holdings may also have lent encouragement to heiresses to look for a husband.

The interval between surrender of land *inter-vivos* and the marriage of a daughter was correspondingly longer than in the case of those women who inherited their parents' property. Thus, Matilda Rattle, who was granted a cottage and two pennyworths of land by her father in 1292–3, did not marry until 1298–9, and intervals of even longer duration have been found. For example, Alice Cardinal received an acre of land from her father, Geoffrey, in 1286–7 and paid her own marriage fine in 1297–8.

Inter-vivos provision, for both sons and daughters, allowed property to be divided more evenly than the dictates of impartible inheritance permitted. In 1299–1300, for example, Robert Trapp provided small plots of varying size for each of his five daughters. In 1306–7 Gilbert Chapman purchased property on the land market which he shared among his daughters, Agnes and Alice, in the following year, while in 1340–1 Matilda Buck was allowed to hold land jointly with her brothers which their mother, Margaret, had conceded to them. *Post-mortem*, however, customary land was not subject to partibility on the Winchester estate, whether sons or daughters were due to inherit. Only free land could be inherited jointly by daughters, of which there was a small amount at Farnham. Thus, in 1341–2 Agnes and Isabella Penny together inherited the cottage and curtilage and 1½ acres of free land held by Andrew their father.

The prominence of sons and daughters at the head of those kin who acquired land, either *inter-vivos* or *post-mortem*, demonstrates the fundamental importance of the family–land bond at Farnham in the century before the Black Death. It was expected that standard customary holdings would remain within the nuclear family and descend intact to the next generation. If a male tenant died childless his brother, or his brother's son, or his sister would be next in line to inherit. Occasionally, if an heir died prematurely, the descent of a property would miss a generation and grandchild would inherit directly from grandparents. Sometimes, however, the net had to be spread wider to find an heir and a 'cousin' or 'kinsman' would inherit the family holding. For instance, in 1316–17 Christina, daughter and heiress of William Skinner, who had inherited a messuage and ferling from her parents just two years before, died at the height of the Great Famine, leaving as her heir her 'kinsman', William Harding. The precise relationship between William and Christina has not been ascertained.

Inheritance, lordship and the land market

Inheritance was thus the dominant mechanism for the transfer of land at Farnham before the Black Death. The preponderance of heritable, and intra-familial land transfers in general, goes a long way towards explaining the relative stability of the land market at Farnham, and on the Winchester estate as a whole, at this time (figs 2 and 3). Only during periods of exceptional mortality was this equanimity significantly threatened, and at Farnham the *inter-vivos* market was not by itself large enough to engender any sharp fluctuations.

The dominance of inheritance held advantages for both lord and tenant (Faith 1966, 92). It provided the lord with a guaranteed and inexhaustible supply of new tenants who rendered him the rents, dues and labour services upon which the manorial economy depended. For the tenantry, inheritance was the principal means by which parents were able to provide for their children in an era of land hunger, to ensure that the eldest, at least, possessed a livelihood and the basis for establishing a new family. The arrangement suited both parties, lord and tenant, and in most cases operated without controversy. But there can be little doubt that the lord, whatever the constraints of custom protecting tenants' rights (Hatcher 1981, 10), retained the ability to manipulate lines of inheritance on those rare occasions when the preservation of his own interests was threatened.

In particular, the bishop was opposed to the fragmentation and accumulation of customary holdings, whatever the rights and expectations of an heir might be. This was most explicitly

stated in the case of John Godwin who, in 1313-14, was refused permission to inherit the messuage and virgate of his father, which he 'ought to have held but was not allowed because he held another tenement of the same status and they always used to be separate'. Instead John's younger brother, William, inherited the family holding. John Godwin had indeed been granted a messuage and virgate by his father in 1300-1 which had previously belonged to his uncle, William Hull, and the bishop would not allow the amalgamation of two such properties in the possession of one man.

Although this was the only recorded intervention by the bishop at Farnham to prevent the accumulation of land, it is possible that similar assumptions lay behind the descent of William Skinner's holdings outlined above, and those of Walter Joy and Agnes Tawyer. Certainly, on other manors of the Winchester estate, similar injunctions against the accumulation of customary holdings were issued (Titow 1962, 104-5). Indeed, it may even be that the bishop preferred to see land pass outside the family rather than witness the ancient tenurial structure of the manor being disturbed.

The strictures imposed by the bishop against the accumulation of customary holdings may explain some transfers of land outside the family, although the evidence is sketchy, relying as it does upon partial family reconstitution. For instance, Richard Pratt first appears among the records in 1286-7 at which time he acquired half a virgate from Robert Woodward and Isabella his wife. In the same year Richard granted this land to his brother Peter whose son inherited it in 1326-7. Richard next appears, with his wife Juliana, in 1301-2, this time surrendering a messuage and half a virgate to Hugh Holt. Finally, Richard's son inherited a messuage and half a virgate when his father died in 1325-6. It is, first of all, important to note that it is not clear how Richard acquired either the tenement transferred to Hugh Holt or that inherited by his son. A mixture of inheritance and marriage is perhaps the most likely explanation. But it is striking that of the three customary tenements to come into Richard's possession only one remained to be inherited on his death. Was it necessary to surrender the other two, either to kin or non-kin, to prevent infringing the rules prohibiting accumulation?

This may have been only one motive behind a decision which requires consideration of the family's economic circumstances, their position within the community, credit arrangements in the village, commercial involvement in the land market, and other factors of which the documents reveal little or nothing. It is never easy to discern the motivations of medieval peasants, especially those behind behaviour that is slightly out of the ordinary. Certainly though there were a number of other cases in which a tenant granted a customary holding to an unrelated individual but whose heir later inherited property of a similar size. For instance, John Fisher surrendered half a virgate to Richard Sticker in 1286-7 and a messuage and half a virgate to Thomas Stubber in 1301-2. Nevertheless, his son, Robert, inherited a messuage and half a virgate and one rood of meadow on his death in 1310-11.

The argument that such surrenders were to prevent the accumulation of holdings should not be pushed too far. For instance, Hugh Holt, to whom Richard Pratt surrendered half a virgate, added this land to half a virgate which he already held so that his son, John, inherited a whole virgate in 1335-6. But this may have been less a case of accumulation than of repairing an earlier, possibly illegal, fragmentation. The bishop was as keen to prevent fragmentation of customary holdings as he was to avoid their accumulation. Without a custom for Farnham, the tenurial structure of the manor cannot be known for certain, but it is possible that Hugh's recovery of half a virgate restored an ancient customary tenement to its original extent. The role of the bishop in many of these transactions is obscure, but compliance with his rules concerning fragmentation and accumulation may offer a potential explanation for some transfers of customary holdings outside the family, which are so at variance with the bulk of the *inter-vivos* land market, which tended to involve relatively small pieces of land outside the confines of the ancient tenurial structure.

The transfer of customary land outside the family

Land which was transferred *inter-vivos* between non-family members tended to be in plots of no more than a few acres, occasionally including a dwelling-place such as a cottage. The purchases of Robert Christman outlined above were typical. Indeed, about 86% of the *inter-vivos* traffic between non-kin involved land measuring 5 acres or less. It was thus rare for customary tenements to pass outside the family during this period, and certainly no more than an average of one a year were recorded in the pipe rolls. In some cases it has been possible to discern a motive for the surrender of customary holdings to non-kin. In 1336–7, for instance, John Mariner gave up his messuage and virgate and 2 acres of purpresture in return for an agreement to be supplied with grain and clothes for the remainder of his life by the new tenant, the apparently unrelated Henry Crouch. The onset of old age and the apparent lack of an heir may also explain a number of other surrenders. For example, Adam Patfold, who inherited a messuage and half a virgate in 1317–18, granted this property to Roger Webb some 26 years later in 1343–4. Similarly, Gilbert Wisdom, who inherited his customary tenement in 1325–6, surrendered it in 1345–6. Neither Gilbert nor Adam appear to have had any close family.

Land which had been forfeited or abandoned might pass outside the family if no heir was forthcoming. A messuage and virgate which had come into the lord's possession because it had been 'devastated' was granted to an unrelated tenant in 1331–2. Similarly, in 1334–5 the messuage and half a virgate which Henry Gilbert had abandoned was fined for by Peter Tollehull. Land which passed outside the family in this way was not, however, eternally irrecoverable. The messuage and virgate which Thomas Dunsiked surrendered for the use of William Pope, who refused to fine for it, leading to its abandonment and grant by the lord to John Hunt in 1325–6, was recovered by Matilda Dunsiked in 1332–3.

It was not in the interests of the lord to obstruct customary rights of inheritance when this could be avoided (Hatcher 1981, 18). Forfeited land was often granted to the heirs of miscreant tenants, and when customary tenements were transferred outside the family, the bishop sometimes sought to emphasize the peculiar nature of the transaction, or to reassert his own interests in the tenancy. In 1285–6, for example, William Brudeford and Emma his wife purchased half a virgate from William Wythelfowl, 'by concession of the bishop', as though this were a special dispensation. Also in 1285–6, when Richard Rolf conceded a quarter of a ferling to John Parker, the labour services and other liabilities which belonged to the tenement were enumerated as part of the grant, while in 1296–7 the surrender of a messuage and half an acre by John Wine to William Linch was accompanied by the observation that the new tenant was 'to hold under the conditions of villeinage as a villein'. When land descended by hereditary tenure such reminders were deemed unnecessary. New tenants, on the other hand, were to be under no illusions about what was expected of them by the bishop of Winchester.

Purpresture, customary holdings and the land market

The *inter-vivos* land market at Farnham before the Black Death appears to have been, somewhat surprisingly, rather muted, considering the amount of purpresture that was available to the manor's tenants as a result of expansion into the waste. Certainly the colonization of new land at Farnham was on a par with that found at Wargrave (Berkshire), Witney (Oxfordshire) and Woodhay (Hampshire), the other principal assarting manors on the Winchester estate, at which the market in small plots of assart and purpresture was extremely active. Yet at Farnham the proportion of *inter-vivos* transfers between non-relatives was, on average, just 23% of the aggregated total of land transactions over the period 1263–1349, compared with figures of approximately 35% at Wargrave and 65% at Witney.

At Farnham inheritance remained the dominant means by which land was transferred in the century before the Black Death and in this the treatment of purpresture was no exception.

TABLE 4 The number of virgated holdings with purpresture attached transferred at Farnham, 1263-1349

	1270-9	1280-9	1290-9	1300-9	1310-19	1320-9	1330-9	1340-9
A	0	3	13	30	48	18	37	81
B	217	290	227	260	246	102	179	358
C	0	1	6	12	20	18	21	23

Source HRO: 11M59/B1/29-101

Notes A = the number of holdings transferred in which purpresture was combined with virgates or fractions of virgates. Holdings in which purpresture was combined with quantities of customary land which did not include the term 'virgate' have been excluded.

B = the total number of land transfers conducted on the manor in the decennial period.

C = the percentage of total land transfers which involved holdings of virgates or fractions of virgates with purpresture attached.

Indeed, to an extent unmatched by any other manor on the Winchester estate, purpresture at Farnham had a tendency to be attached to the standard customary holdings of villein land and thus remain largely within the family. The evolution of this tendency can be easily demonstrated by an analysis of those transactions which included both virgates or fractions of virgates and purpresture in a single tenement (table 4). The first occurrence of such a combined holding of customary land and purpresture was in 1284-5, when William Oak inherited half a virgate and 4 acres of purpresture from his father. Thereafter the incidence of such holdings increased dramatically, so that by the 1330s the number of virgated holdings without an accretion of purpresture was in a minority (table 5).

It was not uncommon, especially by the second quarter of the 14th century, for virgated holdings on other manors of the estate to be encumbered by additions of various sorts, which tenants had acquired either from the lord or from other tenants via the land market (Titow 1962, 115). These ranged from odd acres of villein land or demesne, pasture or wood, to more substantial parcels of meadow or purpresture. The peasants of Farnham were thus not alone in augmenting their customary tenements with land which had been carved out of the waste, but they appear to have done so on a much more ambitious scale. At Wargrave, Witney and Woodhay the number of virgated holdings to which purpresture or assart was attached was relatively small. At Witney, in particular, the customary tenants do not seem to have acquired assart in any significant quantities, which instead was bought and sold by smallholders, many of whom were residents of Witney Borough (Hyde 1954, 31, 33-4).

Interestingly, a substantial cluster of customary holdings with purpresture attached was located in Bentley (Hampshire), Farnham's near neighbour, where the supply of purpresture was relatively limited. Some Farnham peasants also held land at Bentley. One such was Robert Wyle, whose wife Alice inherited land on his death in 1346-7 which may have

TABLE 5 The number of virgated holdings with no purpresture attached transferred at Farnham, 1263-1349

	1270-9	1280-9	1290-9	1300-9	1310-19	1320-9	1330-9	1340-9
A	11	44	50	45	49	25	30	53
B	217	290	227	260	246	102	179	358
C	5	15	22	17	20	25	17	15

Source HRO: 11M59/B1/29-101

Notes A = the number of holdings transferred in which virgates or fractions of virgates were not combined with purpresture. Holdings of customary land which did not include the term 'virgate' have been excluded.

B = the total number of land transfers conducted on the manor in the decennial period.

C = the percentage of total land transfers which involved holdings of virgates or fractions of virgates with no purpresture attached.

straddled the boundary between the two manors, lying partly in Bentley and partly in the adjacent tithing of Runwick in Farnham. The parallel development on both manors of purpresture being absorbed into standard customary tenements, despite the inequalities of supply, may indicate that the social, economic and demographic conditions under which the peasants lived was a more decisive factor in encouraging this trend than the quantities of new land available to them.

A number of factors may have been at work in stimulating the acquisition of purpresture by the virgate holders. First, the holdings of customary tenants at Farnham appear to have been relatively compact. As a result, the addition of consolidated plots of purpresture to their tenements was a natural concomitant to their system of farming (Brooks & Graham 1983, 6–8; Blair 1991, 51, 87). Secondly, the labour services of the virgate holders at Farnham were commuted in their entirety in 1257, the only example of wholesale commutation on the Winchester estate before the Black Death (Robo 1935, 14–15, 87–90). This would have allowed the customary tenants greater freedom to farm their own land, from which they would need to raise more cash in order to pay for the commutation, and which in turn may have been derived by supplying markets in Farnham Borough and perhaps also in London. Thirdly, there appears not to have been a large class of independent smallholders able to compete successfully with the virgate holders of Farnham for the available purpresture, especially after the colonization of the manor came to an end in the late 1270s. Thus, it is noticeable that just as the number of virgated holdings with purpresture attached rose over the course of the 14th century, so the number of extra-familial *inter-vivos* transfers consisting of less than 5 acres fell. Smallholdings were seemingly being taken out of circulation.

The principal effect of this acquisition of purpresture by the customary tenants was to depress the *inter-vivos* land market at Farnham and prevent the kind of speculation in land which was so prevalent, for example, at Witney. In comparison with other colonizing manors on the Winchester estate, the number of land transactions at Farnham was indeed remarkably stable. Even during the years of famine of the early 14th century, the peak in land transfers in 1316–17 which occurred elsewhere on the estate was less intense, and which may have been expected to be stronger if large numbers of smallholding tenants were forced to sell land in order to purchase food (Campbell 1984; Schofield 1997). The land market at Farnham thus appears to have been less volatile than on other Winchester manors.

Despite this apparent stability, however, the purpresture which tenants added to their standard customary holdings rarely remained constant from one generation to the next. The amount fluctuated considerably, in contrast, usually, to the virgated holding itself. In some cases it is possible to see tenants buying and selling this purpresture and so explain the fluctuations. In other cases this cannot be done, suggesting perhaps that the visible *inter-vivos* land market, those transactions which were recorded in the pipe rolls, may not represent the true extent of the traffic in small parcels of purpresture and other non-customary land which was conducted between tenants. For example, in 1292–3 William Wyle died leaving his widow, Isabella, a messuage and half a virgate and 36 acres of purpresture. Yet when William's son, Richard, came to inherit in 1307–8 the amount of purpresture in the holding had fallen to 16 acres.

There are only three likely explanations for this discrepancy. Either there has been a mistranscription during the engrossment of one of the pipe rolls, or the record of a transaction involving the tenement has not survived, or land was transferred without notification being made in the lord's court. The number of these discrepancies is sufficient for the suspicion to be strong that purpresture was being circulated among the peasantry of Farnham on an informal basis, without entry fines being paid. Indeed, the customary of the bishopric explicitly allowed tenants to do this, provided that the term of the lease was no longer than a year (HRO: 11M59/E2/415808, f 64). For terms longer than a year an entry fine had to be paid. Thus, Richard Wyle further reduced the size of his tenement by surrendering 6 acres of purpresture to William Ecclesbourne in 1311–12, who paid a fine of 3s 4d to the bishop.

Conclusions

At the outset this paper posed a number of questions about the nature of the peasant land market at Farnham in the 80 years or so before the Black Death. First, what does the number of land transfers recorded tell us about the supply of and demand for peasant landholdings during this time? The evidence presented would suggest that the general downward trend in the number of entry fines collected by the bishop between the 1260s and the 1340s was, at least in part, the result of a reduction in the available supply of landholdings. After the colonization of the manor came to an end in the late 1270s the large number of holdings of purpresture which had entered into circulation began to be acquired by the customary tenants and added to their virgated holdings. These remained within the family and were rarely bought and sold, at least in terms of the visible land market. However, whether there was a fall in the total number of tenements held by the peasantry may be doubted because of the possibility of an active market in sub-leases.

Secondly, how many land transfers took place within the family and how many occurred between non-kin? Table 2 reveals that over the course of the period 1263–1349 more than 53% of recorded land transfers were intra-familial, of which about 43% represented the inheritance of family holdings. By contrast, only about 32% of land transfers occurred between non-family members, of which over 22% were conducted *inter-vivos* and a further 6% by marriage. The remaining 15% of entry fines recorded only the name of the incoming tenant, most of which occurred in the relatively uninformative pipe rolls of the 1260s.

Thirdly, what reasons can be adduced for the transfer of land, either within or outside the family, before the death of the sitting tenant? A number of possible answers to this question have been suggested. Land might be transferred by a tenant for reasons of old age, incapacity, or unwillingness to continue to farm a particular holding. The rules governing the holding of more than one customary tenement may have led some tenants to relinquish part of their property. However, the most common explanation for the transfer of land within the family was the desire of parents to provide a landholding for their children, both sons and daughters, particularly younger sons who were not due to inherit the family holding.

Fourthly, what role did purpresture play in the peasant economy and society of this manor before the Black Death? The acquisition of purpresture was one way in which parents could provide for their non-inheriting children without infringing the bishop's rules prohibiting the fragmentation of customary tenements. However, it may be that some of this purpresture was transferred without an entry fine being paid and a record made in the court. This would explain the fluctuating amounts of purpresture attached to virgated holdings when these passed from one tenant to another. But purpresture was not only attractive to Farnham's customary tenants because it could be granted to their children. It also allowed them to build up their holdings which were free from labour services and sufficiently close to London to benefit from producing for the market.

Finally, what was the effect of the bishop of Winchester's exercise of lordship on the peasant land market at Farnham? Few explicit examples have been found of the bishop intervening to prevent the accumulation or fragmentation of customary tenements. Nevertheless, it is evident that rules existed governing the inheritance and purchase of holdings which the bishop may have sought to enforce through the manorial court. Lords were generally opposed to accumulation because holdings which remained separate generated more income than those which were combined and buildings were less likely to be run down. Labour services too were attached to individual holdings and it was upon the fulfilment of these obligations that the demesne economy largely depended (Dyer 1991, 637–8; Harvey 1996, 402–3). The fragmentation of holdings was opposed by lords for broadly similar reasons. The tenants of these lands were bound to provide rents and labour services to their lord; if they were unable to do so because their tenements had become so fragmented that they were no longer large enough to sustain a family in its obligations then the manorial economy would be threatened (Harvey 1977, 212–13).

Such opposition to the accumulation and fragmentation of customary tenements, however, appears to sit uncomfortably with the bishop's decision to commute the labour services of the virgate holders in their entirety in 1257. Perhaps it was the tenants themselves who sought to frustrate the acquisitive tendencies of certain of their fellows, in order to ensure that there remained an equitable distribution of land among the community in an era of high demand (Dyer 1991, 637). Manorial courts tended to be dominated by the larger customary tenants who sought to ensure that their interests were upheld and that the behaviour of individuals conformed to what was acceptable to the community at large. The vigilance of the court at Farnham may help to explain not only the apparently successful maintenance of the tenurial structure of the manor but also the considerable number of fines imposed for sexual misconduct among widows, who were expected either to remarry or remain chaste. The bishop gained from the fines levied, but a successful prosecution must have depended upon local co-operation, which seems not to have been apparent on every manor of the estate.

This paper has provided an outline of the main features of the peasant land market and its development on the manor of Farnham between 1263 and 1349. More research needs to be conducted in order to test further some of the conclusions which have been drawn. In particular, the reconstitution of individual families on a much larger scale than has been attempted here will help to shed additional light on the complex relationship between lord and tenant with regard to customary holdings and on the question of the acquisition and use of purpresture within the family unit. In addition, an examination of the location of particular tenements, insofar as this information is recorded, may reveal significant differences in social structure and the operation of the peasant land market across the various tithings of this large manor. Finally, the experience of Farnham needs to be set in a wider context, in order to assess whether the pattern of land transfers revealed here has elements in common with other manors in Surrey and elsewhere, or whether factors peculiar to Farnham, such as the lordship of the bishop of Winchester, have contributed to make it unique.

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