

# The Tribes of Peggy and Jill January 2018

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I have an unpaid part time job speculating about the family dynamics and kinship networks of a fictional village. As a side-line I devoted my network analysis to the web of culpability surrounding the hit n run featuring Matt Crawford last year (Headlam, 2017c) but the main question that interests me is to be found in the underlying and changing network structure of the village of Ambridge over time. In some ways this is a matter of normative or conventional concern – the ways in which the characters “hatch, match and despatch” serves to underscore family norms, and I am most interested in connecting connect these norms with the inequalities that exist as regards the life chances of those with and without capital or land. In terms of my relationship with The Archers, however I have realised that I am far more interested in the long range and macro issues of power and authority in Ambridge than in the detail of individual storylines.

In this blogpost I am focussing on the putative baby boom in 2018 in Ambridge and explaining the ways in which the Archer/Fairbrother baby imperils the **Headlam Hypothesis** and shores up the tribe of Jill both vis a vis the hitherto larger and more powerful tribe of Peggy but also as regards the combined network strength of the non-Archers who had been gathering in strength by virtue of their multiple connections with one another.

## Granny-power and the twin matriarchies

As I have argued recently elsewhere, (Headlam 2017b) this is of acute importance as we come to the end of the rule of the matriarchies of Jill and Peggy and how far their socio-emotional wealth preservation strategies and social structure are secured in the transition. As recently as last year the lack of fecundity of both Archers and Aldridges was remarkable, in Custard Culverts and Cake (ibid) I argued

*Despite having their name above the door (as it were) the Brookfield Archers, or the tribe of Jill, are the second order clique within the structure of Ambridge. There are fewer members in the Jill clique than the Peggy one and are yet to deliver a 4th generation. As befits their landowning status the clique supports four independent households or Brookfield, Lower Loxley, The Stables, and The Bull.*

*It may only be because Jill is ten years younger than Peggy the 4th generation of Brookfield Archers are yet to emerge. It is fair to describe the relationship of David and Ruth as quite rocky over the years. Despite their closeness as business partners and husband and wife there has been a restlessness and resentment expressed and acted upon by Ruth, who often seems miserable in Ambridge. It may be that this has echoes in the reticence of the children of this marriage to commit to partners themselves. In short Pip, Josh and Ben, for quite different reasons appear as unable as their Bridge Farm cousins in the relationships department. Indeed the weight of expectation from her parents and grandparent as regards Pip's poor choices of companion make the future of the farm omni-present in her romantic life. Josh is currently in entrepreneurial mode – in the mould of the sausage king years of his older cousin Tom - and Ben is currently a silent character.*

What a difference a year makes! Those complaining on social media about Pip's pregnancy are howling in the wind as the Keri Davies recently admitted on twitter that the whole purpose of the Fairbrothers has been this storyline. It is absolute genius on the part of the scriptwriters resurrecting this long-forgotten family (much in the same way that Carol Tregorran was revived) The effect of this new life in July/August of 2018 will transform the kinship network of Ambridge. Further, this baby boom in Ambridge is long overdue. As I wrote last year;

*For the existing matriarchies to have more enduring power then we need to see more offspring (or any?) from the various branches of the family. It is quite extraordinary that there are quite so many childless people in their thirties, forties and fifties in Ambridge*

And this is a dynastic concern overall.

*The role of the Aldridges and Archers in Ambridge has been of settled and bourgeois land-owning families. Their connectedness as 'cousins' underpins the routine co-operation necessary for life to run smoothly. However, as has been argued, the principal role of families of this type is as regards their ability to transmit capital across generations.*

As a social network analyst I deal not in family trees or genograms but SNA networks. This time last year (at the Lincoln conference) I presented the Ambridge network as a network of a 'small world' type with seventy-five individual people linked by birth or marriage. Further, that network shows four major cliques; the first two centred on Aldridge and Archer matriarchies (for the purposes of this short piece we are not focussed on 'the others' although they do appear on the network diagram) This time last year, reading the network patterns I introduced some possible futures for kinship networks in the village, arguing either a version of the status quo (i.e. the centrality of

Archers/Aldridges) or *The Headlam Hypothesis* through which Archers assume less importance and the strength of weak ties in the network assume more prominence. (The non-archers archers?) In this short blog I am not going to talk too much about SNA itself (you can see CCC, YouTube etc. for that) But to compare the structures of the kinship networks in 2017 and 2018. On methods, however this point, however, is crucial (Headlam 2017b)

*Ambridge has a bounded outer edge. In its kinship networks only the characters from The Archers link together. This requires that decisions be taken as to. For example, do we include dead characters? There is a very key hinge connecting the Brookfield and Home Farm clans which only functions if you map the earlier generations of Dan and Doris, Dan's Brother Jack, Peggy's first husband and Phil's sister Christine, without whom the strong links between Archers and Aldridges do not make sense.*

For the 2018 network I include dead characters (mainly because the Fairbrother/Archer link only makes sense with reference to the dead) but also because dynastic relationships related to land and power have more to do with bloodlines and ancestry than anything else. It was strongly telling that the reported response of Robin Fairbrother immediately twigged this 'The Fairbrother line going on and on blah blah blah' Also within the 2018 network I have mapped some business relationships – of a stable and durable type. As a result the network is not a pure kinship network but a hybrid, getting towards the holy grail of a complete power-structure with all forms of capital mapped. (See YouTube talk) Such a thing, however would need updating so often that its usefulness would be temporary.

## Mapping the Networks

The precise methodological steps I have taken to generate these kinship networks are as follows:

1. Ethical clearance obtained from all villagers
2. Nodes are defined – and the edges of the network decided upon.
3. Data are generated. For these purposes both "the dead" and "close, durable" business relationships are included in order to highlight the archer/fairbrother link. Kinship ties are by birth or marriage.
4. Algorithms for centrality are applied
5. Maps are presented and analysed

FIG 1 THE AMBRIDGE NETWORK – JANUARY 2018

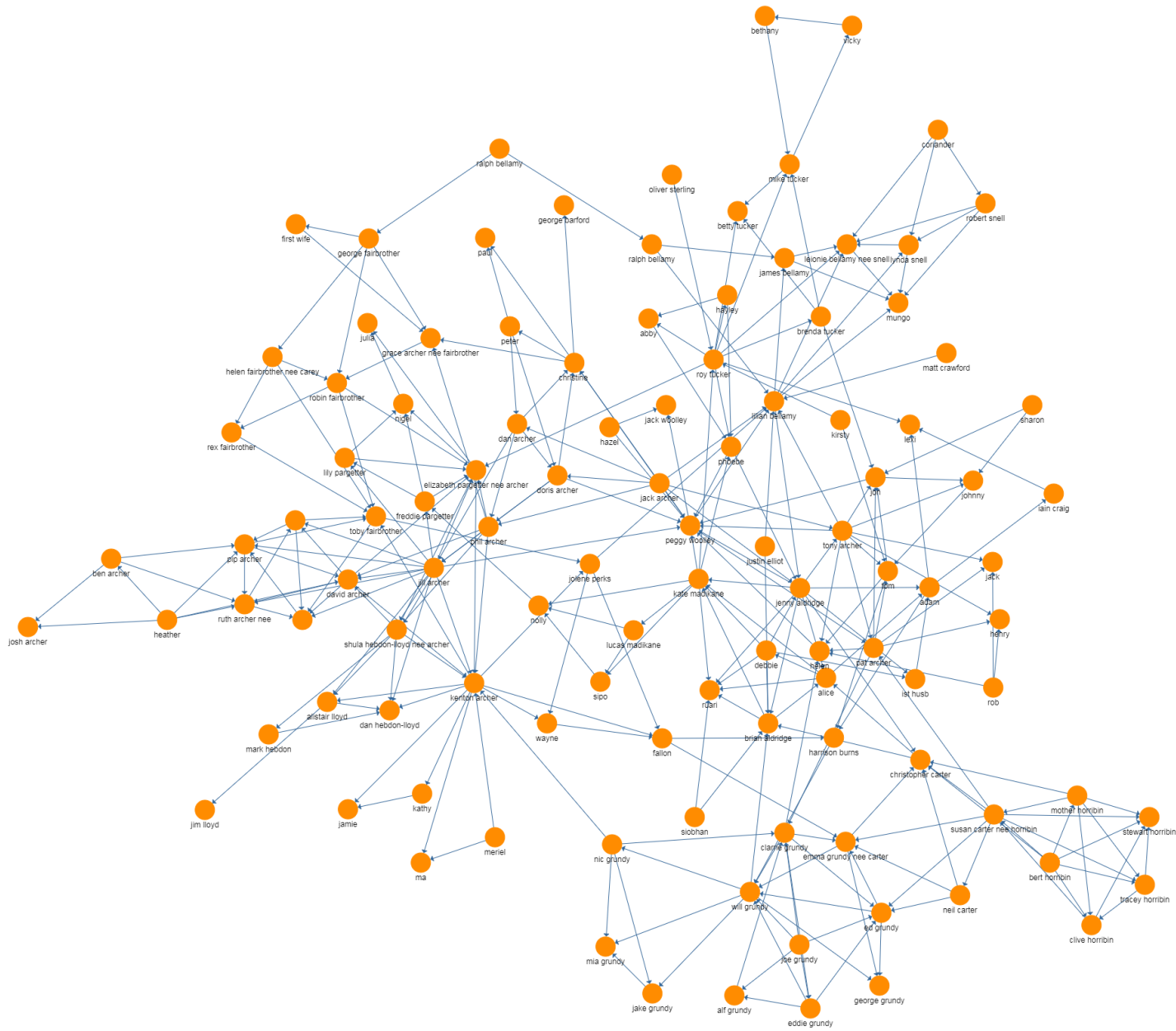




FIG 3: FURTHER MAGNIFIED TO SHOW CORE HUBS OF JILL AND PEGGY

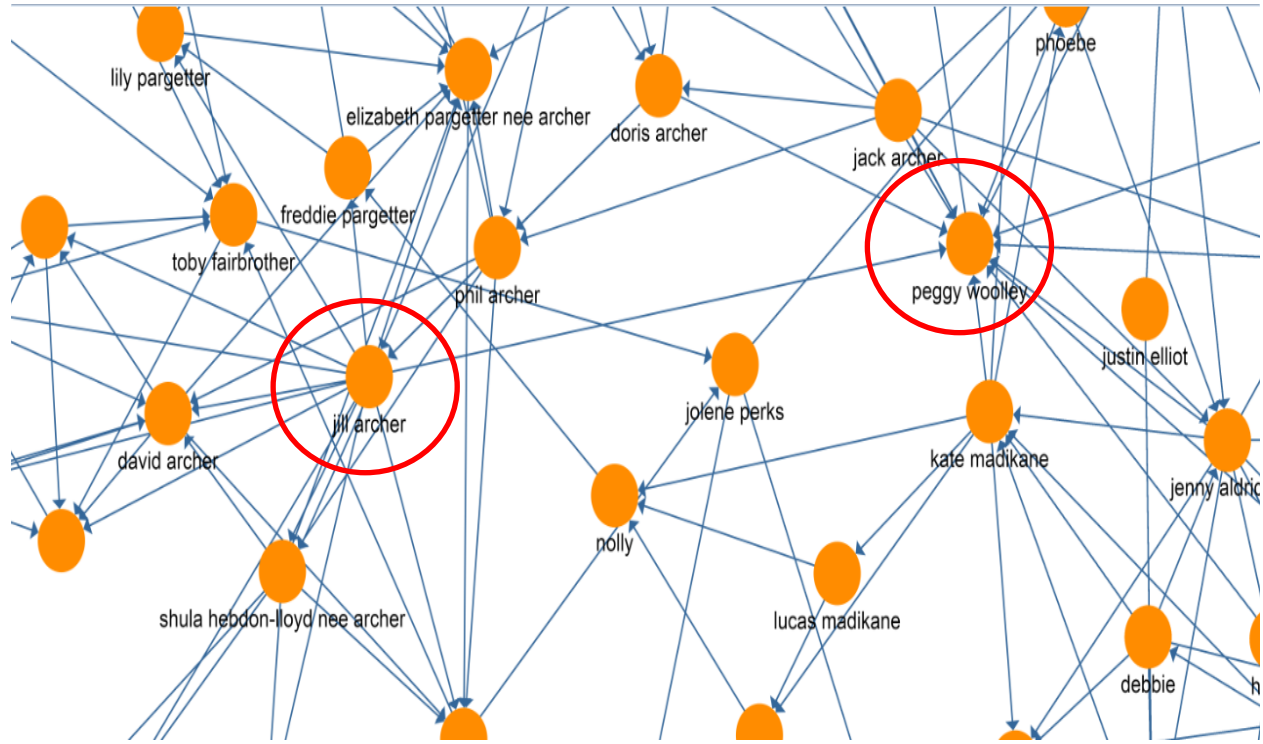


FIG 4: TRIBE OF JILL, 2018 ISOLATED

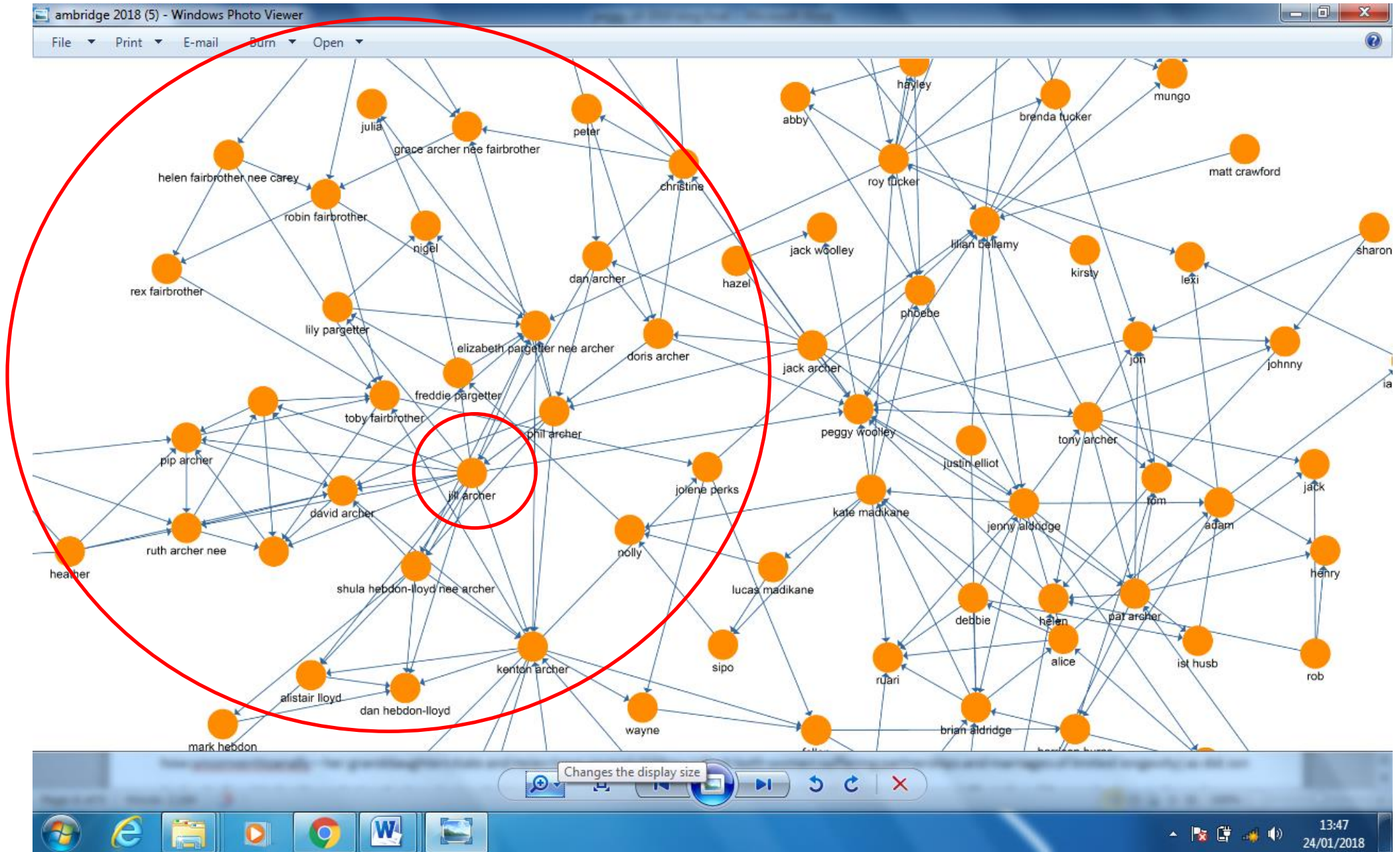
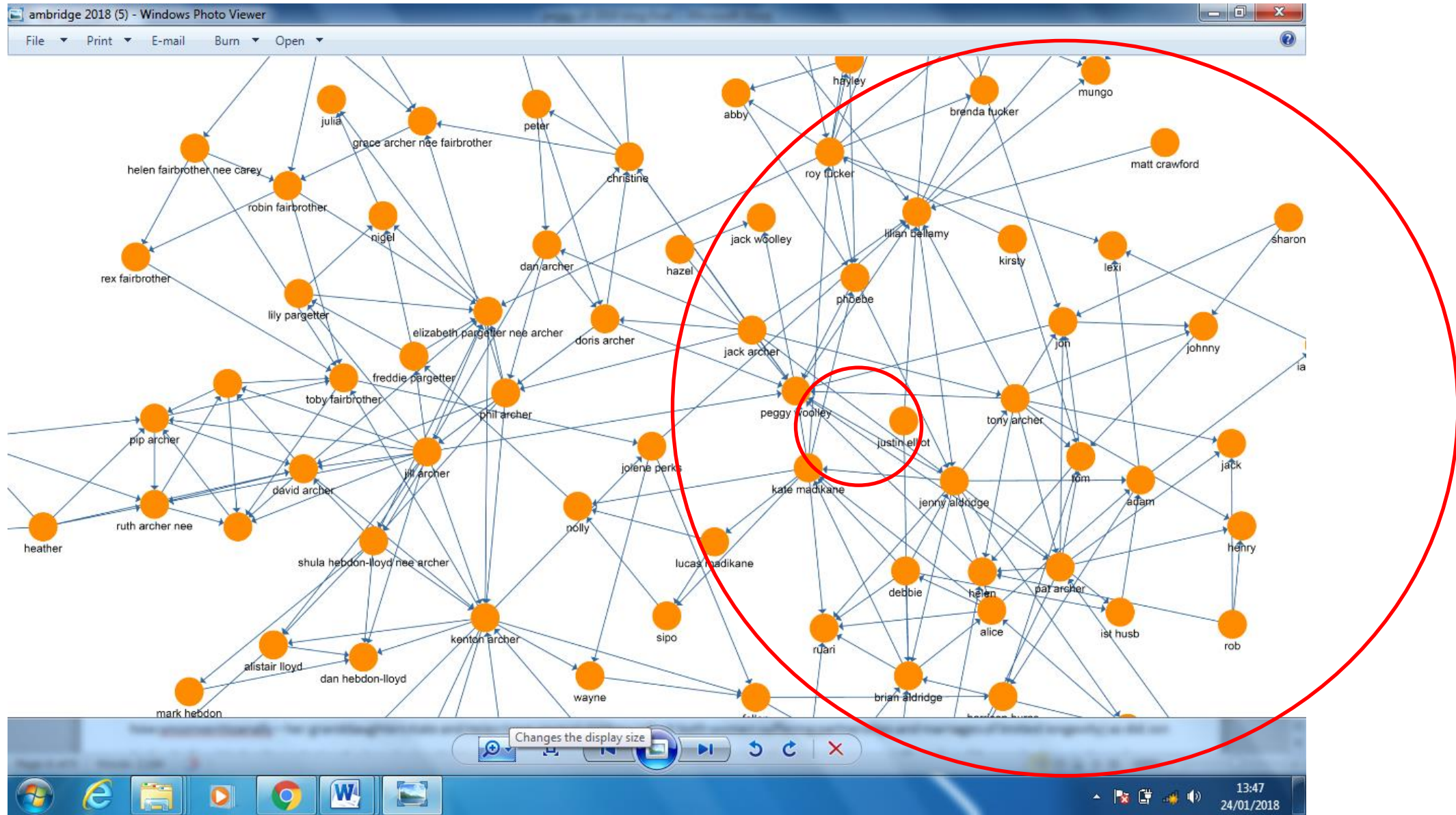


FIG 5: TRIBE OF PEGGY, 2018 ISOLATED



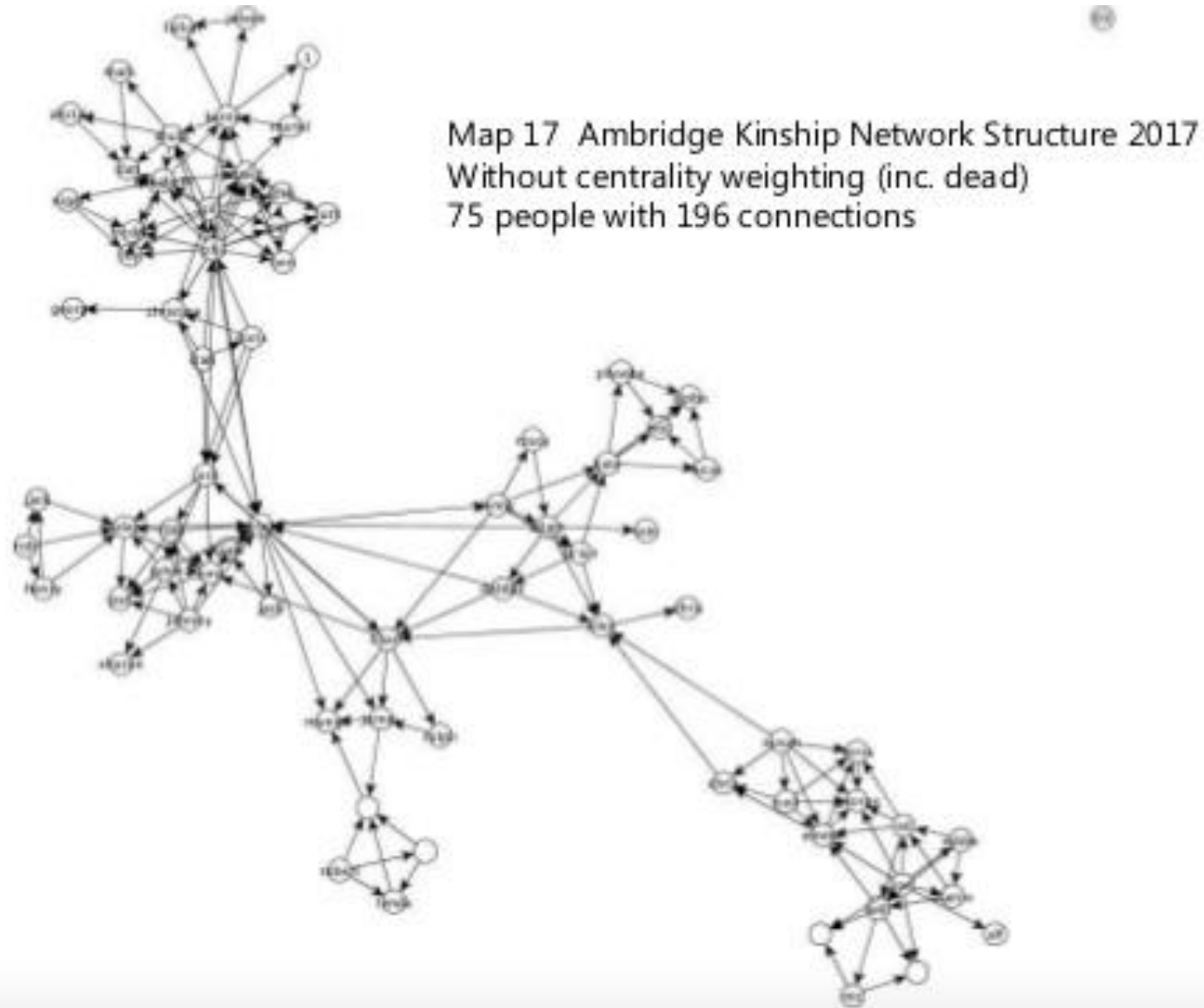


The network is not a **direct** comparison with those generated last year due which did not contain the dead and business connections were mapped separately. However these small changes and the assumption of a live birth for the offspring of Toby Fairbrother and Philippa Archer sometime in the summer of 2018 transforms the network **completely securing the centrality of the tribe of Jill** which had looked shaky this time last year. Last year the full kinship structure of Ambridge looked quite different. I wrote at some length last year about how the tribe of Peggy was actually the dominant clique in the village partly because Peggy is ten years older than Jill and – no matter how unconventionally – her granddaughters Kate and Helen have several children (albeit both women suffering partnerships and marriages of limited longevity) as did Jon Archer before his death producing the long-lost and chipper Johnny to introduce some hybrid vigour into the Archer gene pool. The tribe of Peggy also boasts the only conventional family of the 4<sup>th</sup> generation. Despite the fact that their relationship seems perpetually in peril James and Leonie have the only legitimate heir (Mungo) anywhere within the twin matriarchy structure to be born within formal wedlock. I passed comment that reproductive strategy at Home Farm has been sub-optimal

*Marital fidelity and the legitimacy of offspring has long been a core function of bourgeois marriage. Not so much in the Home Farm Aldridges. Brian Aldridge has, over four decades in Ambridge operationalized a highly differentiated set of mating strategies which may have threatened to fragment the Home Farm Aldridge legacy through sub-optimal strategy... Where there are risks, however, to the continuing dominance of the Aldridges in Ambridge it is in the remarkably underactive mating strategies of the generation of Adam, Debbie, Ruairi, and Alice and Chris Carter. This lack of fecundity is countered by Kate who has two separate families (beyond the village.)*

Of course in the intervening year Noluthando's arrival in Ambridge has led to conflict, soul-searching and (for now) redemption of the mother-daughter bond between her and Kate and a very interesting link with Freddie Pargetter. Presumably Nolly's return to South Africa with her mother will be of long enough duration for Freddie to have sorted himself out into a more sensible proposition rather than the trope of the trustafarian, dj-ing and dealing his way through late adolescence. Further the inheritance politics of the Aldridge family partnership will be significantly affected should Adam and Ian secure the services of a surrogate or adopt either in terms of the transmission of wealth or, as seems likely at present, through the transmission of liabilities into the family trust set up.

FIG 6: 2017 NETWORK STRUCTURE – CLEARER DELINEATIONS.



## The Archers strike back

Comparing the whole network structure from this year with last the major finding is that there has been a dramatic shift to the fortunes of the Archers. The tribe of Jill is more numerous and more central than it has ever been, securing the first of the 4<sup>th</sup> generation of Archers from the Fairbrother line. It is worth noting that Jill foresaw all this unfolding which was why she was so uncharacteristically forthcoming in her visceral (indeed practically genetic) dislike of the Fairbrother boys from the start, and specifically in regards to their interests in Pip/Hollowtree/Brookfield.

It may be that dependent daughters with offspring living in the homes of their parents is more common among the boomerang generation for whom high housing costs make independence beyond their reach but to have both Helen and Pip in this subservient position heavily reliant on their families for childcare and living stretches credulity a bit. Suggesting that Ambridge is more properly feudal (Byrne, 2017) rather than capitalist or neo-liberal. It is notable that in neither case the primary motive has been given as financial but by virtue of their primary employment within family concerns, and their need for support with childcare both women are likely to remain in these situations for the foreseeable future. In fact the more independent women; career-minded and childfree, Brenda, Amy, Hazel, and Debbie have all left the village behind them... begging interesting questions for our Women in Ambridge session at our next conference.

However the existential threat to the dominance of the tribe of Peggy would be in the inevitable death of their titular head. Peggy is an old lady and there have been numerous signposts to both her mental and physical health being of more concern to her offspring than previously. Could we be about to see the scattering of the tribe of Peggy at the expense of the combined granny-power of, say Lilian/Lynda? (If mungo were to return to the village) or of Susan/Jennifer? (Not if Alice has any say in the matter) Also how representative are the complications of Generation X in Ambridge in forming stable attachments and raising offspring? On this point, and the consequences of the changing network structures it remains only to suggest that further research is needed.

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