

**Material lives of the English poor:
a regional perspective, c.1670-1834**

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Abstract

The literature on consumption has grown rapidly over the past thirty years and we now have a detailed understanding of how the material lives of the middling sort and elite were transformed over the long eighteenth century. With the exception of the occasional case study and the research on clothing, the poor have largely been neglected in this literature. Consequently we have very little understanding of whether the poor were also able to consume at a greater level over the period or of how their consumption patterns varied between men and women and across contrasting counties and urban-rural locations. This PhD addresses these gaps through the detailed analysis of over 350 pauper inventories from Dorset, Kent and Norfolk from c.1670 to 1834. This is the largest collection of pauper inventories ever assembled for historical analysis. These sources have been contextualised by analysis of other types of inventories of paupers, artefacts, pictorial sources, pawnbroking records, autobiographies, diaries and pauper letters. The sources suggest that the poor increasingly acquired a greater quantity and variety of household goods over the long eighteenth century and that the material lives of the poor were improving. This increased consumption, however, appears not to have been equal and uniform, as it was not until the late eighteenth century that significant numbers of paupers owned these goods in greater frequencies. Moreover, these items appear to have been consumed by greater numbers of the poor who lived in the Home Counties and urban areas, whilst fewer paupers generally owned these goods in more rural, remote and less commercial areas. Nevertheless, the changes in the poor's material lives appear to have been considerable and signified a number of important changes in people's domestic behaviours and everyday lives.

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Abbreviations

BALSS – Bolton Archives and Local Studies Service, Bolton

BM – British Museum, London

BPP – British Parliamentary Papers

CCAL – Canterbury Cathedral Archives and Library, Canterbury

DHC – Dorset History Centre, Dorchester

ERO – Essex Record Office, Chelmsford

GMH – Geffrye Museum of the Home, London

KHLC – Kent History Library Centre, Maidstone

LRO – Lancashire Record Office, Preston

LWL – Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, Farmington, Connecticut

LROLHL – Liverpool Record Office and Local History Library, Liverpool

MALH – Manchester Archives and Local History, Manchester

MALSC – Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Rochester

ML – Museum of London, London

NRO – Norfolk Record Office, Norwich

ODNB – Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

OLSA – Oldham Local Studies and Archives, Oldham

RH – Royal Holloway, University of London, London

RLSL – Rochdale Local Studies and Archive, Rochdale

SCA – Salford City Archive, Salford

SHLHAL – St. Helens Local History and Archives Library, St. Helens

TLSAC – Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre, Ashton-under-Lyne

V&A – Victoria and Albert Museum, London

WAG – Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

WAS – Wigan Archives Service, Leigh

YALH – York Archives and Local History, York

Chapter 1: Introduction

The history of consumption has grown rapidly over the past thirty years to become a cornerstone of early modern and modern British history. We now have a detailed understanding of how the middling sort and elite increasingly consumed a considerable range of goods, and how this varied around England over the long eighteenth century. Besides the excellent work on clothing and occasional case studies, the poor, who made up at least 50 per cent of the contemporary population at any time, have largely been ignored in this literature. This thesis takes an important step towards addressing this major historiographical gap. Through the analysis of over 350 pauper inventories – the largest collection ever assembled – and other underutilised types of inventories of pauper belongings, this thesis measures how pauper ownership of a wide range of household goods changed from the late seventeenth century to the end of the old poor law in 1834. A regional approach is used through the analysis of three contrasting English counties: Dorset, Kent and Norfolk, to determine how consumption varied around the country and how factors such as proximity to London and the nature of the local economy affected consumption patterns. The results from the inventories indicate that the material lives of most of the poor improved as they increasingly acquired a greater quantity and range of possessions over the long eighteenth century, such as chests of drawers, tea items, looking glasses and clocks. This increased consumption, however, appears not to have been equal and uniform, as it was not until the late eighteenth century that significant numbers of paupers owned these goods in greater frequencies. Moreover, it appears that these items tended to be consumed by greater numbers of the poor who lived in the Home Counties and urban areas, whilst fewer paupers generally owned these goods in more rural, remote and less commercial areas. Some paupers probably only experienced relatively modest transitions in their material culture, such as acquiring bellows, candlesticks, chairs and earthenware, yet these goods still signified important changes which helped to alter people's domestic behaviours and everyday lives. The results of this research also have a number of implications for other important historiographical debates, such as the nature and definition of poverty, the relationship between the parish and the indigent, production and standard of living.

Historiographical review

Following the groundbreaking and often polemical work of scholars such as Neil McKendrick and Joan Thirsk, the study of consumption came to the forefront of historical research from the 1970s. Both writers stressed the need to research demand and emphasised how the spread of new consumer goods had a considerable impact on people's lives and the British economy during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹ A considerable number of publications in the following decades extensively analysed probate inventories to determine exactly how consumption changed for the middling sort. The results from these studies demonstrated that with each new generation the middling sort bought more and better possessions, particularly from the mid-seventeenth century.² Subsequent work has built on these findings to investigate the numerous reasons why the middling sort consumed at a greater level, what these goods meant to people, and how they transformed people's lives over the long eighteenth century.³

The study of elite consumption has also received attention from historians, though not to the same extent as the middling sort. Before the late seventeenth century, some of the most expensive and ostentatious items were owned by the elite, as they sought to

¹ Neil McKendrick, 'Home demand and economic growth: a new view of the role of women and children in the industrial revolution', in Neil McKendrick (ed.), *Historical perspectives: studies in English thought and society in honour of J. H. Plumb* (London, 1974), pp.152-210; Neil McKendrick, 'The consumer revolution of eighteenth-century England', in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb, *The birth of a consumer society: the commercialization of eighteenth-century England* (London, 1982), pp.9-33 and Joan Thirsk, *Economic policy and projects: the development of a consumer society in early modern England* (Oxford, 1978). Also see: Margaret Spufford, *The great reclothing of rural England: petty chapmen and their wares in the seventeenth century* (London, 1983); Ralph Davis, *The rise of the Atlantic economies* (London, 1973), p.251; Ralph Davis, *The industrial revolution and British overseas trade* (Leicester, 1979), pp.62-67.

² Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer behaviour and material culture in Britain 1660-1760* (London, 2nd ed., 1996); Carole Shammas, *The pre-industrial consumer in England and America* (Oxford, 1990); Carl B. Estabrook, *Urbane and rustic England: cultural ties and social spheres in the provinces 1660-1780* (Manchester, 1998), pp.128-191; John Beckett and Catherine Smith, 'Urban renaissance and consumer revolution', *Urban History*, 27:1 (2000), pp.31-50; Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darron Dean and Andrew Hann, *Production and consumption in English households, 1600-1750* (London, 2004); Henry French, *The middle sort of people in provincial England 1600-1750* (Oxford, 2007); Ken Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth, indebtedness and social structure in early modern England', PhD thesis (University of Cambridge, 2008).

³ For example, see the essays in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds.), *Consumption and the world of goods* (London, 1993); Maxine Berg, *Luxury and pleasure in eighteenth-century Britain* (Oxford, 2005); Amanda Vickery, *Behind closed doors: at home in Georgian England* (New Haven, 2009); Jon Stobart, *Sugar and spice: grocers in provincial England 1650-1830* (Oxford, 2013); Maxine Berg, 'Women's consumption and the industrial classes of eighteenth-century England', *Journal of Social History*, 30:2 (1996), pp.415-434; Woodruff D. Smith, *Consumption and the making of respectability, 1600-1800* (London, 2002); John E. Crowley, *The invention of comfort sensibilities & design in early modern Britain & early America* (Baltimore, 2001); Sara Pennell, '"Pots and pans history": the material culture of the kitchen in early modern England', *Journal of Design History*, 11:3 (1998), pp.201-216.

distinguish themselves and publicise their status, civility and taste.⁴ Over the eighteenth century, as the middling sort increasingly consumed on a wider scale, the elite often took greater steps to distinguish themselves from people of lower social standing. For example, many hired architects and upholders to redesign their homes and domestic spaces, and many displayed objects which had personal connections to title, dynasty, family and lineage alongside new fashionable goods.⁵

Whilst this vast literature on middling and elite consumption has grown apace over the past thirty years, the history of the poor's consumer behaviour has largely been neglected. This is a particularly surprising and substantial gap in the literature considering that the poor made up at least 50 per cent of the contemporary population at any time.⁶ Historians have commonly noted this lacuna,⁷ however very little has been done to address the problem. It is not uncommon for scholars to claim that there are simply not enough sources to study the poor,⁸ to suggest that the poor are too difficult to study,⁹ or to state

⁴ Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming splendor: society and culture in seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge, 2005); Jane Whittle and Elizabeth Griffiths, *Consumption and gender in the early seventeenth-century household: the world of Alice Le Strange* (Oxford, 2012).

⁵ Jon Stobart and Andrew Hann (eds.), *The country house: material culture and consumption* (Swindon, 2016); Jon Stobart, 'Gentlemen and shopkeepers: supplying the country house in eighteenth-century England', *Economic History Review*, 64:3 (2011), pp.885-904; Jon Stobart and Mark Rothery, 'Fashion, inheritance and family', *Cultural and Social History*, 11:3 (2014), pp.385-406; Rosie MacArthur, 'Kinship, remembrance and luxury goods in the eighteenth century: a study of the Hanbury family of Kelmarsh', *History of Retailing and Consumption*, 1:2 (2015), pp.125-139; Matthew Craske, 'Plan and control: design and the competitive spirit in early and mid-eighteenth-century England', *Journal of Design History*, 12:3 (1999), pp.187-216; R. G. Wilson and A. L. Mackley, 'How much did the English country house cost to build, 1660-1880?', *Economic History Review*, 52:3 (1999), pp.436-468; Jean-Pascal Daloz, *The sociology of elite distinction: from theoretical to comparative perspectives* (Basingstoke, 2009); Amanda Vickery, *The gentleman's daughter: women's lives in Georgian England* (New Haven, 1998); Amanda Vickery, 'Women and the world of goods: a Lancashire consumer and her possessions, 1751-81', in Brewer and Porter, *World of goods*, pp.274-301; Christopher Christie, *The British country house in the eighteenth century* (Manchester, 2000), pp.26-98, 129-178 and 232-273; John Brewer, *Pleasures of the imagination: English culture in the eighteenth century* (London, 1997); Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.168-171; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.137-169 and 190-200. Also see the above note.

⁶ See the terminology section in chapter two for further information on the size of pauper and 'poor' populations.

⁷ For instance: Sara Pennell, 'Material culture in seventeenth-century "Britain": The matter of domestic consumption', in Frank Trentmann (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of the history of consumption* (Oxford, 2012), p.64; Maxine Berg, 'Consumption in eighteenth century- and early nineteenth-century Britain', in Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson (eds.), *The Cambridge economic history of modern Britain*, Vol. 1: *Industrialisation, 1700-1860* (Cambridge, 2004), p.375; Janine Maegraith and Craig Muldrew, 'Consumption and material life', in Hamish Scott (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of early modern European history, 1350-1750*. Vol. 1: *Peoples and place* (Oxford, 2015), pp.369-397; Jan de Vries, *The industrious revolution: consumer behaviour and the household economy 1650 to present* (Cambridge, 2008), pp.149-150.

⁸ Weatherill, *Material culture*, p.194; Norman J. G. Pounds, *Hearth & home: a history of material culture* (Bloomington, 1989), p.184; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, p.170.

that there is little point in researching them since they could not afford anything more than food and a few basic household necessities.¹⁰ This historiographical review will demonstrate that there are enough surviving sources to study the poor, even if they are less abundant than those relating to the middling sort or elite. Moreover, it shows that people often had some material wealth despite being in poverty and that poor people are an interesting and important group to study.¹¹ Although the number of consumption studies which focus on the poor has grown over the past ten years, there remain a number of considerable gaps and limitations in our knowledge. We have little understanding, for example, of how location or gender affected the poor's consumer behaviour or how consumption patterns changed in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Before the surge in publications related to the consumer behaviour of the middling sort after the 1980s, it was commonplace for historians to note that the poor had limited ability to purchase little other than what was necessary to maintain life. Robert Malcolmson stated that the 'expanding culture of consumerism... was almost entirely inaccessible to the great majority of the nation's population'.¹² In *The making of the English working class*, E. P. Thompson famously argued that 'The "average" working man remained very close to subsistence level... His own share in the "benefits of economic progress" consisted of more potatoes, a few articles of cotton clothing for his family, soap and candles, some tea and sugar'.¹³ Other early writers such as Ethel Hampson and G. E. Fussell also played down the levels of material wealth that the poor had.¹⁴ Such views, however, were largely formed on slender evidence and were often heavily influenced by scholars' prior assumptions and political views. It was convenient for Marxist scholars such as Thompson, for example, to point out that the material benefits of capitalism were limited for the poor. Exceptions to

⁹ Tim Hitchcock, *Down and out in eighteenth-century London* (London, 2004), p.239; Tim Hitchcock, 'A new History from below', *History Workshop Journal*, 57 (2004), p.296.

¹⁰ See the examples of Thompson and Malcolmson below.

¹¹ For definitions of poverty see chapter two.

¹² Robert W. Malcolmson, *Life and labour in England 1700-1780* (London, 1981), p.149.

¹³ E. P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (London, 1991, reprint of 1963 ed.), p.351.

¹⁴ E. M. Hampson, *The treatment of poverty in Cambridgeshire 1597-1834* (Cambridge, 1934), p.182; G. E. Fussell, *The English rural labourer: his home, furniture, clothing & food from Tudor to Victorian times* (London, 1949), pp.68-81. The research of Elizabeth Gilboy from the 1930s is an important exception to these general views. She was one of the only people before the 1970s to argue that increased demand for consumer goods among the rich and poor helped drive the industrial revolution. Elizabeth W. Gilboy, 'Demand as a factor in the industrial revolution' [originally published in 1932], in R. M. Hartwell (ed.), *The causes of the industrial revolution* (London, 1967), pp.121-138; Elizabeth W. Gilboy, *Wages in eighteenth century England* (Cambridge, 1934), pp.59-63, 127-130 and 206-209.

these views started to become more prevalent from the 1970s, following the work of Thirsk, Margaret Spufford and Ralph Davis who assessed commodities such as tea, tobacco, ribbons, earthenware and clothing.¹⁵ By 1982, McKendrick claimed that the late eighteenth century had witnessed a 'consumer revolution', with spending becoming 'unprecedented in the depth to which it penetrated the lower reaches of society'.¹⁶ The idea of an eighteenth-century 'consumer revolution' has received extensive attention from historians;¹⁷ however the extent to which the poor could consume at a greater level and when and where this happened has only received limited consideration.

Barbara Cornford was one of the earliest writers to empirically assess the material lives of the poor. She used 15 pauper inventories, which are lists of paupers' goods made by poor law officials, from Martham village in Norfolk to assess the households of poor people. Her results suggested that most paupers in Martham owned a wide range of consumer goods despite being on poor relief.¹⁸ In 1997 Peter King used 51 pauper inventories to assess the material lives of Essex paupers.¹⁹ The results built substantially upon Cornford's findings to suggest that goods such as looking glasses, tea-related items and clocks/watches became more prevalent in Essex pauper households over the long eighteenth century.²⁰ Recently, Adrian Green studied 206 Norfolk inventories alongside archaeological evidence to assess the living conditions of the poor. In a similar manner to King and Cornford, he argued that the inventories demonstrated that people's material lives were improving over the eighteenth century. Green called the inventories he used 'pauper inventories'; however,

¹⁵ Thirsk, *Economic policy*; Spufford, *Reclotting*; Davis, *Atlantic* (London, 1973), p.251; Davis, *Industrial revolution*, pp.62-67.

¹⁶ McKendrick, 'Consumer revolution', p.11.

¹⁷ Some scholars have argued that eighteenth-century England witnessed a consumer revolution, such as: Jon Stobart, 'A history of shopping: the missing link between retail and consumer revolutions', *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 2:3 (2010), pp.342-349; Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth'; Ken Sneath, 'A Consumer Revolution in Huntingdonshire?', *The Local Historian*, 41:3 (2011), pp.229-238. Others, however, have been much more critical of the concept, such as: John Brewer, 'The error of our ways', Lecture to the cultures of consumption programme, The Royal Society, Working Paper No.12 (2003) [From: www.consume.bbk.ac.uk/working_papers/Brewer%20talk.doc. Accessed 26/11/2010]; John Styles, 'Manufacturing, consumption and design in eighteenth-century England', in Brewer and Porter, *World of goods*, pp.535-542; Ben Fine, *The world of consumption: the material and cultural revisited* (London, 2nd ed., 2002), pp.155-175. Also see above.

¹⁸ Barbara Cornford, 'Inventories of the poor', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 35 (1970-1973), pp.118-125.

¹⁹ The 'broad' sample was 51 pauper inventories and the 'core' sample was 41. The latter sample only included inventories which recorded rooms. Peter King, 'Pauper inventories and the material lives of the poor in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', in Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharpe (eds.), *Chronicling poverty: the voices and strategies of the English poor, 1640-1840* (Basingstoke, 1997), p.160.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.155-191.

because the sources were not checked against other poor law records, around one-third of the sample were not in fact in receipt of poor relief and their goods had been inventoried for other reasons such as arrears of rent.²¹ Consequently, the extent to which Green's results are representative of poor people and whether they can be compared to the inventories used by King and Cornford, which were checked against poor law sources, is debatable. Pauper inventories have also infrequently been used elsewhere to study the mechanisms of poor relief and negotiation between the parish and the indigent;²² however, in terms of assessing pauper consumption most of what we know is based on fewer than 70 pauper inventories from one Norfolk village and parts of Essex. Further research on pauper inventories is thus needed to examine the extent to which Cornford and King's findings are representative of pauper experiences across differing areas of England.

Until recently, probate inventories, which list the possessions of deceased people for the purposes of inheritance and debt, were thought to be too few in number to allow for the study of labouring consumption. Lorna Weatherill in her study of 2902 probate inventories, for example, was only able to find 28 inventories of labourers' goods.²³ In Overton et al.'s sample of nearly 8,000 probate inventories, those of labourers only accounted for a few per cent.²⁴ Craig Muldrew recently analysed an impressive sample of nearly 1,000 labourers' probate inventories from Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Hampshire, Kent, Lincolnshire and Norfolk to chronicle labouring material wealth from the mid-sixteenth to the late eighteenth century. Most of the inventories were made in rural areas. He found that the value of labourers' belongings increased over the period and that after 1650 'almost all families seem to have benefited from a rise in their standard of living as measured by the accumulation of goods over the life course'. This trend was particularly

²¹ Adrian Green, 'Heartless and unhomey? Dwellings of the poor in East Anglia and north-east England', in Joanne McEwan and Pamela Sharpe (eds.), *Accommodating poverty: the housing and living arrangements of the English poor, c.1600-1850* (Basingstoke, 2011), pp.69-101. This calculation is based on my own analysis of the same Norfolk inventories.

²² See for instance: Steven King, *Poverty and welfare in England 1700-1850: a regional perspective* (Manchester, 2000), pp.93-97; Joan Kent, 'The rural "middling sort" in early modern England, circa 1640-1740: some economic, political and socio-cultural characteristics', *Rural History*, 10:1 (1999), pp.34-35; Joan Kent and Steven King, 'Changing patterns of poor relief in some English rural parishes circa 1650-1750', *Rural History*, 14:2 (2003), pp.137-139; Steve Hindle, *On the parish? The micro-politics of poor relief in rural England c.1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004), pp.281-282 and 450; Jeremy Boulton, 'Going on the parish: the parish pension and its meaning in the London suburbs, 1640-1724', in Hitchcock, King and Sharpe, *Chronicling*, pp.35-36.

²³ Weatherill, *Material culture*, p.168.

²⁴ Unfortunately Overton et al. did not provide a percentage for their entire sample. Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, p.22.

pronounced after 1700, as the numbers of labourers who owned items such as chests of drawers and looking glasses increased significantly.²⁵ Muldrew's detailed work is a welcome addition to the historical canon. However, historians have often questioned the extent to which probate inventories made of labourers' belongings are typical of the labouring population as a whole.²⁶ By law, for example, people needed an estate worth at least £5 to have their goods inventoried.²⁷ Although appraisers sometimes neglected this procedure,²⁸ many poor people were nonetheless excluded from the process when they fell beneath this threshold, meaning that it is likely that only a small percentage of the labouring poor who were relatively wealthy had their goods appraised. The usefulness of probate inventories to assess the poor's consumer behaviour is discussed further in the conclusion.

Ken Sneath recently analysed nearly 3000 probate inventories to assess the consumption patterns of different social groups from Huntingdonshire and Yorkshire, including 277 labourers' probate inventories. Sneath differs in his opinion of the representativeness of labourers' probate inventories from Muldrew. He argues that 'Inevitably, labourers with inventories were likely to have more material wealth than labourers as a whole, but the results suggest that the "consumer revolution" was beginning to affect the lower half of society by the later-eighteenth century',²⁹ following labourers' increased ownership of items such as looking glasses and clocks.³⁰ Sneath's dataset is built on an impressive number of probate inventories, of which 621 were made between 1750 and 1800. Only 13 of the inventories from these dates, however, were made of labourers' possessions and none of them were dated any later than the 1760s.³¹ As a result, his argument that labourers witnessed a 'consumer revolution' in the later eighteenth century

²⁵ Craig Muldrew, *Food, energy and the creation of industriousness: work and material culture in agrarian England, 1550-1780* (Cambridge, 2011), esp. pp.163-207.

²⁶ See for example: Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.191-194; Barry Coward, *The Stuart age: England, 1603-1714* (Harlow, 3rd ed., 2003), p.55; Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth', p.102; King, 'Pauper inventories', pp.156 and 176.

²⁷ Shammas, *Pre-industrial consumer*, p.19.

²⁸ For example, out of 927 labourers' probate inventories, Muldrew found that 106 of them were made of people who owned less than £5 worth of goods. Muldrew, *Food*, p.186.

²⁹ Sneath, 'Consumer revolution', p.235.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.229-238; Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth', esp. pp.231-328.

³¹ Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth', p.260. Seven of these came from Huntingdonshire and six from Yorkshire. I also searched the Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire Archives online catalogue for labourers' probate inventories. It showed that five of the seven labourers' probate inventories were made in the 1750s and that the latest two were dated 1760 and 1762 [<http://calm.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CalmView/default.aspx> Accessed 18/03/2014].

is built on a weak empirical base compared to the other social groups that he analysed. Muldrew also struggled to find labourers' probate inventories from 1750-1799.³² Further work is thus clearly needed to understand the poor's material lives, especially from the second half of the eighteenth century when the number of surviving probate inventories of labourers' goods are very small.

A number of interesting and promising approaches have been adopted by historians who use court records to examine consumption. John Styles used theft records from the Old Bailey to investigate the types of items that working people had access to when they rented inexpensive furnished lodgings in London. He argued that these rooms 'were not so squalid' and 'were furnished modestly'. Moreover, Styles found that items such as looking glasses, curtains and tea kettles were more frequently stolen from these furnished dwellings after 1750, suggesting that they had become more commonplace. Thus, through the renting of furnished rooms and theft, the poor had 'opportunities to possess material things that would otherwise have been unattainable'.³³ Recently, Horrell et al. and Helmreich et al. used Old Bailey records to examine how often items such as handkerchiefs, watches and precious metals were stolen from people and how the values and materials of these items changed over the long eighteenth century. The results of both studies have allowed us to understand consumption at a more nuanced level. With regards to watches, for example, these studies have indicated that watches were mostly owned by men; that their value was declining over the period; that they were increasingly stolen from the labouring sort from the second half of the eighteenth century; and that most of the watches of labouring people were made out of silver or cheap metals. These results strongly suggest that watches had become increasingly affordable to a wider spectrum of people from 1750.³⁴

³² Unfortunately, it is unclear exactly how many probate inventories of labourers' goods Muldrew found from 1750-1799. On one page he said that it was 11 and on another 15. Nevertheless, both numbers are small and show that very few exist for the second half of the eighteenth century. Muldrew, *Food*, pp.172 and 194.

³³ John Styles, 'Lodging at the Old Bailey: lodgings and their furnishings in eighteenth-century London', in John Styles and Amanda Vickery (eds.), *Gender, taste, and material culture in Britain and North America 1700-1830* (New Haven, 2006), pp.61-80.

³⁴ Sara Horrell, Jane Humphries and Ken Sneath, 'Consumption conundrums unravelled', *Economic History Review*, 68:3 (2015), pp.830-857; Sara Horrell, Jane Humphries and Ken Sneath, 'Cupidity and crime: consumption as revealed by insights from the Old Bailey records of thefts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', in Mark Casson and Nigar Hashimzade (eds.), *Large databases in economic history: research methods and case studies* (Abingdon, 2013), pp.246-267; Alison Backhouse, *The worm-eaten waistcoat* (York, 2003), pp.77-81; Anne Helmreich, Tim Hitchcock and William J. Turkel, 'Rethinking inventories in the digital age: the case of the Old Bailey', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 11 (2014), pp.1-25.

Although court records allow historians to measure trends in consumption and assess important factors such as choice, fashion and value, they have limitations which are worth noting here. On the whole the sources only capture items which were small and easy for thieves to steal, transport and quickly sell, such as items of clothing, watches and silver spoons. This means that larger items of furniture, such as chests of drawers and feather beds, are seldom recorded.³⁵ It also means that old and mundane items, which were often important to everyday life and household management, are infrequently mentioned since they generally had a lower resale value than luxuries and were more difficult for thieves to sell on. Moreover, most of the studies which assess consumption through theft records are based on digitised Old Bailey records and so only capture London and its environs. Research which uses court records from elsewhere tends to analyse stolen clothing and does not assess household goods.³⁶ This means that we have little understanding of how typical Styles, Horrell et al. and Helmreich et al.'s findings are for other parts of England. If historians were to expand this methodology to courts outside of London the potential findings could be very illuminating for our understanding of regional patterns of consumption.

The most detailed understanding of the poor's consumer behaviour we have is with regards to clothing, following the work of Styles, Beverly Lemire and others. Unfortunately, there is little scope to fully critique and outline the literature here; however, at the risk of oversimplifying, research on ordinary and poor people's clothing has demonstrated that the variety, quality and availability of clothing significantly increased over the eighteenth century. The literature has shown how cotton, clothing accessories and readymade clothing became more important to people and has outlined the numerous informal economies that people used to acquire clothing, such as theft, poor relief and the second-hand trade. Poor men and women increasingly acquired clothing over the eighteenth century for a number of

³⁵ Occasionally larger items were stolen, though much less frequently than other types of goods. For example, out of the 780 cases of theft that Horrell et al. sampled between 1750 and 1821, feather beds were only recorded in 42 cases (5 per cent). Horrell, Humphries and Sneath, 'Conundrums', pp.840 and 850-852.

³⁶ There are occasional exceptions to this. See for example John Styles, *The dress of the people: everyday fashion in eighteenth-century England* (New Haven, 2007), pp.97-107 which uses northern court records to assess watch ownership. For clothing literature which has used court records from different parts of England, see for example: Styles, *Dress*; Beverly Lemire, *Dress, culture and commerce: the English clothing trade before the factory, 1660-1800* (Basingstoke, 1997); Alison Toplis, 'A stolen garment or a reasonable purchase? The male consumer and the illicit second-hand clothing market in the first half of the nineteenth century', in Jon Stobart and Ilja Van Damme (eds.), *Modernity and the second-hand trade: European consumption cultures and practices, 1700-1900* (Basingstoke, 2010), pp.57-72.

reasons, from social and cultural factors including fashion and style to economic reasons such as increased availability, manufacturing improvements and a general decline in the price of textiles.³⁷ The poor's ownership and use of household possessions warrants extensive analysis in a similar manner to that in which historians have scrutinised clothing. After all, the home was where most people's possessions were kept and where they were most often used. The home was also an important scene where people could express themselves and where they could decorate, furnish, use and organise their possessions how they liked.

Aspects of the poor's material culture can also be gleaned from a number of other multifaceted studies. Six strands are particularly worth noting. First, Lemire recently studied plebeian mariners and argued that they were 'reshaping domestic material culture', as they sampled new goods from around the world such as textiles, china and spices, and brought them back to the ports of England where they would often sell or give them away.³⁸ Second, Owens et al. recently analysed the material objects found in the cesspits and privies of a slum area of east London in the mid-nineteenth century. Though the items found in the dig generally only relate to things that were thrown away and were viewed as no longer useful to their owners, the study found that tobacco smoking and tea drinking, as we already know, was common among the poor based on the prevalence of clay pipes, earthenware and tea items that were found there. The findings also greatly aided our understanding of the meanings of material objects. Some of the items recovered in the dig, for example, were love tokens which were traditionally given to lovers as signs of fidelity and commitment.³⁹

³⁷ Styles, *Dress*; John Styles, 'Clothing the north: the supply of non-élite clothing in the eighteenth-century north of England', *Textile History*, 25:2 (1994), pp.139-166; Beverly Lemire, *Fashion's favourite: the cotton trade and the consumer in Britain, 1660-1800* (Oxford, 1991); Lemire, *Dress, culture*; Beverly Lemire, *The business of everyday life: gender, practice and social politics in England, c.1600-1900* (Manchester, 2005); Vivienne Richmond, *Clothing the poor in nineteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 2013); Alison Toplis, *The clothing trade in provincial England 1800-1850* (London, 2011); Jon Stobart and Bruno Blondé (eds.), *Selling textiles in the long eighteenth century: comparative perspectives from western Europe* (Basingstoke, 2014); Horrell, Humphries and Sneath, 'Cupidity', pp.246-267; Steven King, 'Reclothing the English poor, 1750-1840', *Textile History*, 33:1 (2002), pp.37-47; Steven King, "'I Fear You Will Think Me Too Presumptuous in My Demands but Necessity Has No Law": clothing in English pauper letters, 1800-1834', *International Review of Social History*, 54 (2009), pp.207-236; Peter Jones, 'Clothing the poor in early-nineteenth century England', *Textile History*, 37:1 (2006), pp.17-37; Carole Shammas, 'The decline of textile prices in England and America prior to industrialization', *Economic History Review*, 47:3 (1994), pp.483-507.

³⁸ Beverly Lemire, "'Men of the world": British mariners, consumer practice, and material culture in an era of global trade, c.1660-1800', *Journal of British Studies*, 54:2 (2015), pp.288-319.

³⁹ Alastair Owens, Nigel Jeffries, Karen Wehner and Rupert Featherby, 'Fragments of the modern city: material culture and the rhythms of everyday life in Victorian London', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 15:2 (2010), pp.212-

Third, Jonathan White's PhD research has equally suggested that goods such as tea and tobacco became common over the eighteenth century, as contemporary writers debated extensively over whether these goods had a positive or detrimental impact on the lives of the labouring poor.⁴⁰ Fourth, a handful of studies have analysed the material lives of poor people who resided in workhouses and almshouses. Although further case studies are needed, the general consensus is that workhouses of the old poor law were not particularly comfortable but were generally adequate for inmates' material needs.⁴¹ The material conditions of almshouses, on the other hand, could vary considerably from one institution to another.⁴² Fifth, Tim Hitchcock's recent research on the London homeless poor interestingly reminds us that at the same time as some of the poor were consuming a greater range of goods, the homeless often did not even have a bed to sleep in and owned little more than the clothes on their backs.⁴³ Lastly, studies of the consumer behaviour of the poor and labouring sort in European countries, such as the Netherlands, France and Spain, which are often based on underutilised sources, have generally indicated that the poor around Western Europe were increasingly consuming a greater range and quantity of goods just as they did in England, particularly by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.⁴⁴

225. On love tokens also see: Jennine Hurl-Eamon, 'Love tokens: objects as memory for plebeian women in early modern England', *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 6 (2011), pp.181-186.

⁴⁰ Jonathan White, 'Luxury and labour: ideas of labouring-class consumption in eighteenth-century England', PhD thesis (University of Warwick, 2001).

⁴¹ Joseph Harley, 'Material lives of the poor and their strategic use of the workhouse during the final decades of the English old poor law', *Continuity and Change*, 30:1 (2015), pp.71-103; Alannah Tomkins, *The experience of urban poverty, 1732-82: parish, charity and credit* (Manchester, 2006), pp.36-78; Susannah R. Ottaway, *The decline of life: old age in eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 2004), pp.247-276.

⁴² Angela Nicholls, '"A comfortable lodging and one shilling and fourpence a day": the material benefits of an almshouse place', *Family and Community History*, 15:2 (2012), pp.81-94; Alannah Tomkins, 'Retirement from the noise and hurry of the world? The experience of almshouse life', in McEwan and Sharpe, *Accommodating*, pp.263-264, 268 and 272; Alannah Tomkins, 'Almshouse versus workhouse: residential welfare in 18th-century Oxford', *Family and Community History*, 7:1 (2004), pp.45-46 and 56; David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby, *The single homemaker and material culture in the long eighteenth century* (Farnham, 2012), esp. pp.191-200.

⁴³ Hitchcock, *Down and out*, pp.23-48 and 97-123.

⁴⁴ Anne E. C. McCants, 'Poor consumers as global consumers: the diffusion of tea and coffee drinking in the eighteenth century', *Economic History Review*, 61:S1 (2008), pp.172-200; Anne E. C. McCants, 'Porcelain for the poor: the material culture of tea and coffee consumption in eighteenth-century Amsterdam', in Paula Findlen (ed.), *Early modern things: objects and their histories, 1500-1800* (London, 2013), pp.316-341; Daniel Roche, *The people of Paris: an essay in popular culture in the 18th century*, trans. M. Evans and G. Lewis (Leamington Spa, 1987); Daniel Roche, *The culture of clothing: dress and fashion in the ancien régime*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge, 1994); Daniel Roche, *A history of everyday things: the birth of consumption in France, 1600-1800*, trans. Brian Pearce (Cambridge, 2000); Belén Moreno Claverías, 'Lugar de residencia y pautas de consume: El penedés y Barcelona, 1770-1790', *Revista de Historia Industrial*, 15 (2006), pp.136-166; Belén

Although the studies outlined above indicate that the poor increasingly owned more and better goods over the eighteenth century, a less optimistic view on the poor's consumption has prevailed among some economic historians. Arising from the standard of living debate, it has been claimed that labouring people were too poor to afford non-necessities.⁴⁵ In Sara Horrell's study of household budgets, for example, it was argued that the vast majority of working-class expenditure was on basic items such as food and rent, 'leaving very little surplus for discretionary expenditure'. Any consumer gains, she claimed, were short lived.⁴⁶ Economic history has been highly influential and has helped us to understand labouring household priorities and how expensive food was; however in terms of assessing household consumption many of these studies are limited for three reasons. First, economic historians tend to only examine financial expenditure and rarely take into account the numerous informal methods that people used to acquire goods, such as theft, inheritance, credit, gifts, charity, common rights, barter, second-hand purchase and through the parish. Second, through an overreliance on numbers and real wage calculations, economic historians have often neglected to assess social and cultural aspects, such as individual choice, and how people may have stretched their money or credit to afford something even if it did not make financial sense to do so. Finally, economic historians have often based their findings on cost of living indexes which assume that everybody consumed the same types and quantities of certain items. This is a problematic methodology. Candles, for example, are often noted in cost of living indexes, despite the fact that many people used homemade rushlights to light their homes.⁴⁷ To investigate the material lives of the poor, one must use sources which record ownership and not base interpretations primarily on economic factors such as income and cost. Recent research in economic history has

Moreno Claverías, 'Luxury, fashion and peasantry: the introduction of new commodities in rural Catalan, 1670-1790', in Beverly Lemire (ed.), *The force of fashion in politics and society: global perspectives from early modern to contemporary times* (Farnham, 2010), pp.67-93; and the various chapters in John Broad and Anton Schuurman (eds.), *Wealth and poverty in European societies from the sixteenth to nineteenth century* (Turnhout, 2014). Also see: Maegraith and Muldrew, 'Consumption', pp.369-397; de Vries, *Industrious revolution*, pp.151-154.

⁴⁵ Sara Horrell and Jane Humphries, 'Old questions, new data, and alternative perspectives: families' living standards in the industrial revolution', *Journal of Economic History*, 52:4 (1992), pp.849-880; Sara Horrell, 'Home demand and British industrialization', *Journal of Economic History*, 56:3 (1996), pp.561-604; Charles H. Feinstein, 'Pessimism perpetuated: real wages and the standard of living in Britain during and after the industrial revolution', *Journal of Economic History*, 58:3 (1998), pp.625-658. Also see: Hans-Joachim Voth, 'Living standards and the urban environment', in Floud and Johnson, *Cambridge*, pp.268-294.

⁴⁶ Horrell, 'Home demand', pp.561-604.

⁴⁷ See chapter three on this.

started to be more creative and assess the ways in which the poor could consume more and better goods despite their inadequate incomes. The most influential of these approaches is Jan de Vries' concept of an 'industrious revolution', in which households apparently gave up necessities, reallocated their time away from household tasks such as bread making, and worked harder for longer hours, to earn a cash income which could be used to purchase market-produced goods.⁴⁸ The validity of de Vries' theory is being keenly debated by historians and it is currently unclear whether empirical data supports or disproves the concept.⁴⁹

A pessimistic view of the poor is equally common in the literature which has assessed the consumption of food. Scholars such as Carole Shammas and Robert Fogel have typically argued that working people were not able to consume enough calories to sustain hard labour for very long and that their food often had little nutritional value.⁵⁰ The subject of food consumption recently received renewed attention following Muldrew's work on labourers.⁵¹ In addition to arguing that the material lives of labourers was improving, Muldrew controversially claimed that labourers consumed more beer and meat, and thus more calories, than early writers such as Shammas and Fogel suggested. Muldrew acknowledged that there were times when labourers struggled to feed themselves, but argued that this 'was far from constant and incapacitating'.⁵² The issue remains contentious. In the same year that Muldrew published his book, Floud et al. published research which found results that concur more with Shammas and Fogel, despite using similar sources to Muldrew.⁵³ Further work is clearly needed to resolve this debate.

⁴⁸ This theory is explored in most detail in his book, de Vries, *Industrious revolution*.

⁴⁹ For example, see: Muldrew, *Food*; Hans-Joachim Voth, *Time and work in England 1750-1830* (Oxford, 2000); Overton et al., *Production and consumption*; Alexandra Shepard, *Accounting for oneself: worth, status, and the social order* (Oxford, 2015).

⁵⁰ Shammas, *Pre-industrial consumer*, pp.121-156; Robert Fogel, 'New sources and techniques for the study of secular trends in nutritional status, health, mortality, and the process of aging', *Historical Methods*, 26:1 (1993), pp.5-43; Robert Fogel, *The escape from hunger and premature death, 1700-210 Europe, America, and the third world* (Cambridge, 2004).

⁵¹ Muldrew, *Food*.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp.29-162. Also see: de Vries, *Industrious revolution*, pp.116-121.

⁵³ Roderick Floud, Robert W. Fogel, Bernard Harris and Sok Chul Hong, *The changing body: health, nutrition, and human development in the western world since 1700* (Cambridge, 2011). Also see: Roderick Floud [review], 'Craig Muldrew, *Food, energy and the creation of industriousness: work and material culture in agrarian England, 1550-1780* (Cambridge, 2011)', *Economic History Review*, 65:4 (2012), pp.1574-1575; Carole Shammas [review], 'Craig Muldrew, *Food, energy and the creation of industriousness: work and material culture in agrarian England, 1550-1780* (Cambridge, 2011)', *Journal of Modern History*, 84:4 (2012), pp.951-953.

Over the past decade the number of studies on the poor's consumer behaviour has increased to allow us to understand their material lives at a more detailed and nuanced level. With the exception of the literature on clothing, studies on the poor are, however, still lacking in number and there remain uncertainties as to how representative and accurate the results derived from Old Bailey papers, labourers' probate inventories and pauper inventories are. The research of economic historians on the poor has also further complicated the issue. Most of the studies outlined above are based on one specific setting or historical epoch, so we have relatively little understanding of where and when the poor first consumed household goods on a greater scale and how this changed over time. We also have little comprehension of how urban-rural differences and gender affected poor people's ability, propensity and desire to consume. Much of the work conducted on the poor has focused on luxury and non-essential items of the eighteenth century, such as looking glasses and clocks/watches, and so more research is needed to understand what continuities and changes there were in the poor's ownership and use of mundane items that were used for cooking, tending the fireplace and storage, for example. These gaps and uncertainties in the literature can only be addressed through further empirical research.

Thesis aims and scope

With these historiographical issues in mind, the main objective of this research is to assess how the poor's ownership of a wide range of household objects, such as furniture, cooking goods and luxury items, changed over the long eighteenth century (approximately defined as c.1670-1834). The main sources of the thesis are pauper inventories, although other types of inventories made of paupers' possessions such as rent arrears inventories are also used where appropriate. These inventories were found after many months of searching through archive collections. Individual examples from the inventories are selected where relevant and through the use of sources such as pawnbroking records, pauper letters, artefacts, paintings/prints and autobiographies, I discuss the material *lives* of people and do not simply measure levels of consumption. This allows me to consider why paupers consumed certain goods and the wider impact that these changes had on how people moved through their homes and their daily domestic lives, rituals and practices.

Pauper inventories were chosen as the main source of the thesis as they are well suited for systematic analysis. They record a relatively complete and representative picture

of a pauper's entire household belongings, which sources such as court records largely do not. They can be used to systematically analyse how pauper consumption varied across contrasting areas of England. The research of Weatherill, Overton et al. and others has suggested that there were considerable regional differences in the material lives of the English middling sort. Those that lived in London or the Home Counties, for instance, tended to own a much greater range of possessions than those that lived in remote and rural areas, such as Cornwall and Cumbria.⁵⁴ Since few studies have assessed the effect that regional factors had on the poor's material goods,⁵⁵ it is very important to take this approach here. Dorset, Kent, Lancashire and Norfolk were chosen as case studies as they each had contrasting geographical, economic, social and demographic characteristics. Due to a lack of sources from Lancashire, however, the main focus is on Dorset, Kent and Norfolk.⁵⁶ Pauper inventories also allow one to systematically analyse the effect that gender and urban-rural location had on people's desires and abilities to consume. Each of these were important factors that affected and influenced middling and elite consumption,⁵⁷ however they have rarely been explored with regards to the poor. The core research questions of this thesis are:

1. What changes and continuities were there in the poor's ownership of household possessions over the long eighteenth century?
2. How did the changing complexion of pauper household goods affect domestic life?
3. To what extent did consumption of household goods show regional variation?
4. To what extent did living in urban/rural areas and differences of gender affect the material lives of poor people?

It is important to also explain what this thesis does not discuss. This research is primarily concerned with household goods and does not examine well-covered topics such as clothing consumption. The many formal and informal ways in which the poor acquired

⁵⁴ Weatherill, *Material culture*, esp. pp.43-69; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*.

⁵⁵ For an excellent exception to this, see Styles, 'Clothing the north', pp.139-166.

⁵⁶ See chapter two for further details on the counties and why this approach was taken.

⁵⁷ The secondary literature on middling and elite urban/rural differences and gender is discussed at length in chapter five. There are of course exceptions and further nuances, but this literature in brief has tended to find that people who lived in urban areas tended to own greater varieties of goods than rural people did. With regards to gender, the literature suggests that women tended to have had a greater emotional connection to their possessions and consumed more luxury and decorative items than men.

their goods, such as through retail or illicit methods, are only mentioned infrequently and are not systematically analysed. De Vries' idea of an 'industrious revolution' has been highly influential over the past twenty years and has importantly brought both the rich and poor into the field of consumption studies.⁵⁸ This thesis, however, does not engage centrally with the concept, despite its historiographical importance, for three reasons. First, because pauper inventories are largely made of the goods of people who were old and often infirm or sick, they were no longer as industrious as they used to be and so are an inadequate group through which to assess the validity of the concept. Second, the model of the nuclear family was central to de Vries' theory,⁵⁹ however because many of the people in the inventories were often old, widowed, single and not living with any children, they are not a suitable group. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this study does not discuss household production and labour such as spinning and brewing, and concentrates on the consumption of goods such as beds, cooking items and luxury goods.⁶⁰ This means that I am only discussing part of the household and cannot determine the extent to which household production and labour declined as more market-produced goods were bought.

Thesis structure

In order to achieve these aims, the following research is split into seven chapters. The next chapter (two) discusses sources and methodology. It answers a range of questions regarding how, why, when and where pauper inventories and other types of inventories were made and whose goods they tended to be made of, in order to clearly outline the advantages and disadvantage of using these inventories to assess the material lives of the poor. Through this, the chapter also aids our understanding of the nature of poor relief and the relationship between the parish and the indigent. Terminology and the economic, social, demographic and urban backgrounds of Dorset, Kent and Norfolk are also discussed.

Chapters three and four analyse the values, numbers, types and conditions of items that were recorded in the Dorset, Kent and Norfolk pauper inventories from the late seventeenth century to the end of the old poor law. The research starts by counting the numbers of items in the inventories and analysing the values of pauper possessions. Items

⁵⁸ Maegraith and Muldrew, 'Consumption', p.374.

⁵⁹ de Vries, *Industrious revolution*, esp. pp.9-19.

⁶⁰ The decision to not research household production and labour was made to keep the project manageable and ensure that I did not go over the word limit.

that relate to furniture, the hearth, cooking, lighting, tableware, dining, tea and luxury goods are discussed across both chapters. This quantitative analysis is followed by linguistic analysis of the terms used to describe the pauper goods previously itemised. Other sources such as pawnbroking records, pauper letters and autobiographies are used throughout both chapters to contextualise the inventory findings. Examples of surviving artefacts and pictorial sources are also utilised where they are comparable to the items described in the inventories. This methodology helps one to gain a comprehensive picture of the home and infer utility, appearance and the personal significance of the items to the owners. Both chapters collectively indicate that the material lives of the poor were improving over the long eighteenth century. Most of these improvements appear to have come after 1770 and can be measured through the increased ownership of a range of goods such as chests of drawers, seating, tableware and luxury goods. These changes appear to have often had a considerable impact on the lives of the poor. The evidence from surviving inventories, for example, strongly suggests that there were increasing levels of comfort in the homes of paupers through the increased ownership of items such as feather beds and chairs. Domestic rituals and practices also appear to have changed considerably, as paupers switched to earthenware and increasingly drank tea and used cutlery. The results from the pauper inventories suggest that these changes were most pronounced in Kent. This was primarily because people who lived in Kent enjoyed a number of advantages that people who lived in Dorset and Norfolk did not, such as better transport links and a more sophisticated commercial economy. They were also more exposed to the economic and cultural influence of London. Through the analysis of goods such as fuel, food and new consumer items, these chapters also aid our understanding of a number of other important historical topics, such as coal use, the standard of living debate and the production of consumer goods.

Chapter five assesses the influence that gender and urban-rural differences had on consumer behaviour in Dorset, Kent and Norfolk. The findings from the pauper inventories suggest that women and paupers of both sexes who lived in urban areas owned greater numbers of luxury and decorative goods than men and people who lived in rural areas respectively. It is important not to exaggerate the effects that gender and urban-rural differences had on consumer behaviour, however, since ownership of a wide range and

variety of other goods regardless of gender or location can still be found despite these general patterns.

Chapter 2: Sources and Methodology

This thesis utilises a range of different inventories found among parish and miscellaneous archival records which have rarely been used by historians. As a consequence, there exist only a few scattered pages around the secondary literature which critique their usefulness as historical evidence.¹ An additional and unfortunate result of this lack of research is that there are now a number of misconceptions and inaccuracies in the literature. For example, Giorgio Riello claimed that paupers would help appraisers by placing all of their possessions in one room when a parish official came to make an inventory of their goods.² In actual fact, there is no evidence to suggest that this happened and it is much more likely that paupers obstructed the process rather than helped. Adrian Green recently studied Norfolk 'pauper inventories', but did not appreciate that the inventories needed to be checked against wider parish sources to determine to whom the goods in the inventories belonged or why the inventories had been made. Consequently, around one-third of his sample was made up of non-pauper inventories and was inclusive of wealthier members of society who did not receive any relief from the parish.³ As this chapter will demonstrate, the numerous inventories found among parish records are complex and need to be cross-referenced with other sources to categorise each of them and determine whether the people in them were on relief when their goods were appraised. This chapter answers a range of questions regarding how, why, when and where these inventories were made and whose goods they tended to be made of. This research is ultimately used to assess the advantages and disadvantage of using inventories from parish records to examine material life, but also has implications for our understanding of the nature of poor relief and the relationship between the parish and the indigent. It is hoped that this chapter will help to correct a number of inaccuracies in the literature and inform future historians who may use parish-related inventories.

This chapter starts by summarising the numerous types of inventories that are found among parish and miscellaneous archival records. The chapter then concentrates on pauper

¹ The most detailed of these are: King, 'Pauper inventories', pp.157-161; Harley, 'Material lives', pp.74-77; Joseph Harley, 'Consumption and the life-cycle of English paupers: the perspective from Essex, 1750-1834', MA thesis (University of Warwick, 2011), pp.26-42; Tomkins, *Urban poverty*, pp.65-66.

² Giorgio Riello, "'Things seen and unseen': The material culture of early modern inventories and their representation of domestic interiors', in Findlen, *Early modern*, p.134.

³ Green, 'Heartless', pp.69-101.

inventories, which are the principal source used in this thesis. I discuss how and why pauper inventories were made and assess what types of possessions were listed in them. It is subsequently argued that they are a revealing and representative source which can be used to assess the poor's material lives. The chapter then briefly critiques the other types of inventories that I use more infrequently throughout the thesis. This is done to help future researchers identify each type of inventory and offer basic background information regarding how and why they were made. The chapter ends by discussing the terminology that will be used in the thesis and summarises basic background information on the counties under study.

Parish records and inventories

The inventories located among parish archival records are very difficult to find and use. A sample of 1,356 inventories from four different counties was found for this thesis. It took over four months of archival work to locate and photograph the inventories and sources such as overseers' accounts and vestry minutes which related to the people in the inventories. These photographs were then analysed away from the record offices. The majority of inventories found were not documented in archive catalogues and were mostly located through the laborious task of looking through hundreds of thousands of pages of overseers' accounts, bills, receipts and vouchers, vestry minutes, churchwardens' accounts and workhouse records. It is thus hardly surprising that very few researchers have used these sources and that they have only been used to study certain counties, where their respective record offices have gone to greater lengths to catalogue them such as Essex Record Office.⁴ Despite this, the inventories found among parish and miscellaneous records have been known about by historians for decades as there are brief references to them throughout the secondary literature.⁵

⁴ King, 'Pauper inventories', pp.155-191; Harley, 'Consumption'.

⁵ Some of the most notable include: William M. Palmer, *Meldreth parish records* (Royston, 1896), pp.41-42; Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *English local government: English poor law history*, Part 1: *The old poor law* (London, 1927), p.169; F. M. Emmison, *The relief of the poor at Eaton Socon, 1706-1834* (Aspley Guise, 1933), pp.30 and 33-34; Hampson, *Treatment*, pp.79-80, 83, 108-109, 182-183, 185 and 276-277; W. E. Tate, *The parish chest: a study of the records of parochial administration in England* (Cambridge, 3rd ed., 1969), pp.207 and 303 endnote 33; A. E. Newman, 'The old poor law in east Kent, 1606-1834: a social and demographic analysis', PhD thesis (University of Kent, 1979), pp.153-154; Geoffrey W. Oxley, *Poor relief in England and Wales 1601-1834* (London, 1974), pp.97-98; Boulton, 'Going', pp.35-36; Kent, 'Middling', pp.34-35; Kent and King, 'Changing', pp.137-139; King, *Poverty and welfare*, pp.93-97; Hindle, *On the parish*, pp.189, 281-282 and 450.

Table 2.1: Types of inventories found among parish and miscellaneous archival collections, c.1643-1841

	Dorset	Kent	Lancashire	Norfolk	Total
Pauper inventories	60	61	11	230	362
Unknown	23	77	26	118	244
Goods-given	5	55	72	51	183
Poorhouse/workhouse contents	11	101	8	31	151
Debt-related (rates, rent, unknown debt)	13	58	37	34	142
Goods-taken	10	47	26	28	111
Poorhouse/workhouse admittance-related	40	20	1	7	68
Other	1	37	1	23	62
Almshouse-related	0	3	0	13	16
Family abandonment	0	4	7	3	14
Bastardy-related	1	0	1	1	3
Total	164	463	190	539	1356

Table 2.1 records the types of inventories I found whilst searching the record offices of Dorset, Kent, Lancashire and Norfolk. This is the largest sample of pauper inventories and other parish-related inventories ever assembled. Each inventory was related to wider parish sources such as overseers' accounts, quarter sessions papers and vestry minutes to determine why they were made and whose belongings they were made of. It was imperative to do this as many of the inventories looked very similar to one another; however once they were checked against other sources many were clearly made for very different reasons. 244 of the inventories have been omitted from the thesis ('unknown' inventories) as I could not find the relevant background information to classify them and determine whose goods were appraised. It is probable that many of these unknown inventories were pauper inventories; however I could not find the evidence to prove this.

It is important to point out that, with the exception of pauper inventories and poorhouse/workhouse admittance-related inventories, many of the inventories recorded in table 2.1 listed the goods of people who were clearly not poor, based on the fact that they spent large amounts of money on taxes, received no poor relief or help from charities, and

sometimes had many hundreds of pounds worth of stock and goods. Historians have characterised people as 'poor' based on numerous factors such as income, occupation, whether they were in receipt of poor relief or charity, and whether they were exempt from taxes such as poor rates. This thesis, however, concentrates on people who received regular and casual poor relief during the old poor law: paupers. This is because sources such as overseers' papers and vestry minutes allow one to systematically assess whether someone was on relief or not; whereas there are few comparable sources which allow one to determine whether the broader sample of inventories were made of people who were 'poor' (broadly defined to include the labouring sort, people who were exempt from taxes and people who received private charity or poor relief) or whether they were of the middling sort or higher. This methodology potentially introduces new problems as most people received poor relief for only relatively short periods of time,⁶ meaning that the results from the inventories are most relevant to people during only brief periods of their lives. The relationship between different groups of the poor is also complex and it is difficult to tell whether someone who was 'poor' lived a similar material life to someone who was on poor relief.⁷ Nonetheless, the decision to focus on paupers was necessary as the sample of 1,356 inventories from Dorset, Kent, Lancashire and Norfolk is very complex and includes a number of people who were clearly not poor. The definition of 'pauper' and 'poor' is discussed further below.⁸ The next section will evaluate pauper inventories, before concentrating on the other inventories recorded in table 2.1.

⁶ Hindle, *On the parish*, esp. pp.10, 227-299 and 361-449; Samantha Williams, 'Poor relief, labourers' households and living standards in rural England c.1700-1834: a Bedfordshire case study', *Economic History Review*, 58:3 (2005), p.504; Samantha A. Shave, 'The dependent poor? (Re)constructing the lives of individuals "on the parish" in rural Dorset, 1800-1832', *Rural History*, 20:1 (2009), p.86; Henry French, 'An irrevocable shift: detailing the dynamics of rural poverty in southern England, 1762-1834', *Economic History Review*, 68:3 (2015), pp.777, 785 and 797-805.

⁷ Alysa Levene, 'General introduction', in Steven King, Thomas Nutt and Alannah Tomkins (eds.), *Narratives of the poor in eighteenth-century Britain*. Vol. 1: *Voices of the poor: poor law depositions and letters* (London, 2006), pp.xv-xvi; J. R. Poynter, *Society and pauperism: English ideas on poor relief, 1795-1834* (London, 1969); Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The idea of poverty: England in the early industrial age* (London, 1984); Lynn Hollen Lees, *The solidarities of strangers: the English poor laws and the people, 1700-1948* (Cambridge, 1998), pp.39-41.

⁸ In the 'terminology: pauper and poor' section below.

Pauper inventories

Pauper inventories are the principal source of this thesis.⁹ Therefore, this section will now discuss basic background information such as how and why they were made and the advantages and disadvantages of using them. It is argued that pauper inventories are one of the most representative and accurate sources we have to study the material lives of the poor.

Geographical background

Poor law officials made pauper inventories to record the possessions that a pauper owned at one point in time. The paupers would then continue to use their goods and at a later date, usually when they died, the goods would revert back to the parish when they would be sold, given to other paupers as relief in kind or be used to furnish the parish poorhouse/workhouse. Some parishes also took paupers' lands and homes,¹⁰ though much more rarely since few people owned their own properties.¹¹ The vast majority of pauper inventories were written by overseers, sometimes assisted by churchwardens or members of the vestry. Although it is impossible to precisely determine how widespread the inventorying of paupers' goods was, I have been able to find evidence that it happened in at least a handful of parishes in most English counties. Proof that the practice happened in Denmark and Prussia has also been found.¹² The system probably operated in parts of Wales where poor law statutes were identical. Unfortunately, it is unclear if a similar practice happened in Scotland and Ireland, which operated under a different poor law system to England and Wales. The potential for further research on other countries is clearly considerable.

This thesis concentrates on England and in particular the counties of Dorset, Kent and Norfolk to draw broad regional lines regarding English pauper material wealth. Inventories from Essex and Lancashire are also used occasionally but to a much lesser

⁹ See the bibliography for the reference numbers of the pauper inventories used in the thesis.

¹⁰ See for instance the 1804 vestry minutes of Tetney, Lincolnshire, in John Wild, *Tetney, Lincolnshire: a history* (Grimsby, 1901), pp.95-96. Also see John Broad, 'Housing the rural poor in southern England, 1650-1850', *Agricultural History Review*, 48:2 (2000), p.166.

¹¹ Amanda Vickery estimated that only around one in ten people owned their own homes. Moreover, those who owned their own homes are likely to have been the middling sort and elite. Vickery, *Behind*, p.7.

¹² BPP, 1834, XXXIX.1, *Report from his Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the poor laws. Appendix F: Foreign Communications*, pp.xvii, 149, 287 and 457.

degree.¹³ It is very difficult to determine the extent to which the inventories from each county exist today as a result of chance or whether they can be taken to reflect actual regional differences. Nonetheless, table 2.1 suggests that despite finding evidence that pauper inventories were made around the country, the frequency with which the practice happened could vary considerably. For Norfolk I found 230 pauper inventories. Large numbers of pauper inventories were also drawn up in nearby Essex.¹⁴ For the northern county of Lancashire, on the other hand, only 11 pauper inventories were located. Similarly, very few inventories are found in Durham.¹⁵ This difference is especially striking when one considers the methodology I used for searching the archives. For Dorset, Kent and Lancashire, I searched through nearly every poor law record I could find looking for categorised and uncategorised inventories. However, because the inventories were so abundant for Norfolk, I had to be more selective and took the decision to concentrate on the inventories which were listed in the archive catalogue. This is a clear regional difference between the counties and cannot be explained purely by arbitrary record survival. Poor law officials also made pauper inventories in Dorset and Kent, but not to the same extent as parishes in Norfolk and Essex. Unfortunately, due to the limits of time and space, I was unable to sample a Midlands county. Nevertheless, these findings overall suggest that pauper inventories were most common in the east and south of England. Then moving northwards and westwards through the midlands to the north, the practice became gradually less common.

Historians have commonly found that poor law practice was different between the south and north of England. In the south paupers could expect to receive more relief from a better funded poor law system, whilst in the north people appear to have received lower allowances and found it harder to get relief.¹⁶ Having one's goods inventoried essentially guaranteed many people relief and so these findings corroborate other researchers' findings

¹³ The discussion of the Essex pauper inventories is based on my MA research and Peter King's work on the county: King, 'Pauper inventories', pp.155-191; Harley, 'Consumption'. Lancashire is not discussed as extensively as Dorset, Kent and Norfolk as I was only able to find 11 pauper inventories from the county.

¹⁴ King, 'Pauper inventories', pp.155-191; Harley, 'Consumption'.

¹⁵ Green, 'Heartless', p.81.

¹⁶ King, *Poverty and welfare*; Steven King, 'Welfare regimes and welfare regions in Britain and Europe, c.1750s to 1860s', *Journal of Modern European History*, 9:1 (2011), pp.42-65; K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor: social change and agrarian England, 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 1985), pp.104-107; Paul Slack, *Poverty and policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1988), p.179; Hindle, *On the parish*, pp.282-295; Samantha Williams, *Poverty, gender and life-cycle under the English poor law 1760-1834* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp.66 and 160-162.

that the poor law was broadly different in the north and south of England. Unfortunately, as a result of this broad regional picture, the items listed in northern and southern pauper inventories may be too dissimilar to allow for comparisons across the whole of England. If it was harder to get poor relief in the north then people may have had to use informal economies such as begging more often and sell off more of their goods to make ends meet before they were entitled to relief,¹⁷ resulting in northern pauper inventories listing fewer goods than those from the south. Additionally, it is possible that more pauper inventories were made in the south and east as there were greater levels of social inequality there compared to the north. Leigh Shaw-Taylor's recent work has shown that there were considerably more male farm workers for every farmer in the south and east of England than in the north. This probably meant that there was a greater social divide between labourers and employers/major ratepayers and may have meant that the idea of appraising paupers' goods was more prevalent among southern and eastern vestries than northern vestries.¹⁸ Further work is needed to determine the extent to which each of these factors influenced the making of pauper inventories. Nonetheless, for these reasons and due to a lack of pauper inventories and other types of inventories that survive for Lancashire, the results from the county are statistically flawed and very difficult to study alongside Dorset, Kent and Norfolk. Consequently, the Lancashire inventories are primarily used in this chapter as they allow us to understand how parishes inventoried paupers' goods across England, but are not used for quantitative analysis in chapters which assess pauper material lives.

Legal background

Lorie Charlesworth recently argued that historians have concentrated too much on the local application of poor relief and have habitually neglected to assess the national legal underpinnings of the poor laws. As a consequence of this, she argued that historians have misread statute and failed to acknowledge that the poor had an absolute and legally

¹⁷ King, *Poverty and welfare*, esp. pp.94-96; Steven King, 'Making the most of opportunity: the economy of makeshifts in the early modern north', in Steven King and Alannah Tomkins, *The poor in England 1700-1850: an economy of makeshifts* (Manchester, 2003), pp.228-257.

¹⁸ Leigh Shaw-Taylor, 'The rise of agrarian capitalism and the decline of family farming in England', *Economic History Review*, 65:1 (2012), pp.26-60. Also see: Peter King and Richard Ward, 'Rethinking the bloody code in eighteenth-century Britain: capital punishment at the centre and on the periphery', *Past and Present*, 228 (2015), pp.198-199.

enshrined right to relief, rather than simply a right to *apply* for relief.¹⁹ Under the old poor law there was no legal statute which allowed parishes to inventory and take paupers' goods in return for relief. The practice of making pauper inventories is thus a particularly pertinent parish policy to highlight as it demonstrates that local practice was often more important than the national legal framework of the poor law. In fact, there were more laws which allowed authorities to seize the goods of parish officials than there were laws relating to the possessions of paupers.²⁰ The impetus to make pauper inventories instead came from local systems of normative ordering created from the discretion and initiative of local parish officials and vestrymen.²¹

Local parishes often felt that they were legally justified in taking paupers' goods despite having no legal right to do so. Some parish officials, for instance, among the opening lines of inventories wrote that the goods were appraised in a 'lawful' or 'legal' manner.²² Some parishes made paupers sign legal documents which stated that the parish was entitled to their goods because they had given them relief. One document related to Francis Windswift of Lenham in Kent, for example, said that 'in Consideration of the severall Kindnesses & moneys Received of[f] Rich Wakley Churchwarden and Wm: Belcher Gent: overseer... [she] have Bargained Sold: Set over & Deliver[ed]' her goods to them. Francis signed her name with a very imprecise 'W', suggesting that the document was not authored by her despite it being written in the first person.²³ Samuel Hunt had a similar written

¹⁹ Lorie Charlesworth, *Welfare's forgotten past: a socio-legal history of the poor law* (Abingdon, 2010).

²⁰ For example, parish officials could have their goods distrained to pay fines if they were charged with neglecting their duties, not making paupers wear badges, not keeping accurate accounts, or refusing somebody relief who had an order from a justice. See: William Dickinson, *A practical exposition of the law relative to the office and duties of a justice of the peace*, Vol. 2 (London, 1813), p.720; Thomas Walter Williams, *The whole law relative to the duty and office of a justice of the peace*, Vol. 3 (London, 3rd ed., 1812), pp.354, 603, 694, 696 and 708; Williams, *Law*, Vol. 4, pp.315-316 and 950; Giles Jacob, *The compleat parish-officer* (London, 10th ed., 1744), pp.89, 144 and 186; Michael Nolan, *A treatise of the laws for the relief and settlement of the poor*, Vol. 3 (London, 4th ed., 1825), pp.64-66, 127-128 and 151. Also see: Lees, *Solidarities*, p.25 where Lees argues that overseers' 'energy and attention [was] coerced by fines for negligence and dishonesty'.

²¹ On discretionary local application of the law and normative ordering, see: Peter King, *Crime, justice and discretion in England 1740-1820* (Oxford, 2000); Peter King, 'The summary courts and social relations in eighteenth-century England', *Past and Present*, 183 (2004), pp.125-172; Peter King, *Crime and law in England, 1750-1840: remaking justice from the margins* (Cambridge, 2006); David Sugarman and G. R. Rubin, 'Towards a new history of the law and material society in England 1750-1914', in G. R. Rubin and David Sugarman (eds.), *Law, economy and society, 1750-1914: essays in the history of English law* (Abingdon, 1984), pp.47-52.

²² For example, the pauper inventory of Francis Karrington notes that the inventory was made 'as y^e Law requires'. NRO PD 358/41 Shelton overseers' accounts, 1670-1734.

²³ KHL C P224/18/18 Lenham household goods for kindnesses and money received, 1727. Also see: Boulton, 'Going', pp.35-36.

agreement with the parish of St. Mary's in the Marsh in Norwich. It was made when he started receiving casual relief and stated that:

I do hereby Acknowledge that y^e above Goods Furniture and Things are in my Possessions and that the same are the property of the Officers of y^e Parish of S^t Mary in y^e Marsh in y^e Close and I do promise not to Embezzle any [goods] thereof and that I will deliver up y^e same to y^e Officers of y^e said Parish of S^t Mary in y^e Marsh when I am call'd upon so to do²⁴

This was clearly a device that some poor law officials used to legally take parishioners' goods and avoid prosecution.

Most parishes did not go to the trouble of creating legal agreements and some justices of the peace even supported the inventorying of pauper goods, despite the fact that parishes lacked the requisite legal authority to do so. Though probably relating to workhouse admittance-related inventories, Deal borough quarter sessions in 1722 recorded that:

It is ordered that wee person or persons whatsoever applying to the proper officers of the s^d Town of Deal for Releife Shall receive any Weekly Allowance untill that the said Officers shall have taken an account of what Goods and Effects Such persons have and there order be reccieved to the Town house appointed for the Same[?] up and then Ecched into a Book there kept & belong to the said house and the persons there to be kept according to the Rules of the said house.²⁵

The frequency with which the poor appealed to local justices to complain about their goods being inventoried probably varied regionally and depended upon how proactive and understanding their local justice was.²⁶ Moreover, it is possible that some of the poor were not aware of their legal right to appeal to justices or may have been fearful of retribution or an unfavourable decision, such as the refusal of relief or being forced into the workhouse, if they complained to a justice.²⁷ Nonetheless, where evidence is found it appears that when

²⁴ NRO PD 499/79 Norwich inventories, 1734-1772.

²⁵ KHLc De/JQs1 Deal quarter sessions book, 1719-1778.

²⁶ Peter King and Steven King have found that the appeals system was less prevalent in the north of England. There is also evidence to suggest that some paupers chose to voice their appeals to sympathetic local magistrates and refused to see less liberal ones. Peter King, 'The rights of the poor and the role of the law: the impact of pauper appeals to the summary courts, 1750-1834', in Peter Jones and Steven King (eds.), *Obligation, entitlement and dispute under the English poor laws, 1600-1900* (Cambridge, 2015), pp.252-253, 257 and 260-261; King, *Poverty and Welfare*, pp.31-32. Also see: Paul Langford, *Public life and the propertied Englishman 1689-1798* (Oxford, 1991), pp.367-436.

²⁷ Although it is difficult to accurately determine the numbers of people who knew about their right to appeal to justices, the current state of research suggests that the majority of paupers had a decent understanding of the poor laws which they used to negotiate relief. K. D. M. Snell, *Parish and belonging: community, identity*

most justices learned that a parish was inventorying paupers' goods, they ordered parishes to stop.²⁸ Legal cases were sometimes brought against overseers by paupers or their relatives who had goods taken from them.²⁹ In 1814 the justice Samuel Whitbread stopped the parish of Wilstead, Surrey, from taking 'an old bed and sheets' from John Monday.³⁰ The autobiography of the labourer Joseph Mayett records one instance when the parish took his deceased brother's possessions. Instead of letting this happen, Mayett went to the overseer and 'told him if he did not deliver everything into my hands the next morning I would put the law in force against him'. The threat of the law worked and the following morning the overseer 'Came and delivered them up to me and my youngest brother'.³¹ Unsurprisingly, none of the pauper inventories listed a justice as one of the appraisers or witnesses as they would have probably stopped the process.

A very detailed example of a justice stopping a parish from taking a pauper's belongings can be found for Wingham in Kent. It was written by a local justice, Edward Mills, and regarded the pauper John Beach, who had received a weekly allowance of 1s. 6d. or 2s. from the parish of Wingham for 20 years. John's daughter Ann and her husband forced John out of his home and took his possessions following Ann's constant abuse and beatings of him. The parish claimed that Ann had no right to the goods as they had been promised to the parish around 10-12 years ago. An inventory had been made to prove this.³² The justice ruled that Ann could not keep John's belongings, but also questioned whether the parish had the right to take these goods in the first place. Mills decided that parishes had no right to inventory and take paupers' goods to reimburse themselves for some of the money that they had previously paid out in relief. He also said that parishes could not use the act of 5 Geo I c.8. 1718-19, which allowed parishes to distrain the goods of runaway parents or partners, to justify the taking of paupers' goods.³³ Instead the justice proposed that parishes

and welfare in England and Wales (Cambridge, 2006), pp.87-93; Steven King, 'Negotiating the law of poor relief in England, 1800-1840', *History*, 96:324 (2011), pp.410-435; King, 'Pauper appeals', pp.253-254.

²⁸ Though much more research is needed, recent work by Peter King has shown that most paupers were successful when they complained to magistrates about their relief. King, 'Pauper appeals', pp.235-262.

²⁹ Kent and King, 'Changing', p.137; Boulton, 'Going', pp.35-36.

³⁰ Alan F. Cirket (ed.), *Samuel Whitbread's notebooks 1810-11, 1813-14* (Bedford, 1971), p.125.

³¹ Ann Kussmaul (ed.), *The autobiography of Joseph Mayett of Quainton (1783-1839)* (Chesham, 1986), pp.83-84.

³² Unfortunately this inventory does not appear to have survived.

³³ For more information on this, see below.

should make people sell off their belongings before they received relief.³⁴ Mills also said that any goods in the possession of a pauper at death should go to whomever they had nominated in their wills or should go to their nearest relatives.³⁵ From the perspective of the legality of the practice, this example is particularly interesting as it suggests that some justices were aware that the appraising and taking of paupers' goods was illegal and that if they saw such abuses they stopped them. In addition, the fact that Mills had to point out that parishes were not allowed to use the act of 5 Geo I c.8. 1718-19 to take pauper goods, suggests that some parishes manipulated existing statute to justify their actions.

The examples of pauper inventories clearly indicate that local practice was often more important than the national legal framework of the poor law as Charlesworth argued, since parishes on the ground would ignore the law and inventory paupers' goods. Equally it suggests that paupers did not have an absolute right to relief in practice, but that relief was conditional and could be withheld if they did not allow the parish to inventory their belongings.³⁶

Why did parishes make pauper inventories?

The question of why parishes made pauper inventories is potentially very difficult to answer since every inventory was made at a local level under the initiative and discretion of parish officials and vestrymen.³⁷ Despite this, two key reasons emerge. The first and most important of these was financial. Many of these paupers cost considerable amounts of money to relieve and so the inventorying of their goods was a method that parishes used to make money and get paupers to contribute towards their own relief. Although the amounts that parishes received from pauper belongings was generally small, symbolically these sums of money were probably very important to many ratepayers. Secondly, the attitudes of ratepayers and parish officials appear to have been very important in underpinning their decisions to inventory the goods of paupers. Sometimes paupers' goods were inventoried for benevolent reasons, as it guaranteed many people relief until they died and it meant

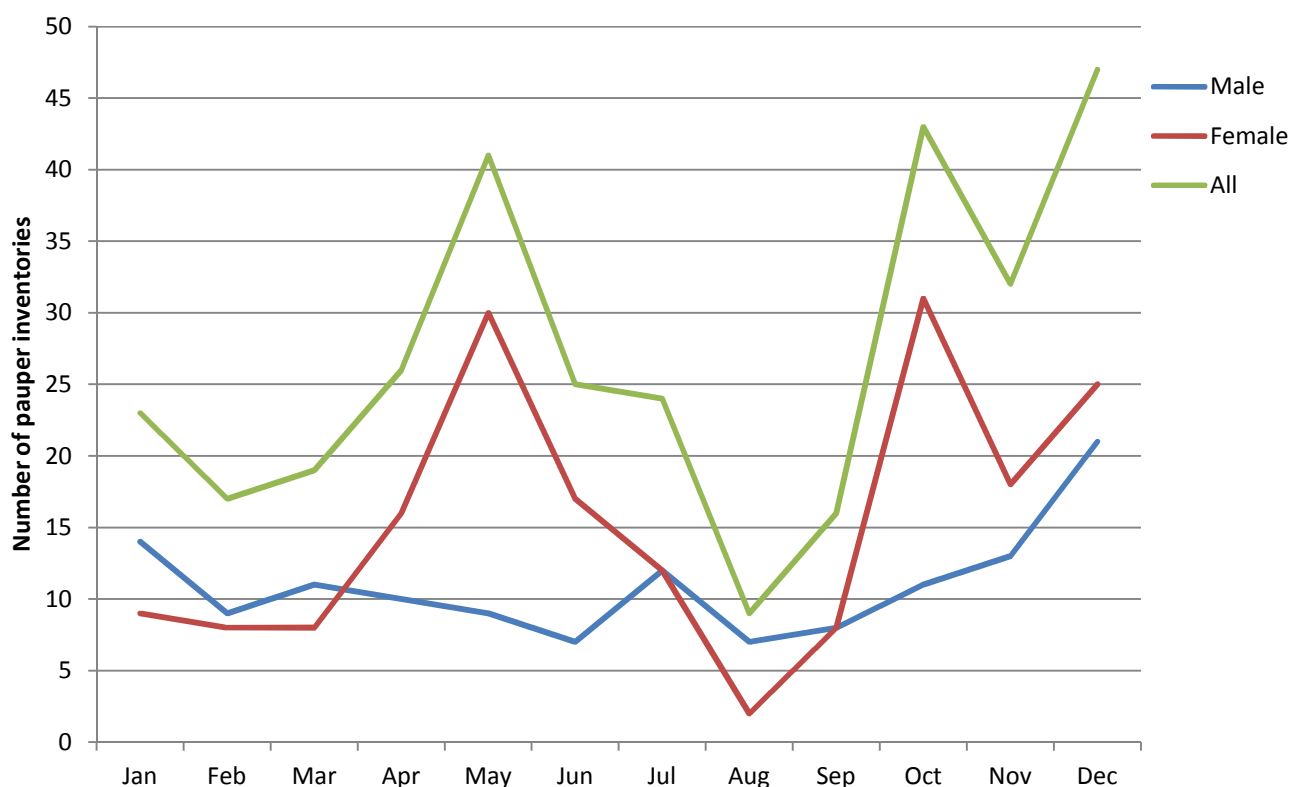
³⁴ The forced selling of belongings is discussed further below.

³⁵ CCAL U3/269/16/1 Wingham case for opinion, 1766.

³⁶ Other historians have equally been very critical of Charlesworth's arguments: Steven King, [review], 'Lorie Charlesworth, *Welfare's forgotten past: a socio-legal history of the poor law* (Abingdon, 2010)', *Rural History*, 22:2 (2011), pp.271-273; Jonathan Healy, *The first century of welfare: poverty and poor relief in Lancashire, 1620-1730* (Woodbridge, 2014), pp.18-19.

³⁷ See note 21.

Figure 2.1: Months when the Dorset, Kent, Lancashire and Norfolk pauper inventories were made, c.1679-1834



that they did not have to sell off their possessions before they were entitled to relief. However, although there is some chronological overlap, parishes appear to have increasingly inventoried people's belongings in a more punitive manner and used it as a method to control the numbers of people on poor relief by the late eighteenth century.

Figure 2.1 shows the months when the pauper inventories from Dorset, Kent, Lancashire and Norfolk were made. The graph shows a fascinating representation of how parish priorities changed over the course of the year. The fewest pauper inventories were made in August. This is unsurprising considering that around 80 per cent of the inventories came from rural areas and that August was when agricultural seasonal unemployment was generally lowest and when fewer people needed parish relief.³⁸ In the winter months seasonal unemployment increased and there is a corresponding increase in the number of pauper inventories made in December.³⁹ One should not take this point too far though, since only a relatively small number of inventories were made in the winter months of

³⁸ Snell, *Annals*, pp.15-66. On urban/rural differences, see chapter five.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.15-66.

January and February. Most importantly, the months of May and October appear to have been very prominent months when pauper inventories were made, which suggests that seasonal unemployment was a lesser factor in influencing parishes to inventory paupers' belongings. The months of May and October are particularly interesting as it was around these times in the year when rates were assessed and collected. Vestries checked overseers' accounts around these months and sometimes they realised that they had spent too much money on poor relief or that they needed additional funds to support the poor over the next 6-12 months. Likewise, it was around these months when most new overseers were appointed and many of these would have had ideas of their own to reduce the amounts of rates that people paid. Arguments, disagreements and conflicts over money at vestry meetings were ubiquitous across the country.⁴⁰ Overseers and many large ratepayers appear to have consequently often welcomed the inventorying of pauper goods in the hope that it would reduce rates and ensure that the poor contributed something towards their own relief.

Interesting gendered nuances can be seen in figure 2.1. Keith Snell found that before 1750 women's agricultural work was most widely available during the harvest and least secure during the winter, but that between 1751-1792 women's work gradually changed to the spring in the south and east of England.⁴¹ Because around half of the female pauper inventories were made before 1750 (and 66 per cent were made before 1760), these results broadly support Snell's arguments that most women's work was at the harvest before the later eighteenth century, since parishes made the fewest pauper inventories in August as most women were less reliant on poor relief. The making of male pauper inventories, on the other hand, was relatively consistent over the year with only a slight increase at the end of the year when seasonal unemployment increased. Women tended to receive the bulk of poor relief in parishes around the country and so it is unsurprising that when overseers reviewed their accounts around May and October to see who cost the most money that women were at the forefront. Men, on the other hand, were generally viewed as less deserving of relief than women and were viewed with more suspicion over the course of the

⁴⁰ On rate-paying arguments, see: Hindle, *On the parish*, pp.365-378.

⁴¹ Snell, *Annals*, pp.19-22. If there were greater numbers of female pauper inventories for the late eighteenth century, it would have been very interesting to have assessed whether parishes made fewer pauper inventories during the spring rather than August.

year, meaning that there was less of a cyclical influence on the inventorying of male pauper goods. In this sense, pauper inventories may have also been made to deter men from applying for relief.

Appraisers sometimes mentioned how the money expended on somebody had influenced their decision to inventory their goods. Such evidence strongly suggests that because paupers were given relief the parish felt entitled to their possessions. In Staplehurst, Kent, for instance, the goods of Hannah Bean were appraised ‘for Money Rec:^d of[f] of them [the overseer and churchwarden] in the time of Sickness’.⁴² In the same parish an inventory was made of Widow Taylor’s possessions ‘for money Rec^d of[f] them in time of Need’.⁴³ In Swanage, Dorset, the inventory of Widow Haysham’s goods was ‘founded On Relief given her Husband in his lifetime and still continued to be Given to His Family’.⁴⁴ In Powerstock, Dorset, inventories were to be made of paupers’ belongings ‘as soon as they shall become chargeable’ to the parish.⁴⁵ In Little Baddow, Essex, inventories were made ‘of the poor which Receive Weekly Colection’ in 1766.⁴⁶ Parishes would thus appraise the possessions of paupers at a range of life-cycle points: some were made of the goods of people who had received poor relief for long periods of time; some were made of the possessions of people as soon as they started to receive relief; and some were made because the parish expected to pay out large sums of money in the near future. In total, 31 per cent of pauper inventories were made around when people started receiving regular or casual relief from the parish and 69 per cent were made of the belongings of people who were already on regular or casual relief.⁴⁷

Some parishes commonly recorded the money that they had made from selling pauper goods alongside their incomes from rates. Parishes such as Burton Bradstock in Dorset, Bressingham in Norfolk and Frampton in Lincolnshire did this for decades.⁴⁸ The

⁴² KHLC P347/18/10 Staplehurst inventories, 1742-1831.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ DHC PE-SW/OV/1/5 Swanage overseers’ accounts, 1752-1780.

⁴⁵ DHC PE-POW/OV/1/2 Powerstock overseers’ accounts, 1757-1775.

⁴⁶ ERO D/P 35/8/1 Little Baddow vestry minutes, 1759-1802; Harley, ‘Consumption’, pp.71-78.

⁴⁷ Already on relief is defined as receiving relief for two months or more before the pauper inventory was made. Most people in this category, however, had been on some sort of relief for years. Unfortunately, I was unable to determine exactly when paupers started receiving relief in one-third of the inventories.

⁴⁸ DHC PE-BBK/OV/1/1-2 Burton Bradstock overseers’ accounts, 1755-1803; NRO PD 111/89 Bressingham overseers’ accounts, 1688-1726; Hindle, *On the parish*, p.281; Steve Hindle, ‘Power, poor relief, and social relations in Holland Fen, c.1600-1800’, *Historical Journal*, 41:1 (1998), p.94.

income from selling pauper belongings was mostly small, but it was symbolically very important to parish officials and ratepayers who wanted the poor to contribute more towards their own relief. Frampton, for instance, raised over £126 from selling the possessions of parishioners over a 118 year period. This, however, only equated to an average income of around £1 1s. 4d. every year.⁴⁹ In Eaton Socon, Bedfordshire, the goods of John Cooper were worth £2 18s. 2d. at his death, but this figure made up only 16 per cent of the total money that the parish had paid out to relieve him.⁵⁰ In Burton Bradstock in 1766 the parish collected a total of £84 9s. 7d. from rates but only recorded proceeds of £4 2s. from selling pauper goods.⁵¹ In most cases parishes would experiment with this policy for a few months or years but would then stop. Sometimes parishes ceased making inventories when justices prohibited them from doing so; however most of the time it appears that parishes stopped when they simply realised that they did not make as much money from it as they hoped. This means that in a single parish the making of pauper inventories usually did not continue for more than a few years. The policy of producing pauper inventories is consequently very similar to the use of workhouse relief. With both schemes parishes hoped to reduce poor law costs and make paupers contribute more towards their own relief. However, both policies were generally short lived and if the parish ever did make any money from inmate labour in workhouses or pauper goods, the amounts that they received were relatively small.⁵²

Historians have often characterised southern and eastern rural parishes as ‘miniature welfare states’ in the decades before 1780, as relief was generally more humane, generous and encompassing at this time, helping people in a number of creative and pragmatic ways.⁵³ By the late eighteenth century, however, the poor law system was seen to be in ‘crisis’ as rates significantly increased and growing numbers of able-bodied men

⁴⁹ Hindle, *On the parish*, p.281; Hindle, ‘Power’, p.94.

⁵⁰ Hindle, *On the parish*, p.281; Emmison, *Relief*, pp.33-34. Also see: L. A. Botelho, *Old age and the English poor law, 1500-1700* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp.118-120.

⁵¹ DHC PE-BBK/OV/1/1.

⁵² There are, of course, exceptions. In Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell in Norfolk, for example, pauper inventories can be found from 1708 to 1828. On workhouses, see for instance: Kathryn Morrison, *The workhouse: a study of poor-law buildings in England* (Swindon, 1999), pp.1-42; Hindle, *On the parish*, pp.183-191; James S. Taylor, ‘The unreformed workhouse, 1776–1834’, in E. W. Martin (ed.), *Comparative development in social welfare* (London, 1972), pp.57-84.

⁵³ Snell, *Annals*, pp.105-107.

applied for relief.⁵⁴ The making of pauper inventories can be related to this more general chronology. The vast majority of pauper inventories were made between the 1720s and 1770s (see figure 2.5 below). As these were the years when parishes were most flexible and generous, this may suggest that parishes were inventorying the goods of paupers for benevolent reasons, as well as financial purposes. Having one's goods inventoried essentially guaranteed many (though not all) paupers relief until they died and helped to fund and maintain the poor law system. Their possessions gave the poor a bargaining chip which they could use to negotiate relief and when their goods were inventoried this essentially acted as official recognition that they were deemed worthy of parish assistance. Moreover, inventorying paupers' goods but allowing them to use them until they died was a better option from the poor's point of view than making them sell off all of their belongings before they were entitled to relief. The lines between paying rates and ending up on poor relief could be very thin.⁵⁵ Consequently, many ratepayers (particularly lesser ratepayers) would not have supported a policy that could have forced them to immediately sell off their possessions if they ever ended up on relief themselves.

Though there is some chronological overlap, the evidence suggests that by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the inventorying of paupers' goods was closely linked to a negative shift in the attitudes of ratepayers and parish officials, who increasingly wanted to pay less towards the relief of the poor, dissuade people from applying for relief, and help only the most deserving and desperate of people.⁵⁶ The infamous Royal Commissioners' report of 1834 praised the practice of taking paupers' goods. They wrote that the application of the policy in Northumberland 'frequently has a salutary effect, as instances occur of poor persons returning what they had received, when they discovered that they had been paid from the assessment, saying, "I would sooner want it than have my goods looked over, and seized when I die"'.⁵⁷ Some parishes used the threat of taking one's

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp.108-114; King, *Poverty and welfare*, pp.164-167; Peter Dunkley, *The crisis of the old poor law in England 1795-1834: an interpretive essay* (London, 1982).

⁵⁵ Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharpe, 'Introduction: chronicling poverty – the voices and strategies of the English poor, 1640-1840', in Hitchcock, King and Sharpe, *Chronicling*, p.10; Williams, *Poverty, gender*, pp.69-100 and 125-129.

⁵⁶ Other historians, albeit briefly, have also linked the making of pauper inventories to control and deterrence. See: Boulton, 'Going', p.35; Newman, 'Kent', pp.153-154; Kent, 'Middling', pp.34-35; Kent and King, 'Changing', p.137; Hindle, *On the parish*, p.282.

⁵⁷ BPP, 1834, XXIX.1, *Report from his Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the poor laws. Appendix A: Reports of assistant commissioners, part II*, p.195a.

goods to prevent parishioners from asking for more relief. For example, John King of Trowse, Norfolk, was given 1s. 6d. per week by the parish for one year to help look after his children after his wife had died. However, John had to accept that after the first year he was 'allow[ed] no more than a shilling P[er] week, [and] if they should [give any more] I acknowledge they have & shall have a right to take the above Goods'.⁵⁸ On other occasions parishes would only give items to paupers or let them use them if they were well-behaved. In 1770 Wimbledon vestry agreed to lend goods to Richard Edmons and his wife 'during the time they live together in peace and quietness'. These goods were 'to be returned to the parish on the first offence'.⁵⁹

Steve Hindle has demonstrated how some parishes made paupers wear badges to show that they were dependent upon parish relief. Such badges were used as a mark of shame and discrimination and it was hoped that wearing them would dissuade further people from applying for relief unless they really needed it.⁶⁰ In a similar manner, some parishes would brand paupers' goods particularly by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. This was done to stop paupers from selling or pawning their belongings once they were appraised, but could also act as a way in which to identify, discriminate and shame the poor. When the parish of Helpston in Northamptonshire came to inventory the labouring poet John Clare's father's goods around the 1800s or 1810s, he was especially disgusted when the parish branded each item. Clare wrote that 'as soon as he went to the parish for relief they came to clap the town brand on his goods and set them down in their parish books because he should not sell or get out of them'.⁶¹ Clare clearly bitterly resented this policy and wrote about it in his poem *The parish: a satire* to get 'revenge':⁶²

Tasking the pauper [his] labours to stand
Or clapping on his goods the Parish Brand
Lest he should sell them for the want of bread
On parish bounty rather pind than fed
Or carrying the parish book from door to door
Claiming fresh taxes from the needy poor

⁵⁸ NRO PD 216/90 Trowse inventories, 1694-1786.

⁵⁹ This example relates to the goods given to the Edmons, but similar threats were sometimes made against people who wanted to continue to use their goods after a pauper inventory was made. F. M. Cowe (ed.), *Wimbledon vestry minutes, 1736, 1743-1788* (Guildford, 1964), p.49.

⁶⁰ Steve Hindle, 'Dependency, shame and belonging: badging the deserving poor, c.1550-1750', *Cultural and Social History*, 1:1 (2004), pp.6-35; Hindle, *On the parish*, pp.433-445.

⁶¹ Eric Robinson (ed.), *John Clare's autobiographical writings* (Oxford, 1983), p.115.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.115.

And if ones hunger overcomes his hate
And buys a load with what shoud pay the rate
He instant sets his tyrant laws to work
In heart and deed the essence of a turk
Brings summons for an eighteen penny rate
And gains the praises of the parish state
Or seizes goods and from the burthend clown
Extorts for extra trouble half a Crown
Himself a beggar that may shortly take
A weekly pittance from the rates they make⁶³

Some of the parishes sampled in this thesis mentioned branding paupers' goods. In Cowpe Lenches, New Hall Hey and Hall Carr parish in Lancashire, the goods given to paupers were branded with a 'P' or 'CLP' during the 1810s.⁶⁴ In 1821 in East Harling, Norfolk, the belongings of Edward Wretham and Widow Whitehead were marked 'EHP'.⁶⁵ If any of these paupers were caught selling or pawning their branded possessions the parish might withhold relief. It is also possible that some people were prosecuted if they sold their goods or if others were caught handling them. Though there were no laws which allowed parishes to brand paupers' goods, there were laws which protected parish property. Under these regulations people were fined or imprisoned if they were caught selling or handling stolen branded workhouse goods.⁶⁶ Parishes could have potentially manipulated this law to apply to people on outdoor relief, as pauper goods were viewed as parish property after they were inventoried, despite the fact that the indigent continued to use them.

Opponents argued that the appraising and seizing of pauper goods was malicious. In 1773 the Quaker poet and writer John Scott wrote that:

In some of those few parishes, where allowance out of the workhouse is permitted, an unkind and indelicate practice frequently obtains. The parish vouchsafes a trifling pittance of a pension; and an industrious son or daughter, from the earnings of their industry, supplies the remainder of the maintenance of the aged or decrepit parent. In such cases, an inventory of what little household furniture may be in the pauper's possession is immediately taken, in order that it may revert to the parish at his decease. The poor have sensibility; and it is really cruel to treat as criminals, whose property is confiscated, those who in this respect have no crime but inevitable poverty.⁶⁷

⁶³ John Clare, *The parish: a satire*, ed. Eric Robinson (London, 1985), pp.63-64.

⁶⁴ LRO MBRA/acc9017/11 Cowpe Lenches, New Hall Hey and Hall Carr overseers' accounts, 1806-1850.

⁶⁵ NRO PD 219/114 East Harling inventories, 1821-1825.

⁶⁶ Nolan, *Treatise*, Vol. 2, p.390.

⁶⁷ John Scott, *Observations on the present state of the parochial and vagrant poor* (London, 1773), p.48.

Likewise, as we saw above John Clare was shocked and disgusted when the parish came to inventory and brand his father's goods. Joseph Mayett also opposed the system and threatened to report the overseer to a justice.⁶⁸ Some paupers even tried to hide their goods, showing that they resisted the policy.⁶⁹

Layout and possessions listed in pauper inventories

It could be argued that as there was no legal precedent which allowed parishes to make pauper inventories, the sources are potentially too dissimilar to be analysed at a county or national level since they were all made under slightly different circumstances. This supposition, however, is largely erroneous as the vast majority of pauper inventories were made for similar reasons, use similar layouts and phraseologies, and list similar types of goods. Figure 2.2 shows a transcription of a broadly representative pauper inventory. It was found at the front of an overseer's account book from the rural parish of Brockdish, Norfolk, and lists the possessions of John Minter. The accounts confirm that this was a pauper inventory and that John was a pauper as he was regularly receiving casual relief from the parish.⁷⁰ Most pauper inventories start with introductions that identify to whom the goods in the inventory belonged, where it was made, when it was made and who appraised the goods. The goods are then listed and the rooms in which the items were found are sometimes recorded. In this formulaic sense, they are very similar to probate inventories and can be used in similar ways. They allow historians to study people's household goods at one moment in time, when people were receiving poor relief and using the items.⁷¹ They also list a range of possessions related to household production such as spinning wheels. Consequently they offer a relatively complete picture of a pauper's home and can be used to further our understanding of topics such as consumption, household and agricultural production, everyday life, standard of living and housing. Because of their formulaic layout they can be analysed quantitatively to measure ownership patterns across time and space.

⁶⁸ See above.

⁶⁹ See below.

⁷⁰ NRO PD 477/43.

⁷¹ In contrast, probate inventories were produced when people were dead and so the belongings were in transition, and thus may not have been arranged in the way that the deceased had them. See: Lena Cowen Orlin, 'Fictions of the early modern English probate inventory', in Henry S. Turner (ed.), *The culture of capital* (London, 2002), pp.51-83.

Figure 2.2: Pauper inventory of John Minter

Inventory of the Houshold Furniture &c. of Jn ^o Minter a Pauper in the Parish of Brockdish taken the 13 th Day of March 1804, by J. Chilver Overseer	
Kitchen	Chamber
2 Tables, 4 Chairs	1 Feather Bed & Bedstead
1 large Dresser	2 pair of Sheets
Nest of Spice Drawers	2 Blankets & 1 Coverlid
2 Tea Trays	2 Pillows & 1 Bolster
6 Knives & Forks	2 Chairs & 2 Boxes
Firepan Tongs & Poker	1 Spade, 1 Scuppet
1 pair of Bellows	1 three-tine Fork
1 Pail	3 Hoes & 1 Iron Rake
Box Iron & 2 Heaters	Sundries ----
1 Tow Wheel very old,	
1 D ^o . Reel ---	
Sundries & Tea Requisites	
Pantry	
3 Keelers	
Tin Boiler	
Brass Skillet	
1 Sieve, 1 Chair	
Sundry earthen Ware	

Source: NRO PD 477/43 Brockdish overseers' accounts, 1772-1811.

Pauper inventories have a number of disadvantages which are familiar to researchers of probate inventories.⁷² Pauper inventories should be seen as a representation of the home rather than a comprehensive record of its contents.⁷³ They are almost never complete and 'should never be used in a negative way to claim that a particular item is not present because it is not recorded'.⁷⁴ This is made obvious when the terms 'sundries' or 'lumber' are used as they are in the example of John Minter. Equally some appraisers simply

⁷² The following critiques of probate inventories are especially useful and can be used to further understand how to use other types of inventories. Adrian B. Evans, 'Enlivening the archive: glimpsing embodied consumption practices in probate inventories of household possessions', *Historical Geography*, 36 (2008), pp.40-72; Orlin, 'Fictions', pp.51-83; John Bedell, 'Archaeology and probate inventories in the study of eighteenth-century life', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 31:2 (2000), pp.231-240; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.13-32; and the various chapters in Tom Arkell, Nesta Evans and Nigel Goose (eds.), *When death do us part: understanding and interpreting the probate records of early modern England* (Oxford, 2000).

⁷³ Riello, 'Things seen', p.127 makes the same point regarding probate inventories. Also see: Evans, 'Enlivening', pp.40-72.

⁷⁴ Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, p.18.

noted 'some' earthenware or 'a few' plates and would use umbrella terms such as 'fire irons' and 'bedding' which lack specificity. Only moveable property is listed and fixtures like windows or stairs and perishable goods like food tended to be omitted by appraisers. Details about gardens, lands and the house are also rarely given. Some items such as household linen, eating and drinking utensils and clothing appear to be under-recorded in the inventories. The goods of lodgers are omitted in most cases. Because pauper goods would inevitably be sold, end up in the poorhouse/workhouse or be given to another pauper, some appraisers may have prioritised writing down items which could be sold or recycled around the community. This means that small items of little value such as love tokens and children's toys are not recorded in the inventories.⁷⁵ Items related to activities such as sewing are rarely found despite the fact we know that it was common.⁷⁶ Many small items such as thimbles and needles may have been hidden away in people's pockets when the inventory was made.⁷⁷ Only animals such as cows and pigs are listed by appraisers since they had financial or utilitarian value, whereas cats and dogs are not mentioned.⁷⁸ As such, we are potentially neglecting to study important objects and pets which often meant more to their owners than any of the other goods in the inventory.

Occasionally pauper inventories may under-record possessions due to the fact that the parish had taken some of them at a previous date. Swanage (Dorset) vestry minutes in 1773 noted that the parish should make inventories of parishioners' goods and take any goods which it deemed superfluous. Parish officials were to:

Go to the Dwelling House of the said Pauper and Take Possession of the Goods belonging to the Pauper And particularly Enter in the Parish Poor Book an Inventory of the goods to the Intent that the said Goods Shall be kept for the use of the Pauper as far as they are necessary to Him, & that What Goods do not appear necessary be disposed off, or kept in the hands of the said Officers & their successors for the use of the Parish ~~unless~~ till such times as the said Pauper, or those

⁷⁵ On sentimental ties and the importance of love tokens, see: Jennine Hurl-Eamon, 'Love tokens', pp.181-186.

⁷⁶ Bedell, 'Archaeology', pp.238 and 240; Jenny McKenney, 'The "Bossy Shield:" money, sex, sentiment, and the thimble', *Lumen*, 34 (2015), pp.1-23; Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (eds.), *Women and the material culture of needlework and textiles, 1750-1950* (Farnham, 2009); Mary C. Beaudry, *Findings: the material culture of needlework and sewing* (New Haven, 2006).

⁷⁷ Barbara Burman and Jonathan White, 'Fanny's pockets: cotton, consumption and domestic economy, 1780-1850', in Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan (eds.), *Women and material culture, 1660-1830* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp.31-51; McKenney, 'Thimble', pp.1-23.

⁷⁸ An exception to this might be hunting dogs. None of the pauper inventories, however, recorded any.

nearest ackind to Him or Her shall Reimpurst the Parish all such Moneys as shall have been Expended on account of the said Pauper & Family.⁷⁹

It is unclear what the parish deemed as not necessary and whether these superfluous goods were still noted down in the pauper inventories, but this example helps to further demonstrate that one should be mindful of how pauper inventories may under-record a person's belongings. Parishes may have also sometimes made paupers sell off their belongings and live off that money for a time before they were allowed relief, resulting in their corresponding inventories recording only a few basic items. When parishes applied this policy, however, they generally appear to have not made inventories since the parish had already saved money by making the pauper sell their possessions.⁸⁰

Some paupers may have hidden their goods or asked friends and relatives to look after them if they knew that somebody was coming to appraise their belongings. It is impossible to know the extent to which this clandestine activity happened, since it inevitably left little written record; however most paupers would have struggled to have concealed their belongings without the parish knowing or suspecting something. The frequency and types of visits that parish officials made on paupers could vary considerably. Some parishes would regularly visit pauper homes on a monthly basis, whereas others would rarely visit people or would only make special visitations when the pauper wanted something.⁸¹ It is difficult to know whether these visits tended to be pre-arranged and thus whether people knew when they had to conceal their goods. Most of the pauper inventories were made in small rural parishes where most people knew or recognised one another and so there may have been little need to arrange visiting times. It would have been very difficult to hide belongings or move them to somebody else's home every time that somebody from the parish came to visit, without poor law officials or ratepayers noticing and reporting it. Moreover, if the pauper had been visited in the past when the home had everything in it, then the overseer may have noticed if the pauper suddenly had few

⁷⁹ DHC PE-SW/OV/1/5.

⁸⁰ CCAL U3/269/16/1.

⁸¹ For instance, in Cranbrook, Kent visits to paupers were made monthly, however the parish would also make 'special visitations both within and without the parish as may be required by the overseers'. Elizabeth Melling (ed.), *Kentish sources: IV: the poor* (Maidstone, 1964), p.185. Meanwhile other parishes went to paupers' homes when they wanted goods off the parish. See the example of the Adam's family and Thomas Peat in: Cirket, *Notebooks*, p.52 and 100. Other overseers neglected their duty and did not visit paupers as often as they should. See the example of John Crowder and his daughter in: Cirket, *Notebooks*, p.94. Also see: Hindle, *On the parish*, pp.258-259; Boulton, 'Going', pp.33-34; Lees, *Solidarities*, pp.30-41.

possessions when it came to appraising the goods. Overall, the evidence appears to suggest that when visits were made to paupers with the intention of appraising goods, the parish foresaw that paupers might hide or sell their goods and thus made surprise visits. Though relating to a workhouse admittance-related inventory, the following example taken from Dartford, Kent in 1733 suggests that visits were designed to catch people off guard and uncover what people and their homes were like on a normal day. It also suggests that if the parish thought that people were concealing their goods they would investigate it.

I was calld upon to visit the Widow Brown as being extraordinary ill and between 3 and 4 this afternoon I visited her and surprized her and her daughter at dinner upon eels and I understand about noon she and her son, James and her daughter and the Widow Preston were at dinner upon hot mutton. When I came she attempted to throw herself in her clothes upon the bed, but I got in before she could be coverd. She spoke very heartily to me and did not seem near so ill as I expected. Her daughter desired me to take her into the workhouse for she had nothing to support her, nor any friends able to do it for her. I told her it was not in the power of any Visiting Governor to take her into the workhouse of his own accord, but to take care of her when she was regularly brought there. I understand she has sold her bed and goods but to whom and for what money it is proper for the parish officers to inquire. I believe it is a mock sale to prevent the parish having them towards her support, if any fraud can be discovered the parish will have them nevertheless, and she has goods worth having, especially her bed. I hear she has sold her new stock of coals, so that she is resolved to come here soon. But I think her daughter should first complain to a justice of her poverty and thereupon have an order to the overseers to take care of her and the overseers at the same time to complain of her fraudulent making away of her goods and have an order to restore them paying the money she received for them, before the Visiting Governors can take her in.⁸²

Though most paupers would have been unable to have concealed more than a few items, researchers should nonetheless never use pauper inventories with the idea that they are complete. The quantitative findings of chapters 3-6, which show the percentages of paupers who owned certain items, should be viewed as minimum ownership levels. Additionally, the results from the pauper inventories are triangulated with findings from the secondary literature and other sources such as pawnbroking records and pauper letters to assess the extent to which inventories under-record items or how ownership may have changed over the life course. Some of these additional sources relate to paupers but others relate to people who can be broadly defined as having been 'poor', based on indicators such as how

⁸² Melling, *Kentish*, p.104.

frequently they used pawnshops, their requests for relief from overseers, and their own descriptions of material poverty.

There are several other difficulties to using pauper inventories which must be considered. The terms that appraisers used can be difficult to decipher. A crock, for instance, in the south east was a metal cooking pot but in the north it was a small earthenware pan.⁸³ I have used the *Oxford English Dictionary* and a number of glossaries to get around these problems; however it was inevitably not always possible to uncover what every term meant. This task was made especially difficult when appraisers failed to use basic grammar and spelled words arbitrarily, archaically or phonetically. Inventories are 'static' documents as they offer a representation of somebody's home at one fixed point in time. Thus, they fail to detail how people acquired their goods and how their material lives altered in response to the seasons, to life-cycle change and to challenges such as worsening poverty. The inventories also effectively list possessions in an emotionless way and generally do not detail the quality of the goods, how owners felt about their possessions or how fashionable the items were. Other sources such as pauper letters and autobiographies are used throughout the thesis to circumvent these problems and understand how people's ownership of material goods changed over the life-cycle and how people may have felt about their belongings. Additionally, qualitative and linguistic analyses are also conducted on the pauper inventories to further understand what pauper possessions looked like, their conditions and how they were used.

Representativeness

Pauper inventories are naturally unrepresentative of pauper populations since they were made of only a minority of chosen people. It is possible that they are an inadequate source to study the material lives of the poor because of this. Parishes, for instance, may have only made inventories of the goods of paupers who were atypical, such as the materially rich middling sort who had fallen on hard times and started to receive poor relief.⁸⁴ A number of assessments have been made throughout this research to investigate

⁸³ *Oxford English Dictionary online* [<http://www.oed.com>]; John S. Moore, *The goods and chattels of our forefathers: Frampton Cotterell and District probate inventories, 1539-1804* (London, 1976), p.302.

⁸⁴ On sampling issues and the difficulties of interpreting sources, see: Pat Hudson, *History by numbers: an introduction to quantitative approaches* (London, 2000), pp.10, 13-20, 168-187; John Tosh, *The pursuit of history: aims, methods and new directions in the study of modern history* (Harlow, 4th ed., 2006), pp.260, 266-

the extent to which the paupers in the inventories are representative. These results largely confirm that the goods of the people in the inventories are broadly typical of millions of other paupers who did not have their goods inventoried over the long eighteenth century. The inventories are atypical in some ways, however, as they appear to over-represent paupers who received regular relief and elderly people. The inventories also only appear to represent people who were on poor relief for life-cycle-related reasons such as sickness and do not represent people who received help through schemes such as Speenhamland or roundsman systems. This section also helps to further our understanding of how parishes treated certain types of people and how and when pauper inventories were made.

When parish officials visited people's homes they would have naturally seen which paupers owned the most superfluous material goods and may have targeted these people when it came to assembling pauper inventories. However, when one assesses the quantities, values and types of goods that were noted in the inventories, one does not get the impression that only materially rich paupers had their goods appraised. It was not uncommon for parishes to make large numbers of pauper inventories on the same day, but for these sets of inventories to record very different quantities of goods. In Bere Regis, Dorset, ten pauper inventories were made on the same day in November 1766. Though pauper inventories inevitably under-record the numbers of goods that people owned,⁸⁵ the largest inventory contained 51 items whilst the smallest contained only three.⁸⁶ In 1699 in Cawston, Norfolk, 19 pauper inventories were made on the same day. The largest contained 52 items and the smallest only three items. Moreover, nearly three-quarters of them contained no more than 16 goods.⁸⁷ In Shipdam, Norfolk, 23 pauper inventories were made on the same day in May 1720. One inventory listed 81 items but the other 22 inventories listed no more than 32 items.⁸⁸ The same trends can be seen across the entire sample of pauper inventories. Whilst some pauper inventories occasionally listed hundreds of items, over half of them listed no more than 30 items. Over two-thirds of pauper inventories listed no more than 50 items. Of course, counting is a crude method of study, but it does suggest

273, 278-280; Charles H. Feinstein and Mark Thomas, *Making history count: a primer in quantitative methods for historians* (Cambridge, 2000), passim esp. pp.71-92, 117-184; Roderick Floud, *An introduction to quantitative methods for historians* (London, 2nd ed., 1979), passim.

⁸⁵ See above and chapter three on this.

⁸⁶ DHC PE-BER/OV/1/9 Bere Regis overseers' accounts, 1740-1770.

⁸⁷ NRO PD 193/93 Cawston inventories, 1699 and 1826.

⁸⁸ NRO PD 337/158 Shipdam inventories, 1720.

that the parish did not choose to only make inventories of the belongings of people who owned lots of goods.

It is possible that parish officials chose to appraise the goods of paupers who owned the most valuable and useful types of belongings. This supposition, however, also appears to be incorrect. Animals such as cows and pigs are an interesting example to highlight. These were valuable assets worth several pounds which could be sold for profit by the parish or be used in the parish poorhouse/workhouse. Yet despite this, only 1.4 per cent of pauper inventories from Dorset, Kent and Norfolk record pigs or hogs; 0.57 per cent list cows and 0.28 per cent record sheep.⁸⁹ I highlighted in the introduction how labourers' probate inventories may be largely atypical of the labouring population. When used alongside pauper inventories they help to suggest that pauper inventories are not unrepresentative of the poor population. If pauper inventories were only made of the materially richest poor, then one would expect the ownership of animals to be high and comparable to Craig Muldrew and Ken Sneath's research on labourers' probate inventories. The differences, however, are considerable. In Muldrew and Sneath's results around half of labourers owned cows and high numbers also owned other types of livestock.⁹⁰ Similarly, the average total value of goods in the probate inventories of labourers from Kent and Norfolk is £11.07 and £8.08 respectively. In the pauper inventories, on the other hand, the average total values are much lower at £9 12s. 3d. and £2 6s. 4d. respectively, despite the fact that the majority of probate inventories Muldrew used for Kent and Norfolk came from the seventeenth century whilst the majority of pauper inventories were made in the eighteenth century.⁹¹ It is unsurprising that inventoried labourers owned more animals and had more valuable estates than paupers, yet the results from the pauper inventories record very low values in comparison and do not suggest that materially rich paupers were a priority of parishes.

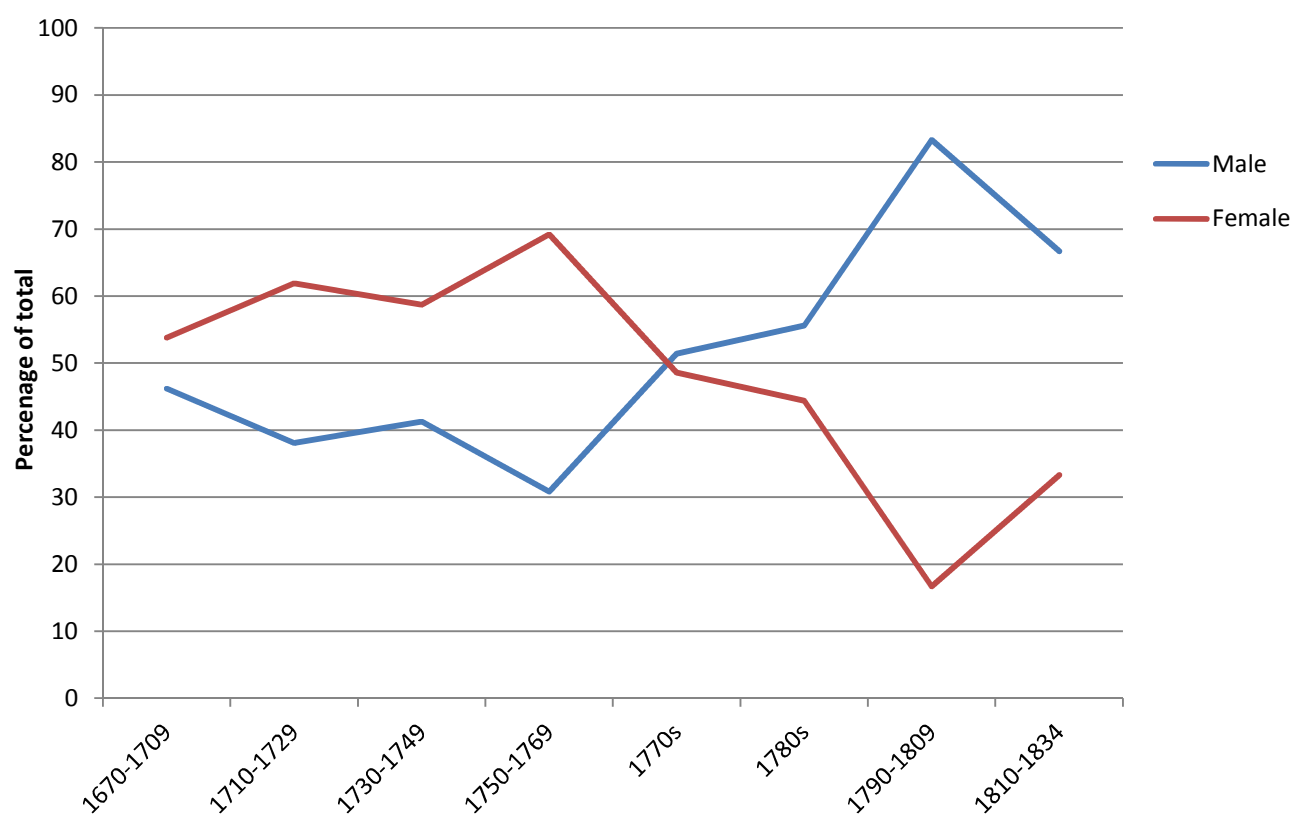
Having assessed the representativeness of the possessions listed in pauper inventories, I will now assess the individuals whose goods were appraised. Figure 2.3 shows the gender distribution of people from the pauper inventories. The results indicate that female pauper inventories were most common from the late seventeenth century to the 1770s. This further suggests that pauper inventories are roughly representative of pauper

⁸⁹ None of the 11 Lancashire pauper inventories recorded animals.

⁹⁰ Muldrew, *Food*, p.250; Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth', pp.143-144.

⁹¹ Muldrew, *Food*, pp.172-173. See table 3.1 below for more information on the value of pauper goods.

Figure 2.3: Dorset, Kent, Lancashire and Norfolk pauper inventories analysed by gender over time, c.1679-1834



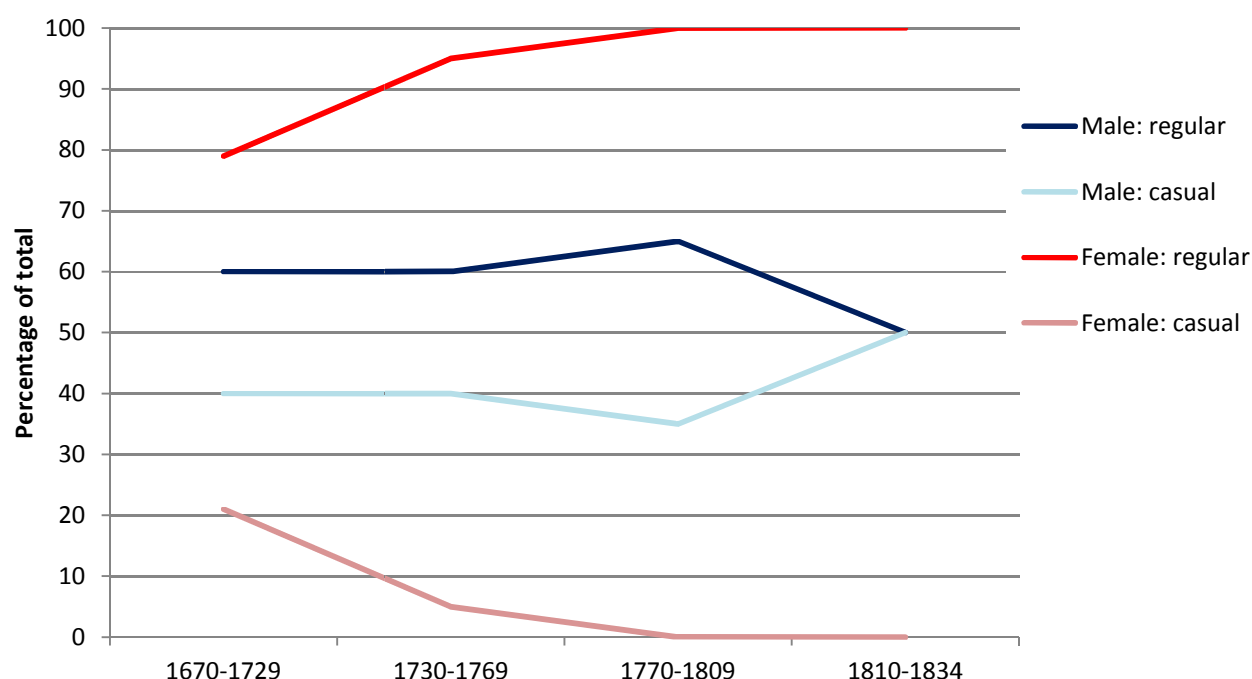
populations since women were typically the most common recipients of relief up until this point. In some parishes the split between men and women was more pronounced. In Chalfont St. Peter, Buckinghamshire, for instance, only around 20 per cent of pensioners were men in 1722.⁹² Despite this, an approximate 60:40 split between women and men is roughly consistent with other studies based in the south and east, where the bulk of pauper inventories come from.⁹³ From the 1770s, this trend is reversed as male pauper inventories became more common. Again, this switch was to be expected as the poor law reached its 'crisis' years, when men became more dependent on relief and increasingly struggled to find regular employment and provide for their families.⁹⁴ The proportions of men and women who received relief inevitably varied from parish to parish, but the results in figure 2.3 are again broadly similar to other studies based on late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-

⁹² Hindle, *On the parish*, p.273.

⁹³ King, *Poverty and welfare*, pp.164-167.

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp.164-167; Snell, *Annals*, pp.108-114; Dunkley, *Crisis*.

Figure 2.4: Types of relief that men and women from the Dorset, Kent, Lancashire and Norfolk pauper inventories received, c.1679-1834



century southern and eastern England.⁹⁵ This further suggests that the gender profile of the people from the pauper inventories is roughly typical of most pauper populations.

Figure 2.4 records the types of relief that men and women from pauper inventories received. It was not possible to discern whether people were on regular or casual relief in around 30 per cent of pauper inventories.⁹⁶ For example, sometimes the overseers' accounts were poorly written and it was not possible to tell if the relief that people received was regular or casual.⁹⁷ Nonetheless, based on the 70 per cent of inventories I was able to accurately track alongside other sources, 82 per cent of women from the female pauper inventories received regular relief and 18 per cent received casual relief between 1670 and 1729. By 1730-1769 this gap had widened and 95 per cent of women received regular relief. From 1770 to the end of the old poor law, every woman in the sample was on regular relief.

⁹⁵ King, *Poverty and welfare*, pp.164-167; French, 'Irrevocable', pp.782-784, 786-767 and 797-805.

⁹⁶ Regular relief was a pension paid in weekly, fortnightly or monthly instalments. Casual relief, such as the giving of small sums of money and relief in kind, was infrequent and mostly only used for short periods of time. The majority of people on regular relief also received some sort of casual relief, such as clothing and rent.

⁹⁷ Other studies have found the same difficulties, such as: Hindle, *On the parish*, pp.262-263. It is important to note that if there were any doubts over whether the person in the inventory was on relief the source was omitted.

The results from the male inventories equally indicate that more pauper inventories were made of the goods of men who received regular relief. The gap, however, is much narrower and for most of the period is set at an approximate 60:40 split. By the early nineteenth century, this gap had narrowed and there was an even split in the numbers of men who received regular and casual relief.

As the majority of pauper inventories were made of the belongings of people who received regular relief, this strongly suggests that parishes tended to inventory the goods of paupers who cost the most money.⁹⁸ Pensioners were, however, not the most common type of pauper. In most parishes long-term regular relief was only given to a minority of paupers whilst most other people had to make do with short-term casual relief.⁹⁹ The pauper inventories are thus atypical of most pauper populations since they over-represent pensioners, especially female pensioners, who received poor relief for significant lengths of time.¹⁰⁰ These differences between regular and casual paupers were to be expected. There was overall little point in inventorying the goods of people on casual relief, since the amounts of money that they claimed from the parish was generally relatively small and only short term. Rather, overseers would have mostly targeted paupers who they thought were taking more from the parish fund and would be on relief until they died, when the parish could then seize their goods.

It was not possible to quantify the reasons why the paupers whose goods were appraised received relief, since this information was infrequently written down by overseers. Nonetheless, where this information was found the reasons are familiar to historians of poverty and mainly stem from life-cycle related problems, such as the death of a partner and sickness.¹⁰¹ The sample, however, probably over-represents paupers who were on regular relief due to old age and infirmity. Sometimes pauper inventories were

⁹⁸ On average, male pensioners whose goods were appraised received 1s. 11d. per week and female pensioners received 1s. 9d. a week. Most had received these amounts of money for a number of years.

⁹⁹ Hindle, *On the parish*, esp. pp.10, 227-299 and 361-449; Samantha Williams, 'Poor relief', p.504; Shave, 'Dependent poor', p.86; French, 'Irrevocable', p.777, 785 and 797-805.

¹⁰⁰ The difference between male paupers on regular and casual relief is less pronounced and so more representative of pauper populations.

¹⁰¹ On the life-cycles of poverty, see for example: B. S. Rowntree, *Poverty: a study of town life* (London, 3rd ed., 1902); Tim Wales, 'Poverty, poor relief and life-cycle: some evidence from seventeenth century Norfolk', in Richard M. Smith (ed.), *Land, kinship and life-cycle* (Cambridge, 1984), pp.351-404; Barry Stapleton, 'Inherited poverty and the life-cycle poverty: Odiham, Hampshire, 1650-1850', *Social History*, 18:3 (1993), pp.339-355; Shave, 'Dependent poor', pp.67-97; Williams, *Poverty, gender*, pp.101-130.

made of the goods of people in their 20s or 30s; however most of the time there was little point in appraising the belongings of young people, since it could potentially be decades until they died and their belongings reverted to the parish. At this point their belongings might have also become too old and worn to be sold or recycled around the community. As such, although I was only able to find the ages of ten people from the sample, the average age is relatively high at 66. Moreover, four of these people with a recorded age were in their 80s.¹⁰² As pauper inventories appear to predominantly represent older people, it is likely that the belongings recorded in the inventories are less varied and numerous than the goods that people owned during more prosperous periods of their lives. Although the selling and pawning of goods was a common part of many people's household economy,¹⁰³ the elderly paupers in the sample had probably used this makeshift economy more often than others as they had been living through very severe hardships for long periods of time which had led to them receiving poor relief.¹⁰⁴ As some parishes appraised the goods of younger people who may have owned more goods, this may mean that the inventories are too disparate and complex to allow us to draw meaningful comparisons across time and different parishes. This issue is difficult to address since the sources needed to find demographic information on the paupers often do not survive. To mitigate this problem, sources such as a pawnbroker's pledge book and pauper letters are used throughout the thesis to examine the types of goods people sold and pawned, and gauge how consumption could vary over the life-cycle.

¹⁰² Despite the small sample size of pauper inventories which record ages, my MA research on Little Baddow and Weathersfield in Essex equally found that pauper inventories tended to be made of older parishioners. Harley, 'Consumption', pp.76-77.

¹⁰³ Craig Muldrew and Steven King, 'Cash, wages and the economy of makeshifts in the economy of England, 1650-1800', in Peter Scholliers and Leonard Schwarz (eds.), *Experiencing wages: social and cultural aspects of wage forms in Europe since 1500* (New York, 2003), pp.155-182.

¹⁰⁴ On how consumption changed over the life-cycle and pawning/selling goods to make ends meet, see *passim* below; Styles, *Dress*, pp.229-245; Harley, 'Material lives', pp.81-82; Lemire, *Business*, pp.82-109; Melanie Tebbutt, *Making ends meet: pawnbroking and working-class credit* (Leicester, 1983); Peter King, 'Social inequality, identity and the labouring poor in eighteenth-century England', in Henry French and Jonathan Barry (eds.), *Identity and agency in England, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp.74-76; Jon Stobart, 'Status, gender and life cycle in the consumption practices of the English elite. The case of Mary Leigh, 1736-1806', *Social History*, 40:1 (2015), pp.82-103; Toplis, *Clothing trade*, pp.135-138 and 146-149; Lynn MacKay, *Respectability and the London poor, 1780-1870* (London, 2013), pp.33-44; Richmond, *Clothing*, pp.72-92; Craig Muldrew, *The economy of obligation: the culture of credit and social relations in early modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp.272-312; Shepard, *Accounting for oneself*.

At least 79 per cent of the women in the sample were widows or spinsters.¹⁰⁵ Around 3 per cent were married and it is likely that the remaining 18 per cent of women were widows and spinsters.¹⁰⁶ These results correspond well with the secondary literature. Widows were seen as the most deserving of relief and without a husband they struggled to earn enough money to be self-sufficient.¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, I was only able to determine the marital status of 47 per cent of the men in the sample, since parish officials tended to not describe men in this way. Of these, 19 per cent were widowers or bachelors and 81 per cent were married. At least 22 per cent of the men and women from the pauper inventories lived with children.¹⁰⁸ This figure is likely to be a considerable under-representation since it came from assessing wider overseers' papers where children were not always mentioned. Either way, around 58 per cent of households which had children were female headed and 42 per cent were male headed. The structures within these households could vary considerably. Sometimes these children lived with a single or widowed mother or father, and sometimes they resided with both of their parents. Sometimes they lived with one or more of their grandparents. The occupations of the people from the inventories are very difficult to find; however, when known this information supports the idea that most paupers from the inventories came from low-skilled labouring backgrounds as one would expect. The two most common occupations were labourers and weavers.

The 362 pauper inventories collected for this thesis are derived from over 100 places in Dorset, Kent, Lancashire and Norfolk between 1679 and 1834.¹⁰⁹ This does pose challenges in terms of analysing the pauper inventories as a single collection, as systems of poor relief varied from parish to parish throughout the old poor law and local practice was dependent upon the economic, legal and cultural features of the respective parishes.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ On single/widowed women and the household, see: Hussey and Ponsonby, *Single homemaker*; Amy M. Froide, *Never married: singlewomen in early modern England* (Oxford, 2007); Bridget Hill, *Women alone: spinsters in England, 1660-1850* (New Haven, 2001).

¹⁰⁶ The 3 per cent of married women only had pauper inventories made in their own names because their husbands were living away from home in a poorhouse or lunatic asylum. Usually relief to married couples was in the husbands' name.

¹⁰⁷ Hindle, *On the parish*, pp.379-398; Lees, *Solidarities*, pp.52-60; Williams, *Poverty, gender*, pp.111-113; Ottaway, *Decline*, pp.179-180.

¹⁰⁸ Children are loosely defined as 15 years old or younger.

¹⁰⁹ See figures 2.6-8 and the bibliography for the names and locations of these settlements.

¹¹⁰ King, *Poverty and welfare*; Snell, *Annals*, pp.104-114; Barry Reay, *Rural England: labouring lives in the nineteenth century* (Basingstoke, 2004); Williams, *Poverty, gender*; Hindle, *On the parish*; Oxley, *Poor relief*. Also see the section 'Backgrounds to counties' below.

Despite this, the majority of pauper inventories appear to have been made in rural parishes in relatively similar areas across the period. Only around one-fifth of the inventories were made in 'urban' spaces.¹¹¹ Very few of the inventories appear to have been made in locations where the practice of distributing relief was merged across adjacent parishes into a single unit through a local act or Gilbert's union from 1782.¹¹² This may be because the system of appraising and keeping an eye on somebody's possessions was easier to manage in a rural area than in towns or where several parishes had been merged, as there would have been fewer paupers for overseers to monitor and relieve. The specific socio-economic conditions of each of the counties are discussed further below.

The pauper inventories from each of the counties also appear to consistently represent paupers who received outdoor relief for life-cycle-related reasons such as sickness, death in the family and old age. This means that several notable types of parishioners are largely not represented in the sample, including people who lacked adequate wages or employment and received allowances from the parish through Speenhamland, the roundsman system and labour rate. These forms of parish assistance became increasingly common from the late eighteenth century in the south of England and meant that in many areas huge proportions of the population were receiving some form of help from the parish.¹¹³ Pauper inventories were made less frequently by overseers from

¹¹¹ See chapter five for further information on how this figure was calculated.

¹¹² Evidence suggests that few places in Lancashire and no parishes in Dorset merged together through a local act or Gilbert's union. In Kent and Norfolk, on the other hand, a number of parishes particularly in the east of Kent and central and eastern parts of Norfolk formed incorporations under local acts or Gilbert's unions. See: Peter Higginbotham, 'The history of poor law unions' (unknown date) [From: <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/unions/index.shtml>. Accessed 02/04/2015]; George A. Body, 'The administration of the poor laws in Dorset 1760–1834', PhD thesis (University of Southampton, 1968), pp.74-75, 84, 185 and 248; Anne Digby, *Pauper palaces* (London, 1978), pp.32-53; Bryan Keith-Lucas, *Parish affairs: the government of Kent under George III* (Ashford, 1986), pp.117-118. It is, however, important to note that these references may under-record the places that used a local act or Gilbert's Act to merge parishes together, meaning that it is not possible to calculate a precise number of pauper inventories that were made under the administration of one of these acts. The total, however, is most likely very low. On this and for wider information, see: Samantha Shave, 'The welfare of the vulnerable in the late 18th and early 19th centuries: Gilbert's Act of 1782', *History in Focus*, 14 (2008) [From: <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/welfare/articles/shaves.html>. Accessed 19/06/2013]; King, *Poverty and welfare*, pp.22 and 24-25; E. E. Butcher, *Bristol corporation of the poor: selected records 1696-1834* (Bristol, 1932); Paul Slack, *The English poor law 1531-1782* (Basingstoke, 1990), pp.39-48; Mary E. Fissell, 'Charity universal? Institutions and moral reform in eighteenth-century Bristol', in Lee Davison, Tim Hitchcock, Tim Keirn and Robert Shoemaker (eds.), *Stilling the grumbling hive: the response to social and economic problems in England, 1689-1750* (Stroud, 1992), pp.121-144.

¹¹³ The Speenhamland system was a form of relief in which parishes subsidised people's incomes according to the price of bread and the number of children that people had. The system appears to have been most common during the Napoleonic wars and was intended to be used during temporary crises until wage rates increased or people's employment prospects improved. The roundsman system involved sending people to

the 1780s (see below) when these systems of help were most commonly used by parishes. This may mean that these types of parishioners are simply not captured in the pauper inventories due to sampling issues. Perhaps more importantly, these people generally did not have their goods appraised by parishes since officials saw little point in doing so because allowances were only intended to be used by the recipients as a temporary measure. Moreover, these allowances were generally only used by younger and middle-aged able-bodied men who struggled to find regular and adequately paid employment. If parishes appraised the goods of these people then they would have generally had to have waited a long time before the person died to collect their possessions. The practice of parishes organising apprenticeships for young people could vary regionally and declined in many rural areas by the late eighteenth century, yet nobody who was involved in an apprenticeship had a pauper inventory made of their possessions.¹¹⁴ This was probably because apprenticeships generally lasted no longer than into young adulthood, meaning that these people often had very few goods of their own which the parish could appraise.¹¹⁵ Overall, although poor relief could be organised in numerous ways and many of the parishes covered in this thesis experimented with different forms of parish assistance throughout the old poor law, parishes appear to have generally only appraised the goods of people who were more suited towards receiving cash relief or relief in kind, rather than other diverse and creative forms of help such as the labour rate, apprenticeships and roundsman systems.

work for ratepayers at reduced wages that were topped up by the poor rate. Under the labour rate, ratepayers could hire people to work for them at a wage rate set by the parish or choose to pay a labour rate tax to the parish. On allowance systems and for further context on why parishes used them, see: George R. Boyer, *An economic history of the English poor law 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1990), pp.9-50; Mark Neuman, *The Speenhamland county: poverty and the poor laws in Berkshire 1782-1834* (London, 1982); Mark Blaug, 'The myth of the old poor law and the making of the new', *Journal of Economic History*, 23:2 (1963), pp.151-184; Mark Blaug, 'The poor law report reexamined', *Journal of Economic History*, 24:2 (1964), pp.229-245; Oxley, *Poor relief*, pp.109-119; Dunkley, *Crisis*; D. A. Baugh, 'The costs of poor relief in south-east England, 1790-1834', *Economic History Review*, 28:1 (1975), pp.50-68; J. D. Marshall, *The old poor law 1795-1834* (London, 1968); Frederic Morton Eden, *The state of the poor*, Vols. 1-3 (London, 1797); Williams, *Poverty, gender*, pp.9-10.

¹¹⁴ It is important to note that 'goods-taken' inventories were sometimes made of the goods of parents who had recently died and left children on the parish who then went to serve apprenticeships. Goods-taken inventories are discussed further below.

¹¹⁵ Moreover, evidence suggests that the age children started and ended their apprenticeships declined over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. On apprenticeships, see: Snell, *Annals*, pp.228-319; Katrina Honeyman, *Child workers in England, 1780-1820: parish apprentices and the making of the early industrial labour force* (Aldershot, 2007); Joan Lane, *Apprenticeships in England 1600-1914* (London, 1996); Alys Levene, 'Parish apprenticeship and the old poor law in London', *Economic History Review*, 63:4 (2010), pp.915-941; Patrick Wallis, Cliff Webb and Chris Minns, 'Leaving home and entering service: the age of apprenticeship in early modern London', *Continuity and Change*, 25:3 (2010), pp.377-404; Williams, *Poverty, gender*, pp.106-107; Hindle, *On the parish*, pp.191-223.

Pauper inventories were primarily made of people who were at the end of their working lives due to old age, infirmity and sickness, and less often people who were younger but needed parish help since they were widowed, sick and/or had children to look after. This means that there is a limit to how far one can claim that pauper inventories are representative of all pauper populations across the length of the old poor law, but it does mean that the sample of paupers studied here is largely consistent across the various counties.

Another way to test the representativeness of the people from the inventories is to establish whether they had paid poor rates earlier in their lifetimes and whether these amounts of money were significant sums. This method is limited since the lines between paying rates and receiving relief could be very thin.¹¹⁶ In some parishes, for example, people were paying poor rates whilst receiving poor relief.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, along with other evidence from this section, these findings suggest that paupers whose goods were appraised did not come from wealthy backgrounds and that their corresponding pauper inventories are thus not atypical of the wider pauper population. 12 pauper inventories survive from Martham in Norfolk between 1758 and 1772.¹¹⁸ These are some of the most detailed inventories I have found and so are interesting examples to test. Of these twelve inventories, four or five were made of the goods of people who had previously paid rates or had partners that had done so.¹¹⁹ The amounts that they had paid were mostly small and sometimes irregular. For example, in the 25 years before Roger Riches had his goods appraised in 1772, he had only paid 9d. for half a year of rates between 1753 and 1754. The other people from the sample tended to pay no more than around 2s. or 3s. in rates for the year. Each person had stopped paying rates for a number of years before their goods were inventoried.¹²⁰ Although this is only one example and further research is needed to test these findings, these results nevertheless suggest that the people from the pauper inventories were not from affluent backgrounds and were thus not atypical of the conditions that most paupers came from.

¹¹⁶ Hitchcock, King and Sharpe, 'Introduction', p.10.

¹¹⁷ Williams, *Poverty, gender*, pp.69-100 and 125-129.

¹¹⁸ NRO PD 710/68 Martham overseers' accounts, 1744-1785. Also see: Cornford, 'Inventories', pp.118-125.

¹¹⁹ Unfortunately, one person could not be firmly identified because there were two people in the overseers' accounts with the same name.

¹²⁰ NRO PD 710/68; Cornford, 'Inventories', pp.118-125. The last time that these paupers paid rates was 4, 8, 10 and 18 years before their goods were inventoried.

Figure 2.5: Chronological distribution of the Dorset, Kent, Lancashire and Norfolk pauper inventories, c.1679-1834

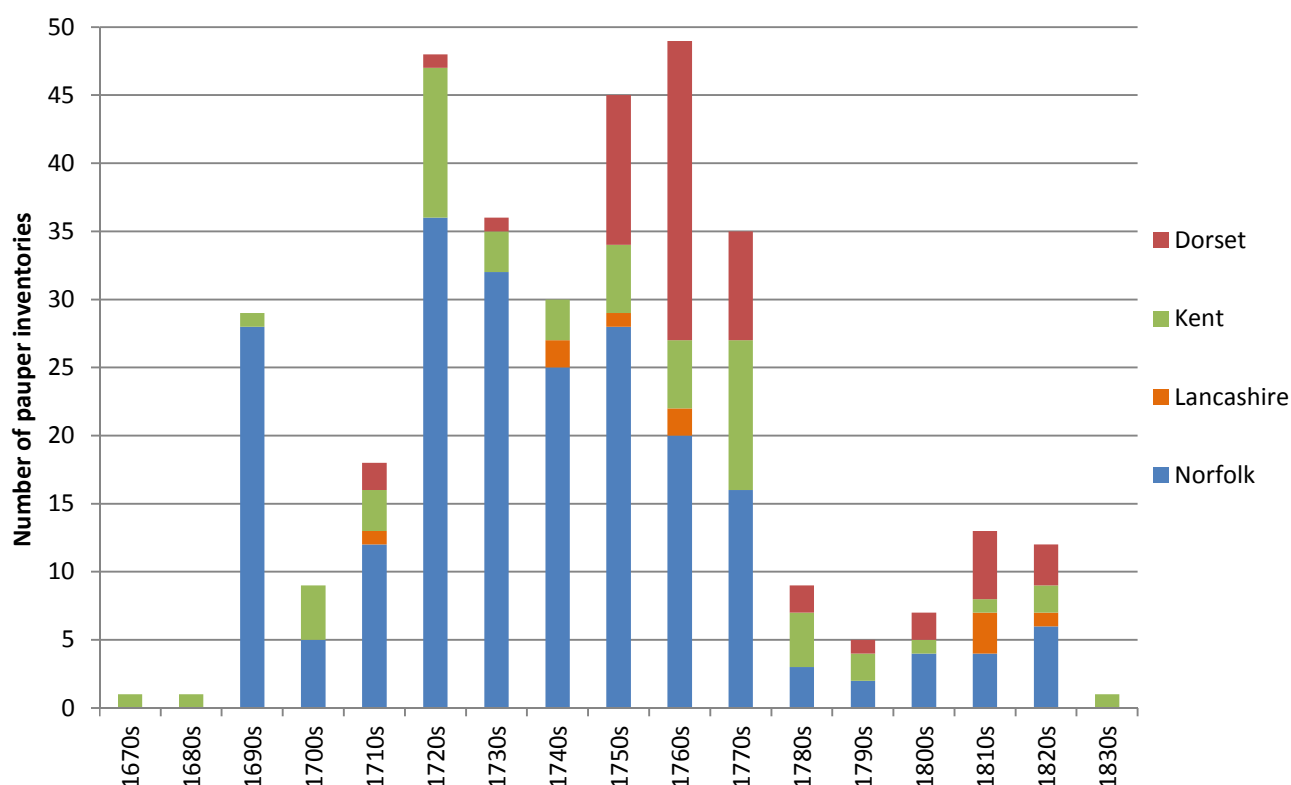


Figure 2.5 plots where the pauper inventories were found and when they were made by decade. The results suggest that most pauper inventories were made between the 1720s and 1770s, although the figures are highly dependent upon record survival. A number of pauper inventories, for example, were written on loose pieces of paper and were thrown away or re-written on after the parish had taken the pauper's goods.¹²¹ One can, however, be fairly certain that pauper inventories were made less frequently after 1818, as Sturges Bourne Act was passed that year which required parishes to preserve their records better.¹²² Assuming that the results of figure 2.5 are not marred too significantly by arbitrary record survival, regional trends can be possibly read into the results. In Norfolk, most inventories appear to have been made between the 1690s and 1770s. They seem to have peaked in the 1720s and then gradually declined thereafter. In Dorset, most pauper

¹²¹ For example the inventory of James Hunt of Lenham, Kent was cut up and used for notes and rough calculations. It is found among the pages of KHLC P224/12/2 Lenham overseers' assessments and disbursements, 1748-1760.

¹²² Pamela Sharpe, "'The bowels of compation': a labouring family and the law, c.1790-1834", in Hitchcock, King and Sharpe, *Chronicling*, p.89.

inventories appear to have been made between the 1750s and 1770s. Kent pauper inventories can be found staggered over the long eighteenth century. For Lancashire too few pauper inventories were found to read anything into the results.

One of the main objectives of this thesis is to measure how pauper ownership of a wide range of goods changed over the long eighteenth century. However, some decades are poorly covered in the sample such as the 1670s and 1680s (figure 2.5). Most importantly, the period from the 1780s to the end of the old poor law in 1834 is thinly represented in the sample. This limits what the thesis can contribute to important contested debates such as the 'crisis' years of the old poor law, when the costs of relief increased significantly and when parishes experimented with a range of different schemes such as Speenhamland and roundsman systems.¹²³ More importantly, it means that any trends regarding pauper ownership between these years are necessarily tentative. Any changes in pauper ownership over time must therefore be viewed as *suggestive*, as the sample is too small for the evidence to be viewed as irrefutable.¹²⁴

Most of the tables split the pauper inventories into two samples dated c.1679-1769 and 1770-c.1834 in order to measure changes in pauper ownership. This is problematic as nearly half of the inventories for 1770-c.1834 come from the 1770s. Despite this, these two periods were chosen as the 1770s onwards appears to be the date when the most notable changes in pauper ownership happened. Table 2.2 shows the percentage of pauper inventories which record various types of goods across differing dates. The patterns of pauper ownership for the 1760s appear to be most similar to inventories from c.1670-1759 and inventories from the 1770s record similar trends to inventories from 1780 onwards. As noted above, the pauper inventory results from 1780-1834 are tentative due to the small sample size, yet this table strongly suggests that most change in pauper material culture took place from the 1770s and thus explains why this particular chronological divide is important and why it is used for most tables throughout the thesis.

¹²³ These schemes, and others, are discussed above.

¹²⁴ For further discussion on these difficulties with samples and quantitative statistics, see: Hudson, *Numbers*, pp.8-10, 13-20, 168-187; Tosh, *Pursuit*, pp.260, 266-73, 278-80; Feinstein and Thomas, *Making history count*, passim esp. pp.71-92, 117-184; Floud, *Quantitative methods*, passim.

Table 2.2: Percentage of pauper inventories which record various goods in Dorset, Kent and Norfolk, c.1679-1834

	c.1670-1759	1760s	1770s	1780-c.1834
Candlestick	29	32	49	49
Chest of drawers	10	21	31	30
Chair	73	85	91	93
Lantern	7	4	20	19
Looking glass	14	13	46	30
Saucepan	2	2	11	12
Table	68	77	94	86
Tea goods	3	23	60	74
Sample size	213	47	35	43

Other inventories

Although pauper inventories are the principal source used in this thesis, ‘goods-given’ inventories, ‘goods-taken’ inventories, almshouse/poorhouse/workhouse-related inventories, bastardy-related inventories and debt-related inventories are also used infrequently throughout the thesis. As with pauper inventories, each of these inventories were checked alongside other sources to determine if the inventory related to the goods of somebody on poor relief. Any inventories which related to the belongings of non-paupers have been omitted. Most of these inventories have not been discussed in the secondary literature. Consequently, I shall now briefly outline some of their advantages and disadvantages as historical evidence and explain why they could not be used quantitatively alongside the pauper inventories.

Goods-given inventories, which list the items given to people by the parish, are the second most common type of inventory found among parish and miscellaneous archival records (table 2.1). Sometimes they only list a few basic items such as beds and bedding, but at other times they recorded a considerable range of goods which could be used to furnish an entire home. 151 of the 183 goods-given inventories were successfully linked to other sources to confirm that the person in the inventory was receiving poor relief when the goods were given to them. Because these inventories only record the items given to

paupers and do not show a representative picture of a pauper's entire home, they are only used occasionally at a qualitative level to assess the conditions of paupers' belongings and some of the informal networks that people used to acquire goods.

Almshouse-related and poorhouse/workhouse contents inventories were made to catalogue the items that were held in almshouses or poorhouses/workhouses. They were made to keep the goods safe and monitor whether things had been stolen or were broken, and to determine if any further items were needed. Among workhouse records, there are also inventories of inmates' belongings which were taken in the period immediately before they entered the poorhouse/workhouse (poorhouse/workhouse admittance-related inventories). These are very interesting as they outline somebody's material world in the moments before they lost their independence. Originally, I had planned to use these inventories alongside pauper inventories to gain a holistic view of the material lives of the poor on indoor and outdoor relief; however due to the constraints of space this was not possible. Some of this research, however, was published elsewhere.¹²⁵

Debt-related inventories were made for the purpose of distraining somebody's possessions to pay back a debt of some sort.¹²⁶ 109 of the 142 debt inventories related to arrears of rent, 32 related to an unknown debt, and only one related to non-payment of poor rates. They were made of the goods of a range of people and only 62 of them related to paupers' belongings. Unfortunately, many of these inventories under-record possessions. For example, by law appraisers were only allowed to take enough goods to repay the debt. Creditors were also not allowed to take goods which would affect a man's livelihood such as his tools.¹²⁷ Consequently, debt-related inventories are often less complete than pauper inventories. Because the goods in these inventories were meant to be sold, the possessions were often valued by appraisers. This is especially useful since pauper inventories tend not to record item values.

¹²⁵ Harley, 'Material lives', pp.71-103.

¹²⁶ On the legal side of this, see: Thomas Jonathan Wooler, *Every man his own attorney* (London, 1830); Richard Burn, *The justice of the peace and parish officer*, Vol. 1 (London, 12th ed., 1772), pp.170, 480-481 and 448-449; Burn, *Justice*, Vol. 3, pp.489-491; Richard Burn, *The history of the poor laws* (London, 1764), p.251; Dickinson, *Exposition*, Vol. 1, pp.413-416; Williams, *Law*, Vol. 1, pp.786-804; Robert Gardiner, *Compleat constable* (London, 3rd. ed., 1708), pp.79-80 and 125-126; Nolan, *Treatise*, Vol. 1, p.251; Jacob, *Compleat*, pp.7, 32-35 and 84.

¹²⁷ Burn, *Justice*, Vol. 3, pp.448-449; David Englander, *Landlord and tenant in urban Britain 1838-1918* (Oxford, 1983), p.22.

Goods-taken inventories were made to record the possessions that the parish took from parishioners. These goods were then sold, recycled around the community, used in the poorhouse/workhouse, or were destroyed. 74 of the 111 goods-taken inventories were made of paupers. Goods-taken inventories have commonly been mistaken as pauper inventories by historians as they sometimes record the final process when the goods of a deceased pauper, which had previously been promised to the parish in a pauper inventory, were taken. However, goods-taken inventories could be made for a variety of different reasons and so should be viewed as distinct from pauper inventories. Over half of these inventories were made of the goods of people who were still alive, and so were not made to record the final stage of the pauper inventory process when the parish took a deceased pauper's belongings. Some goods-taken inventories record the parish taking back the items that they had previously given to a pauper.¹²⁸ Sometimes goods were taken from paupers because they had possessions that were rotten or were unusable.¹²⁹ On occasion the parish only took a small number of goods to pay the funeral expenses of a spouse or child.¹³⁰ Consequently, many of these inventories were made for very different reasons to pauper inventories and often record only a handful of items rather than a representative sample of a pauper's entire home. Fortunately, because many of the goods in these inventories were sold they often give valuations.

Family abandonment inventories are not used in this thesis. They were made to record the distraint of the goods of husbands and/or wives who had deserted their family and left them chargeable to the parish.¹³¹ Although these abandoned people technically became paupers and were sometimes from labouring backgrounds, a number of these inventories relate to the belongings of people from middling trades who unsurprisingly had much greater levels of material wealth than paupers from the pauper inventories. Including these inventories in the sample would have significantly increased the quantitative averages and created an unrepresentative picture of the material lives of the poor.

¹²⁸ See the example of John Monday in Cirket, *Notebooks*, p.125.

¹²⁹ See the example of Joseph Crane *ibid.*, pp.69-70.

¹³⁰ See for instance the goods-taken inventory of John Hansford, Hingham. NRO PD 575/12 Hingham inventories, 1706-1731.

¹³¹ Burn, *Justice*, Vol. 3, pp.505-507; Burn, *History*, p.101; Williams, *Law*, Vol. 3, p.673 and 740; Dickinson, *Exposition*, Vol. 2, pp.685-686; Nolan, *Treatise*, Vol. 3, p.86; Jacob, *Compleat*, p.187; George Nicholls, *A history of the English poor law*, Vol. 2 (London, 1854), pp.6-7.

Table 2.3: Percentage of various Kent inventories which record select items, c.1668-1834

	Kent pauper inventories			Kent bastardy, debt, rent and goods-taken inventories of paupers		
	c.1668-1769	1770-c.1834	All	c.1668-1769	1770-c.1834	All
Bed (any type)	89	100	93	93	93	93
Chests of drawers	13	41	23	8	40	16
Chair	86	100	90	83	87	84
Table	82	100	90	83	87	84
Cooking pot	47	27	40	63	27	53
Spit	28	13	24	32	18	27
Looking glass	13	45	25	13	20	15
Timepiece	11	50	25	10	27	15
Sample size	38	22	60	40	15	55

In this thesis these inventories are chiefly used qualitatively to provide interesting illustrative examples and to facilitate understanding of the functions, appearances, conditions, constructions and social meanings of various pauper items. Inventories related to bastardy, debt, rent and goods-taken inventories of people on relief are occasionally used quantitatively, but inventories related to poorhouses/workhouses and almshouses are not because the focus is upon domestic rather than institutional material surroundings. As with the pauper inventories, the quantitative results from the bastardy, debt, rent and goods-taken inventories must be viewed as suggestive rather than certain as the sample size is relatively small at 103 inventories.¹³² This is because a number of these inventories had to be omitted on the grounds that they mainly listed clothing or did not relate to the goods of an individual on poor relief. These inventories are also less numerous from the late eighteenth century and cannot be used to study regional differences since they are unequally distributed across the counties.¹³³ Moreover, as I discussed above, some of the inventories may have under-represented paupers' possessions if, for example, a creditor decided to only inventory enough goods to pay back a debt rather than all of the paupers'

¹³² For potential problems related to sample size, see above.

¹³³ More specifically, I found 73 inventories dated c.1668-1769 and 30 inventories for 1770-c.1834. 55 of the inventories come from settlements in Kent, 36 from habitations in Norfolk and only 12 from villages/towns in Dorset.

goods. Taken as a whole, this could mean that any statistics derived from these inventories are unreliable. Consequently, in order to test the reliability of these differing inventories I have constructed table 2.3 which compares bastardy, debt, rent and goods-taken inventories of people on relief in Kent to pauper inventories from the same county. Dorset and Norfolk are not included as I was unable to find a large enough sample to use. The results from both samples of inventories reveal relatively similar patterns of pauper material wealth on a broad range of goods. This is very encouraging as it strongly suggests that, although these types of inventories were all made for different reasons, the results will be broadly accurate and reliable enough to use alongside the pauper inventories. The ownership of luxury goods recorded in the inventories related to debt, rent and other reasons was, however, lower than in the pauper inventories. This probably stems from the fact that paupers in the rent and debt inventories were indebted and so may already have sold some of these goods in order to raise funds. Individuals from the pauper inventories on the other hand had less of a pressing need to do this. This probably means that the results from these differing inventories are slightly under-representative compared to the results of the pauper inventories. Overall, despite these various issues quantitative analysis of the bastardy, debt, rent and goods-taken inventories of paupers' goods is valuable as it provides additional insights into pauper homes and represents a control against some of the results from the pauper inventories.

Terminology: pauper and poor

Although the inventories of paupers' goods are the primary focus here, the terms 'poor' and 'pauper' are used almost interchangeably throughout this thesis. This is done for three reasons. First, although entitlement to relief varied between regions and from one overseer to another, people who received help from the parish (paupers) were by definition poor since they could not manage on their own resources. Excluding the homeless and mobile poor,¹³⁴ paupers were some of the poorest people in eighteenth-century England. Second, the term poor is used as it is important to recognise that there were a considerable number of people who received no poor relief but were still in poverty and thus may have

¹³⁴ Hitchcock, *Down and out*, pp.23-48 and 97-123.

had similar levels of material wealth to those in the pauper inventories.¹³⁵ If one includes groups such as the labouring sort, people who were exempt from taxes and people who received private charity, then at least half of the eighteenth-century population could be broadly defined as 'poor'.¹³⁶ Finally, in relation to the second point, it is important to recognise that vast numbers of the national population received poor relief at one moment or more in their lives and thus may have had similar levels of material wealth to the paupers under study here. The research of Tim Wales, for instance, suggests that around two-fifths or more of the population in seventeenth-century Norfolk received poor relief at least one point in their lives.¹³⁷ Richard Dyson estimated that over a 25 year period 47 per cent of households in St. Giles, Oxford received relief in the early nineteenth century.¹³⁸ Henry French recently found that at least 55 per cent of Terling's (Essex) population recorded in the 1801 census received some sort of relief over time.¹³⁹ Consequently, although only inventories of the goods of people on poor relief are used here, the findings of this research are relevant to a broad spectrum of people and are especially relevant to people who were at the stage in their lives when they received some sort of poor relief.¹⁴⁰ Poverty was not constant and was a condition into which people could fall due to adverse circumstances, such as unemployment and sickness, and as a result people's material goods could fluctuate considerably over their lifetimes as they went through cycles of consuming goods and then selling them as their levels of poverty changed.¹⁴¹ The pauper inventories reflect people's material wealth at the stage in their lives when they were generally poorest. This is examined throughout the thesis through the use of sources such as pawnbroking records and pauper letters, which help to show how the ownership of goods changed throughout

¹³⁵ See for example Hindle, *On the parish*, pp.361-449 which shows that many people were in poverty but did not receive any relief.

¹³⁶ See for instance the findings in: King, *Poverty and welfare*, pp.114-117, 132, 164-165, 208-209 and 254; Richard Dyson, 'Who were the poor of Oxford in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries?', in Andreas Gestrich, Steven King and Lutz Raphael (eds.), *Being poor in modern Europe: historical perspectives 1800-1940* (Bern, 2006), pp.42-68; Tom Arkell, 'The incidence of poverty in England in the later seventeenth century', *Social History*, 12:1 (1987), pp.23-47; Wales, 'Poverty', pp.351-404; Slack, *Poverty and policy*, pp.40-43; Stapleton, 'Inherited', pp.339-355; Thomas Sokoll, *Household and family among the poor: the case of two Essex communities in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries* (Bochum, 1993).

¹³⁷ Wales, 'Poverty', pp.351-404; King, *Poverty and welfare*, p.80.

¹³⁸ Dyson, 'Oxford', pp.54-56.

¹³⁹ Henry French, 'How dependent were the "dependent poor"? Poor relief and the life-course in Terling, Essex, 1752-1834', *Continuity and Change*, 30:2 (2015), p.201. Also see: King, *Poverty and welfare*, pp.31 and 164-165.

¹⁴⁰ One group of the poor which are omitted from this broad definition is the homeless, who had no fixed abode and so owned very different goods to the poor with a home. See: Hitchcock, *Down and out*.

¹⁴¹ See note 104.

the life course as people went through different problems such as sickness and unemployment.

Backgrounds to counties

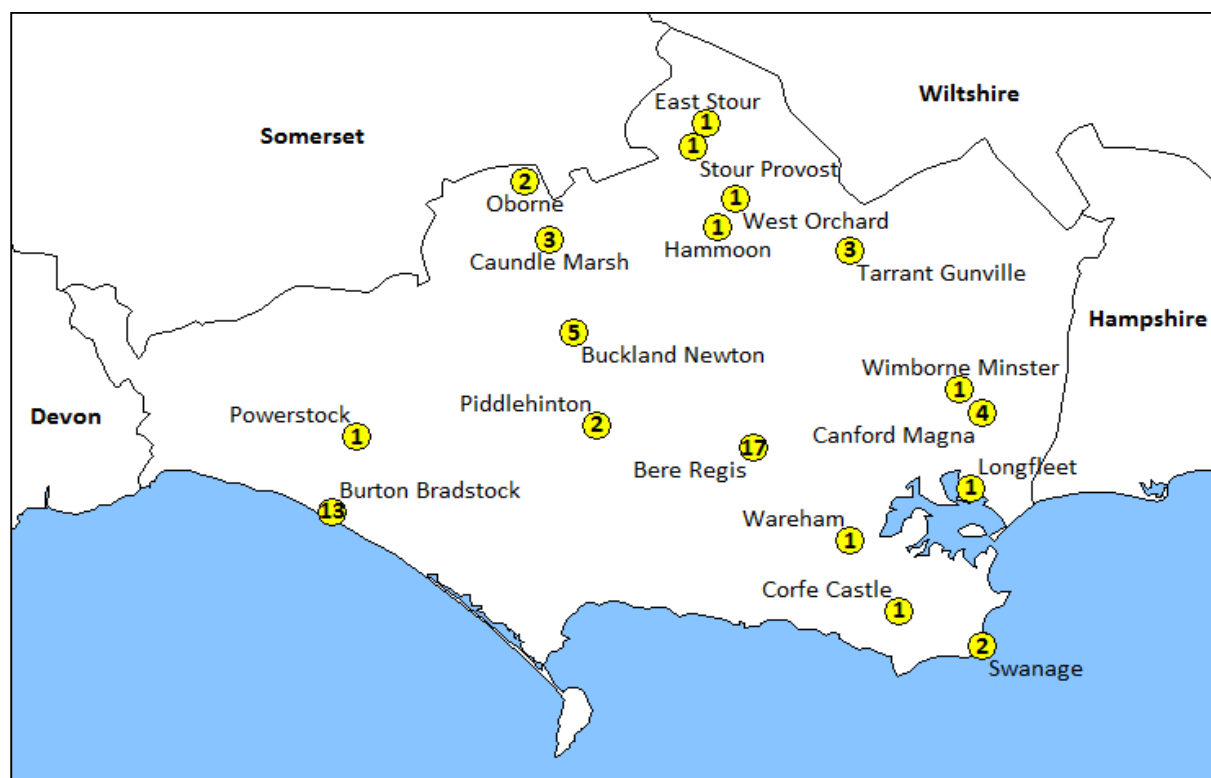
Before our attention turns to the data from the pauper inventories, it is important to first briefly outline the economic, social, demographic and urban backgrounds of Dorset, Kent and Norfolk. These contrasting counties were chosen to measure how the poor's material wealth varied around the country and how factors such as proximity to London and the local economy may have affected the poor's abilities or desires to consume.

Dorset

The rural county of Dorset is located in the south west of England. Over the long eighteenth century, most of the Dorset agricultural labouring population were employed in sheep, cattle or corn production. There were some handicraft sectors, such as button and glove making, and industries related to sailing, such as sailcloth weaving and rope and net production in localities of Dorset; however these were nearly always on a small scale and only small proportions of the population were employed in them. The Dorset pauper inventories are generally found spread around the county and tended to consist of people with backgrounds in agriculture (figure 2.6). In the chalkland areas of Dorset most people would have been involved in sheep rearing or corn production; whereas in the north and west the majority of people would have probably been employed in cattle rearing. The population increased from around 86,462 in 1700 to 159,252 in 1831, yet the county remained relatively sparsely populated and urban growth was limited. Wages were notoriously low in Dorset compared to other parts of England and by the later eighteenth century the population increasingly struggled to find work. There were also fewer retail outlets and transport networks in Dorset compared to Norfolk and the Home Counties, meaning that it was probably more difficult to acquire material goods in Dorset compared to elsewhere. This also meant that new and fashionable items were less 'visible' to Dorset consumers and that there were fewer pawnbrokers and other second-hand outlets from which to acquire these goods.¹⁴² Because the Dorset poor were often struggling over the

¹⁴² This information on Dorset collectively comes from: Cecil N. Cullingford, *A history of Dorset* (Chichester, 3rd ed., 1999); Snell, *Annals*, esp. pp.375-381 and 411-417; Barbara Kerr, *Bound to the soil: a social history of Dorset 1750-1914* (London, 1968); Peter Speed, *Dorset: a county history* (Newbury, 1994); Peter Stanier,

Figure 2.6: Geographical distribution of pauper inventories in Dorset, c.1712-1822



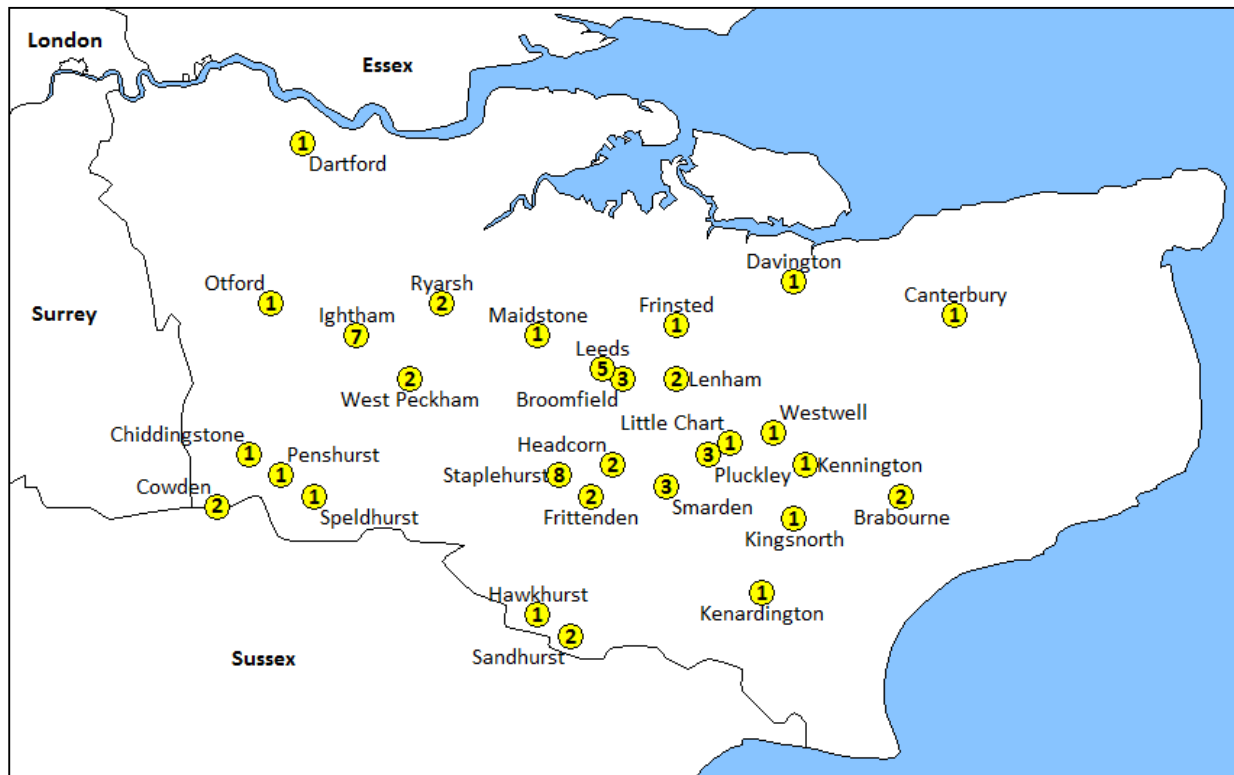
long eighteenth century and lived in a relatively remote area of England away from heavily commercial areas, it is a particularly interesting county to study. If paupers from Dorset were able to increasingly acquire material goods despite these limitations, it would suggest that consumer behaviour had changed drastically over the period and that the poor across wide areas of England were active consumers at some stage in their lives.

Kent

The Home County of Kent is located in the south east of England. The majority of Kentish pauper inventories were made in the middle and southern half of Kent, broadly known as the Scarpfoot and Weald regions (figure 2.7). Broadly speaking, agriculture in the

Discover Dorset: the industrial past (Wimborne, 1998); M. B. Weinstock, *Old Dorset* (Newton Abbot, 1967); French, *Middle sort*, esp. pp.141-200; Shave, 'Dependent poor', pp.67-97; E. A. Wrigley, 'Rickman revisited: the population growth rates of English counties in the early modern period', *Economic History Review*, 62:3 (2009), p.721; BPP, 1833, XXXI.1, *Census of England and Wales, 1831*; John Hatcher, *The history of the British coal industry*, Vol. 1: *Before 1700: towards the age of coal* (Oxford, 1993), pp.2-3; M. J. Daunton, *Progress and poverty: an economic and social history of Britain 1700-1850* (Oxford, 1995), pp.285-317; Michael Freeman, 'Transport', in John Langton and R. J. Morris (eds.), *Atlas of industrializing Britain, 1780-1914* (London, 1986), pp.80-93; *Pigot and co.'s national commercial directory* (London, 1830), pp.273-303; Shammas, *Pre-industrial consumer*, pp.225-265; Hoh-Cheung Mui and Lorna H. Mui, *Shops and shopkeeping in eighteenth-century England* (London, 1989); Stobart, *Sugar*, esp. pp.90-111. On the urban side of Dorset, see chapter five.

Figure 2.7: Geographical distribution of pauper inventories in Kent, c.1679-1834



Scarpfoot region was mixed and in the Weald it was pastoral, involving sheep and cattle. Industry was sparse in these areas and any manufacturing such as cloth and iron production was negligible compared to its heyday in the centuries before the eighteenth century. The population of Kent almost tripled between 1700 and 1831, increasing from around 160,708 to 479,633. With more mouths to feed and extensive food demand coming from burgeoning London, the Kent agricultural industry was booming and labourers could expect to earn relatively high wages compared to their counterparts in Dorset and Norfolk.¹⁴³ Water and road networks were relatively extensive and urban and rural areas were better connected and more integrated than other counties because of its thriving agricultural industry. Some of the highest densities of retail outlets were found in the county and the influence of London had a considerable impact on the consumer behaviour of the Kent middling sort and elite, who were often some of the first people in the country to own

¹⁴³ There were of course times when the Kent agricultural poor struggled, such as during the 1790s when food prices rose considerably and in the decades after the Napoleonic wars when unemployment and underemployment was common. Nonetheless, Kent agricultural labourers in general appear to have fared better than those who lived elsewhere due to the huge demand for Kent produce from London and internally.

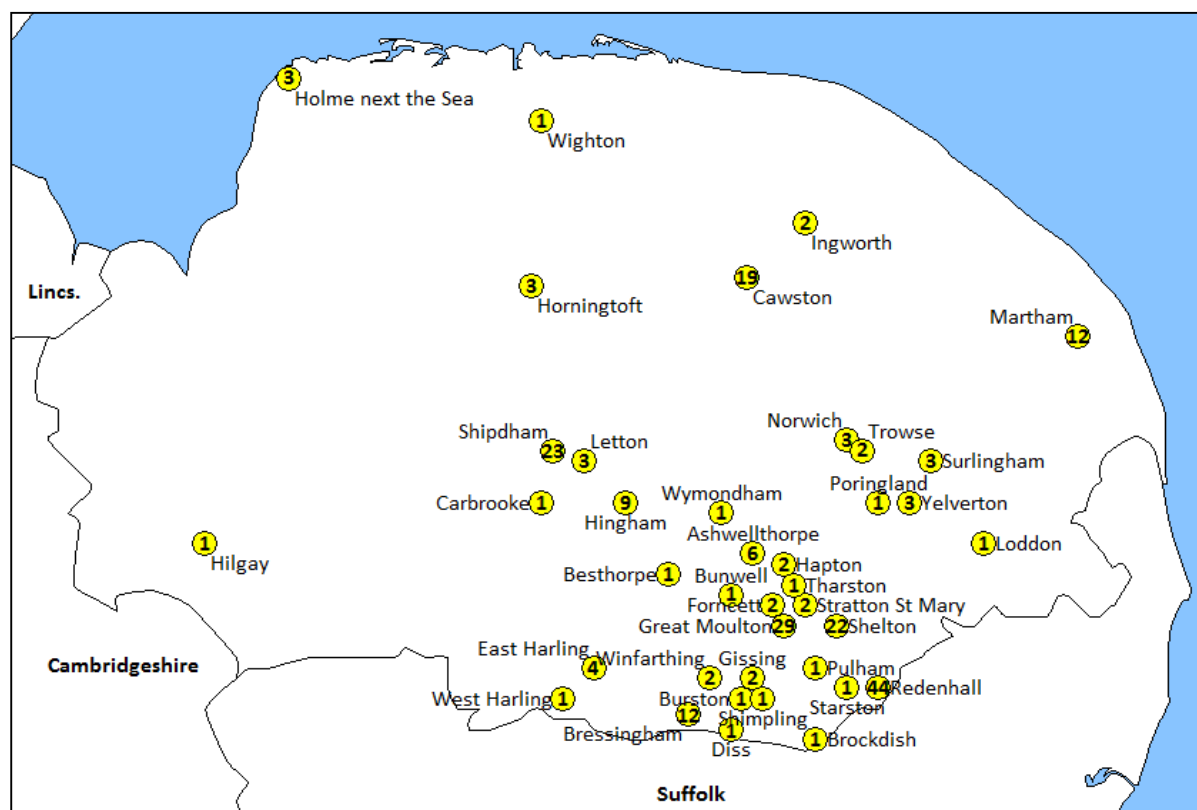
new and fashionable items.¹⁴⁴ This was one of the main reasons why Kent was chosen for this thesis. With the middling sort and elite in Kent being some of the first to consume on a larger and more diverse scale, it is important to investigate the extent to which the Kent poor were able to share in these new patterns of consumption compared to the poor elsewhere.

Norfolk

Norfolk went through considerable changes over the period. At the beginning of the eighteenth century Norfolk boasted the country's largest provincial city, Norwich, and was enjoying the benefits of a prosperous woollen textile industry. Over the period, however, agricultural production became much more important to the local economy and most textile production moved from Norfolk to the north of England. Pauper inventories have been located for various areas of the county, but the vast majority were made in clay lands of central and southern Norfolk, where there was a wood-pasture economy (figure 2.8). The fact that most inventories were made in relatively close proximity to another suggests that local parishes communicated and passed on ideas to one another. Large parts of this area were enclosed at an early date. The Norfolk population increased considerably from around 230,919 people in 1700 to 390,054 in 1831, meaning that unemployment and underemployment became increasingly common over the period. This also meant that agricultural wages were some of the lowest in the country. Many of the pauper inventories were made within a 20 mile radius of the major commercial centre Norwich and were close to turnpikes and/or coaching routes that connected people to major ports such as Yarmouth

¹⁴⁴ On Kent, see: Michael Zell (ed.), *Early modern Kent 1540-1640* (Woodbridge, 2000); Alan Armstrong (ed.), *The economy of Kent 1640-1914* (Woodbridge, 1995); Frank W. Jessup, *A history of Kent* (London, 2nd ed., 1974); Christopher W. Chalklin, *Seventeenth-century Kent: a social and economic history* (London, 1965); Terence Lawson and David Killingray (eds.), *An historical atlas of Kent* (Andover, 2004); Peter Brandon, *The Kent & Sussex weald* (Chichester, 2003); Keith-Lucas, *Parish affairs*; Wrigley, 'Rickman', p.721; *Census, 1831*; Snell, *Annals*, esp. pp.411-417; Hatcher, *Coal*, pp.2-3; Dauntton, *Progress and poverty*, pp.285-317; Freeman, 'Transport', pp.80-93; Shammass, *Pre-industrial consumer*, pp.225-265; Mui and Mui, *Shops*; Stobart, *Sugar*, esp. pp.90-111; Weatherill, *Material culture*, esp. pp.43-69; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*; E. A. Wrigley, 'A simple model of London's importance in changing English society and economy 1650-1750', *Past and Present*, 37 (1967), pp.44-70; F. J. Fisher, 'London as an "engine of economic growth"', in Peter Clark (ed.), *The early modern town: a reader* (London, 1976), pp.205-215; Lena Cowen Orlin (ed.), *Material London, ca. 1600* (Philadelphia, 2000). On the urban side of Kent, see chapter five.

Figure 2.8: Geographical distribution of pauper inventories in Norfolk, c.1692-1828



and the rest of England.¹⁴⁵ Other commercial market towns such as Attleborough, Buckenham, Bungay, Diss, East Harling, Hingham, Redenhall with Harleston and Wymondham were also often within walking distance of the villages in which the inventories were made. Consequently, although the Norfolk agricultural poor were in a difficult position from the second half of the eighteenth century like their peers in Dorset, they were nonetheless well connected and able to choose between several markets from which to acquire their goods.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Because I did not search Norfolk Record Office as extensively as I did for other counties, it is difficult to tell if this concentration of inventories was the result of distinct poor law practice or how the archive catalogued its records.

¹⁴⁶ On Norfolk, see: Susanna Wade Martins, *A history of Norfolk* (Chichester, 1984); Susanna Wade Martins, *Norfolk: a changing countryside* (Chichester, 1988); John Patten, *English towns 1500-1700* (Folkestone, 1978), pp.244-296; Digby, *Pauper palaces*, pp.15-31; Peter Wade-Martins and Jane Everett (eds.), *An historical atlas of Norfolk* (London, 2nd ed., 1998); French, *Middle sort*, esp. pp.141-200; Wrigley, 'Rickman', p.721; *Census, 1831*; Snell, *Annals*, esp. pp.411-417; Hatcher, *Coal*, pp.2-3; Dauntton, *Progress and poverty*, pp.285-317; Freeman, 'Transport', pp.80-93; *Pigot and co.'s*, pp.527-607; Shammass, *Pre-industrial consumer*, pp.225-265; Mui and Mui, *Shops*; Stobart, *Sugar*, esp. pp.90-111. On the urban side of Norfolk, see chapter five.

Chapter 3: Beds, furnishings, hearths, cooking and lighting in the homes of the Dorset, Kent and Norfolk poor

The next two chapters trace pauper ownership of a range of items using the Dorset, Kent and Norfolk pauper inventories from the late seventeenth century to the end of the old poor law in 1834. Of the 351 pauper inventories found for Dorset, Kent and Norfolk, two have been omitted since they mainly list clothing.¹ Over 100 household items from the pauper inventories were selected for analysis and most of the items were broken down into sub-sections, such as material, size and condition,² to gain a holistic view of the entire household and trace the poor's ownership of mundane items as well as luxury goods.³ Examples of individuals' belongings and linguistic analyses of the item descriptions from the pauper inventories are also used, to produce a more comprehensive picture of the home and infer utility, appearance and personal significance of the goods to the owners. The analysis of the pauper inventories is augmented through the use of other types of inventories such as debt-related and goods-taken inventories which relate to paupers' belongings, as well as extensive secondary reading, contemporary paintings and literature, and surviving examples of artefacts which best match the items referred to in the inventories. Sources such as pauper letters, pawnbroking records and autobiographies of the poor are also used. Through these multiple methods of analysis, this thesis develops a much deeper understanding of pauper material lives than has previously been achieved in the historiography. The findings also enhance our understanding of other important historiographical issues, such as standard of living, production, diet and everyday life.

The chapter starts by assessing the quantities and values of the items that were recorded in the pauper inventories. It then assesses pauper ownership of specific goods, including beds, household linen, furniture, cooking implements and hearth- and lighting-

¹ One of these was from Kent and another Norfolk.

² Most other studies are limited as they tend to select no more than 30 items from probate inventories to analyse. Moreover they often study luxury and novel items, instead of basics such as furniture and fire irons. See for instance: Weatherill, *Material culture*; French, *Middle sort*; Hussey and Ponsonby, *Single homemaker*.

³ Historians and scholars from other disciplines have only recently started to look at mundane and everyday objects. See for instance: McKenney, 'Thimble', pp.1-23; Judy Attfield, *Wild things: the material culture of everyday life* (Oxford, 2000); and the many publications of Sara Pennell, such as: 'Mundane materiality, or, should small things still be forgotten? Material culture, micro-histories and the problem of scale', in Karen Harvey (ed.), *History and material culture: a student's guide to approaching alternative sources* (London, 2009), pp.173-191.

related goods. The following chapter will then analyse tableware and luxuries, before assessing how the conditions of pauper items changed over time through analysis of the language used in the inventories. Recent research has emphasised the importance of analysing consumption 'bundles' or 'clusters' rather than items individually, as goods often had little utility or embodied different meanings until they were bundled alongside other possessions. Tea drinking in Britain, for example, became common over the long eighteenth century not because people simply liked the taste, but because it was often drunk with sugar and prepared and used alongside items such as tea cups and tea pots. These items were also connected to certain behaviours such as how tea was sipped, poured and used in sociability.⁴ The items recorded in pauper inventories are sometimes analysed in such bundles, however because some possessions were used with several different clusters of goods this has not been possible for large parts of the thesis. Tables, for instance, were an important item of many people's bundles of tea goods, but were also important in the context of other consumption bundles including tableware such as plates, cups and knives and forks. Belongings can also be difficult to cluster together as bundles can be 'large and diverse, and the connections indirect'.⁵

Overall, the results from the pauper inventories indicate that paupers from each of the counties became materially richer over the long eighteenth century, following their increased ownership of a wide range of goods such as furniture, hearth items, tableware and luxury goods. This increased consumption, however, appears not to have been equal and uniform, as it was not until the late eighteenth century that significant numbers of paupers owned these goods in greater frequencies. Moreover, there appears to have been distinct regional differences, with paupers who lived in Kent and other Home Counties generally owning these goods before paupers elsewhere.

Valuations and quantities of items

Appraisers rarely valued paupers' belongings. Out of the 349 pauper inventories from Dorset, Kent and Norfolk, only 64 recorded the total value of the pauper's goods. This was probably because pauper inventories were made as a record of ownership with the idea

⁴ de Vries, *Industrious revolution*, pp.31-37; Stobart, *Sugar*, passim; Smith, *Respectability*, pp.122-123; Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and power: the place of sugar in modern history* (New York, 1985), p.214; Mary Douglas and Baron C. Isherwood, *The world of goods: towards an anthropology of consumption* (London, 1979), p.72.

⁵ Stobart, *Sugar*, p.272.

Table 3.1: Total average value of goods recorded in pauper inventories, 1681-1825

	1681-c.1769	c.1770-1825	All years
Dorset (n=1) ⁶	£4 1s. 3d.	-	£4 1s. 3d.
Kent (n=5)	£4 1s. 3d.	£13 6s. 3d.	£9 12s. 3d.
Norfolk (n=58)	£2 4s. 10d.	£4 8s. 4d.	£2 6s. 4d.
All (n=64)	£2 6s. 8d.	£9 15s. 1d.	£2 18s. 3d.
Sample size	59	5	64

of taking the goods at a later date, meaning that it was pointless to value the possessions as the condition and value of them could change over time. Additionally, a number of parishes would have kept the items for use in the workhouse or given them to other paupers, further ensuring that there was no point in valuing them. Table 3.1 has been constructed to assess the 64 pauper inventories which listed valuations. The valuations are likely to have been what the parish expected to receive selling the goods, rather than the prices that the owners originally paid.⁷ Nevertheless, the low overall total value of goods is striking, averaging £2 18s. 3d. across the entire sample. The sample size is small and the results are thus tentative, but if one compares pauper inventories with valuations dated between 1675 and 1725, to the probate inventories used in Lorna Weatherill's research on the middling sort, the data demonstrates that Weatherill's sample owned goods worth approximately 11 to 12 times more than paupers in this sample. Even when the results are only compared to husbandmen and labourers, paupers still only owned goods that were worth one-quarter and two-thirds the value of the former respectively.⁸

The results from table 3.1 are inevitably tentative due to the small sample size. Only five pauper inventories dated after 1770 recorded item values, and only one pauper inventory from Dorset and five from Kent recorded valuations. Nevertheless, the findings generally corroborate other evidence presented in this chapter and tentatively suggest that Kent pauper households tended to contain more valuable and better possessions than the

⁶ The letter 'n' refers to the number of pauper inventories.

⁷ Mark Overton found that the items in probate inventories were valued at their resale value. There is no reason to think that the same would not be true of pauper inventories. Mark Overton, 'Prices from Probate Inventories', Arkell, Evans and Goose, *When death*, pp.120-141.

⁸ Weatherill, *Material culture*, p.168.

Table 3.2: Average and median total number of items in pauper inventories, c.1679-1834

	Average			Median		
	c.1679- 1769	1770- c.1834	All years	c.1679- 1769	1770- c.1834	All years
Dorset (n=60)	32	40	35	25	30	27
Kent (n=60)	57	132	85	39	106	61
Norfolk (n=229)	30	56	34	24	50	27
All (n=349)	34	72	43	26	51	29
Sample size	265	81	349	265	81	349

households of paupers located elsewhere. Paupers in Kent, for instance, owned goods worth an average of £7 5s. 11d. more than the Norfolk poor. The total average value of goods appear to have increased over time in Norfolk and Kent, with the material contents of Norfolk homes almost doubling in value and Kent dwellings more than tripling in value after 1770. Even allowing for inflation the contents of pauper homes appear to have increasingly become more valuable over the period.⁹

Historians have often found that while the values and prices of many individual items were decreasing over the long eighteenth century, the total value of people's entire collections of material goods was increasing. This strongly suggests that people were acquiring greater quantities of goods; however, little empirical work on inventories (of any type) has been undertaken to test this assumption.¹⁰ Table 3.2 helps to address this gap by showing the average and median total number of items that people from the pauper inventories were listed as owning. Naturally, this method is fraught with difficulties. It is not uncommon for pauper inventories, for example, to record 'some' earthenware, to not

⁹ This statement was based on comparing the total value of items in pauper inventories to both 'optimistic' and 'pessimistic' price indices in: E. H. Phelps Brown and Sheila V. Hopkins, 'Seven centuries of the price of consumables, compared with builders' wage-rates', *Economica*, 23:92 (1956), pp.296-314; Elizabeth W. Gilboy, 'The cost of living and real wages in eighteenth century England', *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 18:3 (1936), pp.134-143; Peter H. Lindert and Jeffrey G. Williamson, 'English workers' living standards during the industrial revolution: a new look', *Economic History Review*, 36:1 (1983), pp.1-25; Feinstein, 'Pessimism perpetuated', pp.625-658. On the advantages and disadvantages of using these indices, see: Jan de Vries, 'Between purchasing power and the world of goods: understanding the household economy in early modern Europe', in Brewer and Porter, *World of goods*, pp.96-98.

¹⁰ For an overview of this literature and these findings, see: de Vries, *Industrious revolution*, pp.144-148. Also see: Anton Schuurman, 'Things by which one measures one's life. Wealth and poverty in European rural societies', in Broad and Schuurman, *Wealth*, p.25.

mention certain items which we know were present, or write items in the plural such as 'tubs' or 'bedding'. As a result these figures are crude and only used as a rudimentary assessment, but they are nevertheless interesting and offer empirical evidence to suggest that as many goods declined in price, people acquired more possessions. The results from table 3.2 indicate that the average and median number of items recorded in pauper inventories from each county increased after 1770. Kent appears to have experienced the largest growth, followed by Norfolk and then Dorset. Pauper inventories from Norfolk and Dorset recorded similar numbers of items to one another in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, but Norfolk appears to have grown apace whilst Dorset was left behind and only experienced a small increase after 1770. Having examined the value and numbers of goods in pauper homes, the chapter will now assess the consumption and implications of owning individual items such as beds, furniture and hearth goods.

Beds and furnishings

Beds

Contemporary beds were generally made up of a bedstead and mattress. Alongside furnishings such as pillows/bolsters and bedding, these bundles of goods were very important as their quality dictated how comfortable people were when they slept. Laura Gowing recently argued that beds were central to people's lives as they 'were places for eating, talking, doing business, and seeing visions, as well as sleeping and sex' and 'were part of the family life cycle, the scene for birth, marital union, and death'.¹¹ In nearly every inventory beds appear to have also been the most valuable item that people owned at an average value of £1 3s. 8d. each. The value of beds could, however, vary considerably. The most expensive bed recorded in the pauper inventories was valued at £3 and the least expensive was worth 2s. Beds were likely to have only been acquired once or twice in a lifetime and many would have been acquired second-hand or passed down the family. The most common household items that were given to paupers by the parish appear to have been beds, as 81 per cent of goods-given inventories noted one or more. Typically these were chaff or straw beds, generally acquired from a range of sources such as auctions and

¹¹ Laura Gowing, 'The twinkling of a bedstaff: recovering the social life of English beds 1500-1700', *Home Cultures*, 11:3 (2014), pp.278-279. Also see: Sara Pennell, 'Making the bed in later Stuart and Georgian England', in Stobart and Blondé, *Selling*, pp.30-45.

Table 3.3: Percentage of pauper inventories which record beds and mattresses, c.1679-1834

	Any type/ unspecified	Feather	Flock	Straw/chaff
Dorset (n=60)	93	28	8	20
Kent (n=60)	98	35	27	3
Norfolk (n=229)	99	14	3	<1
All (n=349)	98	20	8	4

from other paupers. Sometimes they were even bought new by the parish. Collectively this meant that the beds paupers owned were highly variable in quality, with some being old and worn whilst others were of a good quality. When Thomas Reece entered Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell workhouse in Norfolk, for instance, his inventory recorded ‘Two good Beds’; whereas Widow Hill, who received casual relief whilst living in Kenninghall almshouse, owned ‘a very meane Bed’.¹² Only more showy and rich examples of beds tend to have survived today, despite their apparent ubiquity from at least the late seventeenth century (table 3.3).¹³ This further implies that beds were bought and passed around, repaired and serviced, and ultimately used until the bedsteads became more useful as firewood.¹⁴

Before the seventeenth century it was not uncommon for people to sleep on the floor, on a straw pallet, or on top of a chest or table.¹⁵ Table 3.3 suggests that by the late seventeenth century beds had become almost universal in pauper homes. Only two per cent of the pauper inventories did not record a bed, which suggests that the appraisers may have forgotten to write it down or that the pauper was a lodger using somebody else’s bed. Unfortunately, the majority of inventories do not record whether the mattress was made of feathers, flock or straw/chaff and appraisers may have only recorded the material when it

¹² NRO PD 295/117 Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell inventories, 1744-1762; NRO PD 108/84 Kenninghall overseers’ accounts, 1683-1747.

¹³ F. Gordon Roe, *English cottage furniture* (London, 3rd ed., 1961), pp.149-150.

¹⁴ On servicing and the second-hand trade for beds and bedding, see: Pennell, ‘Bed’, pp.30-45.

¹⁵ F. G. Emmison (ed.), *Jacobean household inventories* (Aspley Guise, 1938), pp.18-19; Ralph Fastnedge, *English furniture styles from 1500-1830* (Harmondsworth, 1961, reprint of 1955 ed.), p.2; Lawrence Wright, *Warm & snug: the history of the bed* (Stroud, 2004, reprint of 1962 ed.), p.18.

Table 3.4: Percentage of pauper inventories which record beds and mattresses in Dorset, Kent and Norfolk, c.1679-1834

	c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Feather	15	35	20
Flock	8	7	8
Straw/chaff	3	7	4
Any type/unspecified	97	100	98
Sample size	265	81	349

was more notable or valuable than other types of mattresses. As a result, the figures regarding type of bed in table 3.3 are under-representative, yet despite this there appear to be clear regional differences. The quality of mattresses appears to have been highest in Kent, as feather and flock beds were most commonly owned there. Paupers in Dorset appear to have owned the second highest frequencies of feather beds but also had the highest numbers of straw/chaff beds out of the three counties. This suggests that the quality of beds was not necessarily better in Dorset than Norfolk. Unfortunately, the inventories rarely detail paupers' bedsteads and tend to only record the most exceptional examples. Tentatively, most bedsteads were probably made out of oak and had a sack- or cord-bottomed base to them. Trundle beds, which were pulled out from under a larger bed, are rarely specified in the inventories. Nevertheless, they were probably more common than the inventories suggest due to the relative lack of space that many paupers had in their homes.¹⁶ Some inventories record odd numbers of mattresses and bedsteads, suggesting that some paupers used mattresses without bedsteads or bedsteads without mattresses. Cradles were recorded in around one in twenty pauper inventories. This may suggest that most babies slept with their parents or siblings; however wider evidence suggests that this may not have been the case. In a letter written by George Watson to the parish of St. Botolph, Colchester, he mentioned how his daughter Hannah had used the money she received from the parish frugally and budgeted 'a Trifle for an old Cradle for her Child',¹⁷ suggesting that cradles were a necessary expense. Additionally, David Davies hinted that cradles were common among labouring people, by saying that women often spent their

¹⁶ See below for a discussion about room and bed sharing.

¹⁷ Sokoll, *Pauper letters*, pp.317-318.

Table 3.5: Average number of beds per pauper inventory in Dorset, Kent and Norfolk, c.1679-1834

	c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Feather	1.1	1.3	1.2
Flock	1.3	1.5	1.3
Straw/chaff	1.1	1.5	1.3
Any type/unspecified	1.4	1.8	1.5
Sample size	265	81	349

time ‘rocking the cradle’ instead of working outside.¹⁸ Hannah was a young mother and Davies was mainly concerned with people of working age, and so it stands to reason that because the people from the pauper inventories were generally older they had little use for cradles in later life and had subsequently sold or given them away. Sometimes people did not own cradles but would use large food containers, drawers and boxes lined with sheets and blankets to make improvised cradles.¹⁹

During the medieval period the term ‘comfort’ had moral, emotional and spiritual connotations; however from the eighteenth century the term was increasingly linked to physical wellbeing and how people felt about their material surroundings.²⁰ This reconceptualised idea became very important to people over the eighteenth century and meant that other interconnected notions that affected physical comfort became more prevalent in people’s minds, including utility, privacy, convenience, relaxation and informality.²¹ These ideas of physical comfort were initially linked to rich and luxury goods,

¹⁸ David Davies, *The case of labourers in husbandry* (London, 1795), p.6.

¹⁹ Vicky Holmes, ‘Dangerous spaces: working-class homes and fatal household accidents in Suffolk, 1840-1900’, PhD thesis (University of Essex, 2012), pp.271 and 303.

²⁰ Crowley, *Invention of comfort*; John E. Crowley, ‘From luxury to comfort and back again: landscape architecture and the cottage in Britain and America’, in Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (eds.), *Luxury in the eighteenth century: debates, desires and delectable goods* (Basingstoke, 2003), pp.135-136; John E. Crowley, ‘The sensibility of comfort’, *American Historical Review*, 104:3 (1999), pp.749-753; Witold Rybczynski, *Home: a short history of the idea* (New York, 1987), pp.20-23; Elizabeth Shove, ‘Comfort and convenience: temporality and practice’, in Trentmann, *Oxford*, p.290.

²¹ It is important to note that some of these terms had slightly different meanings in the eighteenth century. ‘Convenience’ was not associated with time and efficiency, but used by people ‘to describe physical satisfaction with their immediate material culture’ and ‘increasingly referred to open-ended suitability “to the performance of some action or to the satisfying of requirements”’. Quoted from Crowley, *Sensibility of comfort*, pp.761-762. Also see: Shove, ‘Comfort and convenience’, pp.279-303. Utility did not just relate to the quality of goods or the product’s usefulness, but also encompassed ‘subjective attributes, including the

however by the late eighteenth century physical comfort was seen as essential to everybody.²² For example, in pauper letters written by William James to the overseer of Chelmsford, he stated that he had ‘only our Bed, & a few things’ and asked the overseer for help ‘to stop the threatening proceedings of my Landlady, to take away the *Comfort*, of our few goods from us’.²³ Likewise, in a letter written by John Hicks in 1805 he asked for weekly relief from the overseer of Upminster, Essex to make ‘me *tollerable* comfortable’.²⁴ These examples indicate that even if people owned very few goods they still wanted to be comfortable and felt that they had an inherent right to be. Thus, ideas of physical comfort became very important and can implicitly and explicitly be linked to a considerable range of goods that were recorded in the pauper inventories.²⁵

One of the more obvious items connected to eighteenth-century comfort was feather beds,²⁶ which appear to have been owned by greater numbers of paupers over the eighteenth century (table 3.4). The pauper inventories indicate that the ownership of feather beds was highest in Kent, where it increased from 32 per cent between c.1679 and 1769 to 42 per cent after 1770. Paupers from Dorset experienced a small rise in their ownership of feather beds from 24 per cent to 32 per cent by the second period, whereas paupers from Norfolk experienced the largest increase, rising from 11 per cent before 1770 to 32 per cent after 1770. The results from the Dorset, Kent and Norfolk bastardy, debt, rent and goods-taken inventories of people on relief equally suggest that feather bed ownership increased. Between c.1668-1769 14 per cent of the inventories recorded a feather bed, but after 1770 the results indicate that 43 per cent of the sample owned at least one feather bed. Likewise, the results from Essex pauper inventories indicate that between 1710 and

anticipated happiness that attaches to the contemplation of a purchase’ and the search for comfort and pleasure. Quoted from de Vries, *Industrious revolution*, p.20 and see pp.20-25; Tibor Scitovsky, *The joyless economy: an enquiry into human satisfaction and consumer dissatisfaction* (New York, 1976); Stobart, *Sugar*, esp. pp.4, 8, 196, 271-275. Additionally see the texts in the footnote below for further information.

²² Crowley, *Invention of comfort*; Crowley, ‘Luxury to comfort’, pp.135-150; Crowley, ‘Sensibility of comfort’, pp.749-782; Rybczynski, *Home*; Joan DeJean, *The age of comfort: when Paris discovered casual – and the modern home began* (New York, 2009); Stobart, *Sugar*, passim; Shove, ‘Comfort and convenience’, pp.289-306; de Vries, *Industrious revolution*, pp.20-25; Scitovsky, *Joyless economy*. Luxury goods are discussed and defined in chapter four.

²³ Thomas Sokoll (ed.), *Essex pauper letters, 1731-1837* (Oxford, 2001), pp.390 and 410. My italics.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.617-618.

²⁵ Crowley, *Invention of comfort*; Crowley, ‘Sensibility of comfort’, pp.749-782; Shove, ‘Comfort and convenience’, pp.291-292 and 296-297; Stobart, *Sugar*, pp.271-275.

²⁶ Muldrew, *Food*, p.195.

1819 around 46 per cent of paupers owned at least one feather bed.²⁷ These results from Dorset, Essex, Kent and Norfolk strongly suggest that paupers valued comfort and increasingly acquired feather beds to meet these aspirations.²⁸ The ownership of flock and straw/chaff beds, on the other hand, appears to have remained relatively negligible and static across the two periods. This may have been because the ownership of flock and straw/chaff beds was low or that they were generally not worth specifically noting by the appraisers.

By the eighteenth century privacy had become more important to people's ideas of comfort, domestic culture and respectability.²⁹ Pauper inventories allow the historian to gauge privacy and comfort through the goods associated with these concepts. After 1770 the pauper inventories indicate that there was a small increase across all counties in the average number of beds that paupers owned (table 3.5). This may have meant that there was less bed sharing among people; however without knowing the household size of most pauper homes it is impossible to determine the extent to which this was true. Nonetheless, some element of bed sharing appears to have been common throughout the period. Naturally, the experience of bed sharing varied significantly. The famous eighteenth-century physician Erasmus Darwin advised that girls in boarding schools should share beds and Alannah Tomkins has argued that sharing beds in workhouses helped to keep inmates warm and was preferable to having no bed.³⁰ On the other hand, bed sharing also meant less privacy and could also lead to sleepless nights through lack of space, fidgeting and bed wetting from other people in the bed. More seriously, bed sharing was sometimes connected to legal cases involving sodomy, adultery, rape, sex and pregnancy outside of marriage.³¹

²⁷ King, 'Pauper inventories', p.164.

²⁸ On comfort, see: Crowley, *Invention of comfort*.

²⁹ Amanda Vickery, 'An Englishman's home is his castle? Thresholds, boundaries and privacies in the eighteenth-century London house', *Past and Present*, 199 (2008), pp.147-173; Rybczynski, *Home*, pp.14-49; DeJean, *Comfort*, passim; Smith, *Respectability*, passim; F. M. L. Thompson, *The rise of respectable society: a social history of Victorian Britain 1830-1900* (Cambridge: MA, 1988), p.193; MacKay, *Respectability*, pp.22-23. The concept of respectability is discussed further in the 'bedding, household linen and textiles' section below.

³⁰ Tomkins, *Urban poverty*, p.67.

³¹ Gowing, 'Twinkling', pp.288-295.

Bed hangings

Bed hangings can be analysed to assess pauper privacy and comfort. Norman Pounds and Lawrence Wright argued that bed hangings were primarily used to prevent draughts and to keep in the warmth, rather than for privacy.³² Contemporary writers, on the other hand, suggest that privacy was much more important to the poor, but that they often struggled to find this privacy as there were not enough rooms to avoid room and bed sharing. In 1775 Nathaniel Kent argued that 'it is shocking, that a man, his wife, and half a dozen children should be obliged to lie all in one room together; and more so, that the wife should have no more private place to be brought to bed in'.³³ Writing in 1792, John Wood similarly said that parents, boys and girls should all have separate rooms in order to avoid 'offence to decency if they sleep in the same room with their parents'.³⁴ Thus bed hangings, whether originally intended for privacy or not, at least gave those who could not afford a larger home a more cost-effective internal divide that could separate couples, children and lodgers from one another whilst sleeping, resting or having sex in the same room. Of course this privacy was limited as each occupant would still be able to hear one another and the hangings were only a fabric divide that could easily be breached. Nevertheless, hangings would have at least allowed people to feel like they had *some* privacy. Moreover, because window curtains appear to have been relatively uncommon in pauper homes (see table 4.18 below), hangings were especially important as they blocked the view of people who may have been passing by the window.

Bed hangings appear to have been increasingly owned by paupers in Kent and Norfolk after 1770, indicating that there was a greater degree of comfort and privacy for poor people in these counties (table 3.6). In Dorset, on the other hand, none of the pauper inventories recorded bed hangings. This suggests that although paupers in Dorset appear to have increasingly valued comfort with feather beds, they could not afford or did not desire bed hangings. Most pauper inventories listed no more than one set of bed hangings even if the inventory recorded multiple numbers of beds. This suggests that hangings were predominantly used on the beds of the heads of the household. Five pauper inventories recorded blue bed hangings and three inventories noted green hangings. These hangings

³² Pounds, *Hearth*, p.198; Wright, *Warm*, p.18.

³³ Nathaniel Kent, *Hints to gentlemen of landed property* (London, 1775), pp.229-230.

³⁴ John Wood, *A series of plans for cottages or habitations of the labourer* (London, 2nd ed., 1792), pp.4-5.

Table 3.6: Percentage of pauper inventories which record bed hangings, c.1679-1834

	c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Dorset (n=60)	0	0	0
Kent (n=60)	26	50	35
Norfolk (n=229)	17	51	22
All (n=349)	16	37	21
Sample size	265	81	349

would have added a considerable decorative quality to rooms, as they were colourful and clearly visible since they had to be large enough to cover or surround a bed (see figure 3.1 for example).³⁵ Sometimes the bed hangings were held up with testers or posts and were accompanied with valances, which were a decorative material border that hung around the bedstead. Richard Clark from Dartford in Kent, for instance, owned ‘One feather Bed and Bed Steddle Matt and Cord Curtaines valence head Cloth & tester’ in the ‘Best Chamber’ and James Parker from East Harling in Kent owned a ‘4 Post Bed stead & ordinary hangings’ in 1825.³⁶ The majority of other inventories unfortunately do not record items such as testers and posts and so it is unclear if other paupers hung up their hangings in a similar manner.

Bedding, household linen and textiles

Household linen was very important to the home. Bedding helped to keep people warm during the cold winter nights and table linen such as tablecloths and napkins demonstrated a degree of decorum, respectability and comfort to guests. Pauper inventories appear to under-record household linen (table 3.7), as a number of other sources suggest that the very poorest in society, including paupers, commonly owned linen. For example, in the Sherborne almshouse inventories, which note the goods that people brought with them, linen was commonly listed.³⁷ Overseers’ accounts and vestry books across the country also demonstrate that parishes would frequently give bed linen and handkerchiefs to paupers as relief.³⁸ Around a quarter of pauper inventories simply record

³⁵ Also see: Styles, ‘Lodging’, pp.73-74, which shows that poor lodgers in London also often had colourful bed hangings in their homes.

³⁶ MALSC P110/18/52 Dartford overseers’ agreement, 1724; NRO PD 219/114.

³⁷ Ann Clark (ed.), *Sherborne almshouse register* (Dorchester, 2013), esp. pp.62-134.

³⁸ For example: TLSAC PCA/DEN/11/1 Denton overseers’ accounts, 1751-1799; Styles, *Dress*, pp.349-356.

Figure 3.1: Unknown artist, 'A St Giles's Beauty', 1784



Source: BM, 1935,0522.1.107, Unknown artist, 'A St Giles's Beauty', hand-coloured mezzotint print on paper, 1784 [From: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1638754&partId=1&searchText=giles's%20beauty. Accessed 25/05/2014]. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Background: This image offers an interesting depiction of a prostitute in a relatively well-furnished lodging room in St. Giles London.³⁹ Although the bed hangings in the picture have holes or patches on them, they are still a visible and relatively attractive feature of the room.

³⁹ Vickery, *Behind*, pp.304-305.

Table 3.7: Percentage of pauper inventories which record items of bedding and pillows/bolsters and average number of items per pauper inventory, c.1679-1834

	Bedding		Pillows/bolsters	
	%	Average no*	%	Average no*
Dorset (n=60)	70	4	40	2.1
Kent (n=60)	83	6.7	55	2.6
Norfolk (n=229)	80	4.1	44	2.2
All (n=349)	79	4.7	45	2.3
Sample size	349	168	349	148

* - Only includes pauper inventories where the total number of items of bedding can be counted

items like 'bedding' or 'sheets and blankets', meaning that it is only possible to calculate the percentage of inventories which mention bedding and not the quantity or type of bedding in these sources. Despite these problems, some trends and interesting examples can be found.

The most commonly recorded items of household linen/textiles was bedding, including sheets, quilts, blankets, coverlids and rugs (table 3.7). The percentage of inventories which list bedding and pillows/bolsters was highest in Kent. Paupers in Kent were also recorded as owning an average of two to three more items of bedding and a slightly higher average number of pillows and bolsters than paupers in Dorset and Norfolk. There were approximately four items of bedding per bed in Kent homes; three items in Norfolk homes; and around two to three in Dorset homes according to the pauper inventories. Bedding tended to be listed in the inventories after the bed, suggesting that the bed was made when the appraiser came to the pauper's home. Barrie Trinder and Jeff Cox argued that spare sheets are 'one of the best indications' as to the 'steadily rising standards of comfort' in people's homes.⁴⁰ Occasionally bed linen was noted elsewhere in the pauper inventories in linen chests and away from the bed, suggesting that some people had spares. However, this was uncommon and most inventories conversely suggest that a high number

⁴⁰ Barrie Trinder and Jeff Cox (eds.), *Yeoman and colliers in Telford: probate inventories for Dawley, Lilleshall, Wellington and Wrockwardine, 1660-1750* (London, 1980), p.36. Also see: Crowley, *Invention of comfort*.

of paupers owned little or no spare items of bedding.⁴¹ Beverly Lemire recently argued that textiles and clothing were the most important items that people acquired during more prosperous times, as 'stores of value... with a view to their possible liquidity in cash or credit' when times were tough.⁴² It is therefore possible that a number of paupers had relatively little household linen as they had sold off most of their spares for food and other basic necessities before an inventory was made of their possessions. This seems most probable as numerous sources corroborate Lemire's arguments. In the pawnbroker's pledge book of George Fettes of York between 1777 and 1778, around four-fifths of the 10,906 pledges included at least one item of textiles, clothing or household linen. These were by far the most common categories of goods that were put into pledge.⁴³ The letters of paupers asking for relief commonly mention the need to sell household linen and clothing to make ends meet.⁴⁴ For example, in a letter written by William King to the overseer of Braintree, Essex in October 1832, he stressed how 'we have a few old Cloaths... and I am Sorry to Say they are Mostly [pawned] out at this time. My old great Coat wich hides the Ruffull tokens of want and Poverty – will take 2/6 to Redeem, our Blanket and Meny other things are away [pawned] By Reason of want'.⁴⁵ In a letter written to the overseer of Uttoxeter, Staffordshire by a surgeon on behalf of John Jump in 1832, relief was requested 'for the purpose of Releasing the Necessaries of Bedding from the Pawn Brokers'.⁴⁶

Some bedding showed a degree of comfort and decoration. Rhoda Wretham from East Harling in Norfolk, for instance, owned a 'Patch Work Coverlid' in 1821;⁴⁷ whilst others owned coloured rugs and quilts. Ideas of respectability (being of good moral character and social standing) became much more prevalent by the late eighteenth century. Although the

⁴¹ In contrast, Margaret Spufford found that the probate inventories of 'poorer people' often listed spare sheets. Spufford, *Reclathing*, pp.115-116.

⁴² Lemire, *Business*, pp.7 and 82-109. Also see: Tomkins, *Urban Poverty*, 204-234; Richmond, *Clothing*, pp.72-92.

⁴³ Unfortunately it was not always possible to distinguish between clothing, textiles and household linen in order to give more precise figures. YALH Accession 38 Pawnbroker's pledge book, 1777-1778 and Alison Backhouse, *The worm-eaten waistcoat* (York, 2003), pp.77-81.

⁴⁴ Sokoll, *Pauper letters*, passim and King, Nutt and Tomkins, *Narratives* (London, 2006), passim. The applications of men and women trying to enter The Refuge for the Destitute also commonly mention the pawning and selling of clothing to make ends meet, in: Peter King (ed.), *Narratives of the poor in eighteenth-century Britain*. Vol. 4: *Institutional responses: The Refuge for the Destitute* (London, 2006).

⁴⁵ Sokoll, *Pauper letters*, pp.133-134.

⁴⁶ King, Nutt and Tomkins, *Narratives* (London, 2006), p.248.

⁴⁷ NRO PD 219/114.

term can be subjective and incorporate a number of intersecting meanings,⁴⁸ the consumption of certain goods including decent clean linen and clothing was strongly tied to the concept and used by sections of the poor to signal and defend their respectability.⁴⁹ Pauper letters, for example, sometimes link their requests for clothing or bedding from the parish to a need to be respectable.⁵⁰ Similarly to beds, however, the items of bedding recorded in the inventories could significantly vary in quality as it was not uncommon for appraisers to mention 'old' sheets and blankets. Some paupers owned both old and better-quality bedding. The pauper inventory of Witt Bridge from Cawston in Norfolk, for instance, recorded 'a New Blanket' and '2 old Coverings'.⁵¹ Unfortunately the materials of people's bedding are seldom mentioned; however it is probable that most bedding would have been made out of linen and wool, and that by the late eighteenth century some would have been made out of cotton.⁵² Pillows and bolsters are also rarely described in detail in the inventories, but when they are they tended to be made of feather or flock and less often straw or chaff.

Table 3.8 shows the percentages of pauper inventories which record tablecloths, napkins, handkerchiefs and towels. Overall, the results suggest that the poor rarely owned these goods; however such a supposition is very misleading. Handkerchiefs, despite the table's results, were probably commonly owned by the poor as they were frequently given to paupers by parishes around the country.⁵³ They were also the most commonly stolen item recorded in Old Bailey indictments over the eighteenth century and were commonly

⁴⁸ For further discussion on the definition and use of the term 'respectable' and 'respectability', see: Smith, *Respectability*, esp. pp.189-221; MacKay, *Respectability*, esp. pp.7-9; Richmond, *Clothing*, esp. pp.121-160.

⁴⁹ Adam Smith, *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*, Vol. 2, ed. R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner (Oxford, 1981, reprint of 1776 ed.), pp.869-870 and 873; Richmond, *Clothing*, pp.121-160; Beverly Lemire, 'Second-hand beaux and "red-armed Belles": conflict and the creation of fashions in England, c.1660-1800', *Continuity and Change*, 15:3 (2000), p.395. Also see de Vries' ideas on 'social comforts' in: de Vries, *Industrious revolution*, p.22 and Stobart, *Sugar*, pp.271-275.

⁵⁰ For instance, in a letter written by Elizabeth Goodman to the overseer of Rayleigh, Essex in 1833, she stressed that she needed 'a decent Stuff Gown for as I now go out to work at my needle at Several Gentlemens houses I must go *respectable* or not at all'. From: Sokoll, *Pauper letters*, pp.577-578 (my italics). Also see: King, 'I Fear"', pp.207-236; Jones, 'Clothing', pp.17-37.

⁵¹ NRO PD 193/93.

⁵² Using Old Bailey cases John Styles found this trend in the homes of London lodgers. Styles, 'Lodging', pp.74-75. Also see: Helmreich, Hitchcock and Turkel, 'Rethinking', p.23; Horrell, Humphries and Sneath, 'Conundrums', pp.853-854; Lemire, *Fashion's favourite*; Jon Stobart, 'Taste and textiles: selling fashion in eighteenth-century provincial England', in Stobart and Blondé, *Selling*, pp.160-178.

⁵³ See above.

Table 3.8: Percentage of pauper inventories which record household linen/textiles and pillows/bolsters and average number of items per pauper inventory, c.1679-1834

	Handkerchiefs		Tablecloths		Napkins		Towels	
	%	Average no.	%	Average no.	%	Average no.	%	Average no.
Dorset (n=60)	3	2.5	0	0	3	1.5	0	0
Kent (n=60)	5	9	10	1.2	0	0	12	3.1
Norfolk (n=229)	<1	5*	2	1.3	2	2	1	1.7
All (n=349)	2	6.2	3	1.2	2	1.8	3	2.7
Sample size	349	6	349	10	349	4	349	10

* - Only one pauper inventory

pawned by people who needed money.⁵⁴ They were functional items but also helped to lighten one's appearance when they were worn as neckcloths by poor men and women.⁵⁵ The pauper inventories sometimes list decorative handkerchiefs, suggesting that this small item could also be a fashionable luxury. For example, Widow Elizabeth Smith from Martham in Norfolk owned '3 Coloured Hankerchiefs' and '2 more Blue & White hankerchiefs'; while William Lane from Buckland Newton in Dorset owned one white handkerchief and two coloured handkerchiefs.⁵⁶ According to Lemire, 'white handkerchiefs knotted round the neck became the emblem of respectability' to the poor and middling sort.⁵⁷

Tablecloths may have also been owned by a higher proportion of paupers than table 3.8 suggests, especially as their price declined over the eighteenth century.⁵⁸ Writing in 1797, Frederic Morton Eden stated that 'not only the lowest peasant eats his meal at a table, but also has his table covered with a table-cloth'.⁵⁹ Charles Cooper argued that napkins went out of general use in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁶⁰ This may explain why there were low ownership rates across the counties; however the findings of

⁵⁴ Helmreich, Hitchcock and Turkel, 'Rethinking', pp.12-13; Horrell, Humphries and Sneath, 'Cupidity', pp.259-260; Backhouse, *Worm-eaten*, pp.77-81.

⁵⁵ Styles, *Dress*, pp.32, 55 and 349-356; Nancy Cox, *Retailing and the language of goods, 1550-1850* (Farnham, 2015), pp.129-131. Table 3.8 only includes handkerchiefs and not neck cloths.

⁵⁶ NRO PD 710/68; DHC PE-BCN/OV/3/2 Buckland Newton overseers' bills and receipts, 1813-1819.

⁵⁷ Lemire, 'Second-hand', p.395. Also see: Richmond, *Clothing*, pp.121-160.

⁵⁸ Horrell, Humphries and Sneath, 'Conundrums', pp.852-853.

⁵⁹ Eden, *State of the poor*, Vol. 1, p.524.

⁶⁰ Charles Cooper, *The English table in history and literature* (London, 1929), p.14.

other writers indicate that the middling sort and elite continued to use napkins over this period.⁶¹ Equally, the pawnbroker's pledge book of George Fettes of York records high numbers of napkins, which suggests that napkins were not uncommon and were just neglected by appraisers.⁶² Towels, on the other hand, were probably less common among the poor. Out of nearly 11,000 pledges recorded by Fettes, towels were only mentioned 11 times.⁶³

Furniture

Before the seventeenth century, even the homes of many rich people contained only a few items of furniture, such as beds, tables, benches, stools, and a few boxes or chests. From the seventeenth century this changed. The design and construction of furniture became increasingly sophisticated and more specialised items of furniture became available to consumers. This made the home more comfortable and allowed people to store their possessions more conveniently and often display them ostentatiously. Decorative woods such as mahogany and walnut became more widespread and upholstery was increasingly applied to seating. This change reflects a switch in consumer culture in which comfort, fashion, decoration and display increasingly became important.⁶⁴ I will now examine pauper ownership of storage units, seating and tables in order to examine if the poor also consumed furniture for reasons linked to comfort, convenience and display.

Storage units

The ownership of storage units has wider implications concerning pauper material wealth, as it implies that paupers owned a number of possessions that needed storing. Boxes, including chests, coffers, trunks, arks and hutches, appear to have been the most common type of storage unit owned by paupers throughout the period (table 3.9).⁶⁵ They were simple items, generally created out of five planks of wood to make the sides and base.

⁶¹ See for example: Gerard Brett, *Dinner is served: a history of dining in England 1400-1900* (London, 1968), p.126; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, p.109.

⁶² Backhouse, *Worm-eaten*, pp.77-81.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp.77-81.

⁶⁴ de Vries, *Industrious revolution*, pp.31-37; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.90-99; Hussey and Ponsonby, *Single homemaker*, pp.90-97; Clive Edwards, *Eighteenth century furniture* (Manchester, 1996); Fastnedge, *Furniture styles*.

⁶⁵ The table does not include boxes with highly specialised functions such as candle boxes, hat boxes, salt boxes, knife boxes and meal hutches. See: Roe, *Furniture*, pp.71-75 for the history of some of these more unusual types of boxes.

Table 3.9: Percentage of pauper inventories which record storage units and average number of items per pauper inventory, c.1679-1834

		Average no.	c.1679-1769 (%)	1770-c.1834 (%)	All years (%)
Boxes (inc. trunks, coffers, chests etc.)	Dorset (n=60)	2.9	84	73	80
	Kent (n=60)	3.6	92	91	92
	Norfolk (n=229)	1.9	79	62	77
	All (n=349)	2.4	82	73	80
Chest of drawers	Dorset	1*	3	0	2
	Kent	1.2	13	41	23
	Norfolk	1.1	13	43	18
	All	1.1	12	31	16
Cupboard (any type)	Dorset	1.3	22	41	30
	Kent	1.3	66	73	68
	Norfolk	1.2	51	46	49
	All	1.3	49	52	49
Dresser	Dorset	1	14	32	20
	Kent	1	18	55	32
	Norfolk	1.1	10	19	11
	All	1	12	32	16
Sample size	-	-	265	81	349

* - Only one pauper inventory

There was also a lid of some sort, which was sometimes hinged and had a curved or flat surface.⁶⁶ Some boxes even had a decorative quality. William Pocock from Penshurst in Kent owned 'One large *handsom* Trunk'.⁶⁷ Most boxes appear to have been made out of oak or deal which was widely available and relatively cheap. Boxes were sometimes painted, particularly after 1770, adding a decorative quality to them and suggesting that people had a greater interest in appearance and colour.⁶⁸ George Barnes from Tarrant Gunville in

⁶⁶ On the construction of boxes, see: Roe, *Furniture*, pp.45-75.

⁶⁷ KHL C P287/18/5 Penshurst inventory, 1724. My italics.

⁶⁸ On coordinating spaces by colour, see: French, *Middle sort*, pp.179-185.

Dorset, for example, owned 'two Painted blue Deal Boxes'.⁶⁹ Some boxes also had legs,⁷⁰ though the majority were probably simply laid on the floor. The units were generally used to store linen and clothing,⁷¹ but were also sometimes used to store a number of other items, such as dishes, tools, books and cooking utensils. The pauper inventory of 'Old' Baidon from Leeds, Kent listed 'a cote [coat] a hat and a Scarfe and a greene Apron 2 Blanketts more old Blanketts a pillocote [pillowcase] and a Sheete 2 pot brasse scilletts a basting ladle a scimer [and] a brasse scimer' in one of his chests; and the pauper inventory of Susan Burrows in Redenhall, Norfolk, noted 'one Pewter dish in The s[ai]^d Chest with Several old things'.⁷² Boxes could also be used to hold decorative items. Isabella Brown, who used Fettes' pawnbroker's shop nearly 40 times between July 1777 and February 1778, pawned a box containing artificial flowers on one occasion.⁷³ Pauper boxes were sometimes listed with locks and keys, suggesting that people desired to keep their possessions safe or keep their valuables and sentimental objects away from unwanted eyes.⁷⁴ The locks were probably simple and relatively easy to break, however this obstacle would have at least dissuaded trespassers and allowed paupers some privacy.

Using probate inventories, writers on the middling sort's material culture have identified a transition from boxes and chests to more sophisticated storage units such as chests of drawers.⁷⁵ Table 3.9 suggests that boxes remained the most prominent storage item throughout the period; yet after 1770 there appears to have been a small drop in pauper ownership of boxes and increases in the ownership of dressers, chests of drawers and cupboards in most of the counties. The results from the Dorset, Kent and Norfolk bastardy, debt, rent and goods-taken inventories of people on relief appear to corroborate

⁶⁹ DHC PE-TTG/OV/1/1 Tarrant Gunville overseers' accounts, 1817-1835.

⁷⁰ For instance, the pauper inventory of Widow Painter from Canford Magna in Dorset recorded 'won [one] Good Chest Standing on fouer Legs'; and the pauper inventory of James Winters from Caundle Marsh in Dorset recorded 'A Box with Legs'. See: DHC PE-CAM/OV/7/1-8 Canford Magna inventories, 1753-1805; DHC PE-CDM/OV/1/1 Caundle Marsh overseers' accounts, 1805-1835.

⁷¹ Sam Skeer from Pluckley in Kent, for instance, owned a 'Box with Cloaths' and John Dorman from Shipdham in Norfolk owned 'a Chest with 3 Shetes'. KHLC P289/18/2 Pluckley overseers' journal, 1810-1843; NRO PD 337/158.

⁷² KHLC P222/12/1 Leeds overseers' accounts, 1656-1685; NRO PD 295/102 Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell overseers' order book, 1708-1743.

⁷³ YALH Accession 38.

⁷⁴ See Vickery, *Behind*, pp.38-42 for an interesting discussion about how lodgers and travelling workers used locks on boxes.

⁷⁵ Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.90-92; Francis W. Steer (ed.), *Farm and cottage inventories of mid-Essex, 1635-1749* (Chichester, 2nd ed., 1969), p.18.

this switch. Between c.1668-1769, 82 per cent of the inventories recorded boxes but after 1770 the proportion had fallen to 60 per cent. Likewise, after 1770 more people were recorded as owning chests of drawers (27 per cent) than the preceding period (11 per cent). The ownership of chests of drawers was a practical development in comfort as it allowed people to obtain their possessions more quickly and easily than from a box where the items were stacked on top of another. This also meant that more could be stored using less floor space since drawers could be built one on top of another, whereas the size of a box was constrained by how easy it was to reach items at the bottom.⁷⁶ Despite these practical advantages of owning chests of drawers, there appear to have been distinct regional differences in ownership. In Dorset, only one set of chest of drawers was found in the entire sample of 60 pauper inventories from the county; while in Kent and Norfolk around one in ten pauper inventories recorded chests of drawers before 1770, rising to nearly half after this date (table 3.9). Likewise, chests of drawers were recorded in around one-third of Essex pauper inventories between 1710 and 1819.⁷⁷ Chests of drawers were available and known about to the population of Dorset, with around one-quarter of the middling sort in the south west owning one or more between 1625 and 1740. They may, however, have been too expensive for paupers in the region, as they appear to have been most commonly owned by the richest quartile of the middling sort.⁷⁸ In contrast, people in Essex, Kent and Norfolk were generally better connected to London, where chests of drawers were produced in significant numbers and where the fashions for 'new' goods often started,⁷⁹ meaning chests of drawers were widely available and that the middling sort there owned chests of drawers in relatively high numbers.⁸⁰ This may have meant that there were a greater number of cheaper and second-hand units available to the poor in these areas, which would have further encouraged the consumption of chests of drawers over other storage units.⁸¹ For example, in the inventory of goods given to the pauper James Turner of

⁷⁶ Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.90-92; Steer, *Inventories*, pp.18-19; Gertrude Jekyll and Sydney R. Jones, *Old English household life* (London, 2nd ed., 1945), pp.95-97; DeJean, *Comfort*, pp.132-140.

⁷⁷ King, 'Pauper inventories', p.162.

⁷⁸ French, *Middle sort*, pp.160-161 and 189-196.

⁷⁹ Freeman, 'Transport', pp.80-93; Hatcher, *Coal*, pp.2-3; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.95-97; Peter Earle, *The making of the English middle class: business, society and family life in London* (London, 1989), pp.23, 27 and 290-301; Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.44 and 47-51.

⁸⁰ Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, p.91; French, *Middle sort*, pp.160-161 and 189-196; King, 'Pauper inventories', p.162.

⁸¹ On the second-hand furniture trade, see: Jon Stobart, 'Clothes, cabinets and carriages: second-hand dealing in eighteenth-century England', in Bruno Blondé, Peter Stabel, Jon Stobart and Ilya van Damme (eds.), *Buyers*

Marlingford in Norfolk, one chest of drawers was valued at 7s. 6d. and another was much more affordable at 1s. 6d.⁸²

The term 'dresser' was originally used to define a side table where food was dressed. By the late seventeenth century, dressers were increasingly associated with the storage and display of plates and other goods.⁸³ In a similar manner to chests of drawers, dressers were probably owned by a small number of paupers before 1770, but by the later eighteenth century they appear to have been owned by slightly higher numbers of the poor, especially in Kent (table 3.9). Dressers were sometimes listed with shelves. This was a much more specialised and practical way to store and display dishes and added a decorative quality to rooms. Some people would display their finest dishes on these shelves. Widow Marchant from Chiddingstone in Kent, for instance, owned 'One Dresser with 3 Drawers & Shelves', and on the shelves were '½ Dozen 3 b[l]ue Edge plates [,] 4 Bassons, ½ Dozen Cupps & Sawyers [saucers], 1 Rummer Glass, 2 wine Glasses, 3 b[l]ue Plates, one Queens wares bowl, 2 Quart, 2 pint [,] one ½ half pint Pott'.⁸⁴ Some dressers also had hooks which could be used to hang cups and mugs upon.⁸⁵ The drawers of the dressers were probably used to store table linen, cutlery and other household goods.

Cupboards appear to have been relatively common in Norfolk and Kent throughout the long eighteenth century (table 3.9). In Dorset, however, the numbers of pauper inventories which recorded cupboards was much lower before 1770, and it was not until the late eighteenth century when a higher percentage of people appear to have owned them. The term 'cupboard' was traditionally used to describe a side table in which cups and dishes were placed: hence the name *cup*-board. However, by the seventeenth century the term was associated with cabinets with doors and the storage of a wide range of goods such as food, clothing, linen and plate.⁸⁶ The vast majority of inventories used in this study simply

and sellers: retail circuits and practices in medieval and early modern Europe (Turnhout, 2006), pp.225-244; Clive Edwards and Margaret Ponsonby, 'Desirable commodity or practical necessity? The sale and consumption of second-hand furniture, 1750-1900', in David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby (eds.), *Buying for the home: shopping for the domestic from the seventeenth century to the present* (Aldershot, 2008), pp.117-137; Clive Edwards and Margaret Ponsonby, 'The polarization of the second-hand market for furniture in the nineteenth century', in Stobart and Van Damme, *Modernity*, pp.91-110.

⁸² NRO PD 404/54 Marlingford town book, 1776-1829.

⁸³ Steer, *Inventories*, p.12.

⁸⁴ KHLC P89/12/17 Chiddingstone overseers' memorandum book, 1790-1832.

⁸⁵ Jekyll and Jones, *Old English*, pp.93-94.

⁸⁶ Steer, *Inventories*, pp.14-15; Roe, *Furniture*, pp.134-135.

list 'cupboards', meaning that it is often difficult or impossible to uncover their purposes. Some tentative remarks can be made though. Many cupboards were likely to have been shared spaces for general household use, since locks and keys were less frequently listed with cupboards than they were with boxes. Occasionally some appraisers listed the contents of the paupers' cupboards. In a 'Square cubbard' owned by Widow Beal of Lenham in Kent, for example, there was a range of tableware including '5 China Custard [mustard] Cups' and delftware.⁸⁷ Similarly, the cupboard of Sam Skeer from Pluckley in Kent included items such as plates, glass bottles, knives and forks, spoons and a tinder box.⁸⁸ These were items that would have been needed and used by the entire household, further suggesting that these spaces were for general and not private use. Press cupboards, a predecessor to the wardrobe, appear to have been owned by around one-fifth of paupers who owned cupboards in Kent, but were rarely recorded in the Dorset and Norfolk pauper inventories. Oak was the most common material of cupboards according to the pauper inventories, meaning that the poor's cupboards may have looked relatively plain compared to the decorative woods that the middling sort increasingly used for furniture.⁸⁹ Despite this, paupers appear to have been able to find more cost-effective ways to decorate their furniture. By 1770, painted cupboards were more frequently listed in the Kent and Norfolk pauper inventories. Dame Austin in late eighteenth-century Staplehurst, for instance, owned two blue cupboards; while Widow Holybrad who was living in Holme-next-the-sea in Norfolk owned 'a painted Cupbord'.⁹⁰

Although the furniture of the Dorset poor appears to have improved over the period, it probably remained relatively rudimentary as they continued to use boxes and did not acquire cupboards and chests of drawers in the same numbers as the poor in Norfolk and Kent. The reasons for this are multifaceted; however two key reasons emerge. First, because the poor in Dorset appear to have owned fewer goods than paupers elsewhere (table 3.2), there was probably less need for more sophisticated forms of storage there than elsewhere. Additionally, since the Dorset poor lived further away from London where items such as chests of drawers were made in the greatest numbers and resided in less commercial

⁸⁷ KHLC P224/8/1 Lenham vestry minutes, 1731-1789.

⁸⁸ KHLC P289/18/2.

⁸⁹ Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, p.91.

⁹⁰ KHLC P347/18/10; NRO PD 629/50 Holme-next-the-sea overseers' accounts, 1704-1783.

Table 3.10: Percentage of pauper inventories which record seating, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Seating (any type)	Dorset (n=60)	65	91	75
	Kent (n=60)	95	100	97
	Norfolk (n=229)	83	95	85
	All (n=349)	82	95	85
Chair	Dorset	62	82	70
	Kent	86	100	90
	Norfolk	76	95	79
	All	75	93	79
Stool	Dorset	38	45	42
	Kent	32	41	35
	Norfolk	45	54	47
	All	42	48	44
Bench/form	Dorset	32	5	22
	Kent	32	32	32
	Norfolk	8	11	8
	All	15	15	15
Settle	Dorset	11	14	12
	Kent	11	0	7
	Norfolk	1	0	1
	All	4	4	4
Uphol. seating	All	3	1	2
Cushion	All	2	2	2
Sample size	-	265	81	349

Table 3.11: Average number of seating per pauper inventory in Dorset, Kent and Norfolk, c.1679-1834

	c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Seating (any type)	4.8	7	5.4
Chairs	3.8	5.7	4.3
Stools	1.8	1.9	1.9
Bench/form	1.3	2.4	1.5
Settle	1	1	1
Upholstered seat	1.3	1	1.3
Couch	1	1	1
Cushion	1	1.5	1.1
Sample size	265	81	349

surroundings, they probably had less of a perceived desire and need to acquire more sophisticated storage units. In Kent and Norfolk, on the other hand, paupers were closer to centres of commerce and appear to have increasingly shown a preference towards comfort, convenience, decoration and more sophisticated items of furniture by the later eighteenth century.

Seating and tables

Through the study of seating it is possible to further assess the levels of domestic comfort in pauper homes when they rested, dined or sat down to wash clothes or spin thread. Table 3.10 shows that seating was commonly noted in the sample of pauper inventories. Paupers in Dorset appear to have had the lowest ownership levels of seating before 1770, while the Norfolk and Kent pauper inventories indicate that in these counties people were around 20-30 per cent more likely to own seating at this time. Of course, this did not mean that paupers who did not own seating simply stood all day and did not rest until they went to sleep. Makeshift items such as beds, boxes, tables and pails could be used as seating. This is exemplified by George Morland's painting in figure 3.2, which shows somebody sitting on a pail, and other people leaning or sitting on chairs whilst a man smokes tobacco, a child plays with a doll, and a woman sews. People could also sit on the

Figure 3.2: George Morland, 'The happy cottagers (The cottage door)', c.1790-1792



Source: RH, THC0046, George Morland, 'The happy cottagers (The cottage door)', oil on panel, 1790 [From: <http://picture-gallery.rhul.ac.uk>. Accessed 10/06/2014].

Background: George Morland was well known for his rustic paintings of labouring people. Some of the figures in his paintings were 'prettified and made more sentimental' to appeal to buyers, according to Diane Perkins.⁹¹ However, as Keith Snell recently argued, a number of paintings by Morland presented 'realist' depictions of the labouring poor and not an idealised view.⁹² John Barrell has made similar arguments and emphasised how early critics were even 'disturbed' by Morland as he often declined to create idyllic representations of the poor and drew them rather as autonomous subjects that could be idle and immoral.⁹³ Much of Morland's work therefore offers an insightful representation of the poor.

⁹¹ Diane Perkins, 'Morland, George (1763-1804)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [From: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19278>. Accessed 07/11/2014].

⁹² Snell, 'In or out of their place', pp.73-100.

⁹³ John Barrell, *The dark side of the landscape: the rural poor in English painting 1730-1840* (Cambridge, 1992), pp.89-129.

Figure 3.3: William Redmore Bigg, 'The husbandman's enjoyment', 1793



Source: © V&A, 198-1885, William Redmore Bigg, 'The husbandman's enjoyment', oil on canvas, 1793 [From: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O17838/a-cottage-exterior-a-seated-oil-painting-bigg-william-redmore/>. Accessed 26/08/2014].

Background: William Redmore Bigg mostly painted portraits of the gentry, but sometimes also painted genre scenes of the poor. His paintings were popular over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and tended to display moral and industrious figures to please his audiences. Consequently, his paintings are best viewed as an idealised image of the poor and not a fully accurate representation.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ John Bensusan-Butt, *Essex in the age of enlightenment: essays in historical biography*, ed. Shani D'Cruze (Raleigh, 2nd ed., 2009), pp.191-194; James Lomax, *Temple Newsam paintings* (Leeds, 2000), p.51; Ernest Radford and Heather M. MacLennan, 'Bigg, William Redmore (1755–1828)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [From: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2370>. Accessed 07/11/2014].

floor, ledges and fixtures in the home to relax with a tobacco pipe and stroke a pet (see figure 3.3 for example).

Before the seventeenth century chairs were connected to power and authority, meaning that the head of the household would typically use a chair whilst others would use stools, benches or forms.⁹⁵ The evidence from the pauper inventories suggests that this was not the case in eighteenth-century pauper homes, as chairs appear to have been owned by large numbers of people in relatively large quantities over the period (table 3.10-11). Chairs were made in a variety of styles and designs; however it was only possible to distinguish these styles from a handful of inventories.⁹⁶ The pauper inventories indicate that arm chairs and elbow chairs became slightly more common after 1770, suggesting a higher degree of comfort in pauper homes. Some paupers even owned arm or elbow chairs that matched other chairs. Rhoda Wretham from East Harling, Norfolk, owned '½ Doz[en] Hollow seat'd Chairs' and an 'Arm'd D^o [chair] to match'.⁹⁷ Michael Aggus from Redenhall, Norfolk, owned 'Five Elm hollow seat Chairs [and] Two Elbow [chairs] to match'.⁹⁸ There were other paupers who owned chairs which were probably acquired from a range of sources. When Thomas Reece entered Redenhall workhouse in 1757, for instance, he brought '3 odd Chairs' with him.⁹⁹ Other paupers owned odd or old collections of seating alongside more valuable chairs, suggesting that the pauper had amassed a wide range over a period of time. Living in Maidstone, Kent, Mrs Dungay owned '3 odd old Chairs' and '6 Ash Rush bottom Chairs'.¹⁰⁰ Equally, Michael Aggus owned 'Two old Broken Chairs' and '4 old Chairs' in addition to his matching elbow chairs outlined above.¹⁰¹ Since such a large range of chairs can be found in the pauper inventories, this suggests that a range of factors affected which chairs people acquired. Some paupers appear to have been able to retain a range of decorative and comfortable chairs from more prosperous periods in their lives, whilst others had probably sold off their better chairs and replaced them with cheaper chairs that were not matching, less fashionable and perhaps less comfortable.

⁹⁵ Ralph Edwards, *English chairs* (London, 1951), p.5; Fastnedge, *Furniture styles*, p.8; Steer, *Inventories*, p.13; Brett, *Dinner*, p.92.

⁹⁶ On these many different styles, see: Roe, *Furniture*, pp.85-105.

⁹⁷ NRO PD 219/114.

⁹⁸ NRO PD 295/106 Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell order book, 1828-1831.

⁹⁹ NRO PD 295/117.

¹⁰⁰ KHL C P347/18/10. Mrs Dungay's legal settlement was Staplehurst.

¹⁰¹ NRO PD 295/106.

Stools, benches, forms and settles were seen as more traditional items of seating due to their often simple construction and their use by non-heads of the household. Each of these items appear to have been less common than chairs throughout the period, yet nevertheless they probably remained prominent in a number of pauper households (tables 3.10-11). Ownership of stools appears to have slightly increased across the period; however people from the sample typically did not own any more than one or two stools at any time. They may have continued to have been owned in relatively small numbers for several reasons. First, when using a spinning wheel or doing household tasks such as washing clothes, stools were the most ergonomic item of seating as they allowed the user to move more freely around than a chair or settle. Some appraisers listed a stool next the entry for a spinning wheel, for instance, suggesting that the two were connected.¹⁰² Second, stools, especially joint stools, were stackable,¹⁰³ and so could be piled up in a corner when they were not needed or when space was scarce. Third, stools of the eighteenth century were often low-built,¹⁰⁴ and so were particularly suitable for children and could be used as foot rests. Finally, they were made using relatively simple construction methods and tended to be made of oak, meaning that they were a relatively cheap alternative to a chair.

The trends regarding pauper ownership of benches, forms and settles are harder to distinguish than those for chairs and stools. In Dorset and Norfolk only five and 11 per cent of the pauper inventories respectively recorded benches/forms after 1770; whereas in Kent 32 per cent of the inventories listed a bench or form throughout the period (tables 3.10-11). This may suggest that as people in Dorset and Norfolk increasingly obtained a greater number of chairs they saw little point in acquiring forms or benches. In Kent, on the other hand, the poor appear not to have made such a choice and consumed a wider variety of seating. Settles are effectively benches with arms and high backs. They were most commonly found in Dorset, but were nevertheless only recorded in a small number of inventories from the county. In Kent or Norfolk they were not noted in a single pauper inventory after 1770, suggesting that they had gone out of widespread use. Several writers have suggested that settles were particularly used by the hearth as their high backs helped

¹⁰² See for instance the pauper inventory of Albine Davidge from East Stour, Dorset. DHC PE-EST/OV/1/1 East Stour overseers' accounts, 1804-1829.

¹⁰³ Roe, *Furniture*, pp.110-111.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.112.

Figure 3.4: Ash chair with a rush seat, c.1780-1820



Source: GMH, 331/2005, Ash chair with a rush seat, c.1780-1820 [From: <http://www.geffrye-museum.org.uk/collections/explore-our-collections/item-detail/?id=O98&index=4>. Accessed 19/08/2014]. Photograph by Morley von Sternberg.

to keep the fireplace heat in.¹⁰⁵ The results from the pauper inventories suggest that chairs instead of settles would have been used by the fireplace during the eighteenth century.

Pauper ownership of upholstered seating or cushions to use with seating appears to have been fairly low. The middling sort and elite, on the other hand, increasingly acquired upholstered seating in order to add comfort and aesthetic qualities to the home. In Kent, for example, although upholstered furniture was rarely recorded in the probate inventories of waged people and husbandmen, it was ubiquitous in the homes of gentlemen and yeomen and people employed in service or retail sectors.¹⁰⁶ To paupers in the same county, this was an added expense that they could not afford, despite being close to London where

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p.109; Jekyll and Jones, *Old English*, p.93.

¹⁰⁶ Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.91, 95-96 and 191.

upholstered furniture was produced in large quantities and despite appearing to show an increased desire to own comfortable items of furniture.¹⁰⁷ Other types of chairs which had notable aesthetic qualities were nonetheless increasingly owned by paupers after 1770 in Kent and Norfolk. The use of more decorative woods including ash, elm and rush seating appears to have become more prevalent in the two counties (see figure 3.4 for instance). Four mahogany chairs were found in the pauper inventory of Mary Shearling from Wighton, Norfolk, dated 1819.¹⁰⁸ In Dorset, however, the only seating material recorded in the inventories was oak, which may suggest that some expensive and decorative woods were beyond the means of the Dorset poor or that they preferred not to own goods made of these materials. Nonetheless, the overall data on seating suggests that the majority of paupers had some form of seating, particularly chairs. This suggests that, despite probably not owning upholstered seating and items such as cushions in any great number, paupers were fairly comfortable in this regard and could sometimes even own chairs which added a decorative quality to the home.¹⁰⁹

Tables appear to have been increasingly owned by greater numbers of paupers over the long eighteenth century (table 3.12-13). Paupers from Dorset were probably again the least likely to own a table before 1770, but after this date the levels of ownership appear to have been relatively similar across the three counties, suggesting that tables had become almost ubiquitous at a national level. Pauper ownership of tables follows a similar pattern to seating, although tables were nevertheless less common. This was probably because tables were simply less necessary than seating, as people could still eat a meal on their lap without a table and could also use items such as pails, chairs or beds as makeshift table surfaces. Figure 3.5, for example, portrays a woman using a laid-down chair alongside several planks of wood and a linen sheet as a makeshift table surface to rest her oatcakes, despite the fact that there is an actual table in the picture. With people appearing to own greater numbers of tables over the period, this suggests that the poor's dwellings had become increasingly equipped with items that added comfort and helped in the general running of the home.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp.95-96.

¹⁰⁸ NRO PD 553/79 Wighton inventory, 1819.

¹⁰⁹ The same also appears to have been true of the Essex poor as around 95 per cent of pauper inventories from the county recorded chairs, 1710-1819. King's research, however, did not assess upholstery, stools and benches so it is difficult to determine exactly how Essex compared to Dorset, Kent and Norfolk. King, 'Pauper inventories', p.179.

Table 3.12: Percentage of pauper inventories which record tables, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Table (any type)	Dorset (n=60)	59	86	68
	Kent (n=60)	82	100	88
	Norfolk (n=229)	69	86	72
	All (n=349)	70	90	74
Square	Dorset	8	14	10
	Kent	13	18	15
	Norfolk	4	19	7
	All	6	17	9
Round/oval	Dorset	11	14	12
	Kent	13	23	17
	Norfolk	5	24	8
	All	7	21	10
Long	Dorset	11	5	8
	Kent	3	0	2
	Norfolk	2	0	2
	All	3	1	3
Board	Dorset	49	18	37
	Kent	0	18	7
	Norfolk	2	3	2
	All	8	11	9
Dressing table	All	<1	5	1
Dining table	All	0	4	1
Sample size	-	265	81	349

Table 3.13: Average number of tables per pauper inventory, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Table (any type)	Dorset (n=60)	1.6	2.1	1.8
	Kent (n=60)	1.7	3.2	2.3
	Norfolk (n=229)	1.7	2.4	1.9
	All (n=349)	1.7	2.6	2
Sample size	-	265	81	349

Figure 3.5: ‘Woman making oat cakes’, 1814



Source: George Walker, *The costume of Yorkshire* (Leeds, 1814), plate 9.

Background: This book is commonly used by historians to study clothing, but occasionally the pictures are set in the home. Walker was sympathetic to his poor subjects and subsequently attempted to draw them accurately ‘in their simple and sometimes squalid garb’.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Walker, *Costume*, p.13; George Sheeran, ‘Walker, George (1781-1856)’, *ODNB* (Oxford, 2014) [From: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/105621>. Accessed 07/11/2014]; David Hill, *Turner and Leeds: image of industry* (Leeds, 2008), pp.145-146.

Before the seventeenth century tables were typically long, heavy and thick, but from the mid-seventeenth century they were increasingly made to be smaller, lighter and thinner.¹¹¹ These newer forms and shapes of tables were seen as fashionable to middling and elite people. They also appear to have become more popular among the poor. Unfortunately, the majority of pauper inventories do not mention the shape or use of the tables; however the figures from table 3.12 tentatively suggest that traditional long tables had become less prevalent in pauper homes by the late seventeenth century. They were slightly more common in Dorset, suggesting that people there were more traditional in the goods that they owned. Likewise table boards, which were tables with removable legs, were probably owned in Dorset in the greatest numbers. These were also more traditional types of tables,¹¹² as they allowed the user to transform spaces which had multiple functions with relative ease. They were also particularly useful for people who had little space, as they could be piled neatly into a corner when they were not needed. Sometimes table boards were listed with trestles (moveable legs) in the pauper inventories, yet not as often as they are in the probate inventories of the middling sort.¹¹³ This suggests that the poor often used makeshift table legs. Occasionally the inventories of the poor mention this. Robert Howell from Martham in Norfolk, for instance, had '1 Small one [table] on the Stool'.¹¹⁴ In 1781 the pauper Mary Webbs had her goods sold by Lower Halstow parish, including 'One Joint Stool with a table thereon'.¹¹⁵

Before the second half of the eighteenth century most paupers appear to have favoured multipurpose tables which could withstand rough usage; however after 1770 there appears to have been an increase in the ownership of tables that were made using greater craft and which had greater aesthetic qualities. Round/oval and square tables, which were seen as more sophisticated by contemporaries, appear to have slightly increased in ownership over the period (table 3.12). Likewise, there was an increase in ownership of round/oval and square tables in the Dorset, Kent and Norfolk bastardy, debt, rent and goods-taken inventories over the period. Between c.1668-1769 5 and 3 per cent of tables

¹¹¹ Fastnedge, *Furniture styles*, pp.9 and 20-22; Margaret Visser, *The rituals of dinner: the origins, evolution, eccentricities, and meaning of table manners* (London, 1991), p.122; Ursula Priestly and P. J. Corfield, 'Rooms and room use in Norwich housing, 1580-1730', *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, 16 (1982), p.102.

¹¹² Fastnedge, *Furniture styles*, p.9; Brett, *Dinner*, p.90; Visser, *Rituals*, pp.148-149.

¹¹³ Brett, *Dinner*, p.32; Steer, *Inventories*, pp.11-12.

¹¹⁴ NRO PD 710/68.

¹¹⁵ KHLC P168/18/1 Lower Halstow inventory, 1781.

were described as round/oval and square; however after 1770 23 and 20 per cent of inventories recorded these items respectively. Many of these tables would have been decoratively placed in the corners and sides of rooms as side tables and were important in the use of bundles of tea items and eating and drinking utensils such as plates, cups and cutlery.¹¹⁶ The rise in round/oval and square tables can also be linked to the increased ownership of chairs and the relatively minor importance of benches and forms outlined above (tables 3.10-11), as the shapes of these tables were most suited to chairs. There was also a very small number of tables that were described as 'dining' and 'dressing' tables from 1770, which tentatively may further suggest that some tables had started to become less multifunctional and more specialised. Tables appear to have typically been made out of oak or deal; however after 1770 the inventories sometimes note other woods which were often decorative and relatively expensive, including wainscot (an imported high-quality oak), walnut and ash. Mahogany tables were even mentioned in four pauper inventories dated after 1770. Though atypical of the majority of other paupers, the most notable example is of Mrs Dungay from Staplehurst in Kent, who owned '1 Square mahogany Dining Table & green cover' in her front room.¹¹⁷ Leaf tables and tables with drawers were also more frequently recorded in the pauper inventories after 1770. Ben Kent from Stratton in Norfolk, for example, owned '2 leaf tables' and Mrs Buckwell from Canterbury in Kent owned '1 Table w[i]th a Draw' in addition to mahogany and japanned (lacquered) tea tables.¹¹⁸ These changes after 1770 appear to have been most evident in Kent and Norfolk. The pauper inventories from Dorset also increasingly record round/oval and square tables over the period, yet they appear to have been owned in smaller numbers to Kent and Norfolk paupers. Moreover, paupers in Dorset also appear to have owned greater numbers of long tables and table boards than those from Kent and Norfolk, suggesting that people there were much more traditional in their ideas of how to furnish a home. In a similar manner to the ownership of other types of furniture, these changes in material culture appear to stem from an alteration in the poor's priorities, in which goods that were more closely tied to

¹¹⁶ Priestly and Corfield, 'Rooms', p.102; Fastnedge, *Furniture styles*, pp.58, 77-79, 115-116 and 269; Brett, *Dinner*, p.91; Berg, *Luxury and pleasure*, pp.229-232. See chapter four for further information on eating and drinking utensils, cutlery and tea drinking.

¹¹⁷ KHLIC P347/18/10.

¹¹⁸ NRO PD 122/39 Stratton vestry minutes, 1814-1832; CCAL U3/100/11A/2 Canterbury overseers' receipted bills, 1779-1780.

comfort, decoration and convenience became more important by the late eighteenth century.

The hearth

Giorgio Riello recently argued that ‘in the early modern period the hearth lost its role as the center of the house’, as items were increasingly stored ‘according to new functional principles’ in places such as cupboards and drawers and less often around the fireplace.¹¹⁹ Indeed, as the analysis above suggested the poor often stored their possessions in storage units (table 3.9); however this is a narrow manner in which to view hearths, as items such as fire irons and cooking-related items that it was necessary to have close to hand were often habitually stored by fireplaces. The mantelpiece also remained a surface on which a number of miscellaneous items were placed (for example see figures 3.5, 3.9 and 4.7).¹²⁰ Moreover, the hearth remained central to running the household and the wellbeing and comfort of inhabitants, through the heat and light that it provided. Hours would have been spent cooking meals by the fireplace and in order to perform household activities such as brewing and washing clothes, heat and hot water from the fireplace was often necessary. The hearth was also a location of rest and relaxation for most people. By the late seventeenth century when the first pauper inventories are dated, the homes of most of the poor appear to have switched from a central hearth to a fixed one against a wall.¹²¹ According to archaeological evidence these hearths were often large and deep, allowing large numbers of people to gather around the fireplace to relax or undertake household chores together.¹²² Recent historical work has additionally highlighted the importance of a ‘private fireside’ to people’s physical and emotional comfort, especially those who were no longer living independently

¹¹⁹ Riello, ‘Things seen’, p.139. Also see: Stephen Mosley, *The chimney of the world: a history of smoke pollution in Victorian and Edwardian Manchester* (Cambridge, 2001), esp. pp. 50-55 which demonstrates that domestic hearths remained important for long periods of time.

¹²⁰ For example, the pauper inventory of Henry Hartt of Kenardington in Kent records a ‘Mantil Shealf’ and 3 candlesticks after, suggesting that the candlesticks were on the mantelpiece. KHLC P206/28/6-7 Kenardington inventories, 1740-1765.

¹²¹ The inventories occasionally give clues as to this. For instance, mantelpieces are mentioned occasionally suggesting that the hearth was fixed. See *ibid* for an example of this. Also see: Green, ‘Heartless’, p.89, which uses archaeological evidence to argue that this switch in the poor’s homes took place around 1600.

¹²² Jekyll and Jones, *Old English*, pp.64-71; L. A. Shuffrey, *The English fireplace: a history of the development of the chimney, chimney-piece and firegrate with their accessories from the earliest times to the beginning of the XIXth century* (London, 1912), p.76.

in workhouses or almshouses.¹²³ This section will now analyse the fire irons that people owned in order to examine which fuels the poor used and study what their fireplaces were like. I will then assess the cooking vessels found in the pauper inventories to analyse how and what the poor cooked over the period.

Fuel

Considerable volumes of literature have been written on the history of coal and the impact that it had on British industry and domestic life over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, yet less attention has been given to alternative forms of fuel such as firewood and turf. This stems from a lack of primary sources. The sources that we do know about are also often very difficult to use.¹²⁴ Woodland logging records, for instance, can be used to establish how many trees were cut down in certain areas; however such sources fail to show how much of this wood was used for fuel and how much of it was used to make items such as boats and furniture. These types of sources also reveal little about the wood that people acquired themselves through hedgerows and wastelands.¹²⁵ This thesis opens up a new methodological avenue to assess domestic fuel consumption. By assessing the hearth-related items listed in the pauper inventories it is possible to infer what types of fuel the poor used. Moreover, when the findings are linked to poor law records which record the types of fuel that were given to paupers as relief, it is possible to gain a more accurate picture of domestic fuel consumption at a regional level. Through this, I can test the arguments of historians such as Paul Warde, who argued that the consumption of more 'traditional' forms of fuel such as firewood and turf was relatively negligible by the eighteenth century as most people had switched to coal.¹²⁶

¹²³ Hussey and Ponsonby, *Single homemaker*, pp.149-200; Ottaway, *Decline of life*, pp.247-276; Tomkins, 'Retirement', pp.263-283. More generally, see: Crowley, *Invention of comfort*.

¹²⁴ Though sources related to coal have their own faults, they appear to be much more reliable than those for other forms of fuel.

¹²⁵ On people's many uses of differing natural resources, see: Donald Woodward, 'Straw, bracken and the wicklow whale: the exploitation of natural resources in England since 1500', *Past and Present*, 159 (1998), pp.43-76.

¹²⁶ Paul Warde, *Energy consumption in England & Wales 1560-2000* (Rome, 2007), esp. pp. 13, 22, 32-40 and 67-80; Paul Warde, 'Woodland fuel, demand and supply', in John Langton and Graham Jones (eds.), *Forests and chases of England and Wales c.1500-c.1850: towards a survey and analysis* (Oxford, 2005), pp.85-86. In a separate piece, Warde argued that 'Wood remained the primary fuel only in areas of the southern Midlands and south isolated from water transport, with coal and occasionally peat and turf predominating elsewhere'. Because Dorset, Kent and Norfolk were on the coast people were not isolated from water transport and so we would expect paupers there to use coal if Warde's arguments hold true. From: Paul Warde, 'Fear of wood

There are several problems with using pauper inventories to assess fuel consumption. Firstly, fire irons are under-represented in the pauper inventories meaning that any trends from the inventories are tentative. Secondly, people might have used makeshift items to maintain a fire. Long pieces of wood or sticks, for instance, could be used as makeshift pokers to stoke fires. These types of items would not show up in an inventory as they were used ephemerally and had no lasting value. Thirdly, fire irons and other items unrelated to the fireplace could be used in different ways from that to which they were intended. The pauper inventory of Roger Riches from Martham in Norfolk, for example, recorded 'a Lafe [leaf] of a Table for a [fire] Skreen'.¹²⁷ Without the appraiser writing about how the pauper used this table leaf as a makeshift fire screen, one would have simply assumed that the table leaf was used as a table and had nothing to do with the hearth. Fourthly, when times were difficult and the poor could not even afford basic necessities such as food, it is likely that a number of people alternated between different forms of fuel to save money. Fifthly, paupers may have kept old fire irons as spares for occasional use for when they had to switch to an alternative form of fuel, due to shortages or when they were unable to afford a certain type of firing. Finally, some types of fire irons such as bellows and tongs were multifunctional, meaning that it is not possible to tell which type of fuel somebody used when only these items were listed in the inventories. As a result of these problems, any results derived from the inventories are only partial. Nevertheless, fire irons and fuel were recorded in a sufficient number of inventories and poor law papers from each of the counties to reveal interesting and suggestive trends.

Coal was the most efficient form of fuel available to consumers throughout the long eighteenth century, as it burned for long periods of time and provided more heat and light than alternative fuels did.¹²⁸ Despite this, the pauper inventories suggest that the switch to coal was a long-drawn out process with significant regional differences. Table 3.14 suggests that before 1770 the poor owned very few hearth-related items linked to coal, but that after 1770 coal-related items became more common, as indicated by the slight increases in

shortage and the reality of the woodland in Europe c.1450-1850', *History Workshop Journal*, 62:1 (2006), p.38. Also see: Hatcher, *Coal*.

¹²⁷ NRO PD 710/68.

¹²⁸ Hatcher, *Coal*, pp.37-39; Warde, 'Woodland fuel', pp.81 and 84; Hugh D. Roberts, *Downhearth to bar grate: an illustrated account of the evolution in cooking due to the use of coal instead of wood* (Avebury, 1981), p.7.

Table 3.14: Percentage of pauper inventories which record fire irons, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Andirons	Dorset (n=60)	0	5	2
	Kent (n=60)	39	77	53
	Norfolk (n=229)	14	11	13
	All (n=349)	15	27	18
Bellows	Dorset	41	45	42
	Kent	39	68	50
	Norfolk	41	54	43
	All	40	56	44
Fender	Dorset	0	0	0
	Kent	3	14	7
	Norfolk	0	14	2
	All	<1	10	3
Fire pan	Dorset	22	5	15
	Kent	45	41	43
	Norfolk	31	32	31
	All	31	27	30
Fire shovel	Dorset	0	9	3
	Kent	14	36	22
	Norfolk	12	3	10
	All	10	14	11
Grate	Dorset	0	5	2
	Kent	3	0	2
	Norfolk	1	16	4
	All	1	9	3
Poker	Dorset	0	0	0
	Kent	3	5	3
	Norfolk	3	14	4
	All	2	7	3

Tongs	Dorset	46	45	45
	Kent	63	82	70
	Norfolk	56	62	57
	All	55	63	57
Mentions of the word 'coal'	Dorset	0	0	0
	Kent	0	0	0
	Norfolk	2	19	5
	All	2	9	3
Sample size	-	265	81	349

ownership of fenders, grates and pokers which are most closely associated with coal use.¹²⁹ Of course, these items could have potentially been used with other forms of fuel. Additionally, one could argue that the increased ownership of these items was because pauper fireplaces were becoming better equipped rather than because they were turning to coal. There is some truth to both of these facets; however there are a number of other reasons to believe that they can be linked to increased coal consumption. After 1770 the word 'coal' was more frequently noted in the pauper inventories and it was after this date when parishes more frequently gave coal to paupers. This move to coal appears to have been mostly concentrated in Norfolk, with around one-third of pauper inventories recording the word 'coal' or listing at least one fire iron related to coal. One should not, however, overstate the switch to coal as the majority of Norfolk paupers (around two-thirds) appear to have continued to have used other forms of fuel after 1770. Poor law records from Norfolk, which record the types of fuel given to paupers, suggest that wood may have been the most common fuel that the poor used even after 1770. Flags and turf were also given to many of the poor, which were probably sourced locally from the Fenlands. The Norfolk rich, on the other hand, appear to have changed to coal by the early eighteenth century or earlier.¹³⁰ In Kent, wood was probably the main form of fuel used by the poor as pairs of

¹²⁹ Peat and wood, for example, would have struggled to have burned in a grate as they compact fuel together, and so were better suited for use with coal. Hatcher, *Coal*, p.412.

¹³⁰ Whittle and Griffiths, *Consumption & gender*, p.112-113; Priestly and Corfield, 'Rooms', p.119.

andirons, which were used to hold firewood off the floor (see figure 3.6),¹³¹ were recorded in relatively high numbers of pauper inventories. This trend appears to have been especially prominent after 1770, following an increase of nearly 40 per cent in pauper ownership of andirons from the preceding period. Wood was also the most common fuel given to paupers by the parish throughout the period, whilst alternative forms of fuel such as coal were very rarely given as relief and coal-related items were rarely recorded in the inventories.¹³² The trends from Dorset pauper inventories are more difficult to distinguish as they list fewer specialised hearth-related items than in the Kent and Norfolk inventories. However, it is likely that coal was not used by the Dorset poor to any great extent. Overseers' records suggest that the poor used a mixture of turf, furze and wood. These results from the pauper inventories and wider parish sources potentially have significant historiographical implications, as they suggest that more traditional forms of fuel continued to be important to the poor in a number of areas and that their decline was more gradual and prolonged than other historians have suggested.¹³³

There are a number of factors that affected the poor's decision to switch to coal. It was not simply a matter of them impulsively deciding to obtain one fuel over another. England was well endowed with coal, yet there were no known coal reserves in the south and east of the country during the long eighteenth century. This meant that people living in these areas were dependent on coal that was shipped along the coast from the north east. Norfolk received the second highest quantity of coal from the north east behind London, and Kent received the fourth highest quantity.¹³⁴ Dorset, on the other hand, received relatively little coal from the neighbouring coalmines of Gloucestershire and south Wales and obtained the eleventh highest amount of coal from the north east.¹³⁵ This meant that coal was available in each of the counties, but that the quantities available to purchase significantly varied and that the costs of coal in the south and east were some of the highest

¹³¹ Included in the category of andirons are pairs of creepers, brandirons and fire dogs. Brandirons could also be gridirons, however when *pairs* of brandirons are recorded in the inventories they were almost certainly andirons since they come in pairs. See: *Oxford English Dictionary online* [<http://www.oed.com>].

¹³² The wood given to paupers generally came in the form of firewood (logs of wood) or as faggots (bundles of sticks).

¹³³ See above.

¹³⁴ Hatcher, *Coal*, pp.2-3, 6-8, 34 and 479-504; Michael W. Flinn, *The history of the British coal industry*, Vol. 2: *1700-1830: the industrial revolution* (Oxford, 1984), pp.18-19, 21, 215, 220-1 and 442.

¹³⁵ Hatcher, *Coal*, pp.2-3, 10-14, 135-141 and 173-184; Flinn, *Coal*, pp.10-14, 213-215 and 220-221.

Figure 3.6: Andirons, c.1700-1800¹³⁶



Source: Privately owned, Andirons, probably iron, c.1700-1800 [From: <https://www.etsy.com/uk/listing/179756883/18th-century-blacksmith-forged-andirons?ref=market>. Accessed 05/01/15]. Reproduced with permission of NE Primitive Antiques.

in the country.¹³⁷ Coal was thus unsurprisingly first used by the rich, people located in urban areas and those who lived close to ports in the south and east of the country.¹³⁸ The paupers from Norfolk who appear to have used coal tended to be located close to turnpikes which connected them to Norwich, where much of the coal from the north east went to after it was shipped to Yarmouth.¹³⁹ This meant that coal was widely available to paupers close to their homes. There were, however, a number of other paupers who lived around

¹³⁶ The loops at the top of this set of andirons were probably used to hold a spit.

¹³⁷ Nick von Tunzelmann, 'Coal and steam power', in Langton and Morris, *Atlas*, p.75; Hatcher, *Coal*, pp.2-3 and 479-82; Flinn, *Coal*, pp.146-189 and 297-311; Warde, 'Woodland fuel', p.84; Eden, *State of the poor*, Vol. 1, pp.524-525 and 547-548.

¹³⁸ Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, p.159.

¹³⁹ On turnpikes, see: Dauntton, *Progress and poverty*, pp.297-307.

the same turnpikes who do not appear to have changed to coal. This suggests that switching to coal was a staggered process over a period of time which was influenced by a number of factors other than availability.

Lawrence Wright argued that the switch to coal was 'inevitable' following the increasing scarcity of wood from the reign of Elizabeth I.¹⁴⁰ Recent research has questioned the extent to which wood was in short supply from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, however during the Napoleonic wars there were definite shortfalls in supply following the sharp increase in demand for wood from the navy.¹⁴¹ This shortfall in supply probably forced many of the poor to use coal instead of wood. Indeed, only between 6 to 10 per cent of the land in England were woodlands or hedgerows around 1700 and with the Napoleonic wars it is likely that this declined.¹⁴² Moreover, the lack of woodland was particularly prevalent in some heavily populated areas, such as parts of the east coast and in Norfolk, more specifically.¹⁴³ The poor in Norfolk still had access to turf, however the lack of woodlands in the region meant that paupers in Norfolk were probably pushed into using coal sooner than the poor in Dorset and Kent, who conversely had greater local natural resources. Kent, for instance, had some of the most widespread woodlands in the country and the poor could exploit this by gathering firewood for free or by buying it at a more economical price than coal would have cost.¹⁴⁴ Coal items were also rarely recorded in pauper inventories from Essex even after 1770.¹⁴⁵ This also probably stems from the greater natural resources that Essex had compared to Norfolk.¹⁴⁶ The lands of Kent and Norfolk were heavily enclosed by the late seventeenth century when the first inventories from this study are dated.¹⁴⁷ This

¹⁴⁰ Lawrence Wright, *Home fires burning: the history of domestic heating and cooking* (London, 1964), p.63.

¹⁴¹ Warde, 'Fear', pp.28-57.

¹⁴² Ibid., p.34 estimates that 6-7 per cent of land in England was wooded and Hatcher, *Coal*, p.55 estimates that 10 per cent of land was.

¹⁴³ Hatcher, *Coal*, pp.5-8 and 31-37; H. A. Wilcox, *The woodlands and marshlands of England* (London, 1933), map B; Langton and Jones, *Forests*, p.viii; Mark Overton, 'Agriculture', in Langton and Morris, *Atlas*, p.50.

¹⁴⁴ Wilcox, *Woodlands*, map B; Langton and Jones, *Forests*, p.viii; Overton, 'Agriculture', p.50; William Cobbett, *Rural rides* (London, 1830), pp.291-292. Also see: Jane Humphries, 'Enclosure, common rights, and women: the proletarianization of families in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', *Journal of Economic History*, 50:1 (1990), pp.32-33; Warde, 'Woodland fuel', p.84.

¹⁴⁵ King, 'Pauper inventories', p.179.

¹⁴⁶ Wilcox, *Woodlands*, map B; Langton and Jones, *Forests*, p.viii; Overton, 'Agriculture', p.50; Warde, 'Woodland fuel', p.85.

¹⁴⁷ Michael Turner, *English parliamentary enclosure: its historical geography and economic history* (Folkestone, 1980), pp.34 and 46-48; Roger J. P. Kain, John Chapman and Richard R. Oliver, *The enclosure maps of England and Wales 1595-1918* (Cambridge, 2004), pp.81-82 and 96-101; J. R. Wordie, 'The chronology of English enclosure', *Economic History Review*, 36:4 (1983), p.489.

probably meant that the poor in both counties had limited access to commons and waste lands to freely gather fuel themselves.¹⁴⁸ However, with fewer natural resources in Norfolk in addition to the lack of common lands, wood and other fuels were more costly in Norfolk compared to Kent, resulting in the Norfolk poor being further pushed into using coal. Dorset on the other hand has often been characterised as an 'open field' county. Although this is a crude characterisation, the percentage of enclosed land in Dorset was low compared to most other counties and this meant that many of the poor retained access to commons over the period.¹⁴⁹ This helps to further explain why the Dorset poor did not switch to coal and why paupers from Dorset appear to have used a greater range of fuels than paupers elsewhere, since they could freely use whatever fuel was locally available. This locally-sourced fuel could be used to enhance household earnings and meant that money which was not spent on fuel could be directed elsewhere.¹⁵⁰

Paupers' decisions whether to change to coal may have also been influenced by the design of the fireplaces in their homes. Coal produces a heavier smoke than peat or wood and so chimneys had to be redesigned with better flues in order to draw coal smoke up the chimney. Wood fireplaces, on the other hand, needed a draught to keep the fire burning efficiently. If somebody were to have used coal on a wood-burning fireplace, the thick and dirty smoke from the coal would have been drawn into the room rather than up the chimney.¹⁵¹ With Norfolk receiving the highest quantities of coal from the north east behind London, having high rates of enclosure and few woodland areas, it is possible that a greater number of homes in Norfolk contained fireplaces designed for coal compared to Dorset and Kent. This is a very speculative supposition; however if it holds true then paupers who lived in these homes were further pushed into using coal.

¹⁴⁸ There is a wealth of literature on the negative consequences of enclosure to the poor. Three of the most notable include: Snell, *Annals*, pp.138-227; J. L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond, *The village labourer, 1760-1832: a study in the government of England before the reformation bill* (London, 2nd ed., 1920); J. M. Neeson, *Commoners: common right, enclosure and social change in England, 1700-1820* (Cambridge, 1993), esp. pp.158-184. Paul Warde, on the other hand, suggests that enclosure may have increased the poor's access to fuel in some areas due to more hedgerows being laid. Warde 'Fear', p.35.

¹⁴⁹ John Chapman and Sylvia Seeliger, *Enclosure, environment & landscape in southern England* (Stroud, 2001), pp.49-66; Snell, *Annals*, p.165; Wordie, 'Chronology', p.490.

¹⁵⁰ Neeson, *Commoners*, p.165; Davies, *Labourers*, p.15; Humphries, 'Enclosure', pp.32-33.

¹⁵¹ Wright, *Fires*, pp.65-66 and 106; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, p.98; Dorothy Hartley, *Food in England* (London, 1954), pp.49-50; Hatcher, *Coal*, pp.37-39, 409 and 412.

Wealthier members of society increasingly switched to coal even when they lived far away from collieries and when it was the more expensive option, as they saw the benefits of using coal over other forms of fuel and had the means to buy it and to alter their fireplaces accordingly.¹⁵² The poor, on the other hand, had to base their decision on a number of factors, such as cost, which fuels were most available and what their chimneys were designed for. This appears to have led to a highly fragmented and regionalised picture of coal consumption. Paupers in Lancashire and Staffordshire, for instance, appear to have more frequently used coal than the poor in Dorset, Norfolk and Kent as they lived closer to collieries and so it was much more accessible and economical for them to acquire.¹⁵³ Overall, for whatever reason the poor switched to coal, the change was ultimately beneficial as it was the most efficient form of fuel available. The switch also had other long-term benefits. The pauper inventories suggest that the poor started to change to coal when the price for it had started to decline and when the price for firewood had started to increase around the late eighteenth century.¹⁵⁴ Despite this, it was probably not until after railways covered the country that the poor switched to coal on a national level.¹⁵⁵

Fire irons and fire safety

Out of control domestic fires were not uncommon throughout the period. Most tended to arise from the hearth and were caused by a lack of suitable fire irons or leaving fires unattended. In 1806 the vagrant Mary Saxby wrote about one such incident in her autobiography:

whilst my husband, myself, and four children, were gone out, the poor man went from the huts... and left my dear baby by a little fire. When he returned, the huts were in flames, and he could not find her. He ran about, like a mad man, to seek her, but in vain; till, in his fright, he, threw himself into the midst of the fire, and pulled her out alive... and he, almost senseless, threw her on his back, leaving the clothes and huts to burn; and ran, as fast as he could... He had much difficulty to find me; and when he did, he cried out, "Mary, your child's burnt to death!" Oh my God! it

¹⁵² See for instance the results from Kent probate inventories in Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.98-99.

¹⁵³ Although I was only able to find a small sample of inventories from Lancashire, nearly half of all of the pauper inventories and other types of inventories of paupers' goods from the county listed grates between 1710 and 1834. This suggests that coal was used in a significant number of Lancashire pauper households. Also see: Warde, 'Woodland fuel', p.85; Kent and King, 'Changing', pp.132-133.

¹⁵⁴ Hatcher, *Coal*, pp.308-311; Warde, 'Fear', p.38.

¹⁵⁵ Roy Church, *The history of the British coal industry*, Vol. 3: 1830-1913: Victorian pre-eminence (Oxford, 1986).

was thou, and only thou, that sustained my senses through this awful scene. As my dear child was not quite dead, they provided us a lodging in the town. I believe every means was made use of to preserve her; but in a few days she died: and we lost, not only our child, but nearly every thing. We had not a garment left.¹⁵⁶

Such accidents were commonly reported in newspapers and were the cause of increased government intervention to help improve safety and protect children from ‘negligent’ mothers who left the fireplace unguarded, particularly during the Victorian and Edwardian periods.¹⁵⁷ The results from the pauper inventories suggest that around two-fifths or more paupers owned bellows and tongs throughout the period and that small numbers of paupers in Kent and Norfolk owned fenders and pokers by the late eighteenth century (table 3.14). These bundles of items allowed people to heat and light the home more safely. With bellows, paupers could feed air to the fire from a distance where they were less likely to burn themselves. Tongs allowed paupers to maintain a fire with greater ease and could be used to stoke a fire or arrange fuel so that it burned better. Fenders, which were metal frames placed in front of fires, helped to prevent objects from setting on fire if burning fuel dropped out of the hearth. There is, however, a limit to which most pauper fireplaces were safe during the Georgian period. Items such as fire screens or fire guards, for example, which covered the hearth with a protective grid, appear to have remained uncommon and were viewed as an unnecessary expense that was out of the financial means of many people even as late as the 1900s.¹⁵⁸ Only one rent arrears inventory and one goods-taken inventory, both from Kent, recorded fire screens in the entire sample. The nearest that a pauper came to owning a fire screen or guard from the pauper inventories was Roger Riches of Martham, Norfolk, who used ‘a Lafe [leaf] of a Table for a [fire] Skreen’.¹⁵⁹ Most fireplaces of the poor were thus likely to have open and unprotected throughout the period, making them particularly hazardous to children or when they were left unattended.

Although the ownership of fenders, pokers and fire screens appears to be low in all of the counties, the fireplaces of the Kent and Norfolk poor were probably slightly better equipped than those in Dorset. The bundles of goods used in the Dorset poor’s hearths appear to have remained largely unchanged throughout the period, since the ownership of

¹⁵⁶ Mary Saxby, *Memoirs of a female vagrant* (London, 1806), pp.25-26.

¹⁵⁷ Vicky Holmes, ‘Absent fireguards and burnt children: coroners and the development of clause 15 of the children act 1908’, *Law, Crime & History*, 2:1 (2012), pp.21-58.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.41 and 54-55.

¹⁵⁹ NRO PD 710/68.

bellows and tongs remained largely static across the period. Other hearth-related items such as fenders, fire shovels and pokers also appear to have only slowly been taken up by the poor in Dorset. It is most likely that in Dorset paupers' fires were laid on the bare floor of the hearth, following the inexplicable decline of fire pans after 1770 and the lack of pauper inventories which record andirons and grates.¹⁶⁰ This lack of equipment probably stems from the wide range of fuels that the Dorset poor appear to have used. With many of the poor using many different fuels over the year, there was little point in investing in more specialised types of fire irons. Some forms of fuel such as peat also tended to be burned on a flat hearth floor instead of being placed onto something.¹⁶¹

Occasionally some paupers owned duplicate fire irons in different rooms of the house, implying that their homes contained at least two hearths. The vast majority of pauper inventories, however, record no more than one set of fire irons. This strongly suggests that the majority of paupers only had one hearth throughout the period. Of course, items such as bellows and tongs could be shared among several fires, yet other fire irons such as andirons, fire pans and grates could not be shared as easily since they held the fuel in place and so were not movable when the fire was lit.

Cooking and food

Historians have written huge volumes of work on the poor's consumption of food. Recently, Craig Muldrew argued against historiographical consensus by suggesting that the labouring population ate well and had better food than historians have previously suggested.¹⁶² These views are, however, contentious and a number of writers have opposed them.¹⁶³ Through the use of pauper inventories and other parish-related inventories made of paupers' goods, it is possible to offer a perspective on this long-debated subject and uncover how food was prepared and cooked and thus infer whether the quality of the poor's food improved over the period. Unfortunately, the inventories tend to reveal little about ingredients and mostly only describe the utensils that the poor used to cook with,

¹⁶⁰ Andirons are defined above. Fire pans were pans that were used to hold burning fuel. Grates also held fuel but tended to be basket shaped and used for coal.

¹⁶¹ Hartley, *Food*, p.46.

¹⁶² Muldrew, *Food*, pp.1-162.

¹⁶³ For example, see: Shammass, *Pre-industrial consumer*, pp.121-156; Floud et al., *Changing body*; Fogel, 'New sources', pp.5-43; Fogel, *Escape*; Floud [review], 'Muldrew, *Food*', pp.1574-1575; Shammass [review], 'Muldrew, *Food*', pp.951-953. Also see the introduction.

meaning that this analysis only offers a partial view and cannot assess the poor's consumption of foods that were often acquired readymade such as bread and cheese.¹⁶⁴ In addition, because appraisers often used unspecific terms such as 'vessels' and 'dishes', rather than 'bowls', 'porringers', 'pottingers' and so on, the evidence of the inventories cannot be used to assess changes in diet through eating and drinking utensils.¹⁶⁵ The writings of contemporaries such as Eden and Davies are used to address these problems. However, Eden and Davies were writing in the 1790s when there were a number of harvest failures and when bread prices increased dramatically. Consequently, much of what they said may only be true of the 1790s but not of other decades. Both writers also had ideological motives which may have affected the accuracy of their findings. Eden believed that the poor could live independent lives and so may have emphasised the consumption of certain foods which helped this; whilst Davies was sympathetic to the poor and so may have underplayed the quality of the poor's food. Despite these caveats, Eden and Davies' studies are very detailed and allow us to study what food was cooked in the cooking utensils of the poor. Through this, the following section will analyse what types of cooked meals the poor could have made and assess whether the quality of their food improved over the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Table 3.15 shows the frequencies of pauper inventories which note cooking-related items that were mainly linked to cooking foods in liquids such as stews, broths and soups or boiling meat and vegetables. The terms used by appraisers for these utensils can be difficult to distinguish and some of the terms significantly differed between regions. For example, boilers can be synonymous with kettles; posnets synonymous with skillets; and cauldrons synonymous with cooking pots.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the results from table 3.15 suggest that pauper households throughout the period continued to commonly boil and stew food, but that the methods in which people made such dishes could vary by region and period. In Dorset, the usual way paupers cooked boiled dishes appears to have been with a cooking

¹⁶⁴ Frederic Morton Eden and David Davies, for instance, found that bread was the main expenditure and most important staple of the poor. Davies, *Labourers*; Eden, *State of the poor*, Vols. 1-3.

¹⁶⁵ The materials of these eating and drinking utensils, however, are more frequently mentioned in the inventories and are discussed in chapter four.

¹⁶⁶ Joy Bristow, *The local historian's glossary of words and terms* (Newbury, 3rd ed., 2001), pp.24, 104, 142 and 165; Pennell, 'Pots and pans', pp.208-209; Sara Pennell, 'The material culture of food in early modern England c.1650-1750', in Sarah Tarlow and Susie West (eds.), *The familiar past? Archaeologies of later historical Britain* (London, 1999), pp.40-41.

Table 3.15: Percentage of pauper inventories which record cooking items and average number of items per pauper inventory, c.1679-1834

		Average no.	c.1679-1769 (%)	1770-c.1834 (%)	All years (%)
Boiler	Dorset (n=60)	1	0	5	2
	Kent (n=60)	1	5	27	13
	Norfolk (n=229)	1.2	7	30	10
	All (n=349)	1.1	6	22	9
Cooking pot	Dorset	1.6	54	82	65
	Kent	1.7	47	27	40
	Norfolk	1.3	49	32	46
	All counties	1.4	49	44	48
Kettle	Dorset	1.5	43	14	32
	Kent	1.2	39	23	33
	Norfolk	1.3	27	11	24
	All counties	1.3	31	15	27
Posnet	Dorset	0	0	0	0
	Kent	1	3	0	2
	Norfolk	1*	1	0	<1
	All counties	1	1	0	1
Skillet	Dorset	1.6	30	5	20
	Kent	1.6	37	27	33
	Norfolk	1.2	39	24	37
	All counties	1.3	38	20	33
Sample size	-	-	265	81	349

* - Only one pauper inventory

pot, whereas in Kent and Norfolk paupers appear to have chosen between using boilers, cooking pots, kettles or skillets. The pauper inventories indicate that boilers became increasingly common after 1770, while some types of cooking items such as cauldrons and

posnets went out of general usage by the early eighteenth century.¹⁶⁷ Equally, kettles and skillets appear to have been used less frequently by some paupers after 1770. This decline in some boiling- and stewing-related cooking vessels does not mean that paupers were starting to move away from this form of cooking. Nor can the decline of these items be completely explained by semantic reasons, as mentioned above. Instead, the results from the inventories indicate that the poor increasingly owned only *one* type of cooking utensil rather than several types. Before 1770 around two-fifths of paupers owned at least two types of cooking utensils related to boiling food, whereas after 1770 only one-fifth of people owned multiple types of utensils. Overall, despite ten per cent of pauper inventories failing to mention cooking items of any sort, around four-fifths of paupers appear to have owned cooking vessels linked to boiling and stewing food at any time. Cooking utensils related to toasting, grilling, frying, baking and roasting are discussed below, yet these results suggest that the majority of cooked meals of the poor consisted of boiled and stewed dishes since items related to this form of cooking feature very prominently in the inventories throughout the period.

The majority of cooking pots that paupers owned were probably made out of iron; whilst boilers, kettles and skillets appear to have been made out of iron or brass and increasingly copper or tin after 1770. Copper was the best conductor of heat, meaning that any cooking utensils made out of this metal would heat quicker. This would have reduced the cooking time and amount of fuel that was needed. This indicates that there was some improvement in cooking practices over the period. Many of these cooking vessels were described as small or large in the inventories, suggesting that they came in a range of forms and that they could be used to cook varying quantities of food depending upon the size of the household. Several inventories were more specific regarding the size of the cooking implement. The inmate William Hunt, for example, was given a '2 Gallon Iron pot' by Speldhurst parish in 1818 when he left the workhouse; whilst William Carter was given '1 Quart Iron Skillet' by Lamberhurst parish upon leaving their workhouse in 1756.¹⁶⁸ It was also not uncommon for these cooking items to be described as 'old' by appraisers; yet this did not necessarily mean that the items were inferior and had limited use. Cooking vessels

¹⁶⁷ Cauldrons were not recorded in any pauper inventories from Dorset, Kent and Norfolk.

¹⁶⁸ KHLC P344/18/8 Speldhurst workhouse daily accounts, 1817-1818; KHLC P216/8/1 Lamberhurst vestry minutes, 1745-1840.

often had personal significance and continued to be valued even when they were old because of the years of trusted service that they had given to their owners.¹⁶⁹ Cooking implements could be quite expensive,¹⁷⁰ meaning that there was little point in replacing old utensils when they still worked. Moreover, even when they were broken people would most commonly repair them rather than replace them.¹⁷¹

The boiled dishes made by the poor would have included vegetables and potatoes. Meat was also probably added occasionally, though this would have generally been cheaper types and cuts of meat such as bacon. Boiling vessels appear to have also been used to make dishes such as porridge and gruel.¹⁷² Boiling these ingredients had a number of advantages over baking, roasting, toasting, frying and grilling. It meant that a number of meals could be made at once which only needed reheating. This would have saved both time and fuel as each meal would not have had to have been made from new. Pudding could also be boiled at the same time and this would not have used any extra fuel.¹⁷³ Moreover, whilst a meal was boiling it could be left with minimal observation as people did other household tasks. Conversely, when spit-roasting food, for example, people needed to constantly turn the spit and keep a frequent eye on it so as to not burn it. Although the eighteenth-century rich and poor knew very little about the nutritional value of food, producing boiled meals was also generally a more nourishing way in which to cook food, as the vitamins and juices from the ingredients would have generally stayed in the water.¹⁷⁴ When roasting many of these nutrients and juices would have been lost, unless they were gathered in a dripping pan and then consumed somehow. Some of the poor used the fat rendered through cooking meat to make rushlights rather than eat it.¹⁷⁵ Cooking broths and stews meant that cheaper cuts of meat could be used as the boiling process helped to make the meat tenderer than if it were roasted. Boiling meat was also the safest way in which to

¹⁶⁹ Pennell, 'Material culture of food', p.42; Vickery, 'Women', p.292.

¹⁷⁰ Weatherill, *Material culture*, p.110 for instance finds that between 1675-1725 brass pots could be worth up to 25s.

¹⁷¹ Overseers' and workhouse accounts sometimes record the repair of cooking utensils. For example see: KHLIC P224/12/14 Lenham overseers' bills and vouchers, 1738-1829. Also see: Weatherill, 'Introduction', p.xxvii.

¹⁷² Davies, *Labourers*; Eden, *State of the poor*. Vols. 1-3.

¹⁷³ Weatherill, *Material culture*, p.147.

¹⁷⁴ This is, of course, assuming that the liquid was also consumed and not just thrown away after the meat or vegetables were boiled.

¹⁷⁵ See the lighting section below.

Table 3.16: Percentage of pauper inventories which record pot-hanging-related items, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Pot-hanging-related items	Dorset (n=60)	54	64	58
	Kent (n=60)	45	59	50
	Norfolk (n=229)	51	51	51
	All (n=349)	50	57	52
Sample size	-	265	81	349

Figure 3.7: Skillet, c.1650



Source: WAG, WAG 2001.8, Skillet, copper alloy, c.1650. Reproduced with permission of National Museums, Liverpool.

cook older meat and was essential for cooking salted meat.¹⁷⁶ Finally, following the scarcity of wood and lack of inexpensive alternative forms of fuel in some areas,¹⁷⁷ people probably chose to boil their food since it used less fuel and was less costly than roasting it.¹⁷⁸

Cooking vessels linked to boiling and stewing food appear to have generally been suspended over the fire using items such as pothooks, hakes or cranes (table 3.16).¹⁷⁹ The majority of pauper inventories recorded pothooks of some sort and most of these were probably adjustable, allowing the user to place the pot at a height which would either slowly stew the food or quickly boil it. Skillets and posnets, on the other hand, had three legs and a long handle and were placed over the burning fire or to the side of it (figure 3.7). Cooking pots also had three small legs but nevertheless tended to be hung over the fire.¹⁸⁰ These legs were conversely used to allow the user to firmly set the pot down on the floor once the food was cooked.

Although most of the middling sort in areas such as London and Kent had started to move away from boiling and stewing food in a single cooking vessel of some sort by the early eighteenth century, in rural areas such as Cornwall the middling sort appear to have continued to commonly boil and stew their food throughout the eighteenth century.¹⁸¹ When the middling sort boiled and stewed their food, however, it is probable that the quality of their meals was better and less monotonous than the poor, as they could more readily afford herbs and spices to flavour their food. Table 3.17 shows the percentage of pauper inventories which record salt boxes, pepper boxes and spice drawers. By assessing these items it is possible to infer the extent to which the poor could season food and make it less monotonous and more flavoursome. Salt boxes were used to hold salt for domestic purposes, such as adding salt to cooked dishes. They were relatively modest purchases by

¹⁷⁶ Muldrew, *Food*, p.100.

¹⁷⁷ See above on fuel.

¹⁷⁸ Muldrew, *Food*, p.100.

¹⁷⁹ The terms and types of pothooks that paupers used could significantly vary by region. For convenience, the above analysis has grouped all of these items together.

¹⁸⁰ The pauper inventory of Samuel Harman from Redenhall, for example, notes 'a Large Iron pot w[i]th 3 Liggs'. NRO PD 295/102.

¹⁸¹ Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.98-102; Earle, *Making*, p.297; Lorna Weatherill (now Scammell), 'Town versus country: the property of everyday consumption in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries', in Jon Stobart and Alastair Owens (eds.), *Urban fortunes: property and inheritance in the town, 1700-1900* (Aldershot, 2000), pp.41-42. Also see the diary of the Sussex shopkeeper Thomas Turner, which often details the food that he ate: David Vaisey (ed.), *The diary of Thomas Turner, 1754-1765* (Oxford, 1984).

Table 3.17: Percentage of pauper inventories which record spice-related goods, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Salt box	Dorset (n=60)	0	5	2
	Kent (n=60)	3	27	12
	Norfolk (n=229)	5	8	7
	All (n=349)	4	12	6
Pepper box	Dorset	0	0	0
	Kent	5	32	15
	Norfolk	1	3	1
	All	1	10	3
Spice drawers	Dorset	0	0	0
	Kent	0	0	0
	Norfolk	4	8	5
	All	3	4	3
Sample size	-	265	81	349

the mid-eighteenth century and were often owned by the middling sort,¹⁸² yet they were rarely recorded in the pauper inventories beyond Kent. It is probable that most of the poor around the country used salt,¹⁸³ however the lack of salt boxes in Dorset and Norfolk suggests that salt may have predominantly been used to preserve food rather than flavour it in these counties. The ownership of pepper boxes also appears to have been uncommon beyond Kent. Spice drawers appear to have been a regional fashion in Norfolk since they were not recorded elsewhere. They were only recorded in a small number of Norfolk inventories, but their presence may be taken to suggest that although Norfolk pauper inventories rarely recorded salt boxes and pepper boxes, some of the poor there still had access to ingredients which allowed them to flavour and season dishes. Likewise, inventories from Norfolk and Kent sometimes record mortars and pestles, which were used to grind spices for medicine and food. Paupers in Kent nonetheless appear to have owned

¹⁸² Pennell, 'Pots and pans', p.209; Emmison, *Inventories*, p.28.

¹⁸³ See for instance the household budgets in: Davies, *Labourers*.

the greatest variety of items related to the flavouring of food. This included items related to mustard, nutmeg, sugar and vinegar. In 1775 John Playne from Staplehurst in Kent, for instance, owned '1 Spoon w[i]th a Nutmeg Grater in the Handle' and '1 vinegar Bottle'.¹⁸⁴ John Osborne from Sandhurst in Kent owned '1 China Mustard Pot' in 1783.¹⁸⁵ Both of these paupers also owned items related to sugar, which significantly grew in per capita consumption over the eighteenth century and also declined in price.¹⁸⁶ Much of this sugar would have been bundled with tea (see chapter four), but could also be used to flavour other food such as sauces or porridge.¹⁸⁷ Overall, the results suggest that even though most cooked meals of the poor were probably simple and mostly boiled, the flavouring and seasoning of their food appears to have improved by the last quarter of the eighteenth century especially in more commercial areas such as Kent.¹⁸⁸ However, paupers who lived elsewhere in rural areas such as Dorset would probably have been eating very similar food as their ancestors did 100 years earlier.

A number of contemporaries wrote about the food of the labouring poor. At the risk of oversimplifying, most stated that the poor's food was largely inadequate and monotonous, based on staples such as bread and potatoes and relatively little meat.¹⁸⁹ Table 3.18 records the frequencies of pauper inventories which note cooking implements that were relatively 'new' to the eighteenth century and also implements which allowed cooks to grill, roast, fry, bake and toast food. Spits roasted meat, for instance, and gridirons could be used to grill, roast and toast food. The results suggest that the poor owned relatively fewer items related to grilling, roasting, frying, baking and toasting food compared to boiling and stewing implements over the period (table 3.15). Taking all types of cooking utensils into account, the pauper inventories indicate that before and after 1770 four-fifths of the sample owned at least one cooking item related to boiling and stewing food, whereas only half of paupers owned at least one item related to grilling, toasting, frying, baking or

¹⁸⁴ KHLC P347/18/10.

¹⁸⁵ KHLC P321/12/3 Sandhurst overseers' accounts, 1759-1778.

¹⁸⁶ The literature on per capita consumption of groceries and price is well summarised in: Stobart, *Sugar*, pp.48-49.

¹⁸⁷ On using spices and sugar in food, see: *ibid.*, esp. pp.30-33 and 222-237; Mintz, *Sweetness*, pp.79-87, 117-121 and 131-139; Smith, *Respectability*, pp.96-97 and 100-102; Stephen Mennell, *All manners of food: eating and taste in England and France from the middle ages to present* (Oxford, 1985), pp.62-133. It is important to note that salt, vinegar and sugar were also used in the preservation of food.

¹⁸⁸ Other writers have also found that the food of the Kent poor was better than elsewhere. This is summarised in: John Rule, *The labouring classes in early industrial England 1750-1850* (London, 1986), pp.54-55.

¹⁸⁹ Two of the most notable examples are: Davies, *Labourers*; Eden, *State of the poor*. Vols. 1-3.

Table 3.18 Percentage of pauper inventories which record cooking items, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Dripping pan	Dorset (n=60)	0	5	2
	Kent (n=60)	11	5	8
	Norfolk (n=229)	2	3	2
	All (n=349)	3	4	3
Gridiron	Dorset	5	36	17
	Kent	37	32	35
	Norfolk	28	19	27
	All	26	27	27
Frying pan	Dorset	30	23	28
	Kent	39	36	38
	Norfolk	40	35	39
	All	38	32	37
Range	Dorset	0	0	0
	Kent	0	0	0
	Norfolk	3	8	3
	All	2	4	2
Saucepan	Dorset	0	5	2
	Kent	5	18	10
	Norfolk	3	11	4
	All	3	11	5
Spit	Dorset	0	9	3
	Kent	32	18	27
	Norfolk	18	27	20
	All	18	20	18
Jack	All	1	1	1
Sample size	-	265	81	349

roasting food.¹⁹⁰ This suggests that little had changed in the cooking techniques of the poor over the period. It indicates that the consumption of food cooked in diverse manners was possible in many households, but that this type of cooking probably remained infrequent compared to cooking meals in a single vessel of some sort.

The assessment of pauper inventories has tended to indicate that the material lives of paupers improved over the period. Yet with food, which made up the majority of expenditure in the poor's household economy,¹⁹¹ the results from the pauper inventories strongly suggest that cooking techniques changed little over the long eighteenth century. In Kent and Norfolk, there was relatively little change in pauper ownership of cooking utensils related to grilling, roasting, frying, baking and toasting over the period, with the ownership of most items generally either only slightly increasing or slightly declining after 1770 (table 3.18). In Dorset, paupers after 1770 also appear to have often owned similar numbers of these items to their ancestors. There appears to have been, however, an increase in their ownership of gridirons after 1770, which allowed people to grill, roast and toast food. Overall these results generally corroborate the arguments of contemporary commentators, who suggested that the quality of the poor's food had scarcely improved over time. Writing in 1831, William Cobbett argued that 'All of you who are sixty years of age can recollect that bread and meat, and not wretched potatoes, were the food of the labouring people'.¹⁹² Writing in the 1790s, Davies and Eden also argued that the diets of the labouring population had declined in a number of areas. Of course, Eden and Davies were writing during the years when there were a number of harvest failures and when bread prices drastically increased, which meant that much of what they said was temporally specific. Nevertheless, their findings are still interesting and worth noting. Davies found that because of the rising costs of a number of basic necessities, the labouring poor predominantly ate bread day-to-day and had relatively little meat, beer and milk.¹⁹³ Overall, he 'found them [the labouring poor] in general but indifferently fed; badly clothed; some children without shoes and stockings; very few put to school; and most families in debt to little shopkeepers. In short, there was

¹⁹⁰ Around a tenth of pauper inventories unfortunately did not list cooking-related items so these figures are a slight underrepresentation.

¹⁹¹ Horrell, 'Home demand', pp.561-604; Horrell and Humphries, 'Old questions', pp.849-880; Davies, *Labourers*; Muldrew, *Food*, p.29.

¹⁹² William Cobbett, *Two-penny trash: politics for the poor* (London, 1831), p.195.

¹⁹³ Davies, *Labourers*, esp. pp.31-40 and 71-126.

scarcely any appearance of comfort about their dwellings'.¹⁹⁴ Eden, on the other hand, argued that 'the *labouring* classes, must have considerably bettered it's condition in the course of the present [eighteenth] century'.¹⁹⁵ Yet, when Eden assessed the labouring poor in different parts of England, he often found that their lives had recently become worse. For example, he argued that 'The poor, in most parts of Kent, ten years ago, always eat meat daily: they now seldom taste it in winter, except [if] they reside in a poor-house. Private brewing, even amongst small farmers, is at an end'.¹⁹⁶ In letters to the parish the poor would also commonly mention how they struggled to feed themselves and their families.¹⁹⁷ In 1821, for example, William James wrote to the parish of Colchester to say that 'I do not deceive you, we [William, his wife and daughter] are really, in a half starving situation, it have not been in my power, to purchase any meat, these 6 weeks past, we have now a piece of Bread only, we are in want of every Necessary, for the support of Nature, and cannot procure any without your kind assistance'.¹⁹⁸ Equally, when Samuel Parker wrote to the overseer of Uttoxeter from Kidderminster (Worcestershire), he asked for relief as his family were 'in a state of Starvation for potatoes and Salt [h]as been our chiefest Diet'.¹⁹⁹

In the later eighteenth century, particularly in Kent, there appears to have been a small increase in pauper ownership of saucepans, which suggests that some paupers were able to cook in more diverse, skilled and sophisticated manners. Saucepans were smaller, heated quicker than larger pots and were versatile as they could be used to make sauces as well as boil and stew food.²⁰⁰ They were also particularly suited to use with enclosed cooking ranges as they were flat-bottomed.²⁰¹ Ranges are likely to have been under-recorded in the pauper inventories since some appraisers may have viewed them as fixtures rather than moveable possessions. Nevertheless, they appear to have been owned by only a minority of paupers and when they were recorded in the inventories they appear to have unsurprisingly been most common in Norfolk, as they tended to be used with coal.²⁰² In

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p.6.

¹⁹⁵ Eden, *State of the poor*, Vol. 1, p.404.

¹⁹⁶ Eden, *State of the poor*, Vol. 2, p.280.

¹⁹⁷ Sokoll, *Pauper letters*, passim and King, Nutt and Tomkins, *Narratives* (London, 2006), passim.

¹⁹⁸ Sokoll, *Pauper letters*, pp.408-409.

¹⁹⁹ King, Nutt and Tomkins, *Narratives* (London, 2006), p.266-268.

²⁰⁰ Overton, *Production and consumption*, pp.100-101.

²⁰¹ Ibid., p.100; Weatherill, *Material culture*, p.205.

²⁰² Overton, *Production and consumption*, p.98. On pauper coal consumption, see above.

Kent, some paupers appear to have used saucepans with trivets rather than ranges, which were tripods that held saucepans in place next to the fire.²⁰³

Whatever improvements there were in the cooking practices of the poor, they nonetheless appear very small in comparison to other social classes and so should not be overemphasised. People from the lower middling sort and above acquired saucepans and started to move away from boiling and stewing their food at a faster pace than paupers over the long eighteenth century. Nationally, saucepans were owned by only a small percentage of the middling sort around the late seventeenth century, but appear to have been owned by around a quarter of them by the 1720s.²⁰⁴ By the 1800s they were probably owned by the majority of the middling sort.²⁰⁵ They were particularly common among the urban middling sort in commercial areas and were increasingly used on kitchen ranges.²⁰⁶ In addition, middling cooking practices became more sophisticated in other ways. By the second-quarter of the eighteenth century, around half of the middling sort in Kent, for instance, owned jacks, which were used to mechanically turn spits with weights. This meant that around two out of three of the middling sort in Kent owned a jack to go with their spit between the seventeenth century and first half of the eighteenth century.²⁰⁷ In contrast, according to the pauper inventories around one in sixteen paupers who owned a spit in Kent also owned a jack between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries. This indicates that most paupers who spit roasted their food had to manually turn it, sometimes for many hours. This was an uncomfortable job, as people had to be close to the heat of the fire and risked burning themselves.

Although relatively little can be said about ingredients, the results from the pauper inventories strongly suggest that the food of most of the poor in the south and east of England remained basic and monotonous over the long eighteenth century. A number of meals were probably made up of purchased items that were not prepared by the pauper

²⁰³ Trivets were recorded in only 2 per cent of pauper inventories from Dorset and less than one per cent in Norfolk. In Kent, on the other hand, they were recorded in 20 per cent of the sample. As well as holding flat-bottomed cooking utensils in place, they also held dishes and pots next to the hearth to keep them warm. Roberts, *Downhearth*, pp.20-25 and 38-40.

²⁰⁴ Weatherill, *Material culture*, p.26. Unfortunately there is a lack of research on probate inventories dated after 1750, but it is likely that the percentage of the middling sort that owned saucepans further increased.

²⁰⁵ Hussey and Ponsonby, *Single homemaker*, p.39.

²⁰⁶ Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.27 and 44; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.99-101; Earle, *Making*, p.297.

²⁰⁷ Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.99 and 101.

themselves such as bread. However, when the poor cooked a meal it appears to have predominantly been boiled dishes such as stews, porridge and soup that they made. Pauper ownership of cooking implements linked to grilling, roasting, toasting, baking and frying food appears to have remained relatively static over the period, suggesting that there was little or no change and that the poor infrequently cooked food in more diverse and sophisticated manners. It is probable that many of these items were generally only used to cook Sunday dinner.²⁰⁸ The diet of the poor appears to have only improved in a few small aspects. Saucepans were owned by a minority of paupers after 1770 and some of the poor, especially in Kent and Norfolk, appear to have had greater access to a range of seasonings and spices to flavour their food. Overall, the results from the pauper inventories corroborate the evidence of scholars such as Carole Shammas and Robert Fogel, who argued that the quality of the poor's food largely remained inadequate over the period,²⁰⁹ and find little to support the recent work of Muldrew, who argued that by the late eighteenth century the food of the labouring population had significantly improved.²¹⁰

Lighting

Lighting was very important as it meant that people could see to do things outside of daylight hours and allowed people to create a more comfortable and respectable domestic environment.²¹¹ The most important form of lighting in pauper homes was undoubtedly the fireplace. However, when people were in a room that did not contain a hearth or when the fireplace was not lit, other forms of lighting were needed. A number of modern and contemporary writers have emphasised the importance of rushlights to the poor even as late as the mid-nineteenth century.²¹² Briefly, rushlights were made from long rushes which were then dipped into fat, oil or grease to make a thin coating around the rush plant.²¹³ Cobbett discussed this process in detail and claimed that:

²⁰⁸ Mosley, *Chimney*, pp.50-51; Muldrew, *Food*, p.100.

²⁰⁹ See note 163.

²¹⁰ Muldrew, *Food*, pp.29-162.

²¹¹ Crowley, *Invention of comfort*, pp.113-118 and 130-140; Rybczynski, *Home*, pp.122-143; Smith, *Wealth of nations*, Vol. 2, pp.869-870 and 873.

²¹² Gertrude Jekyll, *Old west Surrey: some notes and memories* (London, 1904), pp.101-107; William Cobbett, *Cottage economy* (London, 3rd ed., 1826), pp.193-197; Emmison, *Inventories*, pp.30-31; Steer, *Inventories*, pp.21-22; Christina Hole, *English home-life, 1500 to 1800* (London, 1947), pp.101-102.

²¹³ See the above note.

these rushes give a *better light* than a common small dip-candle; and they cost next to nothing, though the labourer may, with them have as much light as he pleases, and though, without them, he must sit the far greater part of the winter evenings *in the dark*, even if he expend *fifteen shillings* a year in candles.²¹⁴

Unfortunately, there is no evidence of items such as rushlight holders in any of the inventories.²¹⁵ There is also no evidence that rushlights were given to paupers by the parish.²¹⁶ Despite this, it is probable that rushlights were used by a number of the poor who had access to rush plants, as there is a wealth of literature written on them and they were very cheap compared to candles.²¹⁷ It is possible that rushlight-related goods were not recorded in inventories as the terms for candles and rushlights were used interchangeably, meaning that instead of rushlight holders the appraiser listed candlesticks.²¹⁸ Figure 3.8 shows a rushlight and candle holder which was made using simple construction methods. Many of the poor's rushlight holders would have probably been similar to this, meaning that they were relatively inexpensive to acquire. Although many appraisers prioritised listing possessions which could be recycled around the parish, the low resale value of rushlights may be another reason why rushlight holders were neglected by appraisers. It is also possible that rushlights were sometimes held in place using makeshift items, such as in a bottle as displayed in figure 3.9 (top left corner), or that pauper homes contained fixtures such as wall brackets and wall sconces which rushlights could be placed into.²¹⁹ These fittings would not have been recorded in inventories since they were immovable and were permanent fixtures of the home.

The results from the pauper inventories suggest that the poor increasingly owned candlesticks, lanterns and lamps over the period (table 3.19). Paupers in Kent appear to have been the most likely to own these items compared to paupers elsewhere. According to the pauper inventories the Norfolk poor after 1770 owned similar numbers of lanterns and lamps to paupers in Kent, but 21 per cent fewer candlesticks throughout the period. Dorset paupers, on the other hand, probably lagged behind the poor from Kent and Norfolk, as only

²¹⁴ Cobbett, *Cottage economy*, pp.197 and 193-197 in general.

²¹⁵ The same is also true of most probate inventories. Emmison, *Inventories*, p.31.

²¹⁶ It is important to note that there is also little evidence that paupers were given candles by the parish. Nonetheless, candle-related items are still recorded in the inventories unlike rushlight goods.

²¹⁷ See note 212.

²¹⁸ Emmison, *Inventories*, p.31.

²¹⁹ On candle-related wall fixtures, see: Rupert Gentle and Rachael Feild, *English domestic brass 1680-1810 and the history of its origins* (London, 1975), pp.94-95.

Figure 3.8: Iron rushlight and candle holder with a wooden base, c.1700-1800



Source: GMH, M 420, Iron rushlight and candle holder with a wooden base, c.1700-1800
[From: <http://www.geffrye-museum.org.uk/collections/explore-our-collections/item-detail/?id=O21635&index=1>. Accessed 24/11/2014].

Figure 3.9: John June, 'Miseries of a garreteer poet', 1751



Source: LWL, 751.02.00.01, John June, 'A description of the miseries of a garreteer poet', print on paper, 1751 [<http://images.library.yale.edu/walpoleweb/oneitem.asp?imageId=lwlpr01507>. Accessed 24/05/2014]. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

Background: This is a print from Francis Coventry's book *The history of Pompey*.²²⁰ It portrays a poet and his family living in a garret room as a result of their poverty.²²¹ The print is fictional yet offers an interesting portrayal of how some people probably used bottles to hold candles or rushlights.

²²⁰ Francis Coventry, *The history of Pompey the Little; or, the life and adventures of a lap dog* (London, 1751).

²²¹ Vickery, *Behind*, pp.34-35.

Table 3.19: Percentage of pauper inventories which record lighting-related items, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Candlestick	Dorset (n=60)	22	32	25
	Kent (n=60)	42	68	52
	Norfolk (n=229)	28	46	31
	All (n=349)	29	48	33
Lantern/lamp	Dorset	8	14	10
	Kent	11	27	17
	Norfolk	5	22	7
	All	6	21	9
Sample size	-	265	81	349

around one in three pauper inventories recorded a candlestick after 1770. There are two possible ways in which to interpret these results in regards to the consumption of candles. First, the results may suggest that an increasing number of the poor used candles over the period, perhaps over rushlights. This would be a significant finding since candles could be expensive depending upon the amount of beeswax or tallow in them. They were also taxed in Britain from 1710.²²² Second, the results may not suggest that the poor consumed greater numbers of candles, but rather that they increasingly bought specialised goods to hold candles instead of using makeshift items. Davies' research using household budgets, for example, suggests that candles were bought by the majority of the Dorset labouring population in small quantities by the mid-1790s;²²³ which is a very different finding to the data presented here if pauper inventories are taken as an indication as to how frequently candles were consumed. It is not possible to give a definitive answer as to which reason is most important. This research has thus far indicated that the material lives of the poor were improving over the long eighteenth century, so it would stand to reason that people were increasingly using candles and also using more specialised items to hold them. John Crowley

²²² Steer, *Inventories*, pp.21-22; William J. Ashworth, *Customs and excise: trade, production and consumption in England, 1640-1845* (Oxford, 2003), pp.235-236.

²²³ Davies, *Labourers*, pp.148-155. Unfortunately, Davies' household budgets are lacking for Kent and Norfolk, meaning that I cannot make a similar analysis for these counties.

Figure 3.10: Earthenware candlestick, c.1550-1700



Source: © ML, A26007, Earthenware candlestick, c.1550-1700 [From: http://archive.museumoflondon.org.uk/ceramics/pages/object.asp?obj_id=114227. Accessed 16/08/2014].

argued that in medieval and early modern times artificial lighting was a luxury and that by the eighteenth century items such as candles had become a ‘fashionable want’, which were infrequently owned by the rural population.²²⁴ In contrast, the pauper inventories suggest that over the eighteenth century artificial illumination gradually became more common and was increasingly seen as more necessary to the poor.²²⁵

The candlesticks recorded in the inventories tended to be made of iron or brass and less often pewter, earthenware, wood or tin. Some materials such as earthenware, iron and tin were even declining in price over the eighteenth century, which probably meant that candlesticks made out of these materials became cheaper to acquire.²²⁶ Nearly two-thirds of the paupers who owned a candlestick owned more than one, which suggests that people may have burned several rushlights or candles at once. Some candlesticks were clearly fixed

²²⁴ Crowley, *Invention of comfort*, pp.111-140.

²²⁵ Also see: Smith, *Wealth of nations*, Vol. 1, pp.869-870 and 873, where it is argued that candles were ‘necessary for the support of life’.

²²⁶ Muldrew, *Food*, pp.196-197; Pennell, ‘Pots and pans’, p.209; Pounds, *Hearth*, pp.162 and 309-310.

Figure 3.11: Brass candlestick, cast and turned, c.1795



Source: © V&A, M.177A-1977, Brass candlestick, cast and turned, c.1795 [From: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O94314>. Accessed 25/06/2013].

to one location and were not meant to be moved. Thomas Cullam from Forngett in Norfolk, for instance, owned '2 Candle Stands'.²²⁷ Candlesticks were often placed onto mantelpieces, suggesting that when the hearth was not in use it remained a focal point of the home as there was light emitting from the area. The pauper inventory of Henry Hartt of Kenardington in Kent, for example, records a 'Mantil Shealf' and three candlesticks afterwards, suggesting that the candlesticks were on the mantelpiece.²²⁸ Paintings also often portray candlesticks on mantelpieces (see figure 4.7 for instance). Other candlesticks were meant to be moved around and handled. John Playne who was living in Staplehurst, Kent, owned '1 hand Candlestick', for instance.²²⁹ Figure 3.10 shows an example of one of these moveable

²²⁷ NRO PD 421/133 Forngett overseers' accounts, 1778-1791.

²²⁸ KHLC P206/28/6-7.

²²⁹ KHLC P347/18/10.

candlesticks. Most candlesticks of the poor, however, were probably most similar to the one in figure 3.11 and so would have been used at a fixed location but also had the potential to be moved.

Pauper lanterns and lamps appear to have been made out of a number of materials, including brass, wood, tin and glass. Similarly to candlesticks, they could be both static and moveable depending upon the user's needs. However, they had the added benefit of being sealed and so protected the flame from gusts of wind. Lighting hearths and candles could be difficult, uncomfortable and tedious,²³⁰ meaning that this added protection was a significant advantage to using a lantern or lamp over a candlestick. More importantly, because the flames in lanterns and lamps were contained within a transparent case, they were a much safer alternative to candlesticks where the naked flame was always exposed, potentially causing fire.²³¹ The apparent increase in pauper consumption of lanterns after 1770, particularly in Kent and Norfolk, therefore suggests that many pauper homes became safer.

It is most probable that tinder boxes were the main method in which paupers lit fires,²³² despite the fact that they were only recorded in four pauper inventories throughout the period. They were not worth very much and tended not to last very long, meaning that appraisers may have neglected to record them since they had little resale value and because there was little point in the parish giving a worn tinder box to another pauper.²³³ Likewise, out of nearly 11,000 entries in Fettes' pawnbroker's book, only one tinder box was pledged (for 2d.).²³⁴

Hans-Joachim Voth's research on time and work in London and the north suggests that most working people stayed awake for at least two hours after the sun set and woke up before the sun came up throughout most of the year.²³⁵ Consequently, although it is very difficult to determine how long the poor kept hearths and candles alight, this analysis of artificial lighting suggests that the poor did not rely on the fireplace and did not sit in the

²³⁰ Roberts, *Downhearth*, p.20.

²³¹ See above for more information on the hearth and fire safety. Also see: Woodward, 'Straw', pp.68-69 for an interesting example of a fire which started from an unattended rushlight.

²³² For instance, see: Jekyll, *Surrey*, pp.107-109; Hole, *Home-life*, pp.101-102; Steer, *Inventories*, p.21; Jekyll and Jones, *Old English*, p.86.

²³³ Steer, *Inventories*, p.21 found only one reference to a tinder box in his Essex probate inventories, yet argued that they were common but not worth listing because they were not very valuable.

²³⁴ YALH Accession 38.

²³⁵ Voth, *Time*, esp. pp.67-72, 94-99 and 151-154. Also see: Vicky Holmes, 'Death of an infant: coroners' inquests and the study of Victorian domestic practice', *Home Cultures*, 11:3 (2014), p.321.

dark or go straight to bed when the hearth fire went out.²³⁶ The homes of the poor thus appear to have become more comfortable as people's days were not totally dictated by the rhythms of the sun rising and setting.²³⁷ The ownership of artificial lighting allowed people to work longer hours or do household chores.²³⁸ It meant that people could relax during dark evenings and play cards or read a book under the light of a candle or rushlight. It made simple tasks such as changing clothes and using a commode much simpler and opened up new opportunities to entertain guests or simply see to talk to a household member in the evenings. The increased use of artificial lighting can also be bundled alongside other goods such as looking glasses, which also appear to have become more common over the long eighteenth century (see chapter four). When used in combination, these goods allowed pauper homes to appear more comfortable, spacious, bright and pleasant. The apparent increase in pauper ownership of candlesticks and lanterns is thus very important as it helped to significantly alter daily domestic lives and meant that people could create a more comfortable and respectable domestic environment even if they owned few other possessions.

²³⁶ In contrast, Crowley has suggested that most people, except the rich, generally went straight to bed when the sun set. Crowley, *Invention of comfort*, pp.113-118 and 130-140.

²³⁷ Ibid., pp.113-118 and 130-140 and de Vries, *Industrious revolution*, pp.126-129.

²³⁸ On people working longer hours, see: de Vries, *Industrious revolution* and Voth, *Time*.

Chapter 4: Tableware, dining and luxury goods in the homes of the Dorset, Kent and Norfolk poor

This chapter will continue the analysis of pauper inventories and other types of inventories from Dorset, Kent and Norfolk. The chapter follows a similar layout to the previous one by assessing pauper ownership of numerous items around the home, namely tableware, dining items and luxury goods. This section ends by analysing the language that appraisers used in the pauper inventories. In a similar manner to the previous chapter, the results indicate that the material lives of the poor were improving over the period, particularly by the late eighteenth century and in Kent.

Tableware and dining

Whilst assessing cooking allows the historian to gauge the poor's wellbeing through the quality of their food and calorie intake, evaluating the ways in which the poor dined allows us to consider their dining rituals and their cultural and social lives.¹ The vast majority of research on dining unsurprisingly concerns the middling sort and elite, who epitomised a number of changes to social ritual and behaviour over the eighteenth century, including the refinement of manners, politeness and civility.² By assessing the tableware of paupers, it is possible to infer whether some of these changes had reached the poor. The increased ownership of knives and forks, for instance, suggests a considerable change in eating manners as it implies that people had started to move away from simply eating with spoons or with their hands.³ Unfortunately, there are few other sources to use alongside the inventories of the poor. A historian studying the middling sort, on the other hand, would have a number of narrative sources such as diaries and letters at their disposal to investigate how people *used* the material goods. The slender evidence on the poor nevertheless seems to suggest that the poor had some rituals when eating. Frederic Morton Eden stated that a family eating at the table together 'is so common, that not only the lowest peasant eats his meal at a table, but also has his table covered with a table-cloth...

¹ Rituals are defined as the repetitive ways in which certain practices such as eating or drinking were often done.

² See for instance: Visser, *Rituals*.

³ By eating 'manners', I mean the rules, systems and behaviours to which people conformed to while eating. I have intentionally not called it *table* manners, as a minority of the poor did not own tables to eat at (chapter three).

the sitting together at a table, is, perhaps, one of the strongest characteristics of civilization and refinement'.⁴ Consequently, it is likely that the poor were not that far removed from the middling sort and had some sort of table conduct. It would be wrong to assume that because people were poor they had no eating manners and few social rituals when eating. Additionally, it would also be incorrect to assume that paupers who did not own certain types of tableware displayed little ritual when eating.⁵ When 'bundled' together different types of tableware assumed utilities and characteristics that were 'different from those pertaining to the same goods consumed separately'. Cutlery, for example, had little utility until it was used with food, plates and bowls.⁶ This research on tableware and dining has wider implications for our understanding of production and the economy, as the manufacture of ceramics and glass has often been linked to British industrialisation,⁷ as well as the decline of traditional industries such as pewter production.⁸ By assessing the poor's consumption of differing items of tableware, it is possible to add further perspectives to this literature by uncovering how far down the social ladder these industries extended, and where and when they reached people.

Eating and drinking utensils

This analysis of tableware starts by assessing the materials of the poor's eating and drinking vessels, such as plates, bowls, platters and cups. Unfortunately, this category of goods appears to be considerably under-represented as two-fifths of pauper inventories fail to mention any eating or drinking vessels. Of course, it is possible that some people simply did not own any. If they ate bread most meals, for example, then some people may not have seen the need to own plates and dishes. Despite this, it is unlikely that no more than a minority of paupers would have done this, since people still needed vessels to hold liquids for drinks and bowls to hold stew- and soup-type foods. With this in mind, the tabulated data below only includes pauper inventories which mention eating and drinking utensils. Pauper inventories which do not record any vessels have been set aside. This means that

⁴ Eden, *State of the poor*, Vol. 1, p.524.

⁵ Sarah Richards, *Eighteenth-century ceramics: products for a civilised society* (Manchester, 1999), p.127; Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.154-155.

⁶ Quoted from: de Vries, *Industrious revolution*, p.31 and see pp.31-37. Also see: Stobart, *Sugar*, passim; Smith, *Respectability*, pp.122-123; Mintz, *Sweetness*, p.214; Douglas and Isherwood, *World of goods*, p.72.

⁷ Lorna Weatherill, *The pottery trade and north Staffordshire 1660-1760* (Manchester, 1971), pp.xiii-xv; Berg, *Luxury and pleasure*, pp.117-153.

⁸ John Hatcher and T. C. Barker, *A history of British pewter* (London, 1974).

Table 4.1: Percentage of sampled pauper inventories which record eating and drinking vessels, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
China	Dorset (n=41)	0	0	0
	Kent (n=48)	0	20	8
	Norfolk (n=122)	0	4	1
	All (n=211)	0	8	2
Earthenware	Dorset	19	60	34
	Kent	39	80	56
	Norfolk	46	54	48
	All	40	64	47
Glassware	Dorset	4	7	5
	Kent	14	50	29
	Norfolk	11	27	14
	All	10	30	16
Pewter	Dorset	54	47	51
	Kent	57	50	54
	Norfolk	32	15	28
	All	40	34	38
Wood	Dorset	42	20	34
	Kent	43	45	43
	Norfolk	37	23	34
	All	39	30	36
Delftware	All	1	7	3
Leather	All	2	0	1
Tinware	All	1	8	3
Stoneware	All	12	25	16
Unspecified	All	59	66	61
Sample size	-	149	61	211

Table 4.2: Average number of eating and drinking vessels per sampled pauper inventory, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
China	Dorset (n=41)	0	0	0
	Kent (n=48)	0	2.3	2.3
	Norfolk (n=122)	0	4*	4*
	All (n=211)	0	2.8	2.8
Earthenware	Dorset	4.7	4	4.3
	Kent	8.8	14.4	12.3
	Norfolk	4.2	7.2	4.6
	All	5.3	11	7.4
Glassware	Dorset	27*	12*	19.5
	Kent	6	6.7	6.5
	Norfolk	5.9	5.7	5.8
	All	7.3	6.6	6.9
Pewter	Dorset	5.9	6.7	6.1
	Kent	6.7	6.1	6.5
	Norfolk	2.5	5.5	2.7
	All	4.4	6.3	4.8
Wood	Dorset	6.5	6.3	6.5
	Kent	8.8	7	8
	Norfolk	4.5	4.3	4.5
	All counties	5.8	6	5.9
Delftware	All	8	17	13.7
Leather	All	1	0	1
Stoneware	All	2.6	3.6	3
Tinware	All	2	1.4	1.5
Unspecified	All	3.2	10.3	5.3
Sample size	-	149	61	211

* - Only one pauper inventory

the sample is reduced to 211 pauper inventories, but it does mean that the results from the inventories are clearer.⁹

Tables 4.1-2 record the materials of the eating and drinking vessels found in the pauper inventories from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century. Around two-thirds of the 211 pauper inventories unfortunately recorded at least one eating or drinking implement without naming the material that it was made from. Nevertheless the results are revealing. Overall, the tables suggest that the poor used eating and drinking vessels which were made out of a wide variety of materials throughout the period. Earthenware appears to have been the most common material and its lead further extended after 1770, followed by pewter and wood. Leather vessels appear to have largely disappeared by the eighteenth century as they were only recorded in three pauper inventories. Glassware, stoneware and tinware implements were sometimes found in pauper homes, yet appear to have generally only been owned by a minority of people especially before the last quarter of the eighteenth century. China and delftware also appears to have become more common after 1770, but were nevertheless owned by only a minority of paupers. The quantity of eating and drinking utensils that people owned also increased over the period according to the pauper inventories. Most notably, the number of pieces of earthenware increased from an average of around six items each to eleven after 1770; and the amount of eating and drinking vessels with an unspecified material increased from an average of 3.2 items to 10.3 items during the same period.

At a regional level, tables 4.1-2 continue to indicate that earthenware was the most important material used for pauper eating and drinking utensils. The take up of earthenware, however, appears to have been slower in Dorset than in Kent and Norfolk. This perhaps stems from the less commercial nature of Dorset, resulting in pewter and wood being the most prominent materials there before 1770. With the expansion of the pottery trade in north Staffordshire and neighbouring areas such as Bristol by the 1750s, however, earthenware soon reached greater numbers of the Dorset poor.¹⁰ Earthenware had a number of advantages over its competitors which meant that it was increasingly used by the poor over the eighteenth century. It was cheap, widely available and did not scratch

⁹ On the problems of using inventories to measure ceramic ownership, see: Bedell, 'Archaeology', pp.231-240.

¹⁰ Weatherill, *Pottery*, pp.42-95.

Table 4.3: Percentage of pauper inventories which record earthenware, pewter and wooden eating and drinking vessels in Dorset, Kent and Norfolk, c.1679-1834

	1670-1709	1710-1749	1750-1789	1790-1834	(1810-1834)
Earthenware	31	54	47	48	53
Pewter	75	37	39	20	7
Wood	31	42	39	8	0
Sample size	16	67	98	25	15

as easily as pewter. Earthenware also came in a number of shapes and sizes and could be decorated with a range of colours and patterns.¹¹ Occasionally the inventories of paupers show this. Widow Piercon from Martham, Norfolk, for instance, owned 'Six earthen Blue & white Plates [and] 1 yellow earthen dish'.¹² With pewter and wood, on the other hand, there was only limited scope to differentiate the product and make it more appealing to consumers on a decorative level.¹³ Earthenware was also heavily associated with other bundles of goods including tea items. People would use tea pots or kettles to make tea and would drink it out of earthenware cups.¹⁴ Thus, despite the fragile nature of earthenware and the fact that it had to be replaced more often than pewter or wooden utensils, the poor appear to have increasingly acquired earthenware in a similar way to the middling sort and elite.¹⁵

Despite the likely increase in pauper earthenware ownership, pewter and wooden vessels appear to have remained prominent for long periods of time (tables 4.1-3). 61 per cent of pauper inventories which recorded earthenware, for instance, also recorded pewter and/or wooden utensils. 76 per cent of the paupers who owned earthenware owned eating and drinking vessels made out of another material. The prominence of earthenware should not consequently be overstated since a number of other materials remained important. It is likely that most of the poor alternated between various bundles of eating and drinking utensils depending upon what meal they were eating and whether they had guests. Pewter

¹¹ Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.109-111; Styles, 'Lodging', p.68; Richards, *Ceramics*, p.110; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, p.104.

¹² NRO PD 710/68.

¹³ Hatcher and Barker, *Pewter*, p.280.

¹⁴ Tea drinking is assessed in detail further below.

¹⁵ Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.102-104; Weatherill, *Material culture*, p.26.

Figure 4.1: Pewter plate, c.1700-1900



Source: GMH, M 300, Pewter plate, cast pewter, c.1700-1900 [From: <http://www.geffrye-museum.org.uk/collections/explore-our-collections/item-detail/?id=O21493&index=15>. Accessed 15/12/2014].

and wooden utensils appear to have been particularly important in this process. They may have been valued across the period for being hardwearing (see figures 4.1-2 for example) and thus ideally suited for ‘everyday use’; whereas earthenware was used for ‘best use’ as it was seen as more respectable. The steady decline of pewter and wood over the period is nevertheless apparent in the data. Table 4.3 breaks down the long eighteenth-century poor’s ownership of different eating and drinking vessels into approximate 40-year periods to date this decline more precisely. The results indicate that the ownership of pewter was almost ubiquitous among the poor around the end of the seventeenth century, but started to decline after this.¹⁶ The falling off in the poor’s ownership of pewter coincides with the

¹⁶ This trend correlates well with the results of John Hatcher and T. C. Barker, who found that the pewter industry peaked during the late seventeenth century. Hatcher and Barker, *Pewter*, pp.81-141 and 279-301.

Figure 4.2: Trencher, c.1500-1700



Source: © V&A, 702B-1891, Trencher, wood, probably beech or sycamore, c.1500-1700
[From: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O131241>. Accessed 07/05/2013].

sharpest increase in their ownership of earthenware. Over the eighteenth century wooden utensils were recorded in around one-third of pauper inventories, however by the 1790s the ownership of wooden vessels appears to have significantly declined. The last pauper inventory to record wooden vessels was dated 1800 and the last inventory to record pewter was 1810.¹⁷ This decline in pewter and wooden vessels and increase in earthenware suggests that the poor's outlook towards eating and drinking had progressively changed over the eighteenth century. Earthenware, which was closely linked to respectability and the refinement of tableware and decoration, was increasingly valued by the poor, as the

¹⁷ See the pauper inventories of Mrs Parris, Ightham, Kent and James White, Caundle Marsh, Dorset. KHLIC P202/8/1 Ightham vestry church volume, 1782-1813; DHC PE-CDM/OV/1/1.

longevity and utility of hard-wearing products such as pewter and wooden vessels was gradually seen as less important.

The quality of the poor's eating and drinking vessels appears to have improved in other ways. Most notably, the ownership of glassware in Kent and Norfolk appears to have increased after 1770 (tables 4.1-2). Only two people out of the Dorset sample, however, owned glassware. Most of the glassware in the inventories tended to be glass bottles (see figure 4.3), which could have been used to contain wine, spirits, water and medicines. Some inventories even included wine glasses and some paupers owned drinking utensils that were linked to spirits (see figures 4.4-5).¹⁸ Dame Austin from Staplehurst in Kent owned '1 Tumbler' and '3 Glass Bottles'; John Hyder from Sandhurst in Kent owned 'One Glass Bottle' and 'Three Glass Decanters'; and Michael Aggus from Redenhall in Norfolk owned 'one Beaker Glass [,] two Wine D^o [glasses]' and twelve glass bottles.¹⁹ This increase in the pauper ownership of drinking glasses linked to alcohol is difficult to interpret, since alcohol consumption among the poor was common throughout the period and was the cause of much controversy earlier in the eighteenth century in regards to gin in some areas.²⁰ Wine, spirits and beer were also sometimes given to people by the parish, particularly for funerals or when paupers were ill.²¹ Consequently, this increase in glassware does not necessarily suggest that the poor consumed greater quantities of alcohol at home, but may indicate that the utensils that the poor used to drink certain beverages had started to become more specialised and had diversified, instead of simply using whatever drinking vessel was available. This increase in glassware ownership in Kent and Norfolk also suggests that the glass industry was expanding by the second half of the eighteenth century.²²

¹⁸ Beer and cider tended to be drunk out of pewter and not drinking glasses throughout the period. Hatcher and Barker, *Pewter*, pp.289-290.

¹⁹ KHLC P347/18/10; KHLC P321/12/3; NRO PD 295/106.

²⁰ On gin drinking and the controversy that surrounded it, see: Hans Medick, 'Plebeian Culture in the transition to capitalism', in Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones (eds.), *Culture, ideology and politics: essays for Eric Hobsbawm* (London, 1982), pp.84-112; J. A. Chartres, 'Spirits in the north-east? Gin and other vices in the long eighteenth century', in Helen Berry and Jeremy Gregory (eds.), *Creating and consuming culture in north-east England, 1660-1830* (Aldershot, 2004), pp.37-56.

²¹ See for instance, the overseer's entries dated around February 1821 which show the sick pauper Henry Whitehead being given wine, rum and beer by the parish. NRO PD 219/94 East Harling overseers' accounts, 1809-1828. Another overseer 'Paid [2s.] for a bottel of Wine for Johⁿ Eves When Sick' on July 27th 1777. MALSC P193/12/3 Horton Kirby overseers' vouchers, 1770-1779.

²² On glassware and glassware production, see: Berg, *Luxury and pleasure*, pp.117-126; Helen Berry, 'Regional identity and material culture', in Harvey, *Material Culture*, pp.145-149.

Figure 4.3: Glass bottle, c.1671-1695



Source: © ML, 5457, Glass bottle, c.1671-1695 [From: http://archive.museumoflondon.org.uk/ceramics/pages/object.asp?obj_id=148804. Accessed 16/08/2014].

A small number of the poor appear to have owned fashionable ceramics over the period. China, for instance, was recorded in one-fifth of the Kent sample of pauper inventories from 1770 to c.1834. It is possible that these china goods were left over from better times; however they could have also been acquired through the second-hand market relatively cheaply at a range of different life-cycle points. The pawnbroker's pledge book of George Fettes of York, for example, lists the pledges of people who pawned china for just a few shillings.²³ Although the pledge book indicates that china was more expensive than

²³ For instance, one person pledged three china plates for 2s. 6d. and another pledged six china cups and saucers for 4s. YALH Accession 38.

Figure 4.4: Wine glass, c.1701-1800



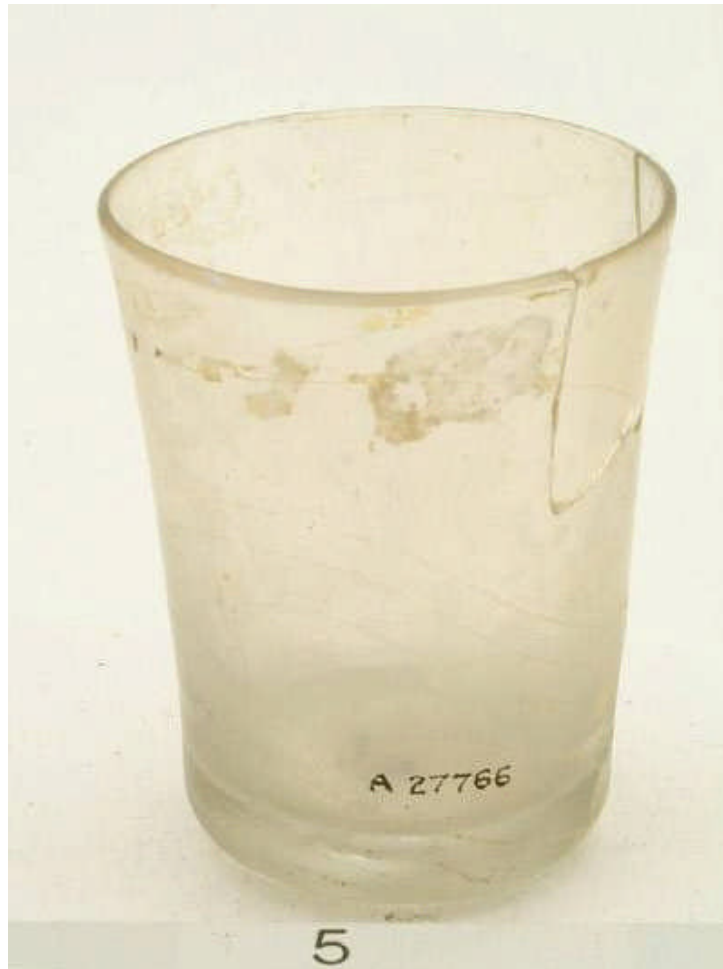
Source: © ML, A12586, Wine glass, c.1701-1800 [From: http://archive.museumoflondon.org.uk/ceramics/pages/object.asp?obj_id=465913. Accessed 16/08/2014].

earthenware, china plates and cups could nonetheless have been bought relatively cheaply from Fettes at a similar price to pewter at between one and two shillings apiece if they had not been redeemed by their owners.²⁴ Widow Marchant from Chiddingstone in Kent even owned refined earthenware, including 'one Queens wares bowl' in 1811.²⁵ This is a particularly notable example since Queen's ware was made by Wedgwood and became very fashionable from the second half of the eighteenth century after Josiah Wedgwood supplied

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ KHLC P89/12/17.

Figure 4.5: Glass tumbler, c.1701-1800



Source: © ML, A27766, Glass tumbler, c.1701-1800 [From: http://archive.museumoflondon.org.uk/ceramics/pages/object.asp?obj_id=475231. Accessed 16/08/2014].

Queen Charlotte with it.²⁶ The delftware industry was in decline by 1770, meaning that there are few examples of delftware in any of the inventories after the 1780s.²⁷ Nevertheless, the ownership of delftware appears to have slightly increased during the 1770s, perhaps as a result of more delftware coming onto the second-hand market as it became less fashionable for the middling sort and elite to own. Some paupers built up a considerable collection of delftware. Mrs Buckwell from Canterbury in Kent, for example,

²⁶ Neil McKendrick, 'Josiah Wedgwood: an eighteenth-century entrepreneur in salesmanship and marketing techniques', *Economic History Review*, 12:3 (1960), pp.408-433; Smith, *Respectability*, pp.240-242.

²⁷ Richards, *Ceramics*, p.44.

Table 4.4: Percentage of pauper inventories which record spoons, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Spoons	Dorset (n=60)	3	14	7
	Kent (n=60)	8	27	15
	Norfolk (n=229)	2	5	2
	All (n=349)	3	14	5
Sample size	-	265	81	349

owned 'fower [four] Delf Jars', '26 Delf Plat[e]s', '23 P[iece]^s of Delf & Ston[e] wear' and '2 Delf' bowls in 1780.²⁸

Cutlery

It is possible that spoons were common in pauper homes because the poor often ate foods such as soups and stews (chapter three). In contrast, the results from the pauper inventories suggest that spoons were relatively uncommon for long periods of time (table 4.4). This may have meant that the poor primarily drank out of bowls and pots when they ate boiled and stewed dishes rather than used spoons; however this seems unlikely. The majority of spoons recorded in the pauper inventories were made out of wood or cheap metals and so were relatively inexpensive. This probably meant that spoons were commonly owned by the poor, but that most appraisers neglected to write them down since they had little worth.²⁹ After 1770, the pauper inventories point to an increase in the poor's ownership of spoons. Again, some of these were made out of cheap materials; however a number of these spoons were more valuable, which may explain why more pauper inventories recorded spoons after this date. Widow Beal from Lenham in Kent, for instance, owned 'one Pap Spoon. Silver' in 1771 and John Playne from Staplehurst in Kent owned '1 Spoon w[i]th a Nutmeg Grater in the Handle' in 1775.³⁰ If the increase in spoons can be accounted for by the greater ownership of more valuable spoons, then the results would

²⁸ CCAL U3/100/11A/2.

²⁹ Archaeological evidence from North America suggests that this may have been the case, as spoons were commonly found in the ground but were rarely recorded in probate inventories. Bedell, 'Archaeology', pp.240-241.

³⁰ KHLC P224/8/1; KHLC P347/18/10.

Table 4.5: Percentage of pauper inventories which record knives and forks in Dorset, Kent and Norfolk, c.1679-1834

	1670-1749	1750-1769	1770-1789	1790-1809	1810-1834
Knives and forks	0	1	9	17	27
Sample size	169	91	44	12	22

suggest that there was little improvement in Norfolk, compared to Dorset and Kent where the increase in spoons was more marked.

From the late seventeenth century the gentry and richest middling sort gradually began to purchase knives and forks to use with their food. In the centuries before this the majority of people would have eaten most of their meals with their hands, and used few or no items of cutlery except a spoon and/or a multi-purpose knife that they carried around with them.³¹ The switch to knives and forks was first seen in urban and commercial areas and by the opening decades of the nineteenth century it is probable that the majority of the middling sort owned knives and forks.³² The probate inventories of middling widows and spinsters from the Midlands, for instance, suggest that at least 65 per cent of them owned knives and forks in the first half of the nineteenth century.³³ This change indicates that there was a considerable shift in the eating and dining rituals of the middling sort, in which individuals used their own cutlery and personal dishes, rather than shared tableware with their hands and spoons.³⁴ Unfortunately, little historical research has been undertaken to examine when the poor started to use knives and forks. Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776 suggested that knives and forks were common in labouring homes.³⁵ In

³¹ C. T. P. Bailey, *Knives and forks: selected and described with an introduction* (London, 1927), pp.1-2; J. F. Hayward, *English cutlery: sixteenth to eighteenth century* (London, 1956), pp.1-3; Brett, *Dinner*, pp.60-64 and 73-74; Bee Wilson, *Consider the fork: a history of invention in the kitchen* (London, 2012), pp.78-82; Visser, *Rituals*, pp.183-184; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, p.106; Weatherill, *Material culture*, p.168; Lorna Weatherill, 'The meaning of consumer behaviour in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England', in Brewer and Porter, *World of goods*, pp.215-217.

³² Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.99 and 106; Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.26, 44 and 76; Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth', pp.253-260; Stena Nenadic, 'Middle-rank consumers and domestic culture in Edinburgh and Glasgow', *Past and Present*, 145 (1994), pp.142-143; Hussey and Ponsonby, *Single homemaker*, p.39.

³³ Hussey and Ponsonby, *Single homemaker*, p.39.

³⁴ Visser, *Rituals*, p.57; Richards, *Ceramics*, pp.152-153.

³⁵ Smith, *Wealth of nations*, Vol. 1, pp.22-23.

contrast, other research has suggested that most of the poor did not use knives and forks because the majority of their meals were made up of dishes such as soups and stews.³⁶

Table 4.5 shows the percentage of pauper inventories which recorded knives and forks. The results suggest that paupers rarely owned knives and forks before 1770, as only one pauper inventory out of 265 recorded a set. From 1770, however, the ownership of knives and forks appears to have gradually increased by around ten per cent every 20 years, resulting in around a quarter of paupers owning knives and forks by the first-quarter of the nineteenth century. If pauper inventories were available for the new poor law from 1834, it is likely that they would have continued to show a gradual increase in the numbers of paupers who owned knives and forks.

Knives and forks were relatively inexpensive throughout the eighteenth century. Lorna Weatherill estimated that a set would cost around 1s. between the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.³⁷ When knives and forks were valued in the inventories of paupers they tended to be worth no more than a few pence each. It was thus clearly not price that stimulated the increased consumption of knives and forks, but a considerable transformation in people's eating habits and dining rituals, in which people moved away from eating with their hands and began to use personal cutlery to cut up food and bring it to mouth. This meant that the rules and systems to which people conformed to at the table had significantly changed.³⁸ Personal cutlery and personal eating and drinking vessels became increasingly important as people desired to be self-contained, and thus not cross-contaminate food and offend others at the table with how they reached or ate from communal dishes.³⁹ People could have also increasingly used knives and forks for certain meals which became more common from the second half of the eighteenth century. The evidence from the pauper inventories, however, does not give any indication as to whether

³⁶ Pounds, *Hearth*, p.208.

³⁷ Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.110-111. Also see: Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth', p.254.

³⁸ Visser, *Rituals*, p.57.

³⁹ Richards, *Ceramics*, pp.152-153; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, p.105. Although appraisers often used unspecific terms such as 'vessels' and 'dishes', the results from the 211 pauper inventories which note eating and drinking utensils tentatively suggest that personal eating vessels became more important. Platters were recorded in 31 per cent of pauper inventories c.1670-1709, but only 5 per cent of inventories c.1710-1834. Plates, on the other hand, were recorded in 25 per cent of pauper inventories c.1670-1750 and 45 per cent c.1750-1834.

Table 4.6: Percentage of pauper inventories which record knives and forks, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Knives and forks	Dorset (n=60)	0	23	8
	Kent (n=60)	3	18	7
	Norfolk (n=229)	0	14	2
	All (n=349)	<1	16	4
Sample size	-	265	81	349

this was true since the analysis of cooking items in chapter three suggested that most of the poor's meals were probably stews and soups.

The poor started to use knives and forks at a much later date than the middling sort,⁴⁰ yet this does not mean that there were no eating manners or social etiquette amongst those who did not own cutlery. People who did not wash their hands before eating, seized food with both hands or licked their fingers, for instance, were seen as particularly rude among some people during the middle ages.⁴¹ Moreover, it is important to note that just because people owned knives and forks it does not necessarily mean that they used them for every meal. As the section in chapter three on cooking utensils suggested, the poor commonly ate boiled and stew-type meals throughout the period which would not have required knives and forks. Instead they would have probably used spoons (see above). Additionally, it is likely that a number of people would have continued to have used the same eating habits and manners that they were taught as a child, meaning that many people might have continued to habitually pick up food instead of using their knives and forks.⁴² For these reasons, the move to knives and forks among the poor was gradual and not sudden, with the practice of using hands to eat only slowly being phased out across the generations.

Table 4.6 records the poor's ownership of knives and forks at a regional level. The table suggests that the ownership of knives and forks was most common among the Dorset poor. This is a surprising finding; however there is a simple explanation to this. As table 4.5

⁴⁰ See above.

⁴¹ Wilson, *Consider*, pp.268-269; Bailey, *Knives and forks*, pp.1-2 and 5-6.

⁴² On teaching children dinner manners, see Visser, *Rituals*, pp.40-56.

above illustrated, the incidence of knife and fork ownership was highest from the early nineteenth century. However, only four of 22 pauper inventories dated between 1810 and 1834 were from Kent, whereas eight came from Dorset. If there were similar numbers of inventories for both Dorset and Kent between these dates, it is highly likely that the Kent poor would have owned the highest numbers of knives and forks out of the sample. Ten of the 22 pauper inventories dated between 1810 and 1834 were from Norfolk, yet the county still recorded the lowest frequencies of knives and forks. This suggests that the Dorset poor may have surpassed those in Norfolk in regards to the ownership of knives and forks.

The middling sort often owned very decorative knives and forks, made at least in part out of expensive materials such as silver, ivory or tortoiseshell.⁴³ Unfortunately, none of the inventories of paupers list the materials of the poor's knives and forks. It seems probable that the poor would have generally owned knives and forks made out of cheap metals or pewter, since cutlery made out of expensive materials would have been beyond the means of most paupers. Around four-fifths of the pauper inventories recorded the quantities of knives and forks that people owned. Unfortunately, the sample is too small to calculate a reliable average, but the results suggest that the number of knives or forks that people owned could significantly vary. Thomas Cullams from Fornsett in Norfolk, for instance, owned '12 Knives & forks', whereas William Lane from Buckland Newton in Dorset owned '2. Knives & 1 Fork'.⁴⁴ Interestingly, it was not uncommon for other paupers to own odd numbers of knives and forks. Around one-quarter of the paupers who owned knives and forks listed uneven numbers. The reason for this probably stems from their cheap and inexpensive manufacture, which meant that they were used until they were broken and thrown away.⁴⁵

Hot drinks

Tea and coffee first came to England around the second-quarter of the seventeenth century.⁴⁶ They were both initially very expensive and seen as exotic and novel luxuries,

⁴³ For examples of these, see the photographs in: Hayward, *Cutlery*; Bailey, *Knives and forks* and the cutlery held at Museums Sheffield [<http://collections.museums-sheffield.org.uk/>. Accessed 20/01/2015].

⁴⁴ NRO PD 421/133; DHC PE-BCN/OV/3/2.

⁴⁵ Hayward, *Cutlery*, p.3.

⁴⁶ Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth', p.261; Helen Saberi, *Tea: a global history* (London, 2010), p.91.

meaning that they were only consumed by the very rich and royalty.⁴⁷ Coffee was originally more popular than tea. This led to a number of coffee houses being established around the country and coffee being imported in higher volumes than tea.⁴⁸ From the late seventeenth century, however, this changed as tea was increasingly consumed by greater numbers of the middling sort and elite. The subject of tea and coffee consumption amongst the middling sort and elite has generated huge volumes of literature, in relation to trade, the East India Company (EIC), coffee houses and the influence of both beverages on the social, cultural and political lives of people. However, we know much less about the poor's drinking of tea and even less about their drinking of coffee. Most of what we know about the poor is based on subjective contemporary comments, household budgets and workhouse records, and has often focused on the impact that tea had on labouring diets.⁴⁹ Consequently, we know relatively little about the types of tea and coffee goods that poor people owned, how they used them, and the wider economic, social and cultural contexts behind the poor's consumption of hot drinks.

Evidence from probate inventories and trade statistics has revealed that tea became a mass consumed commodity among the middling sort between the 1720s and 1740s.⁵⁰ However, there remain some differences in opinion as to when tea became common among the poor. Eden, for example, found that tea was mass consumed by the poor in the south by the 1790s;⁵¹ whereas David Davies, writing just two years before Eden, said that 'though the use of tea is more common than could be wished, it is not yet general among the labouring poor'.⁵² The reasons for the slight differences in opinion may stem from ideological motives. Eden believed that people could live independent self-reliant lives and saw tea as a commodity which hindered this as it wasted money which could have been spent on other

⁴⁷ Robin Emmerson, *British teapots & tea drinking 1700-1850* (London, 1992), p.2; Woodruff D. Smith, 'From coffeehouse to parlour: the consumption of coffee, tea and sugar in north-western Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', in Jordan Goodman, Paul E. Lovejoy and Andrew Sherratt (eds.), *Consuming habits: drugs in history and anthropology* (London, 1995), pp.148-150; Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth', p.263; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, p.99; Stobart, *Sugar*, p.38; Weatherill, *Material culture*, p.26.

⁴⁸ Brian Cowan, *The social life of coffee: the emergence of British coffeehouses* (New Haven, 2005); Denys Forrest, *Tea for the British: the social and economic history of a famous trade* (London, 1973), p.24; Saberi, *Tea*, p.91. It is important to note that coffee houses also sold tea and chocolate.

⁴⁹ See for example, Rule, *Labouring*, pp.60-62; Shammass, *Pre-industrial consumer*, pp.136-137 and 144-146; Stobart, *Sugar*, pp.219-221; Mintz, *Sweetness*, passim esp. pp.74-150; Eden, *State of the poor*. Vols. 1-3.

⁵⁰ Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, p.99; Weatherill, *Material culture*, p.26; Shammass, *Pre-industrial consumer*, pp.84-85.

⁵¹ Eden, *State of the poor*, Vol. 1, esp. pp.496-547.

⁵² Davies, *Labourers*, p.39.

Table 4.7: Percentage of pauper inventories which record tea-related items in Dorset, Kent and Norfolk, c.1679-1834 ⁵³

	1670- 1729	1730s	1740s	1750s	1760s	1770s	1780s	1790- 1834	(1790- 1820)
Tea item (any type)	0	3	7	7	23	60	77	74	59
Sample size	105	36	28	44	47	35	9	34	22

basic necessities; whilst Davies wanted to present a sympathetic picture of the labouring poor and so may have underplayed the significance of tea drinking. There also appears to be a wide spectrum of opinion among historians. Ralph Davis claimed that ‘by 1750 the poorest English farm labourer’s wife took sugar in her tea’.⁵⁴ John Rule, on the other hand, said that ‘tea had become by 1800 a near universal essential’ and Woodruff Smith stated that it was ‘the nineteenth century, [when] tea with sugar became an important part of the British working-class diet’.⁵⁵ Evidently, there is no definitive consensus on when tea became mass consumed among the British poor. My analysis therefore starts by using the pauper inventories to measure the prevalence of tea-related items such as tea kettles and tea pots to examine when the consumption of tea became widespread (table 4.7). The results suggest that from the late seventeenth century to the first-quarter of the eighteenth century, tea was consumed primarily by the affluent as no paupers owned any tea items. Between the 1730s to the 1750s, however, a small number of paupers appear to have owned tea items (3-7 per cent) and throughout the 1760s nearly a quarter of pauper inventories recorded at least one tea-related item. By the 1770s tea appears to have been consumed by a wide spectrum of the poor, with the numbers of paupers who owned tea items increasing dramatically in the space of only a few years. This high frequency of ownership in the pauper inventories largely continued until the 1830s, with only a slight dip in ownership during the dearth years of the 1790s and the French wars.⁵⁶

⁵³ Tea-related items include any goods which were related to tea drinking, including tea kettles, tea pots, tea tables, tea caddies, tea chests, tea cups and saucers, tea trays, tea boards, tea canisters, tea waiters and tea spoons.

⁵⁴ Davis, *Atlantic*, p.251.

⁵⁵ Rule, *Labouring*, p.61; Smith, *Respectability*, p.121.

⁵⁶ The dearth years and French wars are discussed in further detail below.

Table 4.8: Percentage of pauper inventories which record tea-related items and average number of items per pauper inventory, c.1679-1834

		Average no.	c.1679-1769 (%)	1770-c.1834 (%)	All years (%)
Tea item (any type)	Dorset (n=60)	2.1	11	59	28
	Kent (n=60)	5.4	8	73	32
	Norfolk (n=229)	1.9	6	68	16
	All (n=349)	2.9	6	67	21
Sample size	-	-	265	81	349

The results from the pauper inventories indicate that there may have been some slight regional differences in the poor's consumption of tea. Paupers in Kent appear to have been the most likely to own tea items and tended to own the highest quantities of tea goods (table 4.8). The Dorset poor, on the other hand, appear to have owned the fewest tea items compared to paupers who lived elsewhere, including Norfolk. Nevertheless, these disparities are not considerable and still indicate that tea had become common around the country by 1770.

There are a number of economic, social and cultural reasons as to why tea was consumed on mass across all levels of eighteenth-century society within a relatively short space of time. I will start with the economic factors. Tea was heavily taxed by the government for long periods of time. From 1660 it was taxed in the liquid form at 8d. per gallon and from 1698 it was taxed at 1s. per pound of tea leaves to the EIC and 2s. 6d. to other suppliers. From 1721 the EIC had a monopoly to bring tea from China and throughout the eighteenth century the duty on tea continued to be increased by the government at intermittent times.⁵⁷ This meant that during the first half of the eighteenth century tea was very expensive and that only the rich and middling sort could largely afford it. By the second half of the eighteenth century, however, tea started to become more affordable and available to all social classes. Tea was increasingly adulterated by tea dealers, which meant that it could be sold at a lower cost than if it was left pure.⁵⁸ There were also a number of

⁵⁷ On the government's taxation of tea, see: Ashworth, *Customs*, pp.176-183; Emmerson, *Teapots*, pp.4 and 9; Forrest, *Tea*, pp.33-44; Mui and Mui, *Shops*, pp.250-272; Stobart, *Sugar*, p.38; Saberi, *Tea*, p.93.

⁵⁸ See below for more information.

informal avenues through which the poor could obtain tea relatively cheaply or even for free. Some masters would give tea to their servants as part of their pay. There was also a network of suppliers who sold used tea leaves at affordable prices to the poor.⁵⁹ Most importantly, tea became more affordable to the population due to an increase in smuggling during the second half of the eighteenth century.⁶⁰ According to Hoh-Cheung Mui and Lorna H. Mui smugglers brought in around double the volume of tea that the EIC legally did between 1773 and 1783.⁶¹ It is possible that paupers in Dorset, Kent and Norfolk consumed more tea than paupers who lived elsewhere, since they were well placed on the coasts and thus more able to receive smuggled tea than paupers who lived inland.⁶² It would be very interesting to use pauper inventories from inland counties to fully understand the impact of smuggling on British tea consumption. Smugglers continued to dominate the trade in tea until Prime Minister William Pitt the younger enacted the Commutation Act in 1784, which reduced the duty on tea from 119 per cent to 12.5 per cent.⁶³ This meant that the quantity of tea that came into Britain through legal means increased from around 5,857,000 pounds in 1783 to 16,307,000 pounds in 1785, effectively putting the smugglers out of business.⁶⁴ Through the smugglers' actions, Pitt's reduction of the tea duty and informal networks of supply, an increasing number of people could afford tea and most of the poor appear to have developed a taste for it during the second half of the eighteenth century.

The data from the pauper inventories suggests that there was a decrease in the poor's ownership of tea items during the Napoleonic wars and dearth crisis of the 1790s, when the tax on tea was again increased and when people's incomes had diminished (table 4.7).⁶⁵ Despite this, the majority of the poor appear to have continued to drink tea, as over half (59 per cent) of pauper inventories still recorded tea items during this period. It is possible that these tea items were left over from better times when they could afford tea,

⁵⁹ See below.

⁶⁰ Ashworth, *Customs*, pp.176-183; Forrest, *Tea*, pp.68-74; Mui and Mui, *Shops*, pp.160-164.

⁶¹ Mui and Mui, *Shops*, p.250.

⁶² See for example: Christopher McCooey, *Smuggling on the south coast* (Stroud, 2012); Geoffrey Morley, *Smuggling in Hampshire and Dorset 1700-1850* (Newbury, 1983).

⁶³ After the Seven Years War there was a government attempt to combat the smugglers. The duty on tea was reduced to 1s. for five years, on the condition that the EIC made up the shortfall in government revenue. This, however, failed and cost the EIC considerable amounts of money. It was not until the Commutation Act that smuggling was significantly reduced. Ashworth, *Customs*, pp.178-179; Emmerson, *Teapots*, pp.10-11; Mui and Mui, *Shops*, pp.19-20 and 250-272; Saberi, *Tea*, p.96.

⁶⁴ Ashworth, *Customs*, p.182.

⁶⁵ Forrest, *Tea*, p.74; Mui and Mui, *Shops*, pp.251-252; Ashworth, *Customs*, p.182.

however the household budgets from Eden and Davies' research suggests that this was largely not the case. These writers differ in their opinions on how widespread tea consumption was among the labouring sort, yet their budgets from the 1790s clearly indicate that a considerable number of the poor continued to purchase tea even during these difficult years.⁶⁶ By the later eighteenth century tea was thus clearly important to the poor and was even sometimes mentioned in pauper letters. In 1813, for example, Francis Freeman wrote from Middlesex Hospital to complain that 'wee have so litel in the hospital to live on' and emphasised how 'wee have but... no tee no suger'.⁶⁷

Tea appealed to people for important reasons other than price and availability. When tea first came over to England in the seventeenth century it was often used medicinally for ailments such as headaches, fevers and colds, and may have continued to have been used medicinally for longer periods of time in places such as workhouses.⁶⁸ Tea was attractive as it offered an alternative to drinks such as beer. It gave people a caffeine lift and was a warming thirst-quenching drink which people liked the taste of. For these reasons, tea became the 'the prime archetype of comfort' to many English people.⁶⁹ Tea drinking was also often inextricably linked to contemporary ideas of respectability.⁷⁰ Consequently, tea became a staple of people's diets and was associated with a number of social rituals, which added to the appeal of drinking tea. The middling sort and elite epitomised this ritualised form of taking tea. Groups of people would sit around a tea table and use bundles of goods including china or porcelain, tea caddies and silverware to distribute and display tea to families and guests.⁷¹ They used certain hand gestures and modes of speech to denote their civilised, polite, respectable and sophisticated manners to others. This form of tea drinking was often viewed as a domestic female activity by contemporaries (as discussed in chapter five). Figure 4.6 offers a representation of a family participating in this ritualised form of tea drinking. It shows the many different types of tea items that people often owned and offers a portrayal of how people displayed their civility

⁶⁶ Eden, *State of the poor*. Vols. 1-3; Davies, *Labourers*.

⁶⁷ Sokoll, *Pauper letters*, p.622.

⁶⁸ Cowan, *Coffee*, pp.22-25 and 47-53; Emmerson, *Teapots*, p.2; Smith, 'Coffeehouse', pp.152-154; Stobart, *Sugar*, p.38; Saberi, *Tea*, p.85; Harley, 'Material lives', p.88.

⁶⁹ Smith, *Respectability*, p.103.

⁷⁰ Ibid., esp. pp.121-130 and 171-181; Smith, 'Coffeehouse', pp.148-164. It is important to note that not all tea drinking was linked to respectability, such as tea drinking in workhouses. See: Stobart, *Sugar*, p.263 and 273.

⁷¹ de Vries, *Industrious revolution*, pp.31-37.

Figure 4.6: Richard Collins, 'A family of three at tea', 1727



Source: © V&A, P.9&:1-1934, Richard Collins, 'A family of three at tea', oil painting, 1727 [From: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O56103>. Accessed 25/06/2013].

Background: Richard Collins's conversation piece was intended to show a family group engaged in the civilised activity of drinking tea (see the text for further details).⁷²

through how they held their tea cups, for example. Of course, it would be wrong to assume that the middling sort and elite drunk every cup of tea in this ritualised manner and that everybody was engaged in this form of tea drinking at one time or another. Sometimes, for example, people drank tea as an 'intimate or individual experience' and thus may not have wanted the tea paraphernalia that was associated with social display.⁷³ Nevertheless, for many people this was a new form of hospitality and formed an increasingly important part

⁷² Graham-Vernon, Deborah, 'Collins, Richard' (d. 1732), *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [From: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5948?docPos=2>. Accessed 20/01/2015].

⁷³ Stobart, *Sugar*, p.273.

of middling and elite lives.⁷⁴ There has unfortunately been little empirical research to assess the extent to which the poor may have consumed tea in a similar ritualised manner.⁷⁵

It is very difficult to use pauper inventories to assess whether the poor consumed tea in a similar ritualised fashion, since owning a large number of tea goods does not necessarily mean that people used them in the same way as the middling sort. Silver tea spoons may not have been used in the ritualised drinking of tea but could rather have been used as stores of wealth, which could be sold or pawned when people needed to quickly raise money. In December 1824, for example, Thomas Smith wrote to the overseer of Chelmsford in Essex to ask for relief. He said that he had 'been out of employ for about a month' and so had 'pledged what furniture we can possibly spare... [including] my own wearing apparel – all our Silver Spoons and my Watch'.⁷⁶ Tea chests and caddies could have also been used to store small items such as sewing materials and sentimental items rather than tea. Despite these issues, by measuring pauper ownership of tea paraphernalia such as tea caddies, tea tables and tea spoons it is possible to at least find some indication as to the extent to which the poor took tea in a ritualised manner, since these bundles of tea goods were heavily associated with these behaviours and activities. Tea spoons, for instance, could be positioned in or across a tea cup to politely indicate whether somebody wanted more tea from their host.⁷⁷ Table 4.9 records the types of tea items that the poor owned. The category of any type of 'tea paraphernalia' includes any items which can be related to some form of ritualised taking of tea, comprising tea tables, tea chests, tea trays, tea spoons, tea caddies, tea waiters, tea boards, tea canisters and tea cups and saucers.⁷⁸ It is also important to note that earthenware and china can also be linked to the ritualised

⁷⁴ On the rituals of middling tea drinking, see: Smith, *Respectability*, esp. pp.121-131 and 171-181; Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming subjects: women, shopping, and business in the eighteenth century* (New York, 1997), pp.19-36; Berg, *Luxury and pleasure*, pp.229-232; Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.158-159; Emerson, *Teapots*, pp.13-27; Smith, 'Coffeehouse', pp.148-164; Stobart, *Sugar*, pp.242-257; Vickery, *Behind*, pp.271-276.

⁷⁵ This lack of evidence has nevertheless not stopped historians from suggesting that poor people consumed tea in a ritualistic manner. For example, Sidney Mintz argued that 'tea had become a mark of hospitality for all classes' by the mid-nineteenth century and Woodruff Smith argued that 'the British practice [of 'tea gatherings'] began to be adopted by the less fashionable' by the later decades of the eighteenth century. It is important to note that 'less fashionable' does not necessarily equate to the poor, of course. Mintz, *Sweetness*, pp.143-144; Smith, *Respectability*, p.172.

⁷⁶ Sokoll, *Pauper letters*, p.196. Also see: YALH Accession 38. The pawning and selling of tea goods is discussed further below.

⁷⁷ Emerson, *Teapots*, p.23.

⁷⁸ The category also includes pauper inventories which have entries such as 'other tea things', as it strongly implies that those paupers owned different types of tea paraphernalia.

Table 4.9: Percentage of pauper inventories which record items related to tea drinking and average number of items per pauper inventory, c.1679-1834

		Average no.	c.1679-1769 (%)	1770-c.1834 (%)	All years (%)
Tea kettles	Dorset (n=60)	1	8	55	25
	Kent (n=60)	1	3	45	18
	Norfolk (n=229)	1	4	57	11
	All (n=349)	1	4	53	16
Tea pots	Dorset	1	3	14	7
	Kent	3	3	50	20
	Norfolk	1.3	2	16	4
	All	1.5	2	25	7
Tea paraphernalia (any type)	Dorset	3.2	5	18	10
	Kent	8.1	8	36	18
	Norfolk	1.5	2	27	6
	All	4.2	3	27	9
Tea cups and dishes	Dorset	5.5	3	5	3
	Kent	12.2	3	23	10
	Norfolk	2	1	0	1
	All	9.7	2	7	3
Tea table	Dorset	2	0	5	2
	Kent	1.8	3	14	7
	Norfolk	1	0	11	2
	All	1.4	<1	10	3
Tea tray/board	Dorset	0	0	0	0
	Kent	1	3	18	8
	Norfolk	1.5	0	5	1
	All	1.1	<1	7	2
Tea caddy	All	1	0	4	1
Tea canister	All	1.1	1	6	2
Sample Size	-	-	265	81	349

drinking of tea, though they are not discussed here unless something like 'earthenware tea goods' is noted in the inventories.⁷⁹ Measuring the prevalence of tea paraphernalia inevitably has its limits, since it is dependent on the appraiser noting items such as a *tea* table rather than just a table. Despite this, the results suggest that there was probably some element of ritualised tea drinking among the poor. Two-fifths of paupers in Kent appear to have owned at least one item of tea paraphernalia and the results indicate that they were found in smaller numbers of Dorset and Norfolk pauper homes. The percentages are often small, but the most common items of tea paraphernalia in the pauper inventories appear to have been tea tables, tea cups/dishes and tea trays/boards. Although it is difficult to precisely determine how these items were used and what they looked like, the fact that appraisers seem to have understood what they were and found them noteworthy enough to describe them as *tea* cups and *tea* tables rather than just cups and tables is important, and suggests that they had particular intended uses.⁸⁰ This suggests that for some poor people tea drinking could be an enjoyable activity which went beyond thirst and taste.

Some pauper inventories are particularly detailed and allow us to gain a better picture of how some paupers may have drunk tea. Mrs Dungay and her husband had been on poor relief for three or more years before a pauper inventory was made of their possessions in 1821. During this period, the husband Francis Dungay had moved in and out of the workhouse several times to receive treatment for his 'bad legs', whilst Mrs Dungay continued to live at home.⁸¹ Their pauper inventory is atypical of most as it appears to show the material goods of a couple who had recently fallen on hard times, but had previously enjoyed a relatively decent standard of living. The majority of paupers in the sample, on the other hand, appear to have lived their entire lives closer to poverty and poor relief (see chapter two). Despite this, the case of the Dungays is interesting as it suggests that tea drinking may have been a ritualised activity for people who had recently become poor and perhaps for people who owned just one or two specialised and more ostentatious tea items. In the Dungays' 'Front Room' in Maidstone, Kent there was a '30hour Clock [with] Wainscot Case', '1. Square Mahogany Dining Table & green cover' and '6. Ash. Rush bottom Chairs'.

⁷⁹ On earthenware and china, see above.

⁸⁰ Stobart, *Sugar*, p.249.

⁸¹ KHLC P347/18/1 Staplehurst workhouse book, 1754-1833; KHLC P347/12/12 Staplehurst overseers' assessments and disbursements, 1816-1826. Although the Dungays lived in Maidstone their legal settlement was Staplehurst.

The room was further decorated with '6 small pictures' and was heated with a fireplace that had an 'Iron fender'. This room was where the Dungays appear to have drunk tea. There were three tea tables in the room, including '1. Wainscot Tea Table' and '1. Painted Round [round] Deal Tea Table', a range of earthenware vessels, and '1 Japan [lacquered] Tea board & Tea Ware'. Drinking tea in this well-furnished room with these bundles of interconnected luxury goods and extensive range of tea items would have been an experience that went beyond simply satisfying taste or thirst. Despite becoming poor, couples such as the Dungays appear to have still wanted to present a certain respectable image of themselves and even engage in a form of conspicuous consumption by hanging on to these markers of social status.⁸² This case study helps to demonstrate that poverty could be a very broad category and that there was not a single experience of material poverty. Some paupers such as the Dungays were able to retain many of their material goods prior to the inventorying of their possessions, whereas others had to go through a period of selling and pawning their goods before they went on to poor relief and so were left with fewer tea items. Tea goods were some of the first possessions that people sold off during difficult times, since tea drinking was popular and tea items were desired by a wide spectrum of people. In the pawnbroker's pledge book of Fettes, for example, tea items were the third most common types of goods to be pawned by customers. Out of the 300 people that pledged one or more tea-related items between 1777 and 1778, 243 of them pledged at least one tea spoon and 12 and 15 people pledged tea tongs and tea boards/trays respectively. Meanwhile, 31 people pledged a tea kettle and only four a tea pot. This suggests that although tea kettles and tea pots were the most common tea items recorded in the pauper inventories (table 4.9), many people would pawn tea paraphernalia before they sold or pawned off tea kettles and tea pots which were needed in the actual making of tea.⁸³

In spite of finding that some paupers were able to drink tea in a ritualised fashion, it is important to not take this point too far. Many of the pauper inventories suggest that people drank tea in a much more restrained and simple way, involving earthenware instead of china, no tea waiters or tea chests, and a multi-purpose table used for a variety of functions instead of a tea table. Most paupers owned no more than a tea kettle (table 4.9). For many paupers tea pots were the closest that they could get to owning decorative tea

⁸² KHLC P347/18/10.

⁸³ Backhouse, *Worm-eaten*, pp.77-81.

items. Of course, tea pots were functional and important in the brewing of tea, but they could also be decorated, patterned and colourful.⁸⁴ Rhoda Wretham from East Harling in Norfolk, for instance, owned one 'Mock Silver Tea pot'.⁸⁵ Dame Austin from Staplehurst in Kent owned '1 pewter Teapot' and '1 Black Tea pot'.⁸⁶

Many of the poor probably owned little in the way of tea paraphernalia as they simply wanted to drink tea in their own ways and not emulate those of the rich.⁸⁷ Ideas of respectability, for example, were strongly linked to tea and coffee drinking, but the concept was malleable and could be seen differently by the rich, middling sort and the labouring classes.⁸⁸ Some paupers may have been more interested in drinking tea as an individual experience and so may not have wanted the tea paraphernalia that was associated with social display.⁸⁹ Figure 4.7 offers an excellent representation of this simpler way in which many of the poor prepared and drank tea. It portrays a lone elderly woman who has placed a tea kettle onto the fire. There is also a tea pot and a cup and saucer on the table. Whenever the woman prepared her tea she would have always placed the kettle on the fire, fed the flames with bellows and used her tongs to stoke the fire. Once the kettle was boiled she would then pour it into the tea pot or cup. The saucer is there to prevent spillage. She is in a comfortable arm chair next to a fire and about to relax and enjoy a warm cup of tea. This is not the stereotypical image of the tea drinking that some of the middling sort and elite were engaged in, involving guests, polite conversation and silverware, but it is still a ritualised form of taking tea which follows similar repetitive actions, which are geared towards comfort and enjoyment. Eden noted that the poor in the south of England regularly

⁸⁴ For example, see the plates in: Emerson, *Teapots*.

⁸⁵ NRO PD 219/114.

⁸⁶ KHLC P347/18/10.

⁸⁷ Equally, Jon Stobart found that the poor were not emulating the rich 'in part because the existence of different grades of tea... allowed for distinctions to be made within as well as between categories of goods' and because involuntary consumers in the workhouse sometimes had tea. Stobart, *Sugar*, pp.219-221. Overall, the concepts of emulative consumption and 'trickle down' theories have largely been discredited by most academics. Today, scholars more readily acknowledge that people often wanted their own identities and not others; that not all fashions 'trickle down' and that sometimes fashions 'trickle up'; and that some forms of consumption were not emulative, such as drinking water or eating out of hunger. For useful critiques, see: Ben Fine and Ellen Leopold, *The world of consumption* (London, 1993), pp.138-147; Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.194-196; de Vries, *Industrious revolution*, pp.46-52; Nenadic, 'Middle-rank', pp.122-156; and the chapters in Brewer and Porter, *World of goods*.

⁸⁸ Smith, 'Coffeehouse', pp.150-151; Smith, *Respectability*, pp.121-130 and 204-210.

⁸⁹ Stobart, *Sugar*, p.273.

Figure 4.7: William Redmore Bigg, 'Poor old woman's comfort', 1793



Source: © V&A, 199-1885, William Redmore Bigg, 'Poor old woman's comfort', oil on canvas, 1793 [From: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O16543>. Accessed 07/05/2013].

Background: See figure 3.3.

drank tea in the morning and in the evening with dinner.⁹⁰ Again, this did not conform to the rituals of some of the middling sort and elite, but it was nonetheless a ritual in the sense that it involved the same preparatory repetitive actions and happened at particular times of the day with certain meals.

Pauper inventories unfortunately reveal little about the types and quality of tea leaves that the poor used and whether they had milk and sugar with their tea. Consequently, I will be using the research of Eden, Davies and other writers to augment the

⁹⁰ Eden, *State of the poor*, Vol. 1, p.535.

findings from the pauper inventories. Based on this scattered evidence, the majority of the poor appear to have generally used the cheapest tea leaves that they could acquire and only purchased higher grades of tea as 'occasional treats'.⁹¹ Davies defended the labouring poor's consumption of tea by remarking that:

Still you exclaim, *Tea is a luxury*. If you mean fine hyson tea; sweetened with refined sugar, and softened with cream, I readily admit it to be so. But *this* is not the tea of the poor. Spring water, just coloured with a few leaves of the lowest-priced tea, and sweetened with the brownest sugar, is the luxury for which you reproach them.⁹²

Tea was commonly adulterated over the eighteenth century so that tea dealers could make greater profits and sell it for cheaper prices than their competitors.⁹³ The poor were probably the greatest victim of this since they would have been unable to pay high prices for tea at more reputable shops which did not adulterate tea.⁹⁴ There were also a number of servants, particularly in urban areas, who sold their master's old tea leaves to middle men.⁹⁵ The poorer classes would have been the most likely to purchase these used leaves as they offered a cheaper alternative to the tea sold by tea dealers. Some domestic servants would have used their master's old tea leaves themselves, whilst others were given unused tea leaves as part of their pay.⁹⁶ Most working people, however, did not receive tea from their masters and would have used the cheapest and thus most inferior teas available.

The bundling of sugar with tea had considerable ramifications according to some scholars.⁹⁷ Sidney Mintz, for instance, argued that:

The first sweetened cup of hot tea to be drunk by an English worker was a significant historical event, because it prefigured the transformation of an entire society, a total remaking of its economic and social basis. We must struggle to understand fully the consequences of that and kindred events, for upon them was erected an entirely

⁹¹ Stobart, *Sugar*, pp.195-196.

⁹² Davies, *Labourers*, p.39.

⁹³ John Burnett, 'The history of food adulteration in Great Britain in the nineteenth century with special references to bread, tea and beer', PhD thesis (University of London, 1958), pp.157-291; Ashworth, *Customs*, pp.307-314.

⁹⁴ Friedrich Engels, *The condition of the working class in England*, trans. Florence Kelley Wischnewetzky, ed. Victor Kiernan and Tristram Hunt (London, 2009, reprint of 1892 ed.), p.106.

⁹⁵ Ashworth, *Customs*, p.311.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.311; Emerson, *Teapots*, p.301.

⁹⁷ Mintz, *Sweetness*, passim; de Vries, *Industrious revolution*, pp.31-32; Stobart, *Sugar*, passim; Smith, *Respectability*, pp.122-123.

different conception of the relationship between producers and consumers, of the meaning of work, of the definition of self, of the nature of things.⁹⁸

The per capita consumption of sugar grew from 16.94 lb. in 1750-9 to 23.02 lb. in 1770-9 and the price for sugar declined in the long term, suggesting that the poor sweetened their tea with sugar.⁹⁹ However, the poor would have probably mainly used small quantities of brown sugar and not white sugar as Davies mentioned above.¹⁰⁰ Some of them were unable to obtain even the cheapest sugar. The labouring population in 1790s Blandford Forum in Dorset, for example, often used treacle instead of sugar to sweeten their tea.¹⁰¹ Other poor people would have used molasses, another by-product of the sugar refining process.¹⁰² The pauper inventories occasionally record sugar nippers and sugar basins, but the majority of people, particularly outside of Kent, appear not to have owned such items. This suggests that most paupers did not use specialised goods to hold or administer sugar. The addition of milk to tea became common practice in England around the 1720s, resulting in black tea overtaking green tea in popularity.¹⁰³ Milk, however, was probably rarely consumed by the poor whether for tea, as a beverage, or as part of a meal in itself. Both Eden and Davies were in agreement that milk was not consumed by many of the poor, as most could not afford to keep or purchase a cow and because there were a lack of outlets from which to buy milk.¹⁰⁴ The results from the pauper inventories appear to support Davies' and Eden's findings. Cows were only recorded in two of the 349 pauper inventories from Dorset, Kent and Norfolk and items related to milk or cream were also rarely noted.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ Mintz, *Sweetness*, p.214.

⁹⁹ Stobart, *Sugar*, pp.48-49.

¹⁰⁰ On the cultural practice of adding sugar to tea, see: Woodruff D. Smith, 'Complications of the commonplace: tea, sugar, and imperialism', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 23:2 (1992), pp.259-278.

¹⁰¹ Eden, *State of the poor*, Vol. 2, p.148.

¹⁰² Carole Shamas, 'Changes in English and Anglo-American consumption from 1550 to 1800', in Brewer and Porter, *World of goods*, pp.182-183; Cox, *Language*, pp.134-136.

¹⁰³ Saberi, *Tea*, p.91.

¹⁰⁴ Eden, *State of the poor*, Vol. 1, esp. pp.531-532; Davies, *Labourers*, pp.37-38.

¹⁰⁵ Other contemporaries and historians alike have argued that cows were rarely owned by the poor, such as: Kent, *Hints*, pp.236-237; Snell, *Annals*, pp.174-179; Leigh Shaw-Taylor, 'Labourers, cows, common rights and parliamentary enclosure: the evidence of contemporary comment c.1760-1810', *Past and Present*, 171 (2001), pp.95-126.

Table 4.10: Percentage of pauper inventories which record coffee-related items and average number of items per pauper inventory, c.1679-1834¹⁰⁶

		Average no.	c.1679-1769 (%)	1770-c.1834 (%)	All years (%)
Coffee- related items	Dorset (n=60)	0	0	0	0
	Kent (n=60)	2	5	14	8
	Norfolk (n=229)	1	1	5	1
	All (n=349)	1.8	1	6	2
Sample size	-	-	265	81	349

Coffee consumption decreased in relative terms from the 1710s as tea became increasingly popular.¹⁰⁷ Brian Cowan argued that for most of the eighteenth century ‘coffee was clearly tea’s second cousin’; yet nevertheless he suggested that ‘Coffee and tea were widely available to people of all classes throughout the British Isles by the later eighteenth century’.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, Sarah Richards claimed that ‘In 1800 tea, coffee and sugar was accessible to many of the working people in England’.¹⁰⁹ The results above indicate that tea was widely available and commonly consumed by all social groups by the later eighteenth century, but to what extent was coffee? Table 4.10 tests Cowan and Richard’s claims by measuring the percentage of paupers who owned coffee-related items such as coffee pots, coffee grinders and coffee mills. The results suggest that, at least at a domestic level, coffee drinking was relatively uncommon among the poor, especially in Dorset and Norfolk. The percentage of paupers who owned coffee items slightly increased in Kent by the later eighteenth century. The reasons for this may stem from Kent’s proximity to London, where the greatest number of coffee houses were and where most coffee was received into the country.¹¹⁰ Kent was also an important route into England used by coffee smugglers.¹¹¹ This

¹⁰⁶ Coffee-related items include any goods which were related to coffee drinking, including coffee pots, coffee grinders, coffee mills, coffee mugs and coffee cups.

¹⁰⁷ S. D. Smith, ‘Accounting for taste: British coffee consumption in historical perspective’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 27:2 (1996), pp.183-214; Cowan, *Coffee*, esp. pp.75-77; Forrest, *Tea*, p.24; Saberi, *Tea*, p.91.

¹⁰⁸ Cowan, *Coffee*, p.77.

¹⁰⁹ Richards, *Ceramics*, p.131. Also see: Smith, ‘Coffeehouse’, p.148 who said that tea and coffee was common among most social classes in north-west Europe by the early nineteenth century.

¹¹⁰ Cowan, *Coffee*, pp.154-156.

may have meant that coffee was both more popular and more accessible to consumers in Kent compared to elsewhere. One should not, however, overstate this as the ownership of coffee goods only increased slightly and they appear to have only been owned by small numbers of Kentish paupers.

There are a number of reasons why coffee drinking remained uncommon in pauper homes.¹¹² During the second half of the seventeenth century coffee was initially the cheaper option to tea; however this trend was reversed in the early eighteenth century as plantation owners increasingly switched their attention to sugar cultivation at the expense of coffee and after coffee was increasingly taxed by the government. Tea was also heavily taxed, but following the opening up of Canton port in 1713 it became more accessible to the English and its pre-tax price further declined.¹¹³ This meant that the legal imports of tea were 17 times higher than coffee in the mid-1780s. Moreover, 85 per cent of the coffee brought into the country was re-exported.¹¹⁴ These economic reasons relating to price and availability are likely to have had a negative impact on the poor's consumption of coffee, but other factors were also important. On a practical level, although roasted and ground coffee could be bought at a higher price, cheaper coffee was difficult to prepare as it required a number of processes and specialised items to grind, roast and brew the coffee.¹¹⁵ In contrast, boiling water was all that was needed to make tea. This meant that most coffee was probably consumed outside the home, namely in coffee houses by the 'respectable' poor.¹¹⁶ This meant that the social and ceremonial rituals that surrounded drinking coffee were entirely different to tea. A significant appeal of tea was that it could be drunk at home with relative ease and could be used to entertain guests. To serve coffee in the home could be much more difficult and time consuming.

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp.155-156; Ashworth, *Customs*, pp.176-183; Forrest, *Tea*, pp.68-74; Mui and Mui, *Shops*, pp.160-164.

¹¹² It is important to note that coffee drinking was also less common in middling and elite homes than tea drinking. Shamma, *Pre-industrial consumer*, pp.182-183 and Hussey and Ponsonby, *Single homemaker*, p.124.

¹¹³ Smith, 'Accounting', pp.183-214; Cowan, *Coffee*, pp.55-77; Ashworth, *Custom*, pp.182-183; Smith, 'Coffeehouse', pp.148-150; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.106-107; Stobart, *Sugar*, pp.48-49; Shamma, *Pre-industrial consumer*, p.84.

¹¹⁴ Smith, 'Accounting', pp.184-185.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p.187; Saberi, *Tea*, p.102; Hussey and Ponsonby, *Single homemaker*, pp.124-125.

¹¹⁶ MacKay, *Respectability*, p.21. It is important to note that when coffee houses were first opened they were almost exclusively used by middling and elite men. Cowan, *Coffee*; Smith, *Respectability*, pp.139-161; Richards, *Ceramics*, pp.133-135.

Chocolate first came to England around the same time as tea and coffee. It never reached the same levels of consumption as tea or coffee, but it was nevertheless not uncommon among the more affluent.¹¹⁷ In regards to the poor, however, none of the pauper inventories recorded any items related to the making of chocolate drinks, which suggests that chocolate was infrequently drunk by the poor at least at a domestic level. Similarly to coffee, chocolate was expensive to acquire throughout the period and was difficult to prepare at home as it required a number of different processes to make, which often included adding ingredients such as eggs, milk and alcohol.¹¹⁸ This made the drink even more difficult to prepare and more expensive, explaining why domestic chocolate consumption was uncommon.

Luxury goods

John Cupper was married with children and lived in Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell parish in south Norfolk. He started receiving 1s. 6d. per week from the parish in July 1740 around the same time a pauper inventory was made of his possessions.¹¹⁹ His inventory recorded 37 possessions. For furniture he owned one bed, a chest, a keep, four chairs and two tables. The Cuppers cooked using an iron pot, brass skillet and spit, and owned five trenchers to eat off. The family also owned an iron candlestick to help light the home and a warming pan.¹²⁰ In the same parish 88 years later, we find another pauper inventory taken of Michael Aggus' possessions. He was not in receipt of regular relief like John, but he had children to look after and started to receive regular allowances of casual relief to help his sick daughter around the same time an inventory was taken of his possessions.¹²¹ The inventory reveals a home very different to John's house. Michael's inventory recorded 160 items. It included six pairs of knives and forks, a range of glassware and crockery, a copper saucepan, a lantern, bed hangings, chest of drawers and a number of items related to pepper, mustard, nuts, sugar and salt. Michael and his family appear to have clearly taken to tea drinking and owned two tea pots, a copper tea kettle and a tea caddy. In addition to these goods, Michael also owned an 'Eight Day Clock', 'Four Prints

¹¹⁷ Hole, *Home-life*, p.23.

¹¹⁸ Ashworth, *Customs*, pp.182-183; Hussey and Ponsonby, *Single homemaker*, pp.124-125; Cowan, *Coffee*, p.80

¹¹⁹ NRO PD 295/94 Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell overseers' accounts, 1721-1751.

¹²⁰ NRO PD 295/102.

¹²¹ NRO PD 295/106. Unfortunately it could not be determined if Michael was married like John.

Glaz^d. & Framed', a 'Bird Cage' and a 'looking Glass', and several items made out of mahogany including a 'Mahogany Beaureau with four Drawers' and a 'Mahogany waiter'.¹²² The inventories of John and Michael show very stark differences. John's inventory, with only the odd exception, notes little more than the ownership of functional items needed in the everyday running of the home. Michael's pauper inventory listed similar goods to this, but also recorded a significant range of goods which became more common over the eighteenth century and a number of luxury and decorative items. Of course, Michael may have owned better goods than John as he enjoyed a period of earlier and greater prosperity. These differences in ownership may also just simply reflect the range of experiences of material poverty that people went through. However, these two inventories may also suggest considerable change over time in the way that poor people lived and the comforts and luxuries that they could expect to own.

Contemporaries and historians alike have written huge volumes of work on eighteenth-century 'luxury' goods and have approached the subject from a number of perspectives. Contemporaries such as David Hume, for instance, linked the growth of luxury goods to the economic prosperity of Britain and the betterment of labouring lives,¹²³ whilst writers such as Alexis de Tocqueville argued that luxury goods had helped to pauperise the English population since people's material expectations had risen.¹²⁴ Historians have also assessed a number of aspects of luxury consumption. Some have linked the increased consumption of luxury goods to the growth of capitalism and concepts such as the 'industrious revolution' and an eighteenth-century 'consumer revolution'.¹²⁵ Others have been more interested in studying how these goods came to change and shape the lives of people.¹²⁶ The poor have often been neglected in this literature, with most attention undoubtedly being given to middling and elite consumers. The main objective of this section is thus to use the evidence of the pauper inventories to assess whether the poor acquired a

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ David Hume, 'Of commerce' (1752) and 'Of the refinement of arts' (1742), in David Hume, *The philosophical works of David Hume*, Vol. 3 (Edinburgh, 1826), pp.285-316.

¹²⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Memoir on pauperism*, trans. Seymour Drescher, ed. Gertrude Himmelfarb (Lancing, 1997).

¹²⁵ Most notably, see: Werner Sombart, *Luxury and capitalism*, trans. W. R. Dittmar, ed. Philip Siegelman (Ann Arbor, 1967); de Vries, *Industrious revolution*; McKendrick, 'Consumer revolution', pp.9-33.

¹²⁶ See for example: Peck, *Consuming splendor*.

number of luxuries in a similar manner to the middling sort and elite, and how this came to affect their everyday lives.

Before the analysis begins it is important first to define what 'luxury' goods were to contemporary society. Historians have argued over the definition and use of the term for a number of years. Maxine Berg, for example, is an advocate of using the term and has written a number of publications which frequently use the adjective 'luxury'.¹²⁷ Weatherill, in contrast, is highly critical of the term and argued that it can be elusive and misleading.¹²⁸ For convenience I could avoid using the term. However, that could be ahistorical since contemporaries closely associated material goods with what was seen as 'luxurious' and 'necessary'.¹²⁹ Bernard Mandeville in *The Fable of the Bees* argued that luxury goods were a private vice but a public virtue. He broadly defined 'luxury' to include anything that was not necessary 'to keep a Man alive' and said that:¹³⁰

The greatest Excesses of Luxury are shewn in Buildings, Furniture, Equipages and Clothes: Clean Linen weakens a Man no more than Flannel; Tapistry, fine Painting or good Wainscot are no more unwholesom than bare Walls; and a rich Couch, or a gilt Chariot are no more enervating than the cold Floor or a Country Cart.¹³¹

Over time luxury goods were seen as less of a vice to society and were increasingly seen as beneficial. Several decades after Mandeville's work, Adam Smith, for instance, argued that consumption led to greater trade and manufacture and so benefitted the population. He agreed with Mandeville and said that 'commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life' were necessities, but added that 'whatever [items] the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without' were also necessities, including white linen shirts, leather, soap and candles.¹³² Smith defined luxuries as items which 'Nature does not render them necessary for the support of life; and custom no where renders it indecent to live without them', such as beer, wine,

¹²⁷ Berg, *Luxury and pleasure*; Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (eds.), *Consumers and luxury: consumer culture in Europe 1650-1850* (Manchester, 1999); Berg and Eger, *Luxury*.

¹²⁸ Weatherill, 'Meaning', p.207.

¹²⁹ There is a considerable literature on the 'luxury debate'. For some of the most notable examples, see: John Sekora, *Luxury: the concept in western thought, Eden to Smollett* (London, 1977); Christopher J. Berry, *The idea of luxury: a conceptual and historical investigation* (Cambridge, 1994); White, 'Luxury'; Crowley, *Invention of comfort*, pp.141-170; Styles, *Dress*, pp.181-194. Also see note 127.

¹³⁰ Bernard Mandeville, *The fable of the bees or private vices, publick benefits*, Vol. 1, ed. F. B. Kaye (Oxford, 1988, reprint of 1732 ed.), pp.108 and 107-123 more generally.

¹³¹ Ibid., p.119.

¹³² Smith, *Wealth of nations*, Vol. 2, pp.869-870 and 873.

jewellery and pictures.¹³³ One could continue to present other contemporary definitions, but the point is that the issue is very complex and that definitions can vary widely and be subjective. The issue is complicated when items are assessed over a long period of time. In the late seventeenth century, for example, tea was seen as a luxury item by many as it was expensive, novel and exotic, and was only consumed by the very rich and royalty. However, as the eighteenth century drew to a close it was seen as an everyday necessity to many as it became cheaper to acquire and was commonly consumed across society.

With these problems in mind, this thesis uses a very broad definition of luxury and does not claim to offer a definition that is completely robust or infallible across all contexts. Thus, luxury goods to the poor are loosely defined here to include items which were not necessary to the running of the home and the basic physical wellbeing of the owners. This includes items that were strongly linked to decoration, status, vanity, novelty, display and imitation, and items that were owned in superfluous numbers. It also includes possessions which were primarily geared towards pleasure, convenience and comfort, and possessions that were probably only acquired when people had some disposable income at a relatively affluent stage in their lives. Included in this, therefore, are items such as timepieces, looking glasses and items of gold or silver, as well as items as varied as saucepans, chest of drawers, jacks and lanterns. Necessities, on the other hand, were everyday, mundane and rudimentary items that were often necessary to the support of life, such as food, water and basic cooking items. Defining luxury goods and necessities also depends upon when goods became more commonplace. Beds, for instance, were necessities by the late seventeenth century as they were recorded in nearly every pauper inventory from that period. Likewise, seating and tables were necessities as they were owned by the majority of people throughout the period, but upholstered seats or mahogany tables were luxuries since they were uncommon and were strongly tied to aspects such as decoration, comfort and display.¹³⁴ Beds, seating and tables were also commonly given to paupers by the parish, suggesting that they were seen as necessities by contemporaries. Some items are difficult to define as luxuries or necessities. Earthenware, for example, appears to have been commonly owned by people for much of the period, but while it could clearly have been

¹³³ Ibid., pp.870-871; Neil de Marchi, 'Adam Smith's accommodation of "altogether endless" desires', in Berg and Clifford, *Consumers*, pp.18-36.

¹³⁴ See chapter three for the discussion on beds, seating and tables.

classed as a necessity, it could also be patterned, used to decorate the home and be owned in superfluous quantities. Nevertheless, this section will now assess the poor's ownership of a number of luxury goods which fit within these defined parameters, and items which have commonly been identified by a number of contemporaries and historians as luxury goods.

Books

For decades historians have debated the extent of literacy from Tudor times to present. David Cressy examined the signatures and marks of people on petitions and ecclesiastical records to assess the number of people who could write. His results suggested that around 70 per cent of men and 90 per cent of women in Tudor and Stuart England were unable to write their own name.¹³⁵ In Dorset and Norfolk around 70 and 72 per cent of men could not sign their names in the 1640s.¹³⁶ Literacy levels appear to have increased over the period, but this growth was most pronounced among affluent people, tradesmen and people who lived in urban areas.¹³⁷ Other scholars have employed a similar methodology to Cressy and have found that in the 1750s around 40 per cent of men and 60 per cent of women were unable to sign their names. By 1914, 99 per cent of the population appear to have been literate.¹³⁸ Unfortunately, these figures are limited as they only include people who could write and do not account for the varying levels and types of literacy that individuals had. Some people, for instance, could read and write fluently, whilst others could not read or write handwritten texts but could read printed texts. Others only recognised odd passages from the bible or only knew the alphabet.¹³⁹ Access to the written word was also not dependent upon being able to read yourself. People often had friends, neighbours and family who could write or read for them.¹⁴⁰ An oral culture continued throughout the

¹³⁵ David Cressy, *Literacy and the social order: reading and writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980), passim.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.73-74. Unfortunately Cressy did not sample Kent.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ David Vincent, *Literacy and popular culture: England 1750-1914* (Cambridge, 1989), p.1; Roger S. Schofield, 'Dimensions of illiteracy, 1750-1850', in Harvey J. Graff (ed.), *Literacy and social development in the west: a reader* (Cambridge, 1981), p.207; Lawrence Stone, 'Literacy and education in England 1640-1900', *Past and Present*, 42 (1969), p.105 and John Feather, *A history of British publishing* (London, 1988), pp.95-96.

¹³⁹ Keith Thomas, 'The meaning of literacy in early modern England', in Gerd Baumann (ed.), *The written word: literacy in transition* (Oxford, 1986), pp.98-104; Jonathan Barry, 'Literacy and literature in popular culture: reading and writing in historical perspective', in Tim Harris (ed.), *Popular culture in England* (London, 1995), pp.69-94; Estabrook, *Urbane*, pp.185-186; David Cressy, 'Literacy in context: meaning and measurement in early modern England', in Brewer and Porter, *World of goods*, pp.311-313.

¹⁴⁰ Cressy, *Literacy and the social order*, p.14; Thomas, 'Literacy', pp.106-107; Brewer, *Pleasures*, pp.187-188; Sokoll, *Pauper letters*, pp.62-67.

period in which people shared texts and ballads by reading or singing aloud. Many traditions and cultures were often passed down through speech rather than the written word.¹⁴¹ As a result of these many problems, it is difficult accurately to determine contemporary levels of literacy and it is not possible to quantify the exact percentage of poor people who were literate over the period. The pauper inventories also reveal little regarding the burgeoning volume of print that was available for only a few pence during the eighteenth century, including chapbooks, ballads, broadsides, almanacs and newspapers.¹⁴² It is highly likely that large numbers of people, including the poor, bought these cheap prints despite the fact that few pauper inventories recorded them.¹⁴³ They may not have generally been noted by appraisers because they had little value or because they were used as toilet paper, fuel or to insulate walls once they were read.

Table 4.11 shows the percentage of pauper inventories which recorded books. The results suggest that books were owned by only a small number of paupers. There was a slight increase in pauper ownership of books after 1770, however one should not make too much of this since it was a small increase and no Norfolk pauper inventories recorded books after 1770. Similarly, books were recorded in only 2 per cent of the bastardy, debt, rent and goods-taken inventories of paupers' goods. Given that books are known to have been under-recorded by the appraisers of probate inventories, it is possible that the types of inventories used in this study have the same faults, however this is difficult to prove.¹⁴⁴

Despite these possible limitations of inventories, autobiographies and diaries from the period help us to further understand the significance of reading and writing to the poor.

¹⁴¹ Adam Fox, *Oral and literate culture in England 1500-1700* (Oxford, 2000); Adam Fox and Daniel Woolf (eds.), *The spoken word: oral culture in Britain 1500-1850* (Manchester, 2002); Victor E. Neuburg, *Popular literature: a history and guide: from the beginning of printing to the year 1897* (London, 1977), pp.234-247; Robert Darnton, 'History of reading', in Peter Burke (ed.), *New perspectives on historical writing* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.150-151; Feather, *Publishing*, p.94; Cressy, *Literacy and the social order*, p.13-14; Thomas, 'Literacy', pp.113-114.

¹⁴² Vast amounts have been written on the development of these publications. For some of the most interesting and notable, see: James Raven, 'The book trades', in Isabel Rivers (ed.), *Books and their readers in eighteenth-century England: new essays* (London, 2001), pp.1-34; Tessa Watt, *Cheap print and popular piety 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1991); Margaret Spufford, *Small books and pleasant histories: popular fiction and its readership in seventeenth-century England* (London, 1981); Feather, *Publishing*; Lori Humphrey Newcomb, 'What is a chapbook?', in Matthew Dimmock and Andrew Hadfield (eds.), *Literature and popular culture in early modern England* (Farnham, 2009), pp.57-72; Bernard Capp, *Astrology and the popular press: English almanacs 1500-1800* (London, 1979); Neuburg, *Popular literature*; Estabrook, *Urbane*, pp.164-224.

¹⁴³ The same can also be said of richer consumers who had probate inventories made of their belongings. Spufford, *Small books*, p.48; Estabrook, *Urbane*, p.171.

¹⁴⁴ Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, p.113; Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth', p.193.

Table 4.11: Percentage of pauper inventories which record books, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Book	Dorset (n=60)	3	14	7
	Kent (n=60)	3	18	8
	Norfolk (n=229)	4	0	3
	All (n=349)	3	9	5
Sample size	-	265	81	349

Naturally, these sources are problematic since they were written by a subgroup of the poor who were able to read and write. Those who were completely illiterate or could only read have left little trace in this type of historical record. Additionally, although each of the individuals quoted here was poor and received relief during their lifetimes, it is not always clear if they were on relief when they recounted their reading habits in their writings. Despite these difficulties, the findings from these personal narratives are very interesting and help us to form a picture of how some of the poor read and what they gained from it. John Clare, the famous labouring poet, would spend many hours of his youth reading and writing and honing his skills as a poet. His father saw little use to reading and writing as John was destined for a life of ‘hard labour’, and so he discouraged his son. In spite of this, Clare had a lust for learning and did not give up. He said ‘I preseed with my writing... I pursued it with all secresey possible and every shilling I cou[l]d save unknown to them I bought books and paper with’. He stored his books and writings in a box ‘w[h]ere they lay snug and safe from all dangers’.¹⁴⁵ Clare subsequently amassed a relatively large and diverse library from the odd shilling he set aside, including:

“Abercrombies Gardiners Journal,” “Thompsons Seasons,” A Shatterd Copy of “Miltons Paradise lost,” “Wards Mathematics,” Fishers “Young mans companion,” “Robin Hoods Garland,” “Bonnycastles Mensuration,” and “Algebra,” “Fennings Arithmetic,” “Death of Abel,” “Joe Millers Jests,” A “Collection of Hymns,” with some odd Pamphlets of Sermons by the Bishop of Peterborough¹⁴⁶

At various points in his autobiography Clare also referred to other books he owned, such as the bible, a prayer book, *The Scotch Rogue*, a ‘Universal Spelling Book’ and ‘an old book of

¹⁴⁵ Robinson, *Clare*, p.14.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.14.

Essays with no title'.¹⁴⁷ The labourer Joseph Mayett of Quainton in Buckinghamshire was taught how to read whilst serving in the army by a fellow soldier.¹⁴⁸ He soon enjoyed reading and used his captain's books 'so that I sone knew all the laws that Concerned a Military life and sone learned the System of politics in a greate measure'.¹⁴⁹ Mayett was devout and occasionally referred to the religious books he had read, such as *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. He claimed, however, that: 'I have read many authors but... always prefer the bible before any other book'.¹⁵⁰ The vagrant Mary Saxby was also a devout Christian and frequently made references to the 'good books' she owned and read. She carried her bible around with her and read books related to religion such as hymn books and *The Pilgrim's Progress*.¹⁵¹ When Saxby read *An Alarm to Unconverted Sinners*, it clearly had a considerable impact on her life and her religious beliefs. She said:

I had never heard of this book; but going into a neighbour's house, I saw it lie on the table, and took it up to read it: I had not power to put it down again, for it so exactly described my case, that, before I had read many lines, I was bathed in tears. I begged the owner to lend it me, which she readily did. I took it home, and found I had got a treasure of more solid worth than the mines of both the Indies... This book, the Lord was pleased to make of singular use to my soul; for many a time have I laid it before me, and wept, and prayed in bitterness of soul, because I feared that I was unconverted¹⁵²

These sources indicate that books could be owned by the poorest and that some people clearly enjoyed reading. The books that Clare read were one of the few sources of enjoyment he had and they helped to enhance his skills as a poet. Mayett and Saxby read for enjoyment as well as the pursuit of religious knowledge and spiritual devotion.¹⁵³ For others, the ownership of self-help books or bibles could also offer a route towards respectability.¹⁵⁴ Unfortunately, the pauper inventories generally do not record the titles of the books that people owned, but when they do the books tended to be bibles or prayer books. These may have been used by paupers for devotional purposes, however their ownership may have arisen from less pious reasons. Bibles were sometimes given to the

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., pp.15 and 46.

¹⁴⁸ Kussmaul, *Mayett*, pp.34 and 41.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p.48.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pp.41 and 72.

¹⁵¹ Saxby, *Memoirs*, pp.4, 16, 24, 30-32, 37-38 and 40.

¹⁵² Ibid., pp.31-32.

¹⁵³ For further research on popular literature and reading culture, see: Neuburg, *Popular literature*; Jonathan Rose, *The intellectual life of the British working classes* (New Haven, 2002).

¹⁵⁴ MacKay, *Respectability*, p.8; Thompson, *Respectable society*, p.158.

poor by well-meaning organisations such as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; whilst other people owned a bible in the hope that somebody else would read it to them sometimes.¹⁵⁵ Other bibles may not have even been used for reading and could have been used for their perceived power to ward off spirits, to swear oaths or heal sick people.¹⁵⁶ Most bibles the poor owned were probably small and cheap copies worth only a few shillings.¹⁵⁷ Other paupers owned bibles which were both financially and sentimentally significant. Widow Thrower from Shelton in Norfolk, for example, owned 'A Great Bible',¹⁵⁸ which was probably worth around £1 or £2.¹⁵⁹ Some paupers owned family bibles which, according to Carl Estabrook, were 'large, decorative, and heritable volumes [that] contained not only scripture but, according to conventional practice, hand-written entries of personal interest such as records of birth, marriage and death'.¹⁶⁰

The autobiographies and diaries of poor people also help to give some indication as to how and when people read and the networks that they used to acquire a range of printed materials. Clare said 'I carried them [books and pamphlets] in my pocket and read them at my leisure and they was the never weary food of winter evenings'.¹⁶¹ He acquired books and pamphlets from hawkers, fairs and markets and was also able to acquire books in other informal ways. He borrowed school books and was lent books by friends and Mr Gee, a local farmer.¹⁶² He stated that 'From these friendships I gathered more acquaintance with books which chances oppertunitys were but sparing'.¹⁶³ Saxby borrowed books from friends. She was very grateful for this as it helped to convert her to Christianity and keep her devout.¹⁶⁴ Mayett also borrowed numerous books from his captain whilst he was in the army.¹⁶⁵ During the long eighteenth century there were public areas such as taverns in which the poor could gain access to print,¹⁶⁶ in addition to the growing number of cheap publications

¹⁵⁵ Scott Mandelbrote, 'The English bible and its readers in the eighteenth century', in Rivers, *Books*, pp.47-50; Cressy, *Literacy and the social order*, pp.50-51; Thomas, 'Literacy', p.106.

¹⁵⁶ Cressy, *Literacy and the social order*, pp.50-51.

¹⁵⁷ Mandelbrote, 'Bible', pp.50-53; Weatherill, *Material culture*, p.110.

¹⁵⁸ NRO PD 358/42 Shelton various accounts and papers, 1735-1779.

¹⁵⁹ Estabrook, *Urbane*, p.169

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.169.

¹⁶¹ Robinson, *Clare*, p.57.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, pp.15-17, 46 and 56.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.46.

¹⁶⁴ See the quotes of Mary above.

¹⁶⁵ Kussmaul, *Mayett*, p.48.

¹⁶⁶ Estabrook, *Urbane*, p.194; Brewer, *Pleasures*, pp.176-184; Darnton, 'Reading', pp.147 and 150.

such as chapbooks and broadsides which could be purchased for as little as halfpence.¹⁶⁷ It was not unusual for people to pawn books during times of difficulty. These were often not redeemed and so when they were subsequently sold by the pawnbroker people could acquire a range of books relatively cheaply.¹⁶⁸ In the pawnbroker's pledge book of Fettes, for instance, there were bibles, hymn books, prayer books and even one book on the history of Scotland. In most cases people could buy these printed materials from Fettes for less than a shilling if they were unredeemed by the owners.¹⁶⁹

Although the results from the inventories regarding book ownership are tentative, by using autobiographies and diaries this section has suggested that access to print was not difficult for those who wanted it and that some people owned and used print even if they could not read. Some of the poor subsequently gained much from books and printed materials. People read for enjoyment and relaxation, to maintain and enhance religious devotion, and to improve their knowledge and skills in a range of topics including language, politics and mathematics.

Looking glasses

Looking glasses were used by people for centuries before the eighteenth century. The earliest looking glasses were generally small, made of polished metal alloys and were owned by the very rich. Over time the manufacture of looking glasses gradually improved. They were increasingly made out of glass and by the late seventeenth century they could be made in large sizes with few imperfections for domestic spaces.¹⁷⁰ Looking glasses became more affordable and subsequently were one of the first luxury items to infiltrate the homes of richer people. Looking glasses were owned in the greatest numbers by the gentry, tradesmen and professionals, and by the opening decades of the eighteenth century around two-fifths of all the national middling population appear to have owned one.¹⁷¹ Table 4.12

¹⁶⁷ See note 142.

¹⁶⁸ Some pawnbrokers held sales of unredeemed goods regularly. Toplis, *Clothing trade*, p.29.

¹⁶⁹ YALH Accession 38. Also see: Backhouse, *Worm-eaten*, pp.77-81; Ian Mitchell, "Old books-new bound" selling second-hand books in England, c.1680-1850', in Stobart and Van Damme, *Modernity*, pp.139-157.

¹⁷⁰ On the manufacture of looking glasses, see: Graham Child, *World mirrors, 1650-1900* (London, 1990); Benjamin Goldberg, *The mirror and man* (Charlottesville, 1985); Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, *The mirror: a history*, trans. Katherine H. Jewett (New York, 2001), pp.9-21; Geoffrey Wills, *English looking-glasses: a study of the glass, frames and makers (1670-1820)* (London, 1965), pp.15-16 and 41-64; Crowley, *Invention of comfort*, pp.122-128; Margaret J. M. Ezell, 'Looking glass histories', *Journal of British Studies*, 43:3 (2004), pp.322-324.

¹⁷¹ Weatherill, *Consumer behaviour*, pp.26 and 168.

Table 4.12: Percentage of pauper inventories which record looking glasses, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Looking glass	Dorset (n=60)	16	32	22
	Kent (n=60)	13	45	25
	Norfolk (n=229)	13	38	17
	All (n=349)	14	38	19
Sample size	-	265	81	349

records the percentage of pauper inventories which noted a looking glass. The results suggest that around one in ten paupers owned a looking glass between 1679 and 1769. By the late eighteenth century, the pauper inventories indicate that looking glasses had become more common as around two-fifths of the inventories noted one or more. Paupers in Kent appear to have owned looking glasses in the highest numbers, whilst their counterparts in Dorset owned them in smaller numbers. This may suggest that looking glasses tended to be first owned by the poor in more commercial areas in a similar manner to the middling sort.¹⁷² The relationship between looking glass ownership and urbanisation is discussed in chapter five.

The growing ownership of looking glasses over the period suggests that people had become increasingly concerned with their appearance. Before the looking glass, people would have rarely seen their reflection except in water or in a window. However, following an increase in the ownership of looking glasses, people were able to take more pride in their appearance, style their hair or shave at home. Using scattered sources, appearance seems to have gradually become more important to paupers and the parish over the period. In 1834 Beaminster workhouse in Dorset ruled that inmates should not wear ear rings or hair ornaments and had to keep their hair 'decently short'. Several decades prior to this, Beaminster parish was conversely more concerned with the appearance of paupers based on their clothing, rather than their hair length and style and whether they wore hair ornaments or ear rings.¹⁷³ Looking glasses also had practical benefits in domestic spaces as

¹⁷² Ibid., pp.44 and 168; Beckett and Smith, 'Urban renaissance', pp.42-43; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.111-112.

¹⁷³ Harley, 'Material lives', p.90. Also see: Steven King, 'The clothing of the poor: a matter of pride or a matter of shame?', in Gestrich, King and Raphael, *Being poor*, pp.365-387.

they could be used with other bundles of goods such as candles and rushlights to create a more comfortable domestic environment that seemed brighter and more spacious.¹⁷⁴ In folk law and popular culture looking glasses were sometimes linked to the spiritual, fortune telling and witchcraft. Though many of these beliefs were probably less prevalent over the long eighteenth century, some people still believed that looking glasses could be used to tell the future, to find lost objects and protect the residents from witchcraft. It was also believed by some people that looking glasses could be used as an instrument of the Devil and could capture the souls of dying people.¹⁷⁵

The majority of people possessed only one looking glass. Only two pauper inventories recorded three looking glasses and three pauper inventories recorded two. When the sizes of the looking glasses were recorded they tended to be described as 'small', which suggests that they were either hand-held or only large enough to show a person's head and perhaps their shoulders. As a result, no pauper looking glasses in any of the inventories (of any type) were valued at more than 1s. In fact, most looking glasses were valued at only a few pence, suggesting that they had become affordable luxuries to the poor. The pawnbroker's pledge book of Fettes from York equally shows that looking glasses were pledged at a modal value of 1s. 6d. If left unclaimed by their owners, these looking glasses would have probably been relatively cheap to acquire from Fettes.¹⁷⁶ The affordability of looking glasses may thus be a reason as to why they appear to have been owned by greater numbers of the poor than other luxury items. Some looking glasses which were not valued by the appraiser, however, were clearly large and worth more than 1s. Widow Searls from Redenhall in Norfolk owned 'a Looking-Glass-frame with a Drawer'; Mrs Buckwell from Canterbury in Kent owned '1 swing glas' and two 'pier glas[ses]'; and William Taylor from High Halden in Kent owned one 'swing glass', despite having to enter the workhouse.¹⁷⁷ These looking glasses would have added a decorative and aesthetic quality to the home. Pier glasses, for instance, were long and rectangular and were generally ornately

¹⁷⁴ See for instance the pauper inventory of John Brunson from Martham, Norfolk which records candlesticks and hearth-related goods close to the entry for looking glasses. This suggests that the items may have been located and used close together. NRO PD 710/68. Also see: Crowley, *Invention of comfort*, pp.122-130.

¹⁷⁵ On these beliefs, see: Melchior-Bonnet, *Mirror*, pp.101-269; Wills, *Looking-glasses*, p.15; Ezell, 'Looking glass', pp.326-328. Also see: Keith Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic: studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England* (London, 1973).

¹⁷⁶ YALH Accession 38.

¹⁷⁷ NRO PD 295/102; CCAL U3/100/11A/2; KHL C P164/8/1 High Halden vestry book, 1762-1816.

positioned between two windows or above the chimney piece. The inventory of Richard Hammond taken before he entered Redenhall workhouse is particularly illuminating as it noted 'a Broken Looking-Glass'.¹⁷⁸ This suggests that looking glasses had value and utility despite being in a poor condition, since Richard chose to keep his and since the appraiser decided to record it in the inventory. Thus, despite often being relatively cheap, small and sometimes even broken, looking glasses appear to have been important possessions, which had aesthetic and practical values to owners.

Pictures

This section seeks to assess the types of pictures or images that paupers owned. At the high end of consumption, there are paintings which were generally expensive, unique and handmade;¹⁷⁹ whereas at the low end there are prints, which were made in multiple numbers, uniform in design and sometimes very cheap.¹⁸⁰ The pauper inventories mostly record 'pictures' meaning that it is not possible to uncover the types of pictures that paupers owned. However, it is highly likely that the majority of pictures were prints, as these offered people a huge variety of different images, such as satire, landscapes and religious imagery, which were widely available. Some prints were very expensive but many could be relatively cheap.¹⁸¹ Paintings on the other hand were generally very expensive and so were simply beyond the means of the poor and even many of the lower middling sort such as yeomen.¹⁸² Table 4.13 records the percentage of pauper inventories which noted pictures of any type. The results suggest that pictures were owned by only a small number of paupers. There appears to have been a slight increase in the pauper ownership of pictures after 1770, however one should not make too much of this since it was only a relatively small increase and highly localised to Kent. The evidence from the bastardy, debt,

¹⁷⁸ NRO PD 295/102.

¹⁷⁹ Brewer, *Pleasures*, pp.201-251.

¹⁸⁰ On printmaking, see: Anthony Griffiths, *Prints and printmaking: an introduction to the history and techniques* (London, 1980) and Linda C. Hulst, *The print in the western world: an introductory history* (Madison, 1996). On eighteenth-century prints more specifically, see: Sheila O'Connell, *The popular print in England* (London, 1999); Timothy Clayton, *The English print 1688-1802* (New Haven, 1997).

¹⁸¹ O'Connell, *Print*; Eirwen E. C. Nicholson, 'Consumers and spectators: the public of the political print in eighteenth-century England', *History*, 81:261 (1996), pp.5-21; Clayton, *Print*; Diana Donald, *The age of caricature: satirical prints in the reign of George III* (New Haven, 1996). Also see the prints reproduced in Hulst, *Print*; Griffiths, *Prints*; A. Hyatt Mayor, *Prints & people: a social history of printed pictures* (New York, 1971).

¹⁸² Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.166-189. John Brewer suggests that it was possible to buy paintings for less than £1 during the eighteenth century; however most of the poor would have still been unable to afford this. Many paintings over the eighteenth century were also only made because they were commissioned by rich patrons. Brewer, *Pleasures*, pp.204-205.

Table 4.13: Percentage of pauper inventories which record pictures, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Picture	Dorset (n=60)	3	5	3
	Kent (n=60)	5	18	10
	Norfolk (n=229)	1	5	2
	All (n=349)	2	9	3
Sample size	-	265	81	349

rent and goods-taken inventories also suggest that pictures may have rarely been owned by the poor, as they were recorded in only 2 per cent of these inventories.

It is possible that cheaper prints were more common than the inventories suggest as appraisers may have neglected to write them down.¹⁸³ Figure 4.8, for example, portrays a young servant maid who was distracted by a fortune-teller while ‘mischief’ surrounded her, including somebody stealing items from her cupboard and a cat taking a fish from her basket.¹⁸⁴ As well as showing a range of furniture and an expensive clock, the painting also shows a low-quality print next to the cupboard. Although it is not a decorative picture in the sense that it portrays a picturesque landscape or an historic battle, it is still placed on the wall to add a visual feature to the home and take attention away from the walls which have plaster peeling from them (also see figure 3.1). If the paupers from the inventories owned these types of prints, it is possible that appraisers may have neglected to write them down since they were worth very little, made on low-quality paper and ephemeral by nature.

The majority of people from the inventories who owned pictures tended to own multiple numbers of them, which may suggest that people bought pictures in sets rather than individually. This would have meant that the paupers were able to spread the pictures around the home and make different rooms and areas more decorative and visually appealing. Mrs Buckwell from Canterbury in Kent, for instance, owned 24 ‘prints’ spread across her garret, low room and chamber.¹⁸⁵ Some pictures could even be informative as

¹⁸³ On cheap prints, see: O’Connell, *Print*.

¹⁸⁴ David H. Solkin, *Painting out of the ordinary: modernity and the art of everyday life in early-nineteenth-century Britain* (New Haven, 2008), p.93.

¹⁸⁵ CCAL U3/100/11A/2.

Figure 4.8: Thomas Heaphy, 'Credulity', 1808



Source: BM, 1946,1012.1, Thomas Heaphy, 'Credulity', watercolour over graphite, 1808 [From: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/. Accessed 25/10/2015]. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Background: F. M. O'Donoghue described Heaphy's pictures as 'realistic representations' which 'were characterized by truthfulness'.¹⁸⁶ However, this picture clearly shows an exaggerated portrayal of how fortune-tellers used to distract people and steal things from them.¹⁸⁷ It is thus difficult to precisely determine the extent to which the domestic interior in the picture offers an accurate representation of similar contemporary dwellings.

¹⁸⁶ F. M. O'Donoghue, 'Heaphy, Thomas (1775–1835)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004) [From: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12820>. Accessed 01/11/2015].

¹⁸⁷ Solkin, *Painting*, pp.93-97.

well as decorative. Sam Skeer from Pluckey in Kent owned one 'Old Map' and the pauper inventory of Widow Doe taken in Wethersfield, Essex recorded '1 large picture of London'.¹⁸⁸ Isabella Brown, who used Fettes' pawnbroker's shop in York nearly 40 times between July 1777 and February 1778, pawned a small picture of a nun for 6d. on one occasion.¹⁸⁹ Unfortunately, most pauper inventories and other sources reveal little about the content of the imagery, but it is likely that they owned a mixture of relatively cheap and more valuable prints. Some pictures, for instance, were described as 'small' by the appraiser which may have meant that they were relatively cheap to acquire; whereas other pictures were found in frames which would have added value to them.¹⁹⁰

Timepieces

The history of time has attracted the attention of a number of scholars. Hans-Joachim Voth argued that more hours and more days were worked in England between 1750 and 1830.¹⁹¹ E. P. Thompson argued that there was a fundamental change in people's lives as work went from being task-orientated to being time-orientated in the new disciplinary factories of the industrial revolution.¹⁹² Recent research written after these three studies has convincingly shown that time awareness was not necessarily dependent upon owning a timepiece because public clocks were more widely spread and used than previously thought.¹⁹³ Yet despite this, Voth and Thompson's influential arguments were founded on the assumption that a wide spectrum of people, including the labouring poor, owned timepieces in high numbers by the late eighteenth century. Each, however, failed to offer convincing empirical evidence to support this. Voth, using estimates of timepiece production made by David Landes, estimates of industrial output by Nicholas Crafts and Knick Harley, estimates of how long watches lasted until they broke, and E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield's national population figures, made huge leaps to estimate that somewhere

¹⁸⁸ KHLCP289/18/2; ERO D/P 119/12/1 Weathersfield overseers' accounts, 1763-1806.

¹⁸⁹ YALH Accession 38; Backhouse, *Worm-eaten*, p.29.

¹⁹⁰ For instance, the pauper inventory of Mrs Dungay from Maidstone in Kent recorded '6 small pictures' and the pauper inventory of Michael Aggus from Redenhall in Norfolk contained 'Four Prints Glaz^d. & Framed'. KHLCP347/18/10; NRO PD 295/106.

¹⁹¹ Voth, *Time*.

¹⁹² E. P. Thompson, 'Time, work-discipline and industrial capitalism', *Past and Present*, 38 (1967), pp.56-97.

¹⁹³ Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift, *Shaping the day: a history of timekeeping in England and Wales 1300-1800* (Oxford, 2009); Bruno Blondé and Gerrit Verhoeven, 'Against the clock: time awareness in early modern Antwerp', *Continuity and Change*, 28:2 (2013), pp.213-244.

Table 4.14: Percentage of pauper inventories which record clocks, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Clock	Dorset (n=60)	0	9	3
	Kent (n=60)	11	50	25
	Norfolk (n=229)	0	11	2
	All (n=349)	2	21	6
Sample size	-	265	81	349

between 33 to 97 per cent of the adult population by 1831 owned watches.¹⁹⁴ Likewise, Thompson estimated that timepieces were owned by significant numbers of the labouring poor by the 1790s but offered little quantitative evidence to support this.¹⁹⁵ Most of what we empirically know about the poor's ownership of timepieces is based on London or the Home Counties, meaning that we know very little about how widespread timepiece ownership was elsewhere.¹⁹⁶ Considering the huge emphasis put onto watch and clock ownership by influential writers such as Voth and Thompson, and its connection to the emergence of a capitalist economy, this lack of literature on the poor's ownership of timepieces is particularly surprising.

Mechanical timepieces were used as early as the thirteenth century; however it was not until the 1650s that they became more accurate, affordable and accessible to people, following a number of technological breakthroughs in their manufacture and the growing numbers of clockmakers around the country.¹⁹⁷ Table 4.14 shows the percentage of pauper inventories which recorded clocks. The results suggest that, despite the burgeoning number of clocks from the mid-seventeenth century, many of the poor did not own domestic clocks and there were significant regional differences among those who did. Half of the Kent

¹⁹⁴ Voth, *Time*, pp.48-52.

¹⁹⁵ Thompson, 'Time', pp.69-70.

¹⁹⁶ King, 'Pauper inventories', esp. p.179; Helmreich, Hitchcock and Turkel, 'Rethinking', pp.14-15 and 18-21; Horrell, Humphries and Sneath, 'Conundrums', pp.845-847. An important exception to this is: Styles, *Dress*, pp.97-107; John Styles, 'Time piece: working men and watches', *History Today*, 58:1 (2008) which both use court records from the north and London to assess watch ownership.

¹⁹⁷ On the manufacture of timepieces, see: David S. Landes, *Revolution in time: clocks and the making of the modern world* (Cambridge, 1983), pp.83-360; R. W. Symonds, *A book of English clocks* (London, 2nd ed., 1950); Cecil Clutton and George Daniels, *Watches: a complete technical history and decorative development of the watch* (London, 2nd ed., 1971); Glennie and Thrift, *Shaping*, pp.29-42.

pauper inventories recorded clocks by the late eighteenth century, however in Dorset and Norfolk one tenth of inventories did. Peter King's research indicated that clocks/watches were owned by 38 per cent of paupers in Essex between 1770 and 1819 and John Styles' work suggests that watches were first adopted by plebeian men in London.¹⁹⁸ Collectively, this suggests that timepieces were chiefly owned by the labouring poor and paupers who lived in London or the Home Counties, whereas those who lived in more distant provincial areas owned timepieces in smaller numbers until a later date. Throughout the long eighteenth century the provincial clock-making industry grew in places such as Liverpool, Leicester and Bristol, however London remained at the centre. This meant that people who lived in or close to the capital had access to a greater number and selection of both affordable and expensive timepieces.¹⁹⁹ Moreover, with London and the Home Counties being at the centre of many contemporary fashions, people around the area would have been more likely to have followed trends and fashions to own timepieces. This also probably meant that there were more timepieces available to the poor through the second-hand market in these areas.

This research offers important findings regarding the poor's ownership of clocks; however the picture is much more complicated with watches. No pauper inventories from Dorset, Kent or Norfolk recorded watches, and only two pauper rent arrears inventories and two goods-taken inventories recorded them.²⁰⁰ Thus, the figures in table 4.14 are potentially misleading regarding the number of people who owned timepieces if watches were more common than clocks. Watches may have been classed as clothing by appraisers and omitted from the inventories as a result of this.²⁰¹ However, since watches were often very valuable possessions it stands to reason that appraisers would have recorded them if paupers owned them. Therefore, it is probable that they were either hidden from appraisers or were simply not owned by many paupers at the time an inventory was taken of their possessions. Although watches were pocket sized and therefore potentially very easy to conceal, most watches would have been attached to clothing using a chain or ribbon and so were still

¹⁹⁸ King, 'Pauper inventories', p.179; Styles, *Dress*, p.98. Also see: Helmreich, Hitchcock and Turkel, 'Rethinking', pp.14-15 and 18-21; Horrell, Humphries and Sneath, 'Conundrums', pp.845-847.

¹⁹⁹ Symonds, *Clocks*, pp.30-31 and 59-60; Thompson, 'Time', pp.65-66.

²⁰⁰ It is important to note that a watch was found in the pauper inventory of Richard Smith from Culcheth, Lancashire. LRO PR 2853/1/5 Culcheth overseers' accounts, 1818-1824.

²⁰¹ See chapter two.

visible to the appraiser.²⁰² Additionally, when people were at home their watches were sometimes hung on their bedsteads or chimneypieces and so would have been noticeable to the appraiser.²⁰³ Perhaps more importantly, watches were simply not owned by many paupers and so do not appear in the inventories. When people had a small amount of disposable income or had saved up their money, one of the first items that they purchased was often a watch.²⁰⁴ Watches were, however, also one of the first items that people would sell off during difficult times as they were valuable and could be used to quickly realise reasonably large sums of money to pay bills or purchase food. Beverly Lemire argued that the poor often acquired goods as 'stores of value... with a view to their possible liquidity in cash or credit' when times were tough. Watches were particularly useful for this purpose: Lemire argued that 'the sums received for the watches were striking, representing among the highest returns for goods pawned, from a low of 6s. to several pounds per watch'.²⁰⁵ Meanwhile, Thompson characterised watches as 'the poor man's bank' because they retained their value and could be easily sold when money was needed.²⁰⁶ The acquisition and sale of watches appears in the writings of the poor. In December 1824 Thomas Smith wrote to the overseer of Chelmsford in Essex to ask for relief. He said that he had 'been out of employ for about a month' and so had 'pledged what furniture we can possibly spare... [including] my own wearing apparell – all our Silver Spoons and my Watch'.²⁰⁷ Likewise, the vagrant Mary Saxby mentioned owning a watch but had to sell off her possessions twice: once when she was ill and another time after her husband died. Her watch was likely to have been one of the goods she sold.²⁰⁸ Although it is impossible to accurately quantify this, it is probable that a number of the paupers in the inventories, particularly from the mid- to late eighteenth century, owned a watch sometime before an inventory was made of their goods when they were healthier and had decent work, but had to part with them when times were tough and when they increasingly sought relief from the parish, as these examples indicate. It is possible that some people also sold off their clocks during difficult times; however, pawning records indicate that this happened much less frequently than

²⁰² Styles, *Dress*, pp.103-104.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.103.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.96-107; Styles, 'Time piece'; Thompson, 'Time', pp.69-70.

²⁰⁵ Lemire, *Business*, pp.70, 77 and 82-109.

²⁰⁶ Thompson, 'Time', p.70. Also see: Styles, *Dress*, p.107.

²⁰⁷ Sokoll, *Pauper letters*, p.196.

²⁰⁸ Saxby, *Memoirs*, pp.14-15, 26 and 51-52. Also see: King, 'Social inequality', pp.74-76.

with watches. In the pawnbroker's pledge book of Fettes, for example, 197 watches were pawned, yet between the same dates only three clocks were pledged.²⁰⁹ This was probably because most people pawned their goods with the intention of reclaiming their possessions and so it made sense for them to pawn something small like a watch rather than a clock, which would have been more difficult to carry back and forth from home and the pawnbroker's shop.

Owning a timepiece had practical advantages as it allowed people to tell the time without having to ask somebody else, without having to leave the house to look at a public clock and without having to wait to hear the chimes from the public clock. Perhaps more importantly, the pride, prestige and symbolic power of owning a timepiece may have been the greatest incentive to own one. People would save up and stretch themselves financially to purchase timepieces.²¹⁰ It stands to reason that people would not have done this unless it meant a lot to them. Timepieces were sometimes given to middling and elite people at important anniversaries and were passed down through families as heirlooms.²¹¹ There is scattered evidence which suggests that the poor sometimes did this. The pauper inventory of Widow Water from Otford, Kent recorded a clock and written next to the entry was: 'NB my Son Richard Wate[r]s is advanced One pound Eight Shillings for the said Clock'.²¹² This suggests that Richard was granted a loan or had given his own money to purchase the clock back and stop the parish from taking it. No other items in the pauper inventory were redeemed in such a way, suggesting that the clock had significant symbolic ties to the family for Richard to spend such a large amount of money to save it.

Most of the pauper inventories vaguely list a 'clock' and so it is not possible to determine what each clock was like. Some clocks were probably simple and uncased with only a clock face (see figure 4.7 for example). This, however, does not mean that they were primarily functional. By the eighteenth century dials were commonly applied to clocks and these could be quite attractive and add an aesthetic quality to the timepiece.²¹³ Other clocks listed in the pauper inventories clearly added a decorative quality to the home. Several

²⁰⁹ Backhouse, *Worm-eaten*, pp.77-81.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.96-107; Styles, 'Time piece'; Thompson, 'Time', pp.69-70.

²¹¹ For examples of this, see Glennie and Thrift, *Shaping*, p.191; A. F. J. Brown, *Essex people 1750-1900 from their diaries, memoirs and letters* (Chelmsford, 1972), p.130.

²¹² KHL C P279/8/2 Otford public vestry book, 1820-1838.

²¹³ Roe, *Furniture*, p.170.

pauper inventories described clocks with cases. These were probably self-standing clocks with wooden cases covering the mechanisms. Initially, these types of clocks were borne out of necessity to cover up the pendulum and mechanisms in the second half of the seventeenth century, however over time they became increasingly fashionable and allowed clockmakers to decorate and create a range of sought-after timepieces.²¹⁴ The average value of the clocks paupers owned was £1 7s. 6d., based on the values recorded in a number of different types of inventories made of pauper belongings. The mode was £1 10s. The most expensive clock was £2 10s. and the least expensive was 10s. 6d. Some inventories note 12- and 30-hour clocks, whereas others note eight-day clocks. The latter were worth more as they needed winding less often.²¹⁵ This suggests that paupers' clocks could vary in quality as well as value. As an alternative to a mechanical timepiece, people could also use sundials or hourglasses. No sundials were found in the sample, but hour glasses were sometimes noted in the inventories. Interestingly, the pauper inventories may indicate that hour glasses were slightly more common in Dorset and Norfolk than in Kent, where clocks were most common.²¹⁶ Using an hour glass would have been a much cheaper method of timing household activities than a mechanical clock.

Tobacco

Tobacco originated in the New World and was first brought to Europe in the sixteenth century.²¹⁷ It quickly spread and by the 1670s it was mass consumed by both the rich and poor in England, according to Carole Shammas and other writers.²¹⁸ We, however, know surprisingly little about how the poor consumed tobacco and the social and cultural implications of this.²¹⁹ For instance, did the poor consume tobacco at home or in public places? What tobacco paraphernalia did the poor use? Most probate inventories do not record the tobacco goods of the people captured in these sources.²²⁰ Likewise, only three

²¹⁴ Symonds, *Clocks*, pp.42-44, 52-54 and 64-67.

²¹⁵ Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth', p.235; Glennie and Thrift, *Shaping*, p.36.

²¹⁶ Hour glasses were recorded in 12 per cent, five per cent and two per cent of pauper inventories from Dorset, Norfolk and Kent respectively.

²¹⁷ Shammas, *Pre-industrial consumer*, pp.78-81; Jordan Goodman, *Tobacco in history: the cultures of dependence* (London, 1993), pp.59-89; F. W. Fairholt, *Tobacco: its history and associations* (London, 1859), pp.13-43; Smith, *Respectability*, p.161.

²¹⁸ Shammas, *Pre-industrial consumer*, pp.78-80; Stobart, *Sugar*, p.48; Ashworth, *Customs*, p.170.

²¹⁹ There are some recent and interesting exceptions to this, see: Pennell, 'Material culture in seventeenth-century "Britain"', pp.73-76; Owens et al., 'Fragments', pp.219-220.

²²⁰ Steer, *Inventories*, pp.48-49; Stobart, *Sugar*, p.250.

Table 4.15: Percentage of pauper inventories which record tobacco-related items, c.1679-1834²²¹

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Tobacco-related item	Dorset (n=60)	0	5	2
	Kent (n=60)	3	5	3
	Norfolk (n=229)	0	0	0
	All (n=349)	<1	2	1
Sample size	-	265	81	349

pauper inventories from the entire sample recorded tobacco-related items, such as tobacco pipes, tobacco boxes and snuff boxes (table 4.15). None of the 103 bastardy, debt, rent and goods-taken inventories of paupers' goods recorded tobacco-related items either. Consequently, the results from this section are tentative and rely heavily on secondary evidence and pictorial sources.

The fact that inventories rarely recorded tobacco-related items is interesting in itself. Tobacco pipes were very cheap goods, generally made out of clay. At wholesale value a dozen pipes were roughly worth one penny in total and each had a short life span of a matter of weeks. They were subsequently used as disposable items and were frequently replaced by their owners.²²² It is thus hardly surprising that inventories rarely recorded pipes, but that they are commonly found in archaeological digs.²²³ Moreover, much of the other tobacco-related paraphernalia that people owned was also ephemeral and worth little. In the pawnbroker's pledge book of Fettes, for example, only one tobacco-related item was found out of nearly 11,000 pledges.²²⁴ Two of the pauper inventories recorded tobacco tongs. These were also relatively cheap items but they were not as disposable as clay pipes. The detailed pauper inventory of William Lane from Buckland Newton in Dorset interestingly recorded '1. Tobacco Box with some Tobacco'.²²⁵ Tobacco boxes were

²²¹ Tobacco-related items include any goods which were related to tobacco consumption, including tobacco, tobacco pipes, tobacco boxes, tobacco tongs, snuff and snuff boxes.

²²² Pennell, 'Domestic consumption', pp.74-76; Goodman, *Tobacco*, pp.65-66; Fairholt, *Tobacco*, pp.160-216; Owens et al., 'Fragments', pp.219-220; Shammas, *Pre-industrial consumer*, p.187.

²²³ Owens et al., 'Fragments', p.219; Bedell, 'Archaeology', pp.240-241.

²²⁴ YALH Accession 38.

²²⁵ DHC PE-BCN/OV/3/2.

Figure 4.9: Henry Singleton, 'At the inn door', c.1790



Source: © V&A, 1834-1900 Henry Singleton, 'At the Inn Door', oil on canvas, c.1790 [From: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O77223/at-the-inn-door-oil-painting-singleton-henry/>. Accessed 10/06/2014].

Background: Henry Singleton was primarily a portrait painter. This genre scene was influenced by painters such as George Morland and Francis Wheatley and so may be viewed as representative of inn and alehouse culture, although this is difficult to prove.²²⁶

²²⁶ L. H. Cust and Robin Simon, 'Singleton, Henry (1766–1839)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2006) [From: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25642>. Accessed 10/04/2015]. Also see figure 3.2.

sometimes simple and cheap objects which habitually contained pipes and the tinder, flint and steel needed to light the tobacco. They could also be highly decorative and expensive items with huge symbolic value to their owner.²²⁷

Some historians have argued that tobacco consumption primarily happened in public and sociable environments such as taverns and coffee houses.²²⁸ This may be true, yet it would be unwise to suggest that the home consumption of tobacco was insignificant. Tobacco, after all, is addictive and so for many people it was both a domestic and public activity, even if the habit initially started with friends in the local tavern. Paintings from the eighteenth century commonly depict men smoking pipes in public places such as inns and taverns (figure 4.9), but also quite frequently show people enjoying a pipe in domestic settings (see figures 3.2-3 for instance).²²⁹ According to Jordan Goodman, people consumed tobacco in the eighteenth century to keep their bodies in order and that it was only in the nineteenth century that smoking became a recreational activity.²³⁰ Although these paintings are largely representations and not precise depictions of labouring life, the sheer quantity of similar paintings which show people smoking in domestic environments in a relaxing and recreational manner suggests that tobacco was another small domestic comfort that poor people could enjoy in the eighteenth century.

Warming pan

Warming pans are metal pans with a cover which are attached to long wooden handles (figure 4.10). The pans were filled with burning fuel such as coal, wood or peat and were then placed into beds to warm the sheets and reduce damp. Being more interested in the ownership of 'new' and more ostentatious items, historians have commonly neglected to study warming pans and so we know very little about who owned them and when. In spite of this, when writers do discuss warming pans the consensus appears to be that they were widely owned by the middling sort by the Jacobean era or earlier.²³¹ One could thus

²²⁷ Goodman, *Tobacco*, p.66; Fairholt, *Tobacco*, pp.225-231.

²²⁸ For example: Pennell, 'Domestic consumption', p.74; Shammas, *Pre-industrial consumer*, p.81; Richards, *Ceramics*, pp.135 and 143-144.

²²⁹ For another example, see: Thomas Gainsborough, 'Peasant smoking at a cottage door', 1788 [From: Barrell, *Dark side*, p.66].

²³⁰ Goodman, *Tobacco*, p.85.

²³¹ Emmison, *Inventories*, p.19; Gentle and Feild, *Brass*, p.177; Stephanie Appleton, 'Shakespeare's world in 100 objects: Number 54, a warming pan' (2012) [From: <http://findingshakespeare.co.uk/shakespeares-world-in-100-objects-number-54-a-warming-pan#sthash.WoVjmOlk.dpuf>. Accessed 04/03/2015]; V&A 1462-1870,

Figure 4.10: Brass warming pan with turned fruit wood handle, c.1700-1800



Source: Privately owned, Brass warming pan with turned fruit wood handle, c.1700-1800 [From: <http://www.denhams.com/auction-catalogue/antique/501/toys-carpets-memorabilia-militaria>. Accessed 11/03/2015]. Reproduced with permission of Denham Auctioneers.

argue that warming pans should not be studied in the luxury section of this thesis, as they were in fact common necessities. However, as table 4.16 indicates, warming pans were probably not ubiquitous among the poor as there appears to have been significant regional differences in pauper ownership of them. 60 per cent of pauper inventories from Kent recorded a warming pan, however in Dorset and Norfolk roughly a third of inventories recorded the same item. The picture becomes more complicated when the ownership of warming pans is assessed at rough twenty-year periods (table 4.17). The results suggest that increasing numbers of paupers owned warming pans between the late seventeenth and late eighteenth century, however from the 1790s the percentage of pauper inventories which

Warming pan, brass with a brass mounted iron handle, the lid perforated and engraved, c.17th century [From: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O77414>. Accessed 25/06/2013].

Table 4.16: Percentage of pauper inventories which record warming pans, c.1679-1834

		All years
Warming pan	Dorset (n=60)	27
	Kent (n=60)	60
	Norfolk (n=229)	34
	All (n=349)	37
Sample size	-	349

recorded warming pans significantly drops to 17-23 per cent. These results imply one or more of three things: that warming pans had started to go out of general use from the 1790s; that warming pans were starting to be superseded by alternatives such as ceramic hot water bottles and foot warmers;²³² or that warming pans continued to be owned by greater numbers of paupers in the nineteenth century, but were increasingly neglected by appraisers since they were no longer noteworthy possessions. Given the lack of literature on warming pans, it is unfortunately not possible to determine which picture was most accurate.

Owning a warming pan allowed people to improve their domestic comfort. It could even help people's health and welfare. As many pauper homes were probably badly insulated, the likelihood of damp was high and so warming pans allowed the user to sleep in a drier bed than they would otherwise have had.²³³ Moreover, because pauper homes often contained only one hearth and because hearths were not constantly lit,²³⁴ warming pans further helped people to keep warm. The majority of paupers owned only one warming pan. The pans tended to be made out of brass, which was gold coloured and often seen as decorative by contemporaries (see figure 4.7 and 4.10).²³⁵ Only one copper warming pan was found in the sample. Unfortunately, no inventories recorded the material of the

²³² Billy Murphy, 'The history of the hot water bottle: how a low-tech product remains relevant in a high tech world' (October, 2013) [From: <http://www.articlesfactory.com/articles/health/the-history-of-the-hot-water-bottle-how-a-low-tech-product-remains-relevant-in-a-high-tech-world.html>. Accessed 21/04/2015].

²³³ On the poor's housing, see: Broad, 'Housing', pp.151-170; and the various chapters in McEwan and Sharpe, *Accommodating*.

²³⁴ See chapter three for a discussion about the number of hearths that paupers had. Paul Warde interestingly suggests that the poor used their hearths infrequently or for only short periods of time. See: Warde, 'Woodland fuel', p.85.

²³⁵ Gentle and Feild, *Brass*, pp.1, 3 and 59-66.

Table 4.17: Percentage of pauper inventories which record warming pans in Dorset, Kent and Norfolk, c.1679-1834

	1670- 1709	1710- 1729	1730- 1749	1750- 1769	1770- 1789	1790- 1809	1810- 1834
Warming pan	30	32	41	43	52	17	23
Sample size	40	65	64	91	44	12	22

wooden handle. Cheaper and plainer warming pans were increasingly available over the eighteenth century and these would have offered paupers a more affordable warming pan.²³⁶ In 1823 John Turner was given a warming pan worth 1s. 6d. from the parish of Marlingford in Norfolk and the pauper inventory of Widow Cock, Great Moulton, Norfolk recorded a warming pan worth 1s. 6d. in 1738.²³⁷ Not all pauper warming pans, however, were cheap. In 1801 William Gooding was given a warming pan by Lenham parish in Kent worth 10s. 6d. and the pauper inventory of Widow Townsend of Great Moulton in Norfolk recorded a warming pan worth 5s.²³⁸

Window curtains

Most pauper homes would have probably had window shutters and/or glass in the windows; however none of the pauper inventories recorded these items as they were fixtures of the building and not moveable household objects.²³⁹ Window curtains, on the other hand, were moveable objects and so tended to be noted down by appraisers. They had both practical and decorative qualities. They helped to improve comfort by preventing draughts, softening outside light and noise, and maintaining privacy from on-looking passersby.²⁴⁰ Window curtains were often made in a range of colours and so could also be used to decorate the home and display taste to the outside world.²⁴¹

²³⁶ Wright, *Warm*, p.219; Rita Roberts, 'Keeping warm during the 17th-19th century' (2012) [From: <https://ritaroberts.wordpress.com/2012/08/11/keeping-warm-during-the-17th-19th-century/>. Accessed 04/03/2015].

²³⁷ NRO PD 404/54; NRO PD 489/29 Great Moulton, with Little Moulton overseers' accounts, 1695-1738.

²³⁸ KHL C P224/12/14 Lenham overseers' bills and vouchers, 1738-1829; NRO PD 489/29.

²³⁹ Although paintings are not fully accurate representations, glass and less often shutters were nearly always pictured in the windows of the poor's homes or buildings that they frequented such as alehouses. See: figures 3.1-3, 3.5, 3.9, 4.8 and 4.9.

²⁴⁰ Some academics such as Crowley have suggested that glazed windows became common by the late seventeenth century, when the window tax was introduced. Crowley, *Invention of comfort*, pp.66-68. Also see

Table 4.18: Percentage of pauper inventories which record window curtains, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Window curtains	Dorset (n=60)	0	0	0
	Kent (n=60)	0	23	8
	Norfolk (n=229)	2	0	2
	All (n=349)	2	6	3
Sample size	-	265	81	349

In some Victorian homes the poor used curtains to display their respectability to the outside world.²⁴² The results from the pauper inventories, however, suggest that these ideas were not prominent during the long eighteenth century as very few inventories recorded window curtains in Dorset and Norfolk (table 4.18). In Kent, on the other hand, window curtains appear to have been owned by around one in four paupers by the late eighteenth century. There are two potential reasons for this regional difference. Firstly, as I have argued throughout this thesis, people who lived around the capital and Home Counties appear to have been more susceptible to contemporary desires and fashions to own certain goods. The same appears to have been true of window curtains. Secondly, Mark Overton and his co-writers argued that window curtains were more common in the homes of the Kent middling sort than the Cornish middling sort as the average size and quality of people's homes in Kent was continually improving, whereas Cornish houses were 'small, dark and smoky places' meaning that there was little room to hang curtains.²⁴³ It may be that the dwellings of Kent paupers were also improving at a faster rate than the homes of the Dorset and Norfolk poor, resulting in greater numbers of Kent pauper inventories noting window curtains.

pp.36-44 and 62-69. It is, however, debateable whether they were ubiquitous among the very poorest, since they could be expensive to acquire and maintain.

²⁴¹ Hole, *Home-life*, pp.2-5; Eden, *State of the poor*, Vol. 1, p.78; Pounds, *Hearth*, pp.184-186; Fussell, *Labourer*, pp.50-51; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, p.113; Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.81-83; Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth', pp.275-278.

²⁴² Thompson, *Respectable society*, p.176.

²⁴³ Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, p.113.

Table 4.19: Percentage of pauper inventories which record gold or silver c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Gold and silver items	Dorset (n=60)	0	0	0
	Kent (n=60)	3	5	3
	Norfolk (n=229)	0	0	0
	All (n=349)	<1	1	1
Sample size	-	265	81	349

Gold and silver items

Over the long eighteenth century the ownership of gold and silver was relatively common among some of the middling sort and elite. Using a national sample of probate inventories, Weatherill found that 23 per cent of her sample between 1675 and 1725 recorded gold or silver items, and that around half or more of the gentry and many types of tradesmen owned goods made out of gold or silver.²⁴⁴ Likewise, David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby found that silver was recorded in 35-38 per cent of the Midlands probate inventories of spinsters and single women between 1775 and the first half of the nineteenth century.²⁴⁵ Pauper inventories, in contrast, rarely record gold or silver which may suggest that these items were generally not owned by paupers (table 4.19). When gold or silver was noted in the sample, they all came from Kent pauper inventories. One inventory was particularly notable. Widow Beal from Lenham owned ‘one Pap Spoon. Silver’, ‘one Pair of Sleeve Bottoms. Stone Set in Silver’ and ‘one Gold Ring’.²⁴⁶

Gold and silver were as desirable to the poor as they were for the wealthy. Rhoda Wretham from East Harling in Norfolk, for example, owned one ‘*Mock Silver Tea pot*’.²⁴⁷ If silver had not been a desirable material then Rhoda could have easily acquired an earthenware tea pot which would have cost much less.²⁴⁸ There is wider evidence to suggest that, despite the high costs of acquiring gold and silver, some poor people owned

²⁴⁴ Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.25 and 168.

²⁴⁵ Hussey and Ponsonby, *Single homemaker*, p.39.

²⁴⁶ KHLC P224/8/1.

²⁴⁷ NRO PD 219/114. My italics.

²⁴⁸ See for instance the research of Maxine Berg, who found that silver-plated and silver-imitation items were relatively expensive over the eighteenth century. Berg, *Luxury and pleasure*, pp.154-192.

objects made from these precious metals during periods in their lives when they were better off, healthy and had regular employment. However, in a similar manner to watches, people sold and pawned such goods to provide food and basic provisions prior to when an inventory was made of their possessions.²⁴⁹ The gold and silver items would have almost always been owned in small numbers and were generally rings or other small objects, rather than larger items such as silver ornaments. Two pauper letters written by William King mention a ring. In one letter he asked the overseer of Braintree, Essex for relief. He said that 'I Cannot Do without Soume Help. Every thing of My Wearing apparel and *Even* My wifes Ring is Put of [pawned] to Procure food'.²⁵⁰ In a similar manner, Samuel Balls wrote to the overseer of Colchester, Essex. He said that he 'had Pledged all our weairing Aparril and *Even* my wifes Ring being thus Destressed and No further Imploy to be had'.²⁵¹ Unfortunately the materials of the rings are unspecified in these letters, but it is probable that they were made out of gold.²⁵² Moreover, the fact that both writers stressed that '*Even*' their wives' rings had been pawned suggests that they were wedding rings and that they were relatively common objects, but should not be parted with.²⁵³ Perhaps then, gold and silver rings were more common than pauper inventories suggest, but tended not to be recorded by appraisers due to the huge symbolic, religious and emotional ties that they held for owners and families. Some parishes even purchased wedding rings on behalf of their parishioners to incentivise the marrying off of single female parishioners.²⁵⁴

Less often paupers owned household goods made out of gold or silver. There is no reason to think that an appraiser would deliberately have not recorded these items as they may have done with wedding rings. Thus, if they were still owned by paupers at the time an inventory was made of their possessions, it is likely that the appraiser would have written them down. Most people who owned these objects would have sold them off during difficult times to pay bills and provide basic provisions. Thomas Smith, for instance, wrote to

²⁴⁹ See above for the discussion on this.

²⁵⁰ Quoted from: Sokoll, *Pauper letters*, pp.121-122. My italics. For the second letter from William, see p.143.

²⁵¹ Ibid., p.299. My italics.

²⁵² The rings pawned to the pawnbroker Fettes, for instance, were nearly always made of gold. Less often they had stones in them or were made out of silver. YALH Accession 38. Also see: Danae Tankard, "'A pair of grass-green woollen stockings': The clothing of the rural poor in seventeenth-century Sussex", *Textile History*, 43:1 (2012), p.11.

²⁵³ For another example, see: King, Nutt and Tomkins, *Narratives* (London, 2006), p.281.

²⁵⁴ Steven King, 'Too poor to marry? "Inheritance", the poor and marriage/household formation in rural England 1800-1840s', in Anne-Lise Head-König (ed.), *Inheritance practices, marriage strategies and household formation in European rural societies* (Turnhout, 2012), p.134.

the overseer of Chelmsford in Essex in 1824 to ask for relief. He said he had 'pledged... all our Silver Spoons' as well as their clothing, furniture and a watch.²⁵⁵ In the pawnbroker's pledge book of Fettes dated 1777 to 1778, gold, silver and rings were the second most common types of items pledged by customers, numbering over 1000 pledges.²⁵⁶ Interestingly, items like silver spoons and silver cups were often inscribed with initials when they were pawned, which suggests that owners had sentimental ties to these objects as they also had to rings.²⁵⁷ A series of studies primarily based on Old Bailey papers has equally found that silver watches were the most common types of watches that labouring people owned.²⁵⁸ Some objects may have simply been missed by appraisers. Silver thimbles, for example, could be purchased for a shilling or less and may have been missed by appraisers since they were habitually carried around in pockets and not left in plain sight.²⁵⁹ Silver and gold items were thus probably more common than the pauper inventories suggest, however their ownership appears to have largely been restricted to small objects which were often only owned at more prosperous stages in the life-cycle.

Linguistic analysis and a new ratio-based analysis

Linguistic analysis assesses the adjectives used in inventories and other written documents to uncover the sizes, functions, colours, shapes, contents, conditions, ages and composition of items described in the documents.²⁶⁰ This form of analysis has been used throughout the thesis. For example, in chapter three it was found that painted and coloured furniture was more commonly noted by the appraisers after 1770, and that it was not unusual for appraisers to describe linen or cooking items as 'old'. This section differs by concentrating on the conditions and ages of *every* item described in the pauper inventories.

Linguistic analysis is dependent upon the level of detail and thoroughness of the appraiser in describing and distinguishing one item from another, such as an old oak box from a new blue box. As a result, the methodology is potentially flawed if appraisers' levels

²⁵⁵ Sokoll, *Pauper letters*, p.196.

²⁵⁶ Backhouse, *Worm-eaten*, pp.77-81.

²⁵⁷ YALH Accession 38. On people's sentimental ties to silver, see: MacArthur, 'Kinship', pp.128-131.

²⁵⁸ Styles, *Dress*, pp.98-99; Helmreich, Hitchcock and Turkel, 'Rethinking', pp.19-20; Horrell, Humphries and Sneath, 'Conundrums', pp.845-847. Also see above.

²⁵⁹ McKenney, 'Thimble', pp.1-23; YALH Accession 38.

²⁶⁰ For other studies which have used this methodology, see: Mary C. Beaudry, 'Words for things: linguistic analysis of probate inventories', in Mary C. Beaudry (ed.), *Documentary archaeology in the New World* (Cambridge, 1988), pp.43-50; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.114-116; Muldrew, *Food*, p.200. Also see: Evans, 'Enlivening', pp.49-54.

of detail differed between the regions. Unfortunately, this appears to have been true for Dorset. This was probably because paupers in Dorset tended to own fewer items (table 3.2) and had a smaller range of goods than paupers in Kent and Norfolk, meaning that appraisers did not need to be very descriptive and distinguish a number of similar items from another.²⁶¹ The methodology is also dependent on the subjective opinions of appraisers. Overseers, churchwardens and other parish officials who made the pauper inventories tended to own a greater range and quantity of goods than most middling people. Many even aspired to be more 'genteel' in their patterns of consumption, according to Henry French.²⁶² Consequently, their perception as to what was 'old', 'broken' and 'good' was probably very different to what paupers themselves thought. The use of adjectives such as 'good' and 'old' for particular items was also probably influenced by the wider domestic space. If an appraiser thought that every item in a pauper's home was 'old', for instance, would they have bothered noting this down for each of the goods? Or would they have just picked out the belongings that they thought were particularly 'old' or simply not used the word? Additionally, it is important to note that just because something was described as 'old' or 'broken', it does not necessarily mean that the item was worthless or had no utilitarian or sentimental value to their owners.²⁶³

The number of words that appraisers used to describe objects is potentially endless, meaning that it is very difficult to determine which terms are best to isolate and analyse. It can also be difficult to fully understand what the appraisers meant in some of their more qualitative and subjective descriptions of objects. For example, Widow Hill, living in Kenninghall almshouse in Norfolk, owned 'a *very meane* Bed'; Easter Turner from West Harling, Norfolk owned 'two *very ordenry*' shifts; and William Pocock from Penshurst in Kent owned 'One large *handsom* Trunk'.²⁶⁴ Moreover, using a quantitative methodology to analyse the words appraisers used removes the context and emotional milieu from which the items came from. Something that was described as 'very old' rather than just 'old', for

²⁶¹ Overton et al. similarly found that the Kent probate inventories were more detailed than those from Cornwall. Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.115 and 170-171.

²⁶² French, *Middle sort*, pp.141-200.

²⁶³ Sara Pennell, "'For a crack or flaw despis'd': thinking about ceramic durability and the "everyday" in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England', in Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (eds.), *Everyday objects: medieval and early modern material culture and its meanings* (Farnham, 2010), pp.31-39; Stobart and Rothery, 'Fashion, inheritance', pp.385-406. Also see the looking glass section above.

²⁶⁴ NRO PD 108/84; NRO PD 27/21 West Harling overseers' accounts, 1771-1828; KHLC P287/18/5. My italics.

Table 4.20: Percentage of pauper inventories which use certain adjectives to describe items, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
'Good'	Dorset (n=60)	0	0	2
	Kent (n=60)	11	0	7
	Norfolk (n=229)	1	3	1
	All (n=349)	1	1	2
'New'	Dorset	0	0	0
	Kent	3	0	2
	Norfolk	3	0	3
	All	3	0	2
'Bad'	Dorset	5	0	3
	Kent	0	0	0
	Norfolk	0	0	0
	All	1	0	1
'Broken'	Dorset	0	0	0
	Kent	0	0	0
	Norfolk	1	3	1
	All	<1	1	1
'Old'	Dorset	11	9	10
	Kent	21	45	30
	Norfolk	31	24	30
	All	27	26	26
Sample size	-	265	81	349

example, suggests a greater level of poverty than the latter. Equally, an 'old sheet' is a much greater indicator of poverty than an 'old clock', however this nuance is missed when the words are quantitatively analysed. Despite these shortfalls, this method of analysis is interesting as it helps us to understand how contemporaries perceived the material world and allows the historian to go beyond simply counting the items.

If pauper material lives were improving over the period, then one would expect the number of items to be described positively by the appraiser ('good' or 'new') to have increased and for the number of items to be described negatively ('bad', 'broken' or 'old') to have fallen. In contrast, the terms 'good' and 'new' were infrequently recorded in the pauper inventories and slightly less often after 1770 (table 4.20). This may suggest that appraisers increasingly saw pauper goods in less of a positive light over the period; however it is very difficult to determine the extent to which this is true. The datasets from Mary Beaudry, Muldrew and Overton et al.'s linguistic analyses all show that the adjective 'new' was more commonly used in probate inventories than pauper inventories, which may suggest that the label is reliable as it stands to reason that richer people would own more 'new' items than paupers.²⁶⁵ However, their data also suggests that the term 'new' was not commonly used across the board. In Muldrew's sample of labourers' probate inventories, for example, only four per cent of all of the inventories recorded 'new' items and there was no discernible pattern over time which indicated whether greater or fewer numbers of people owned 'new' goods.²⁶⁶ With appraisers appearing not to use the term very often, this may indicate that the adjective was not very common and is an unreliable indicator by which to measure material wealth.

The labels 'bad' and 'broken' similarly appear to have rarely been used by appraisers, which may indicate that they are also unreliable labels to use.²⁶⁷ The word 'old', on the other hand, was more commonly used throughout the period, and appears to have also been frequently used by the appraisers of probate inventories.²⁶⁸ This may mean that the label is a more reliable adjective in which to measure changes in material wealth; however one must be wary of this as the inconsistent results with items described as 'new', 'good', 'bad' and 'broken' may undermine how reliable the descriptor 'old' is. With this in mind, the results from the pauper inventories are tentative until further research is done to test the reliability of linguistic analyses. Table 4.20 suggests that paupers continued to own and accumulate old items over the period. This may indicate that the condition of some pauper

²⁶⁵ Beaudry, 'Words for things', p.46; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.114-115; Muldrew, *Food*, p.200.

²⁶⁶ Muldrew, *Food*, p.200.

²⁶⁷ Similarly Muldrew found that only two per cent of labourers' probate inventories had items described items as 'bad'. Muldrew, *Food*, p.200.

²⁶⁸ Beaudry, 'Words for things', p.46; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.114-115; Muldrew, *Food*, p.200.

Table 4.21: Ratios of items described as ‘old’ in pauper inventories, c.1679-1834

		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
‘Old’	Dorset (n=60)	1 in 295	1 in 98	1 in 161
	Kent (n=60)	1 in 31	1 in 62	1 in 44
	Norfolk (n=229)	1 in 41	1 in 63	1 in 45
	All (n=349)	1 in 43	1 in 66	1 in 50
Sample size	-	265	81	349

items was poor, despite paupers appearing to own a greater range of other goods over the period. With a larger abundance of goods and a greater awareness of fashion, items may have become more recognisable as ‘old’ to appraisers. To some appraisers the term ‘old’ may have also been used to indicate that an item was old-fashioned rather than old in age.

Unfortunately, there is one potential problem with this method of linguistic analysis which other writers have not recognised. Because the total number of goods that people owned appears to have increased over the period (table 3.2), it is probable that people would have been more likely to have owned a greater number of ‘old’ items by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Taking Kent as an example, table 4.20 suggests that the material lives of paupers in Kent may have been declining as there was an increase of 24 per cent in the incidence of ‘old’ items between the two periods. Whereas in fact, because Kent paupers from the sample owned on average more than double the quantity of goods after 1770 than they did before this date (table 3.2), the likelihood that they owned ‘old’ items may have increased. Thus, using percentages in linguistic analysis can mask and distort the actual nature of material culture.

By dividing the total number of goods in every pauper inventory by the total number of times that the word ‘old’ was used, it is possible to uncover the ratio of items which were seen as ‘old’ by appraisers and whether people owned relatively more or fewer ‘old’ items over the period.²⁶⁹ This methodology has not been used by other writers. The results from table 4.21 suggest that from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, people gradually owned relatively fewer ‘old’ items over the period. In Kent, one in 31 items was

²⁶⁹ Unfortunately, because the descriptors ‘new’, ‘good’, ‘bad’ and ‘broken’ were infrequently used by appraisers, this methodology cannot be used with these terms.

described as 'old' between c.1679 and 1769, but between 1770 and 1834 one in 62 items was described as 'old'. Likewise, between the same dates one in 41 items was described as 'old' in Norfolk in the first period and one in 63 items was described as 'old' in the later period. Unfortunately, as I noted above the pauper inventories from Dorset are less descriptive than those from Kent and Norfolk, meaning that the results from this county are too flawed to warrant any statistical meaning. Despite this, the results from Kent and Norfolk are lucid and appear to suggest that 'old' items became relatively less common over the long eighteenth century.

The reason for the apparent decline in 'old' items from the 1770s may stem from contemporaries using the term less often or differently to people of the early eighteenth century. I have, however, found little primary or secondary evidence to support this, meaning that it is possible that there was a shift in people's material culture, in which the utility and longevity of products was seen as less important compared to cheaper and less durable goods, which were more fashion sensitive and subject to be traded as tastes changed.²⁷⁰ In other words, people may not have kept items long enough for them to have become 'old' and have swapped them when they did, for newer and perhaps more fashionable goods by the later period. As the section above on tableware indicated, for example, there was a long-term move from hard-wearing goods such as pewter and wood to less durable but more fashion-sensitive materials such as earthenware. There is one potential problem with this assumption. As the analysis above on the ownership of gold, silver and timepieces has indicated, it was common for poor people to sell their possessions to make ends meet, and so one would expect paupers to have had less ability to replace their goods in accordance to fashions or when items became old.

To test the plausibility of this supposition, I have made table 4.22 which records the ratios of goods that were described as 'old' in the pauper inventories. In one column there are inventories which were written at the same time as when the person started receiving poor relief and in the second column there are inventories which were made after the person had received poor relief for a period of time.²⁷¹ The table is based on the assumption

²⁷⁰ de Vries, *Industrious revolution*, pp.129-133; Stobart, 'Gentlemen and shopkeepers', pp.895-897.

²⁷¹ This period of time is defined as two months or more. The majority of people in this category, however, had been on poor relief for several years before a pauper inventory was made of their possessions.

Table 4.22: Ratios of items described as ‘old’ in the pauper inventories at different points in the life-cycle in Kent and Norfolk, c.1679-1834

	Pauper inventories made at the moment that people <i>started</i> poor relief			Pauper inventories made of people who were <i>already</i> on poor relief		
	c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years	c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All years
Ratio	1 in 80	1 in 95	1 in 86	1 in 30	1 in 74	1 in 40
Sample size	49	15	64	97	28	125

that before people received poor relief and before an inventory was made of their possessions, they had a greater ability to change and replace goods as they became old and unfashionable, compared to paupers who had been on poor relief for an extended period of time. Although the sample size for 1770-c.1834 is relatively small, the results suggest that people who had recently turned to poor relief tended to own fewer ‘old’ items than those who had been on poor relief for longer periods of time. Thus, people who were new to poor relief may have recently had a greater ability to change goods before a pauper inventory was made of their belongings, whereas some of those who had been on relief for longer periods of time did not have the means to change goods as freely when they became old and worn. This is not to say that people were not necessarily struggling before they turned to poor relief, however it stands to reason that most individuals who had been on relief for many years had struggled for much longer than those who had recently turned to it. Collectively, this linguistic analysis adds another dimension to the analyses of chapters three and four, by suggesting that the condition of pauper goods improved over the period, as well as the range, number and value of their goods.

Conclusion

The results from chapters three and four have indicated that paupers from each of the counties became materially richer over the long eighteenth century, following their increased ownership of a wide range of goods such as furniture, hearth items, tableware and luxury goods. These changes appear to have often led to considerable and significant alterations in people’s domestic culture and everyday lives. Some paupers probably only experienced relatively modest changes, such as acquiring bellows, candlesticks, chairs and

earthenware; yet these goods still signified an important shift in material culture in which homes became more comfortable, convenient and decorated. This increased consumption, however, appears not to have been equal and uniform. It was probably not until the late eighteenth century that significant numbers of paupers owned these goods. Before then most paupers only owned basic possessions that were needed to manage the home. Moreover, there appear to have been distinct regional differences as these items were generally owned in greater numbers by the poor who lived in Kent and other Home Counties. The poor in Norfolk appear to have owned some possessions such as chests of drawers and bed hangings in much greater frequencies than paupers in Dorset; however the poor in neither county appear to have reached levels of material wealth comparable to those of the poor in the Home Counties.

Paupers from Kent probably had greater levels of material wealth than their peers who lived elsewhere for multifaceted reasons which could vary considerably from one item to another. One key factor that appears to have influenced all pauper consumption was, however, location.²⁷² Kent was well connected to London, where most fashions first arose and where many of these goods were produced, meaning that the desire and ability to consume goods was greater in Kent than elsewhere. Many imported commodities such as tea also went through London at a wholesale level before it was distributed to suppliers elsewhere. The county had a large agricultural economy, yet also boasted a number of wealthy and commercial urban centres which collectively contained a greater number and variety of retail outlets than those in Dorset and Norfolk. Urban and rural areas in the county were also generally better connected and more integrated than elsewhere. Overall, this meant that many 'new' and existing goods were probably consumed by the Kent middling sort and poor before much of the rest of the country. Norfolk and Dorset, on the other hand, have often been characterised as poverty-stricken counties by historians, due to the low wages of the labouring population there.²⁷³ Both counties were largely agricultural, but Norfolk appears to have generally been more prosperous and commercial than Dorset in several key respects. Norfolk contained a greater number of retail outlets than Dorset and also contained a number of significant urban centres such as Norwich and Yarmouth. The

²⁷² For further information on these counties see chapter two.

²⁷³ See for instance: Snell, *Annals*, pp.375-376 and 411-417; Snell, *Parish and belonging*, p.191; Shave, 'Dependent poor', p.73.

Norfolk population were also better connected to a range of other important areas, such as the north east, the northern Home Counties and London via water and roads throughout much of the eighteenth century. This helped to ensure that markets in Norfolk received many goods before Dorset and that the fashions and social rituals behind the spread of various goods reached Norfolk first. It is likely to have also meant that many goods could be transported to Norfolk at a lower cost than Dorset. It was not until the late eighteenth century when Dorset had become better connected to other commercial areas such as Bristol that people appear to have increasingly consumed a greater range and number of goods.

Chapter 5: Gender and urban-rural differences

Having assessed the material lives of the poor in chapters three and four, this chapter examines the influence that gender and urban-rural differences had on consumer behaviour in Dorset, Kent and Norfolk to gain a more nuanced view of pauper lives. Gender is discussed first and then urban-rural differences are examined. The results from the pauper inventories suggest that some women and some paupers who lived in urban areas owned greater numbers of luxury and decorative goods than men and people who lived in rural areas respectively. Both sections, however, emphasise that it is important not to exaggerate the effects that gender and urban-rural differences had on consumer behaviour, since ownership of a wide range and variety of goods regardless of gender or location can still be found despite these general patterns. Moreover, with some types of items there appears to have been few differences between men and women or people who lived in urban and rural areas. The results from the pauper inventories, for example, suggest that most types of furniture were just as common in rural areas as they were in towns.

Gender

Many contemporary commentators and historians have placed women at the centre of consumption. When Neil McKendrick claimed that the late eighteenth century witnessed a 'consumer revolution', he argued that women's contribution to the household economy and their desire to emulate their social superiors was fundamental to this. McKendrick's interpretation drew upon a number of contemporary commentators such as Jonas Hanway and Bernard Mandeville who claimed that women had insatiable desires to consume, keep up with fashion and emulate the rich.¹ These desires could ultimately lead to the ruin of the family. In 1732 for instance, Mandeville claimed that the 'poorest Labourer's Wife in the Parish, who scorns to wear a strong wholesom Frize... will half starve her self and her Husband to purchase a second-hand Gown and Petticoat... because, forsooth, it is more genteel'.² Subsequent studies on gender and consumption have since toned down these

¹ McKendrick, 'Consumer revolution', pp.9-33; McKendrick, 'Home demand', pp.152-210. Also see: Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming*; Marjo Kaartinen, Anne Montenach and Deborah Simonton, 'Luxury, gender and the urban experience', in Deborah Simonton, Marjo Kaartinen and Anne Montenach (eds.), *Luxury and gender in European towns, 1700-1914* (New York, 2015), pp.1-15.

² Mandeville, *Fable*, p.132.

arguments,³ yet historians are still trying to understand the extent to which the act of consuming and buying various goods followed gender-defined lines or whether status, location, wealth and other factors were more important.

The vast majority of studies on gender and consumption since McKendrick have examined the material lives of the middling sort or elite using case studies. Consequently, we have a detailed understanding of how wealthy individuals such as Alice Le Strange, Judith Baker, Mary Leigh and Elizabeth Shackleton from the gentry saw, used and perceived their material world and how complex consumer behaviour could be.⁴ In some of these households, for example, women were responsible for making mundane and repetitive purchases such as food, whereas in other homes men took a more active role in this. Likewise, in regards to furniture and luxury items some studies have suggested that men made most of these purchases and others have suggested that women predominantly bought these items.⁵

Our knowledge of the poor is also limited due to a lack of research in this area. The research of historians such as Beverly Lemire, John Styles and others on clothing is an important exception to this. This literature has found that men and women, in both obvious and more subtle manners, owned different types of clothing to one another and were both interested in fashion and appearance. Both genders also used a number of different formal

³ See for instance: Brewer, 'Error'; Vickery, 'Women', pp.274-301.

⁴ Whittle and Griffiths, *Consumption & gender*; Helen Berry, 'Prudent luxury: the metropolitan tastes of Judith Baker, Durham gentlewoman', in Rosemary Sweet and Penelope Lane (eds.), *Women and urban life in eighteenth-century England 'on the town'* (Aldershot, 2003), pp.131-155; Jon Stobart, 'Status, gender', pp.82-103; Jon Stobart and Mark Rothery, 'Men, women and the supply of luxury goods in eighteenth-century England: the purchasing patterns of Edward and Mary Leigh', in Simonton, Kaartinen and Montenach, *Luxury and gender*, pp.97-114; Vickery, 'Women', pp.274-301; Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*.

⁵ Margot Finn, 'Men's things: masculine possession in the consumer revolution', *Social History*, 25:2 (2000), pp.133-155; Margot Finn, 'Women, consumption and coverture in England, c.1760-1860', *Historical Journal*, 39:3 (1996), pp.703-722; David Hussey, 'Guns, horses and stylish waistcoats? Male consumer activity and domestic shipping in late-eighteenth- and early- nineteenth-century England', in Hussey and Ponsonby, *Buying*, pp.47-69; Lemire, *Business*, pp.187-226; Vickery, *Behind*; Claire Walsh, 'Shopping at first hand? Mistresses, servants and shopping for the household in early modern-England', in Hussey and Ponsonby, *Buying*, pp.13-26 and Claire Walsh, 'Shops, shopping, and the art of decision making in eighteenth-century England', in Styles and Vickery, *Gender, taste*, pp.151-177; Shepard, *Accounting for oneself*; Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough (eds.), *The sex of things: gender and consumption in historical perspective* (Berkeley, 1996); Karen Harvey, *The little republic: masculinity and domestic authority in eighteenth-century Britain* (Oxford, 2012), esp. pp.82-86 and 99-133; Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of manhood in early modern England* (Oxford, 2003); Tammy C. Whitlock, *Crime, gender and consumer culture in nineteenth-century England* (Aldershot, 2005). Also see the note above.

and informal networks to acquire these goods over the long eighteenth century.⁶ With regard to household items, however, the literature is almost absent. We know from a small volume of studies that overall the poor became materially richer and that their household possessions changed over the period,⁷ yet we know very little about how this differed by gender.

The pauper inventories have been divided by gender to determine whether consumption differed between men and women. Six of the inventories have been omitted as it was not possible to discern whether they were made of a man or woman's belongings, leaving a sample of 343 inventories. Between c.1679 and 1769 around three-fifths of the pauper inventories were made of women's belongings and two-fifths were of men's goods; however after 1770 this trend was reversed as two-fifths of the inventories were made of women's property and three-fifths men's possessions.⁸ It is important to note that because the pauper inventories have been divided by gender, the sample is relatively small for 1770 onwards (49 male-headed and 31 female-headed inventories) and the data therefore more tentative.⁹ At least 79 per cent of the women in the sample were widows or spinsters when the inventory was made of their belongings. Around 3 per cent were married and it is likely that the remaining 18 per cent of women were widows and spinsters although their status is not recorded. The majority of pauper inventories made of married couples' belongings were in the husbands' name. The 3 per cent of married women only had pauper inventories made in their names because their husbands were living away from home in a poorhouse or lunatic asylum. Unfortunately, I was only able to determine the marital status of 47 per cent of the males in the sample, since parish officials tended not to describe men in this way. Nonetheless, of these around 19 per cent were widowers or bachelors and 81 per cent were married.

This analysis of the pauper inventories is based on the assumption that consumption was influenced by gender if one sex owned more of certain goods than the other. Of course, this is potentially a very problematic supposition. The wives of the married men might have

⁶ Lemire, *Fashion's favourite*; Lemire, *Dress, culture*, pp.43-74 and 95-146; Lemire, *Business*; Styles, *Dress*; Toplis, *Clothing trade*; Toplis, 'Stolen garment', pp.141-144; Penelope Byrde, *The male image: men's fashion in Britain 1300-1970* (London, 1979); Jennie Batchelor, *Dress, distress and desire: clothing and the female body in eighteenth-century literature* (Basingstoke, 2005).

⁷ See chapter one.

⁸ The reasons for this are explored in chapter two.

⁹ See chapter two for further discussion about sample size issues.

made all of the decisions on what to buy and the widowed women in the sample may have continued to have owned their deceased husbands' goods rather than part with them. There is no way around these problems, but similar analyses by Lorna Weatherill using probate inventories and Maxine Berg using wills has nevertheless revealed interesting gendered trends, despite being subject to the same criticism.¹⁰ Moreover, most of the women in the sample had been widowed for a number of years and only around 8 per cent of them had lost their husbands a year or less before the inventory was made of their belongings. This figure is an underrepresentation,¹¹ but does suggest that most women in the sample had been widowed for long enough to have exerted their sole influence on what items to keep and buy and how to use these goods.

Several studies have used qualitative sources such as diaries, letters and wills to argue that women had a greater emotional attachment to their possessions than men.¹² This form of analysis is not possible here as few of these types of sources relate to the poor. The main focus is thus to use pauper inventories to examine whether consumption was gendered and to infer from the results how men and women may have used their goods. Due to spatial constraints, this section will only examine items which were typically seen as gendered by contemporaries and scholars. The majority of the literature concentrates on women and so I would have liked to have assessed goods such as coffee, tobacco and guns which tended to be linked to men by contemporaries, as well as items such as tea and decorative luxury items which were generally linked to contemporary ideas of 'femininity'.¹³ However, because these 'masculine' belongings are rarely recorded in the inventories, this section concentrates on items which contemporaries closely tied to women.

¹⁰ Lorna Weatherill, 'A possession of one's own: women and consumer behaviour in England, 1660-1740', *Journal of British Studies*, 25:2 (1986), pp.131-156; Berg, 'Women's consumption', pp.415-434.

¹¹ This figure is an underrepresentation because it was not always possible to track people's relief patterns over a long period of time.

¹² See for example: Berg, 'Women's consumption', pp.415-434; Vickery, 'Women', pp.274-301; Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*; Finn, 'Men's things', pp.133-155.

¹³ For exceptions to this in the secondary literature, see: Finn, 'Men's things', pp.133-155; Hussey, 'Guns', pp.47-69; Stobart and Rothery, 'Men, women', pp.97-114; Harvey, *Little republic*; Shepard, *Manhood*. Coffee and tobacco is discussed in chapter four. Guns were only found in three pauper inventories.

Tea

Tea has commonly been portrayed as a feminine commodity due to the connection that it had to the 'private' sphere, feminine sociability, respectability and civility.¹⁴ A key component of each of these concepts was that tea was taken by middling women in the domestic space using a large range of tea items. Groups of women would gather around the tea table, make polite conversation and conform to the unwritten rules regarding how one should present oneself.¹⁵ To many contemporary minds, tea drinking had a positive impact on the lives of middling and elite women as it was healthy and promoted civility and sobriety.¹⁶ In regards to the poor, however, contemporaries often portrayed the poor's drinking of tea in a very negative manner.¹⁷ Gender was at the centre of these views. Women were portrayed as trying to copy their social superiors, often to the detriment of their bodies, husbands and children. In 1745 Simon Mason argued that:

Tea in an Afternoon... is an Expence they cannot afford... I beg the Women's Pardon, for, amongst the lower Set, the Men are excluded to partake, if at Home... Wives are regaling with their Tea... These poor Creatures, to be fashionable and imitate their Superiors, are neglecting their Spinning, Knitting, &c. spending what their Husbands are labouring hard for; their Children are in Rags, gnawing a brown Crust, while these Gossips are canvassing over the Affairs of the whole Town, making free with the good Name and Reputation of their Superiors... And by these Meetings much Gossiping, Lying, Backbiting, is broached and carried on, and proves often destructive to others more sober and industrious.¹⁸

Just over a decade after this, Hanway in 'An essay on tea' took these arguments further and claimed that drinking tea adversely affected mothers' and wet nurses' milk, harming the

¹⁴ On these concepts, see: Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family fortunes: men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850* (Abingdon, 2nd ed., 2002); Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English society 1650-1850: the emergence of separate spheres?* (Harlow, 1998); Amanda Vickery, 'Golden age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronologies of English women's history', *Historical Journal*, 36:2 (1993), pp.383-414; Vickery, 'Women', pp.274-301; Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*; Harvey, *Little republic*; Karen Harvey, 'Barbarity in a teacup? Punch, domesticity and gender in the eighteenth century', *Journal of Design History*, 21:3 (2008), pp.205-221; Smith, *Respectability*.

¹⁵ Smith, *Respectability*, esp. pp.121-131 and 171-181; Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming*, pp.19-36; Berg, *Luxury and pleasure*, pp.229-232; Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.158-159; Emerson, *Teapots*, pp.13-27; Smith, 'Coffeehouse', pp.148-164; Stobart, *Sugar*, pp.242-257; Vickery, *Behind*, pp.271-276.

¹⁶ Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming*, pp.19-36.

¹⁷ On these, see: *ibid.*, pp.31-36; White, 'Luxury and labour', pp.278-282. There are of course exceptions. John Scott, for instance, argued that tea offered labouring people a rest from work and that it was a civilising alternative to alcohol: Scott, *Observations* pp.56-57.

¹⁸ Simon Mason, *The good and bad effects of tea consider'd* (London, 1745), pp.41-42.

young and creating a future weak military in the process.¹⁹ Meanwhile husbands were apparently becoming increasingly emasculated as their wives wasted household resources on tea and used speech, in which they were well versed from idle chat at the tea table, to tame and manipulate their partners.²⁰ These views were both exaggerated and contradictory in numerous ways. Despite this, the important point to take from them is that tea and the ritualistic drinking of it was seen as gendered among both the rich and poor in the minds of contemporaries.²¹ The extent to which the poor conformed to the same middling and elite hand gestures, behaviours and modes of speech at the tea table is difficult to determine using inventories.²² However, as chapter four indicated, some paupers were probably involved in some form of ritualised drinking of tea. Some paupers, for instance, owned a large range of tea paraphernalia such as tea tables, tea spoons and tea caddies. Other paupers only owned a few tea items but could still drink tea using some ritual and habit, such as sitting by the fireplace having dinner. This section will take these findings further and uncover the extent to which poor men and women drank tea in different manners to one another.

Weatherill's research on probate inventories suggested that there were no differences between men and women in their ownership of hot drinks utensils.²³ Her data, however, only covered 1675 to 1725 and so missed the following decades when tea was mass consumed among the rich and poor and when tea was increasingly tied to cultural practices such as feminine sociability. Table 5.1 records the tea-related items that men and women were recorded as owning in the pauper inventories. The table omits inventories dated before 1770 since few paupers owned tea items then (see chapter 4). In contrast to the results found by Weatherill, these figures suggest that the drinking of tea was more closely tied with women than it was men. Although the size of the sample is small and the results are consequently tentative, women in all three counties appear to have been more likely to own tea items compared to men. In Kent, for instance, 27 per cent more women than men owned tea items. Most interestingly, the largest difference between men and

¹⁹ Jonas Hanway, 'An essay on tea', in Jonas Hanway, *A journal of eight days journey* (London, 1756), pp.203-361.

²⁰ Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming*, pp.19-36; Mason, *Tea*; Hanway, 'Tea'.

²¹ Rituals are defined as the repetitive ways in which certain practices such as eating or drinking were often done.

²² Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming*, pp.19-36.

²³ Weatherill, 'Possession', pp.138-140.

Table 5.1: Percentage of pauper inventories which record tea-related items and average number of items per pauper inventory divided by gender, c.1770-1834²⁴

		Men		Women	
		Average no.	%	Average no.	%
Tea item (any type)	Dorset (n=22)	2.1	56	1.5	67
	Kent (n=22)	3.6	62	5.9	89
	Norfolk (n=36)	2.2	60	1.9	75
	All (n=80)	2.6	59	3.2	77
Tea kettle	Dorset	1.1	56	1	50
	Kent	1	46	1	44
	Norfolk	1.1	45	1.1	69
	All	1.1	50	1.1	58
Tea pot	Dorset	1*	6	1	33
	Kent	1.7	54	3.3	44
	Norfolk	2.7	15	1.7	19
	All	1.9	22	2.2	29
Tea paraphernalia (any type)	Dorset	2.7	19	1*	17
	Kent	8.5	15	5	67
	Norfolk	1.8	25	1.2	31
	All	3.4	20	3.1	39
Sample size	-	49		31	

* - Only one pauper inventory

women appears to have come in Kent with the ownership of tea paraphernalia, such as tea tables, tea caddies and tea spoons. Over four times as many women in Kent were recorded as owning these goods compared to men. In Dorset and Norfolk, however, the difference is negligible according to the pauper inventories. Approximately the same number of men and

²⁴ Tea-related items include any goods which were related to tea drinking, including tea kettles, tea pots, tea tables, tea caddies, tea chests, tea cups and saucers, tea trays, tea boards, tea canisters, tea waiters and tea spoons.

women in Dorset owned tea paraphernalia and in Norfolk only 6 per cent more women owned some.

These broad findings suggest that tea drinking was more commonly associated with women than men; however it is important not to overstate this. Though smaller numbers of male-headed households appear to have contained tea goods than female-headed households, tea goods nonetheless still appear to have been relatively common in households headed by men, suggesting that tea drinking was common across both sexes.²⁵ Moreover, the practice of drinking tea using tea paraphernalia such as tea tables and tea caddies was not just something that predominantly happened in female-headed households, as stereotypical contemporary representations of the eighteenth century suggest.²⁶ Of course, these tea goods may have been owned by wives, yet the results suggest that in Dorset and Norfolk men and women were just as likely to own tea paraphernalia. It was only in Kent where the sample indicates that there may have been clear gendered differences in the ownership of tea paraphernalia. This trend may stem from Kent's proximity to London, where tea was received into the country in high volumes and where new trends, fashions and behaviours connected to tea consumption such as feminine sociability were often most prevalent.²⁷

Luxury goods

Eighteenth-century contemporaries perceived women as less rational than men, having little control over their innate desires to buy luxuries and other fashionable items.²⁸ Recent historical work has demonstrated that these contemporary ideas are misleading as men too bought luxury goods and gained much enjoyment from doing so.²⁹ Yet in spite of this, the literature has revealed that there were a number of subtle gendered differences between men and women in the goods that they owned and how they perceived them. For example, Berg found that eighteenth-century middling women had considerable emotional attachments to their possessions, as they described their goods in greater detail and

²⁵ Other writers have found the same. See: Hussey and Ponsonby, *Single homemaker*, pp.125-127; Stobart, *Sugar*, pp.196-198.

²⁶ See for example: Vickery, *Behind*, pp.271-276.

²⁷ On the influence of London, see: Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.43-69; Wrigley, 'London's importance', pp.44-70; Fisher, 'London', pp.205-215; Orlin, *Material London*. Also see chapters 3-4.

²⁸ Styles and Vickery, 'Introduction', in Styles and Vickery, *Gender, taste*, pp.2-14; Kowalski-Wallace, *Consuming*. Also see the luxury goods section in chapter five.

²⁹ Finn, 'Men's things', pp.133-155; Hussey, 'Guns', pp.47-69.

bequeathed larger numbers of household goods in their wills than men did.³⁰ Using probate inventories from 1675 to 1725, Weatherill did not find stark differences between men and women, yet found that slightly higher numbers of women owned decorative and luxury goods than men.³¹ David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby compared the probate inventories of husbands to their widows to examine how the domestic environment changed when the wife became the head of household. They too found 'subtly different forms of gendered ownership' like Weatherill, suggesting that widowed women owned greater numbers of luxury and decorative goods than when their husbands were alive. Their homes also became increasingly geared towards domestic comfort and less towards work.³² This section will now assess whether pauperised men and women owned different numbers of luxury and decorative goods to one another and whether the results can be taken to imply that women had a greater desire to make their homes more comfortable and decorative than men.

There appears to be relatively few differences between men and women in most of the luxury goods that they owned before 1770 (table 5.2). This is unsurprising since the ownership of most types of luxuries was relatively low before this date.³³ Looking glasses appear to be a notable exception to this as more male-headed pauper inventories recorded mirrors than female-headed households between c.1679 and 1769. Perhaps this was because men needed a looking glass to shave. Many of the men in the sample, however, had wives and so the looking glasses could have primarily been used by women. In either instance, by the later eighteenth century similar numbers of women appear to have owned looking glasses to men in Dorset and Kent. In Norfolk 20 per cent more women owned looking glasses compared to men. Moreover, after 1770 women appear to have been slightly more likely to own multiple numbers of looking glasses than men and owned more decorative and distinctive looking glasses such as pier glasses and swing glasses. Though the sample is small, this suggests that looking glasses were important comforts to both men and women by the later eighteenth century.

Though there are exceptions, the figures suggest that the material lives of both poor men and women improved over the period. In Dorset and Norfolk, men and women lived

³⁰ Berg, 'Women's consumption', pp.415-434.

³¹ Weatherill, 'Possession', pp.131-156.

³² Hussey and Ponsonby, *Single homemaker*, pp.44-51. Also see pp.53-106 on work and living in the home.

³³ See chapter 4.

Table 5.2: Percentage of pauper inventories which record luxury items divided by gender, c.1679-1834

		Men			Women		
		c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All	c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All
Book	Dorset (n=60)	13	13	13	0	17	3
	Kent (n=60)	0	0	0	5	44	17
	Norfolk (n=223)	4	0	3	4	0	3
	All (n=343)	4	4	4	3	16	5
Clock	Dorset	0	13	8	0	0	0
	Kent	18	38	27	5	67	23
	Norfolk	0	15	3	0	6	1
	All	3	20	9	1	23	4
Gold or silver	Dorset	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Kent	0	0	0	5	11	7
	Norfolk	0	0	0	0	0	0
	All	0	0	0	1	3	2
Looking glass	Dorset	50	31	38	7	33	11
	Kent	24	46	33	5	44	17
	Norfolk	18	30	21	11	50	15
	All	22	35	26	9	45	15
Picture	Dorset	0	6	4	3	0	3
	Kent	6	15	10	5	22	10
	Norfolk	1	5	2	1	6	2
	All	2	8	4	2	10	3
Mahogany	Dorset	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Kent	0	0	0	0	22	7
	Norfolk	0	5	1	0	6	1
	All	0	2	1	0	10	2
Sample size		97	49	146	164	31	197

relatively similar material lives to one another and neither gender appears to have been more likely to have owned luxury goods than the other. It was only in the ownership of clocks that men outnumbered women, but the figures are too small to read much into this. In Kent, however, the richness of the material lives of women appears to have outstripped men on a broad range of goods. With the exception of a 2 per cent difference in the ownership of looking glasses, women appear to have owned slightly more pictures and gold/silver items and significantly more clocks, books and mahogany goods than men. Kent was more commercial and better connected than Dorset and Norfolk, meaning that these items were probably more widely available and cheaper for women who lived in Kent compared to elsewhere. This would have also meant that Kent women had more choice in what they bought. These same networks were, however, also available to men. Consequently, it is most probable that women in Kent owned higher frequencies of luxuries than men for two possible reasons. First, women may have owned greater numbers of luxury goods as they had a greater affinity to fashion and a greater desire to create a comfortable and decorated domestic space than men. Equally, it is possible that women in Kent owned higher frequencies of luxuries than men as a consequence of the system of relief. Women who had lost their husbands, for instance, may have been able to keep a number of the possessions that they owned whilst their husbands were alive, because they were seen as more deserving by the parish and were thus offered poor relief sooner than their male counterparts, who may have had to wait longer and sell off more of their goods to make do before they were given relief. Having tracked the relief patterns of each pauper in the years before their goods were inventoried, however, it was not uncommon for parishes to let recently widowed women wait several months or years before they were given relief. Consequently, this factor did not affect every widow in the sample and it is difficult to quantify how many it did concern. Nevertheless, the results suggest that a number of pauperised women in some areas owned more luxury and decorative goods than men on parish relief.

It is now important to discuss some of the individual findings from Kent and their implications for the lives of women. Numerous studies have suggested that men were more literate than women.³⁴ Revisionist work from the past few decades has suggested that

³⁴ See for example: Cressy, *Literacy and the social order*, passim; Schofield, 'Dimensions', pp.201-213.

despite this many women were still actively involved in the writing, reading and printing of books.³⁵ This literature has concentrated on middling and elite women; however the findings from Kent suggest that poor women were also involved in print culture as some of them owned books. Likewise, in Dorset women appear to have owned books in greater numbers from 1770 and in the pawnbroker's pledge book of George Fettes, 67 per cent of people who pledged books in his pawnshop in York between 1777 and 1778 were women and only 27 per cent were men.³⁶ Although some of these women may have been illiterate and some of these books may have been owned by their husbands if they were married, these statistics imply that more women could read than has been suggested by much of the literature. It is possible that they read books such as novels and household manuals like middling and elite women did and that they used a number of different networks to acquire books, as the vagrant Mary Saxby did.³⁷ More work is clearly needed on the topic. Some women, for instance, may have owned more books than men because they did not frequent taverns and other public spaces as often as men did, where print was often freely available and could be read on the premises.

The literature on middling and elite women's ownership of jewels and precious metals suggest that they had strong emotional ties to these items. They could be given to women as gifts, heirlooms, form part of a dowry or be inscribed with messages used as tokens of love.³⁸ Although only a small number of female pauper inventories recorded gold or silver items, poor women probably shared some of the same emotional attachments to these items as rich women did. Finally, although clocks were owned by more men in Dorset and Norfolk, the results from Kent indicate that clocks were important possessions to

³⁵ Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan, 'Introduction', in Batchelor and Kaplan, *Women*, pp.3-4; Cheryl Nixon and Louise Penner, 'Material of the "everyday" women writer: letter writing in eighteenth-century England and America', in Maureen Day Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (eds.), *Women and things, 1750-1950: gendered material strategies* (Farnham, 2009), pp.157-187; Margaret Beetham, 'Women and the consumption of print', in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and literature in Britain 1800-1900* (Cambridge, 2001), pp.55-77; Susan Staves, '"Books without which I cannot write": how did eighteenth-century women writers get the books they read?', in Batchelor and Kaplan, *Women*, pp.192-211; Peter H. Pawlowicz, 'Reading women: text and image in eighteenth-century England', in Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (eds.), *The consumption of culture 1600-1800: image, object, text* (London, 1995), pp.42-53; Terry Lovell, 'Subjective powers? Consumption, the reading public, and domestic women in early nineteenth-century England', in Bermingham and Brewer, *Culture*, pp.23-41; Helen Smith, *"Grossly material things": women and book production in early modern England* (Oxford, 2012).

³⁶ YALH Accession 38. It was not possible to determine gender on six per cent of book pledges.

³⁷ Saxby, *Memoirs*, pp.31-32. Also see note 35 and chapter five.

³⁸ Marcia Pointon, 'Women and their jewels', in Batchelor and Kaplan, *Women*, pp.11-30.

women. The secondary literature suggests that considerably more men owned watches than women and that they had a number of symbolic ties to manhood and display.³⁹ The results from table 5.2 remind us that not all types of timepieces were masculine. When clocks were in the domain of the house they appear to have assumed a different meaning and been used to decorate the home and time household tasks, rather than functioning as displays of masculinity and distinction as watches did outside the home.

Conclusion

This section has argued that pauper inventories provide evidence to suggest that some women owned greater frequencies of material goods than men, even amongst the poorest in society. Greater numbers of women appear to have owned tea-related items than men and items such as looking glasses appear to have become increasingly important to women over the eighteenth century. Women in Dorset and Norfolk earned some of the lowest wages in the country and were less able to furnish their homes with luxury goods as they did not have access to the same networks of supply that paupers in the Home Counties had. They also probably experienced less desire to consume decorative and luxury goods as a result. In Kent, on the other hand, women seem to have had both the desire *and* the networks available to acquire goods and create a more comfortable and furnished home over the long eighteenth century. This suggests that in some areas women's lives were not as bleak as some of the literature might have us believe, as even the poorest woman could make a home and have some comforts.⁴⁰ Having said this, it is important not to overemphasise these divisions. The ownership of tea items, for instance, appears to have been common among poor men and women even though women seem to have owned them in the highest numbers. Moreover, a number of the differences in the data are too small to claim that consumption was mainly driven by gender. This can most clearly be seen in Dorset and Norfolk, where men and women appear to have lived relatively similar material lives to one another throughout the period.

³⁹ Helmreich, Hitchcock and Turkel, 'Rethinking', p.15; Landes, *Revolution*, p.281; Thompson, 'Time', pp.56-97; Blondé and Verhoeven, 'Against', pp.213-244; Styles, *Dress*, pp.96-107.

⁴⁰ See for instance the following paper by Alannah Tomkins which reviews this literature: Alannah Tomkins, 'Women and poverty', in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (eds.), *Women's history: Britain 1700-1850: an introduction* (London, 2005), pp.152-173.

Urban and rural differences

In the late seventeenth century there were just over 850 towns in England which contained between one-third and 40 per cent of the population. By 1841 another 100 towns emerged and around half of the English population were living in urban spaces.⁴¹ Following the relatively recent surge in research on retailing we have a greater understanding of the importance of these urban areas for their markets, shops and concentration of leisure activities.⁴² Additionally, from the empirical work of historians such as Carl Estabrook, Overton et al. and others, we know that this concentration of activities and people in built spaces helped lead to greater consumption of both old and new consumer goods among the urban middling sort.⁴³ Research on the continent has found similar trends. Belén Moreno Claverías, for example, has shown that the urban eighteenth-century poor in Catalonia had greater levels of material wealth than their peers who lived in neighbouring rural areas.⁴⁴ It is likely that the same is true of the English poor; however there is little empirical work to confirm or disprove this. Research on urban areas such as London has indicated that the poor often owned or had access to a range of new consumer goods,⁴⁵ however without a rural comparison it is difficult to gauge the extent to which London and other urbanised areas were different. The objective of this section is thus simple. It seeks to examine whether the poor had greater material wealth when they lived in towns and how this compared to rural areas.

The pauper inventories are split into two separate urban and rural samples to determine if consumer behaviour differed between the town and country. Unfortunately, this is not a straightforward task as there are a number of different ways in which to define

⁴¹ These figures are calculated in: John Langton, 'Urban growth and economic change: from the late seventeenth century to 1841', in Peter Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, Vol. 2: 1540-1840 (Cambridge, 2000), pp.462-468. It is important to note that the figures can vary depending upon the historian/geographer and the methodology that they use to define towns. See below for further information.

⁴² See for instance: Jon Stobart, Andrew Hann and Victoria Morgan, *Spaces of consumption: leisure and shopping in the English town, c.1680-1830* (London, 2007); Jon Stobart, *Spend, spend, spend! A history of shopping* (Stroud, 2008); Mui and Mui, *Shops*; Peter Borsay, *The English urban renaissance: culture and society in the provincial town 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989); Jonathan Brown, *The English market town: a social and economic history 1750-1914* (Marlborough, 1986), pp.16-64; Alan Dyer, 'Small market towns 1540-1700', in Clark, *Urban History*, pp.436-440; Shammass, *Pre-industrial consumer*, pp.225-265.

⁴³ Estabrook, *Urbane*, pp.128-191; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.153-165; Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.70-90.

⁴⁴ Moreno Claverías, 'Lugar de residencia', pp.136-166; Moreno Claverías, 'Luxury', pp.67-93. Also see the various chapters in Broad and Schuurman, *Wealth*.

⁴⁵ Styles, 'Lodging', pp.61-80; Helmreich, Hitchcock and Turkel, 'Rethinking', pp.1-25; Horrell, Humphries and Sneath, 'Conundrums', pp.830-857.

an area as urban or rural. These include population size, how nucleated the settlement was, the local economy, the numbers of people who were employed inside and outside of agriculture, the possession of a market and whether the area had administrative and legal powers.⁴⁶ The pauper inventories are derived from over 100 places in Dorset, Kent and Norfolk and the entire sample of over 1350 inventories comes from around 600 different places. Consequently, due to a lack of sources, the time it would take to assess each settlement and the subjective nature of what constituted a town across such a large range of places, I am using population as a systematic way in which to define places as urban or rural. This too is a difficult task as historians have employed a wide range of population limits to define towns and these can vary considerably. Some contemporaries saw places with only 200-300 people in them as towns.⁴⁷ Gregory King in the late seventeenth century defined a town as anywhere which had around 500 people in it.⁴⁸ Weatherill and Ken Sneath employed the same limit of 500 people to their samples of probate inventories from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁴⁹ Other scholars such as Penelope Corfield and C. M. Law defined an eighteenth-century urban area as possessing 2500 people or more.⁵⁰ E. A. Wrigley used 5000 people as a limit and Jan de Vries excluded any areas which had fewer than 10,000 people in his study on European urbanisation from 1500 to 1800.⁵¹ Peter Borsay used a flexible definition of 500-1000 people as the lower limit and assessed places which served their hinterlands.⁵² Peter Clark and Jean Hosking, on the other hand, only assessed areas which were perceived as small towns by contemporaries.⁵³

With such a wide variation of opinion among contemporaries and historians and because I am studying over 150 years of history in which there was significant urban growth

⁴⁶ Rosemary Sweet, *The English town: government, society and culture* (Harlow, 1999), pp.7-10; Patten, *Towns*, pp.16-17 and 21-28; P. J. Corfield, *The impact of English towns 1700-1800* (Oxford, 1982), pp.4-6; Borsay, *Urban renaissance*, pp.3-5; Peter Clark and Paul Slack, *English towns in transition 1500-1700* (Oxford, 1976), pp.2-7; C. M. Law, 'Some notes on the urban population of England and Wales in the eighteenth century', *Local Historian*, 10:1 (1972), p.16.

⁴⁷ Sweet, *Town*, p.7.

⁴⁸ Corfield, *Towns*, pp.7-9; Joyce M. Ellis, *The Georgian town 1680-1840* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp.11-12 and 14; Weatherill, *Material culture*, p.73.

⁴⁹ Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.73-74; Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth', pp.58-61.

⁵⁰ Corfield, *Towns*, pp.4-7; Law, 'Population', p.16.

⁵¹ E. A. Wrigley, 'Urban growth and agricultural change: England and the continent in the early modern period', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 15:4 (1985), p.684; Jan de Vries, *European urbanization 1500-1800* (London, 1984), pp.18-19.

⁵² Borsay, *Urban renaissance*, pp.3-5; Sweet, *Town*, pp.8-9.

⁵³ Peter Clark and Jean Hosking, *Population estimates of English small towns 1550-1851* (Leicester, 2nd ed., 1993), pp.ii-iii.

and change, I have defined any areas that possessed 1000 or more people as urban. This method is crude but necessary to allow for the systematic analysis of the sample. Trade directories, for example, show that shops, services and markets could be found in places with fewer than 1000 inhabitants.⁵⁴ Likewise, some of the places which had populations of 1000 or more may have had more in common with the country than the city. Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell in Norfolk, for instance, where a number of the 'urban' inventories come from, in some ways appears urban but in other manners rural. It was described as a 'respectable market-town' in a trade directory from 1830. It had a population of nearly 1800 people in 1831 and the town contained a wide range of shops and services, including general shopkeepers, clock/watch makers and tea and china dealers, as well as a number of others who were engaged in the selling of clothing, food and drink. However, the town only contained two manufactories in bombazine and worsted, which were 'both of small importance' to the place, and it was mainly reliant on supplying and receiving the produce of the surrounding country which was engaged in a mixture of arable and pastoral activities.⁵⁵

Estimates of population are subject to a wide margin of error before the national census. However, this largely does not matter as in most cases it was relatively easy to determine if a settlement had more or less than 1000 inhabitants in it, even if it was not possible to find precise figures. For example, if a settlement only had 100 people in it at the time of the 1801 census, it is almost certain that a few decades earlier it would not have contained over 1000 people and so can be safely classed as rural. Even so, 16 inventories have been omitted from this section since they were borderline between urban and rural. A wide variety of sources were used to determine the population of each settlement. For the nineteenth century the national census was predominantly used. Before 1801, estimates of population were found by back-tracing the national census and through using local censuses, hearth and tax records, trade directories, parish registers and estimates made by

⁵⁴ For example, I have four pauper inventories from East Harling in Norfolk. It was described as a market town in trade directories and had a weekly market, but in the 1821 census, on or around when the inventories are dated, it only had 867 residents which would make it rural using a definition of 1000 people. *Pigot and co.'s*, p.545; *Census, 1831*.

⁵⁵ *Pigot and co.'s*, pp.544-545; *Census, 1831*; Patten, *Towns*, pp.244-296.

historians and geographers.⁵⁶ 63 pauper inventories have been identified as urban using the method outlined above and 270 have been classified as rural. Individual counties are generally not assessed across two contrasting dates since there are too few urban inventories to allow for this. Eight urban inventories were found for Dorset from six different places, 48 came from Norfolk which were mostly made in Redenhall (discussed above), and seven came from Kent across six different towns. The sample is thus heavily weighted towards Norfolk and in particular one market town located in the south of Norfolk. Most of the urban places in the sample had around 1000-2000 people in them, but five pauper inventories have been found for Norwich, Canterbury and Maidstone, which were considerable in size by contemporary standards. Norwich, for instance, was the second largest provincial town in England for much of the period and had a population of around 36,000 people in 1750.⁵⁷

Quantities of goods

The analysis of urban and rural differences starts by assessing the numbers of goods that people in different areas owned. This method is crude as appraisers were sometimes vague on the quantities of items that paupers owned. For example, some appraisers noted 'some' earthenware or used unspecific terms such as 'bedding' and 'fire irons'. Despite this, the figures appear to reveal differences between urban and rural spaces (table 5.3). The results suggest that paupers in rural Kent owned higher quantities of goods than paupers who lived in other rural areas. Unfortunately, because the sample is small it has not been possible to calculate how many goods urban paupers owned at a county level, yet when all of the counties are combined together the results suggest that paupers in urban areas tended to own greater quantities of goods than those who lived in the country. Between the late seventeenth century and first three-quarters of the eighteenth century the results between town and country are fairly similar, with urban paupers each owning 37 items on average and rural paupers 32 items. However, after 1770 urban paupers appear to have overtaken their rural counterparts by some degree and owned an average of 19 more items per inventory. The number of urban inventories for 1770-1834 is relatively small (13

⁵⁶ These sources are too numerous to name but the following were particularly useful: *Census, 1831*; Law, 'Population', pp.22-26; Clark and Hosking, *Population*; Robert J. Bennett (ed.), 'Urban population database, 17th century-1911 [computer file]' (UK Data Archive, 2012) [From: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-7154-1>. Accessed 04/05/2015].

⁵⁷ Law, 'Population', pp.22-26.

Table 5.3: Average number of items in pauper inventories across urban and rural areas, c.1679-1834

	Rural			Urban		
	c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All	1708-1769	1770-1828	All
Dorset	32	45	36			
Kent	52	120	74			
Norfolk	29	55	32			
All	32	66	40	37	85	47
Sample size	205	63	270	50	13	63

pauper inventories), but the results nonetheless tentatively suggest that there were differences between the town and country.

Household goods

Counting the number of goods that paupers owned is useful as it offers an overall quantitative impression on urban and rural differences. However, the method is crude since owning a large quantity of goods does not necessarily mean that somebody lived a materially richer life than somebody who had few belongings. Thus, in order to expand this analysis tables 5.4-5 show the percentages of paupers who owned various types of goods in urban and rural areas. The results indicate that with some items there were very few differences between town and country (table 5.4). Tables, for example, appear to have been owned by similar numbers of paupers in both small and large settlements over the entire period. These trends can be found with most types of furniture. Interestingly, because chests of drawers were relatively new and fashionable over the eighteenth century, one might have expected them to have been owned in higher numbers by paupers in urban areas.⁵⁸ However, the results suggest that they were just as common in the country. Likewise, there appear to have been few urban and rural differences in regards to other household items. Spit ownership shows a slight increase in rural areas and a slight decline in urban areas, but nothing to indicate that there were stark differences between the two. In addition, one might have expected paupers to have used knives and forks in urban areas

⁵⁸ Overton et al., for example, found that chests of drawers were more common in the towns of Cornwall and Kent. Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, p.157.

Table 5.4: Percentage of pauper inventories which record furniture and items related to eating, drinking and cooking across urban and rural areas in Dorset, Kent and Norfolk, c.1679-1834

	Rural			Urban		
	c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All	1708-1769	1770-1828	All
Chest of drawers	12	30	16	14	31	17
Table	68	90	73	76	85	78
Earthenware	17	44	23	44	46	44
Knives and forks	<1	16	4	0	15	3
Saucepan	2	6	3	4	15	6
Spit	17	21	18	20	15	19
Tea items	7	63	21	4	69	17
Sample size	205	63	270	50	13	63

first, yet the results for town and country are similar. Tea was first consumed among the middling sort who lived in towns and cities in the early eighteenth century,⁵⁹ however there appears to have been no such division among the poor, as the results indicate that tea drinking was relatively common in both town and country by the later eighteenth century.

The ownership patterns of other items related to eating, drinking and cooking may reveal urban and rural differences. Earthenware appears to have been owned by nearly half of paupers in both rural and urban areas from 1770, yet before this date the results indicate that it was owned by greater numbers of paupers who lived in urban areas. This suggests that earthenware first reached people who lived in towns, whereas those in rural areas kept to more traditional eating and drinking utensils generally made out of pewter and wood until the later eighteenth century. This may have been because urban areas were where new and second-hand dealers in earthenware were most common and thus where earthenware was cheapest and easiest to acquire. Earthenware may have also been more visible to consumers in towns in shop windows, the homes of friends, pubs and inns. This may have further increased people's desires to acquire earthenware over alternative eating

⁵⁹ Estabrook, *Urbane* pp.147-148; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.158-160; Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth', p.270.

Table 5.5: Percentage of pauper inventories which record luxurious and decorative goods across urban and rural areas in Dorset, Kent and Norfolk, c.1679-1834

	Rural			Urban		
	c.1679-1769	1770-c.1834	All	1708-1769	1770-1828	All
Book	3	8	4	6	15	8
Clock	2	21	6	0	31	6
Looking glass	9	37	15	34	31	33
Mahogany	0	2	<1	0	23	5
Pictures	1	5	2	6	23	10
Window curtains	0	2	<1	8	8	8
Sample size	205	63	270	50	13	63

and drinking utensils.⁶⁰ Saucepans appear to have been owned by slightly higher numbers of paupers who lived in towns, which may suggest that the cooking and eating practices of paupers in urban areas were sometimes different and more varied in what they ate off and could cook to that of their rural counterparts. One should not, however, overemphasise these distinctions, as earthenware appears to have been relatively common in the town and country from 1770 and saucepans may have only been slightly more common in urban spaces.

The research on probate inventories has found that the urban middling sort tended to own the highest quantities of luxury and decorative items.⁶¹ The results from table 5.5 suggest that the urban poor similarly owned these goods in greater frequencies than those who lived in rural areas. After 1770 mahogany and pictures were both recorded in 23 per cent of urban pauper inventories, but were only recorded in 2 and 5 per cent of rural inventories respectively. Although window curtains were owned by only a low percentage of all paupers, they also appear to have been slightly more common in urban areas. The reasons for luxury and decorative goods being more common in towns are numerous. People lived in close proximity to each other and so the desire to distinguish and follow

⁶⁰ Trade directories, for example, indicate that china, earthenware and ceramic dealers were more common in towns. Additionally, urban spaces contained more pawnshops and second-hand earthenware dealers. See for example: *Pigot and co.'s*, passim.

⁶¹ Weatherill, *Material culture*, p.77; Estabrook, *Urbane* pp.140-141; Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.157-159; Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth', pp.231-343.

contemporary fashions was probably greater. Moreover, these goods were more widely available to purchase in towns and so people may have been more aware of these items, or at least reminded of them at a more frequent rate, than those in the country were. There would have also been more luxury goods available to paupers on the urban second-hand market. Looking glasses were functional and helped to improve domestic comfort as they made the home appear more spacious, bright and pleasant. They appear to have been roughly as common among urban and rural paupers by the later eighteenth century; however the results from the pauper inventories indicate that they had reached the urban poor first. Between c.1679 and 1769 only 9 per cent of paupers in the country owned a looking glass compared to 34 per cent in towns.

Studies by Overton et al., Estabrook and Sneath found that clocks were most common in rural areas. They argued that there was less need for them in towns since there were more public clocks there to use.⁶² The pauper inventories on the other hand indicate that clocks were most widespread among urban paupers; however it is important not to overstate this, since the figures suggest that clocks were still found in rural areas. Interestingly, it was the inventories from the largest urban centres including Norwich, Canterbury and Wymondham (Norfolk) which meant that more urban inventories recorded clocks than rural inventories,⁶³ whereas people from smaller urban settlements of 1000-2000 people appear to have owned clocks in smaller numbers. Books too may have been owned by slightly higher numbers of the urban poor. This was helped by the variety of outlets through which an urban population could acquire books, such as through booksellers and the second-hand market.⁶⁴ In a similar manner to clocks, however, it is important not to overstate this divide, since the differences in the ownership of books in urban and rural areas between 1770 and 1834 was only very small at 15 and 8 per cent respectively.

⁶² Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.168-169; Estabrook, *Urbane* pp.140-141; Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth', pp.236-238.

⁶³ Wymondham had a population of roughly 3500-3600 when the pauper inventory from there was made. *Census, 1831*.

⁶⁴ See chapter four.

Conclusion

This section has applied a simple urban-rural dichotomy to systematically tease out the differences between the town and country. Recent research, however, has started to go against this and highlighted that there was considerable overlap between urban and rural spaces.⁶⁵ The results from this section have added to this literature by showing that paupers in the town and country often owned similar types of furniture and other goods and that items like clocks were not uncommon in rural areas. This indicates that one should not always assume that urban populations were more motivated to own certain goods than their rural counterparts, or that availability of goods in urban areas meant that levels of consumption were highest in towns. Despite this, the results have also indicated that it is still important to analyse general urban and rural trends since the poor's ownership of some types of goods, most notably luxury and decorative goods, appears to have sometimes followed urban-rural lines as well as regional lines which were highlighted in chapters three and four.

⁶⁵ For example: Peter Borsay, 'Nature, the past and the English town: a counter-cultural history', *Urban History*, forthcoming; Peter Borsay, 'Nature, the past and the English town: a counter-cultural history', Centre for Urban History annual lecture, University of Leicester (2015); Anton Schuurman, 'Rural consumer behaviour and the new orthodoxy. Some qualifying observations', in Broad and Schuurman, *Wealth*, pp.245-247; Stobart et al., *Spaces*, p.4; Toplis, *Clothing trade*, pp.32-39 and 151-153.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Tim Hitchcock recently claimed that the study of poverty has changed from being ‘perhaps the most humane and internationally important facet of British history’ in the 1980s to ‘an increasingly disregarded fragment of historical studies’. He argued that this was due to historians increasingly concentrating on the middling sort as ‘consumption came to take pride of place – effectively excluding the poor by virtue of their limited ability to buy’.¹ This thesis has shown that researching the poor’s consumer behaviour is both feasible and intellectually rewarding, and has outlined a number of important changes in the material lives of the poor. Although these changes appear to have been less prevalent and visible than those taking place amongst the well-researched middling sort, it does not mean that they are unimportant or unworthy of study. In fact, the changes in the material lives of the poor were arguably more significant than those affecting the middling sort, as the poor appear to have been able to have consumed more and better goods *despite* their limited incomes. The considerable changes in eighteenth-century consumption and production were not just driven by the middling sort and elite as Horrell claimed.² The poor were a significant group and considerable numbers of them were able to acquire a greater range of goods by the later eighteenth century. Many of these belongings were acquired from the parish and pawnbrokers; however, particularly during more prosperous stages in their lives, the poor also bought a range of goods from new and did not just acquire belongings that were passed down from the middling sort. At an individual level their consumption may seem minor in comparison to others, but at a collective level the impact of the group was considerable, as many increasingly consumed goods such as earthenware, furniture and metal goods and in turn stimulated these industries.

A number of studies on the poor’s consumption of household goods have been published in the past ten years which provide important context to this study. Arguably, the most important strand of this literature is Craig Muldrew and Ken Sneath’s research on labourers’ probate inventories. Their research was a welcome addition to the historical canon and they found that labourers whose goods were the subject of probate inventories increasingly consumed a greater range of items over the seventeenth and eighteenth

¹ Hitchcock, *Down and out*, pp.238-239. Also see: Hitchcock, ‘New history’, pp.294-298.

² Horrell, ‘Home demand’, pp.561-604.

centuries. The extent to which probate inventories made of labourers' belongings are typical of the labouring population as a whole is questionable though.³ Sneath allows that his sample of labourers' probate inventories represented a subgroup of the labouring sort who were better off than most; but Muldrew claimed that his sample was representative of the wider labouring population who did not have their goods appraised.⁴ However, within Muldrew's book there are hints which may suggest that labourers' probate inventories are unrepresentative of the wider labouring population. Muldrew found that 68 per cent of his sample owned animals and that a further 51 per cent grew crops.⁵ It was not unusual for labourers to produce some of their own food but the numbers seem very high. For instance, Muldrew found that 54 per cent of the sample owned cattle at an average of nearly four each,⁶ which is more indicative of relatively large-scale farming since cattle needed a large area of land to graze on, which common land or smallholdings would have struggled to accommodate.⁷ Moreover, when these figures are compared to other sources they appear even more problematic. Although pauper inventories only refer to paupers, a very specific subgroup of the poor, the differences from labourers' probate inventories are considerable, as only 1.4 per cent of pauper inventories from Dorset, Kent and Norfolk record pigs or hogs; 0.57 per cent list cows and 0.28 per cent record sheep.⁸ Research by Keith Snell and Leigh Shaw-Taylor, and contemporary observations made by Nathaniel Kent, Frederic Morton Eden and David Davies, have similarly suggested that cows were rarely owned by the poor over the eighteenth century.⁹

As proof of the representativeness of his sample, Muldrew compared the ownership patterns of five different items from the labourers' probate inventories to the same goods in Peter King's Essex pauper inventories. The comparison showed that paupers and labourers owned similar frequencies of goods to one another and that any differences between the two sets of inventories were not sizeable enough to suggest that the two samples were

³ Other historians have also questioned the reliability of labourers' probate inventories, including: Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.191-194; Coward, *Stuart age*, p.55; Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth', p.102; King, 'Pauper inventories', pp.156 and 176.

⁴ Sneath, 'Consumer revolution', p.235; Muldrew, *Food*, pp.187-192.

⁵ Muldrew, *Food*, p.166.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.250.

⁷ Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.40-41.

⁸ None of the 11 Lancashire pauper inventories recorded animals.

⁹ Snell, *Annals*, pp.174-179; Shaw-Taylor, 'Labourers, cows', pp.95-126; Kent, *Hints*, pp.236-237; Eden, *State of the poor*, Vol. 1, esp. pp.531-532; Davies, *Labourers*, pp.37-38.

Table 6.1: Percentage of pauper inventories and probate inventories which record select items, 1700-1749

	Kent pauper inventories 1700-1749	Kent probate inventories 1700-1749					
		Labour-ers	Husband-men	Yeoman	Retail	Gentle-men	Any status/occupation
Clock	4	22	41	74	42	69	49
Jack	4	20	19	57	74	62	46
Looking glass	16	39	34	43	61	77	44
Uphol. seating	4	4	0	80	100	100	77
Sample size	25	49	35	110	52	15	663

Sources: See bibliography for pauper inventories references; KHLC PRC11 Archdeaconry Court of Canterbury probate inventories, 1571-1842; KHLC PRC27 Consistory Court of Canterbury probate inventories, 1596-1748; KHLC DRb/Pi Diocese of Rochester probate inventories, 1687-1784 and Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.185-194.

made of disparate people. Muldrew used this as evidence to claim ‘that the inventory sample here is broadly representative of the labouring population as a whole’.¹⁰ Again, this assertion can be challenged. Muldrew compared probate inventories from all six of his counties to Essex, which is problematic as he fails to take into account regional differences and the considerable influence that London had on consumers in Essex and other Home Counties.¹¹ His inventories for Kent, another Home County, would have been a much fairer comparison and would have probably revealed a very different picture to that derived from all six counties. Second, the goods that Muldrew chose to compare to King’s results were problematic as two of them, linen and candlesticks, were infrequently recorded in Muldrew’s sample after 1650,¹² meaning that any claims that the results from the two samples are similar is tentative.

With these problems in mind, table 6.1 compares pauper inventories to labourers’ probate inventories from Kent between 1700 and 1749 to examine the extent to which the

¹⁰ Muldrew, *Food*, pp.187-192.

¹¹ On the influence of London, see: Weatherill, *Material culture*, pp.43-69; Wrigley, ‘London’s importance’, pp.44-70; Fisher, ‘London’, pp.205-215; Orlin, *Material London*.

¹² Muldrew, *Food*, pp.196-197.

samples represent similar subsections of the poor. By focusing on Kent and sampling items which appear not to have been under-recorded by appraisers of probate and pauper inventories, this comparison is more accurate than that which Muldrew made with Essex pauper inventories. The results indicate that labourers who had probate inventories made of their belongings generally lived richer material lives than paupers from the pauper inventories as they owned greater frequencies of goods such as clocks, jacks and looking glasses.¹³ This strongly suggests that Muldrew was incorrect in claiming that labourers' probate inventories are representative of large numbers of the poor. Pauper inventories do appear to be problematic, however, in the way that they over-represent paupers who received regular relief and the elderly. Nor do they capture parishioners who received parish help through allowances such as Speenhamland and the labour rate. Despite this, as chapter two suggested, pauper inventories nevertheless appear to be broadly representative of millions of other paupers who did not have their goods appraised and needed help from the parish for life-cycle-related reasons. Estimates vary, however approximately two-fifths to half of the late seventeenth- to early nineteenth-century population were likely to have received some poor relief at one point or more in their lives,¹⁴ and because pauper inventories appear to represent many of these people at the time when they received relief, they appear to be a more suitable source for studying the poor's consumption. This is, of course, not to say that labourers' probate inventories do not have their uses. They represent a subsection of the poor who were more similar to husbandmen (table 6.1) and who often but not always owned a bit of land and thus 'enjoyed many economic advantages' that the labourers in the Eden-Davies budgets did not.¹⁵ This was a social level which many labourers could feasibly aspire to, but one which most would never reach. There was also a subsection of the poor who fell below the people captured in pauper and probate inventories: the homeless and mobile poor. As Hitchcock's recent work has demonstrated, this subsection of the poor often did not even have a bed to

¹³ Only four items were used for table 6.1 because I wanted to compare the results to Overton et al.'s findings for 1700-1749; however they only analysed a limited number of goods for these dates. Overton et al., *Production and consumption*, pp.185-194.

¹⁴ The numbers, of course, vary depending upon where and when one looks. See for example the results of Wales, 'Poverty', pp.351-404; Dyson, 'Oxford', pp.54-56; French, 'How dependent', p.201; King, *Poverty and welfare*, pp.31 and 164-165.

¹⁵ Quoted from: Styles, *Dress*, p.229.

sleep in and owned little more than the clothes on their backs.¹⁶ The homeless and mobile poor were thus the poorest of the poor, whilst pauper inventories represent the material lives of the poor at the point that they were on poor relief but still had a home to live in. Labourers' probate inventories, on the other hand, represent the poor who were generally less reliant on poor relief and had a number of advantages such as smallholdings which enabled them to keep animals and crops. This is of course an oversimplified dichotomy between the samples and there was inevitably overlap between the groups. There were also other groups of the poor such as workhouse inmates who fell somewhere between the homeless/mobile poor and those on outdoor relief.¹⁷ Nonetheless, this brief comparison of different sources shows that we need a more nuanced awareness of the different spectrums of the poor. Once we are aware of these spectrums and of the fact that labourers represented in probate inventories, on average, would have had more and better possessions than people represented in pauper inventories and people who were seldom captured in historical sources such as the homeless and workhouse poor, we can begin to develop a fuller and more detailed analysis that is less optimistic than that which Muldrew suggested, but one which still shows that the material lives of many groups of the poor improved over the long eighteenth century.

Throughout the thesis I have noted how the results from the pauper inventories compare to those from the probate inventories of the middling sort and elite. Table 6.1 further contextualises the samples by comparing pauper inventories to the probate inventories of husbandmen, yeomen, people in retail and gentlemen in Kent. The results suggest that the people represented in pauper and probate inventories were materially poorer than the middling sort and elite as we would expect. However, they also further show how consumption was multi-layered and how material wealth differed depending upon financial resources, status and occupation, with gentlemen owning the highest frequencies of goods and labourers and paupers owning the lowest frequencies. One could use such comparisons to claim that the material lives of the poor were limited. Indeed, whilst it is vital to point out that the material lives of the poor changed in some notable ways, it is important to not push the argument too far. As Styles pointed out in his seminal book *The Dress of the People*, although people 'enjoyed unprecedented access to novel

¹⁶ Hitchcock, *Down and out*, pp.23-48 and 97-123.

¹⁷ Harley, 'Material lives', pp.71-103; Ottaway, *Decline*, pp.247-276; Tomkins, *Urban poverty*, pp.36-78.

material things' in the eighteenth century, one should not deny that there was 'deprivation, exploitation and repression in the plebeian experience'.¹⁸ Additionally, sources such as pauper letters suggest that many people could not even feed and clothe themselves, let alone furnish their homes,¹⁹ and economic historians in the standard of living debate often emphasise inadequate real wages and thus limited spending power.²⁰ Such examples should always be considered when studying the poor, but we should not let them restrict our overall understanding. Whilst it cannot be denied that there was considerable poverty throughout the period, the majority of poor people appear to have increasingly been able to own a greater number and variety of consumer goods over the period. Some of these gains were restricted to certain points in the life-cycle, such as when they were healthy and had regular employment, and many of these changes were limited when people lived in rural and remote areas. Yet despite this, the pauper inventories generally point to a more positive perspective.²¹ By the late eighteenth century, pauper inventories suggest that the majority of paupers owned at least one or two items that were beyond necessity.²² This represents a significant contrast to the pauper inventories dated 100 years earlier, which indicated that the majority of paupers only owned the basic possessions that were needed to manage the home and little else. Even if an individual owned only a few more extra chairs than his or her ancestors had several generations ago, this still signified an important move towards greater comfort and a change in domestic arrangement, which helped to embody the development of contemporary ideas of the 'home'.²³

Such changes in material culture beg the question: why did this happen? Regionally, it appears that local social, economic, demographic and urban factors were each important and affected people's propensity and desires to consume as they did with the middling sort.

¹⁸ Styles, *Dress*, pp.1-2.

¹⁹ Sokoll, *Pauper letters*.

²⁰ Horrell, 'Home demand', pp.561-604; Horrell and Humphries, 'Old questions', pp.849-880; Feinstein, 'Pessimism perpetuated', pp.625-658.

²¹ Although I would not go as far as to claim that the industrial revolution heralded the 'dawn of liberty' for many poor people as Emma Griffin argued, the results of this thesis are nonetheless broadly similar to Griffin's interpretation that poor people's lives were improving in some ways as well as remaining difficult and getting worse in others. Emma Griffin, *Liberty's dawn: a people's history of the industrial revolution* (New Haven, 2013), esp. pp.19-20.

²² By this I do not only mean goods such as timepieces and looking glasses. The increased ownership of items such as bellows, candlesticks, tea goods, spits, saucepans and extra seating all reflect important changes in material culture.

²³ Clive Edwards, *Turning houses into homes: a history of retailing and consumption of domestic furnishings* (Aldershot, 2005), pp.4-6.

The poor who lived in the Home Counties, for example, appear to have consumed at higher levels than those who lived in more rural and remote areas, as they were better connected, heavily influenced by London, and generally lived in more commercial surroundings. Improvements in production and increased availability also all inevitably helped the process. Undue emphasis upon these macro factors, however, overlooks the importance of individual choice at the level of a person or a household. Whilst the poor never had the means to be as selective in the possessions they owned as those with greater incomes did, they nonetheless often exercised an element of choice.²⁴ Individual choice was heavily dependent upon the item in question. With items such as clocks and pictures appearance and fashion may have been the most important factors behind acquiring the objects, but with other items such as seating and lanterns utility, comfort and durability were often at the forefront. The evidence also suggests that gender and urban location had some influence on people's propensity to consume. Historical studies which only emphasise single factors such as emulation, respectability or comfort are limited. Though each of these factors was inevitably important and influenced consumer behaviour, they should not be viewed in isolation. Thus my research has emphasised how multifaceted the reasons and motivations for consumption were across a wide variety of goods and has highlighted how some people's priorities changed over time. There was no single motive which underpinned all consumption but a multitude of unquantifiable reasons which differed considerably from one person or one household to another. The only way that this web can be untangled is through the detailed analysis of each individual item or 'bundles' of interrelated goods using a wide range of historical and interdisciplinary methods.

This research has additionally aided our understanding of the nature of poor relief and the relationship between the parish and the indigent. In the decades before the later eighteenth century, the system of poor relief generally operated well and most parishes, particularly in the south and east, offered flexible, humane and relatively generous relief to parishioners.²⁵ The practice of inventorying paupers' goods appears to have been most common during these years and can be connected to these broad characteristics. Having one's goods appraised essentially guaranteed many paupers relief until they died and helped to fund and maintain the poor law system. Moreover, inventorying paupers' goods

²⁴ For a similar interpretation, see: Cox, *Language*, pp.123-139.

²⁵ Snell, *Annals*, pp.105-107.

but allowing them to use them until they died, was a better option than making the poor sell off all of their belongings before they were entitled to relief. As the costs of relief increased dramatically by the later eighteenth century, however, the inventorying of paupers' goods appears to have been used more punitively as parishes increasingly branded pauper goods and dissent to the system became more common.

There are several limitations of this study which could be developed as new research themes with additional work. First, because I only had a finite period of time I was not able to sample a fully representative group of English counties. The four counties I studied were each on the coast. It would have been very interesting to have studied an inland county and evaluated the effect that geographical location had on consumption. For example, would people living in counties away from coastal smuggling routes have consumed tea at a later date than those that lived in places such as Dorset and Kent? Historians have commonly noted that the poor in Dorset and Norfolk were some of the worst off over the long eighteenth century and this hypothesis could be tested by sampling inventories from more prosperous Midland counties such as Staffordshire and Warwickshire. Further analysis of archives in different counties can also help to reveal the extent to which the practice of inventorying paupers' goods varied regionally.

Second, because this thesis has primarily concentrated on household goods, there has been no room to study other highly important items connected to household labour and production, such as spinning wheels and food-processing goods, which means that an important aspect of the domestic lives of the poor has not been covered. By examining these categories of goods one could have studied other important factors that affected the standard of living, such as the ability to produce goods to generate extra income. Third, because relatively few pauper inventories list rooms the thesis has not assessed rooms and room use, meaning that I have largely analysed the poor's ownership and use of goods with little regard to the spaces in which they were used. A larger sample of pauper inventories from three or four additional counties would probably generate a sufficient sample of inventories which record rooms to analyse contemporary paupers' use of space.

Using the largest sample of pauper inventories assembled to date, this thesis has addressed a number of major historiographical gaps regarding the poor's consumer behaviour and will help to give historians a deeper and more rounded perspective on

eighteenth-century consumption across different social groups. The research has expanded the work of Peter King and Barbara Cornford and has shown that pauper inventories are a reliable and representative source which can be analysed in similar ways to probate inventories. The potential for future work is considerable and this research in many ways has only begun to scratch the surface.

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U3/221/12/2 Boughton under Blean overseers' assessments and disbursements, 1685-1712.

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U3/154/18/1 Chartham workhouse book, 1765-1795.

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U3/117/12/1 Godmersham overseers' assessments and disbursements, 1651-1699.

U3/235/8/1 Hernhill vestry minutes, 1693-1727.

U3/235/18/2 Hernhill goods of the Widow Courthill, 1729.

U3/245/16/93 Preston next Wingham household inventory, n.d.

¹ In addition to other manuscript primary sources, the following section includes references to every inventory I found over the course of the PhD. The inventories were generally un-catalogued in archive catalogues and can be found within the volumes or on loose pieces of paper. The following list does not include the manuscript sources I used to cross-reference and categorise each inventory, unless they are referenced in the text. Records which contain pauper inventories are marked with an asterisk next to the document number. See chapter two for further details on the different types of inventories used in the thesis.

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U3/174/8/A/18 Wye vestry minutes, 1721-1785.

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*PE-CAM/OV/7/1-8 Canford Magna inventories, 1753-1805.

PE-CAN/OV/1/2 Cann overseers' accounts, 1822-1832.

PE-CAS/OV/1/2	Castleton overseers' accounts, 1775-1848.
*PE-CDM/OV/1/1	Caundle Marsh overseers' accounts, 1805-1835.
PE-CEA/OV/1/4	Cerne Abbas overseers' accounts, 1815-1826.
PE-CHH/OV/1/1	Chaldon Herring overseers' accounts, 1723-1792.
*PE-COC/OV/2/1	Corfe Castle overseers' accounts, 1747-1763.
PE-COC/OV/2/4	Corfe Castle overseers' accounts, 1788-1799.
*PE-EST/OV/1/1	East Stour overseers' accounts, 1804-1829.
PE-FOL/OV/1/1	Folke overseers' accounts, 1787-1812.
PE-FOM/OV/10/2	Fontmell Magna inventory, n.d.
*PE-HAM/OV/1/1	Hammoon overseers' accounts, 1716-1780.
PE-HAZ/VE/1/1	Hazelbury Bryan vestry minutes, 1813-1839.
PE-HIL/OV/2/7	Hilton inventory, n.d.
PE-LOB/OV/1/2	Longburton overseers' accounts, 1810-1823.
PE-LYD/OV/1/1	Lydlinch overseers' accounts, 1734-1781.
PE-LYD/OV/1/2	Lydlinch overseers' accounts, 1781-1821.
PE-LYD/OV/1/3	Lydlinch overseers' accounts, 1821-1836.
PE-LR/OV/1/1	Lyme Regis overseers' accounts, 1760-1781.
PE-LR/VE/1/1	Lyme Regis vestry order book, 1810-1833.
PE-MOT/OV/3/2	Motcombe overseers' bills and receipts, 1753-1824.
*PE-OBN/OV/1/1	Oborne overseers' accounts, 1770-1898.
*PE-PDH/OV/1/1	Piddlehinton overseers' accounts, 1745-1791.
PE-PL/OV/1/3/4	Poole account of the sale of the goods, 1789.
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*PE-POW/OV/1/2	Powerstock overseers' accounts, 1757-1775.
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*PE-SPV/OV/1/2	Stour Provost overseers' accounts, 1749-1767.
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PE-WSG/OV/1/2	Wimborne overseers' accounts, 1732-1770.
PE-WMN/OV/1/1	Winterborne Monkton overseers' accounts, 1729-1836.
PE-WWH/OV/1/1	Winterborne Whitechurch overseers' accounts, 1791-1828.

Essex Record Office, Chelmsford

*D/P 35/8/1	Little Baddow vestry minutes, 1759-1802.
*D/P 119/12/1	Weathersfield overseers' accounts, 1763-1806.

Kent History Library Centre, Maidstone

PRC11	Archdeaconry Court of Canterbury probate inventories, 1571-1842.
PRC27	Consistory Court of Canterbury probate inventories, 1596-1748.
DRb/Pi	Diocese of Rochester probate inventories, 1687-1784
P10/18/3	Ashford catalogue of household furniture in the workhouse sold by auction, 1836.
P26/12/7	Biddenden poor ledger, 1818-1822.

U908/E36	Bore Place inventory, 1758.
P36/11/1	Boughton Aluph overseers' accounts, 1808-1850.
*P41/5/1	Brabourne churchwardens' assessments and disbursements, 1693-1735.
P42/18/1	Brasted inventories, 1709-1724.
P45/18/4	Brenchley inventory of clothing of the poor in the poor house, 1781.
*P222B/12/1	Broomfield overseers' assessments and disbursements, 1695-1727.
*P222B/16/1	Broomfield overseers' correspondence and miscellaneous papers, 1714-1837.
P78/12/1	Charing overseers' accounts, 1725-1749.
P78/12/10	Charing overseers' accounts, 1832-1836.
P89/12/3	Chiddingstone overseers' assessments and disbursements, 1672-1708.
U908/Q5	Chiddingstone bill of sale, 1741.
*P89/12/17	Chiddingstone overseers' memorandum book, 1790-1832.
EK/U1496/E1	Chislet Brook Bridges estates distress of chattels for rent, 1722.
EK/U1496/E4	Chislet Brook Bridges estates bill of sale, 1726.
U908/E15/1	Cowden inventory, 1708.
*P99/18/2	Cowden inventories, 1718-1808.
P99/12/2	Cowden overseers' disbursements, 1715-1794.
P99/12/4	Cowden overseers' disbursements, 1808-1820.
P99/12/5	Cowden overseers' disbursements, 1820-1828.
P99/8/1	Cowden vestry order book, 1811-1834.
P100/18/3	Cranbrook inventory, 1817.
De/JQs1	Deal quarter sessions book, 1719-1778.
P125/18/1	Dymchurch inventory, 1798.

P145/8/1	Farningham vestry minutes, 1792-1830.
P145/28/7	Farningham inventory, 1805.
P145/21/1	Farningham overseers' accounts, 1811-1834.
P145/8/2	Farningham vestry minutes, 1830-1872.
U120/E2	Filmer distresses, 1579-1747.
U120/T97	Filmer manuscripts estate papers, 1696-1785.
EK/U270/E14	Folkestone appraisal of goods and other papers, 1716.
*P152/12/3	Frittenden overseers' accounts, 1726-1748.
*P152/12/4	Frittenden overseers' accounts, 1764-1780.
P157/8/1	Goudhurst vestry minutes, 1744-1831.
P163/11/2	Hadlow warrants and orders, 1820-1827.
P173/12/1	Harrietsham overseers' vouchers, 1593-1869.
P173/18/3	Harrietsham signed undertaking of loans with inventory of goods, 1681.
P173/28/1	Harrietsham inventory, 1757.
P178/18/19B	Hawkhurst inventory, 1715.
P178/12/8	Hawkhurst overseers' receipted bills, 1717.
*P178/18/14	Hawkhurst inventory, 1725.
P178/18/19A	Hawkhurst inventories, 1756-1759.
P178/18/20	Hawkhurst inventory, 1768.
P178/18/30	Hawkhurst workhouse inventory, 1823.
P178/18/8	Hawkhurst poor house inventories, 1818-1827.
*P181/18/18/1-8	Headcorn inventories, 1702-1776.
P181/28/3/3	Headcorn fragments of bills of sale, 1739-1743.
P181/8/3/1	Headcorn bill of sale, 1757.

P181/18/10	Headcorn Miscellaneous workhouse documents, 1816-1826.
P164/18/2	High Halden inventory, 1705.
P164/8/1	High Halden vestry book, 1762-1816.
P192/12/2	Horsmonden overseers' rates and disbursements, 1733-1770.
P192/18/8	Horsmonden workhouse inventory, 1823.
P192/18/10	Horsmonden overseers' letters, 1831-1833.
P192/18/8	Horsmonden catalogue and prices of workhouse goods sold by auction, 1836.
*P202/12/2	Ightham overseers' rates and disbursements, 1702-1734.
*P202/18/5	Ightham Inventories, 1730-1739.
*P202/8/1	Ightham vestry church volume, 1782-1813.
P202/18/7	Ightham workhouse inventories, 1780-1800.
P202/12/9	Ightham overseers' vouchers, 1790-1804.
P202/8/2	Ightham vestry church book, 1814-1857.
P206/12/3	Kenardington overseers' vouchers, 1720-1729.
P206/18/5	Kenardington distraint of George May's goods, 1730.
P206/12/4	Kenardington overseers' vouchers, 1730-1739.
P206/12/5	Kenardington overseers' vouchers, 1740-1749.
*P206/28/6-7	Kenardington inventories, 1740-1765.
P207/11/2	Kennington overseers' bundle of accounts, 1658-1692.
*P207/11/5	Kennington overseers' rates and accounts, 1781-1801.
*P212/12/1	Kingsnorth overseers' accounts, 1710-1746.
P216/12/1	Lamberhurst overseers' accounts, 1640-1676.
P216/8/1	Lamberhurst vestry minutes, 1745-1840.
P216/12/2	Lamberhurst overseers' accounts, 1745-1802.

P222/12/1	Leeds overseers' accounts, 1656-1685.
*P222/28/5	Leeds inventories, 1693-c.1750.
P222/12/2	Leeds overseers' accounts, 1685-1705.
*P222/12/10	Leeds overseers' vouchers, 1700-1726.
P222/12/4	Leeds overseers' accounts, 1720-1757.
P222/10/1	Leeds order to distrain, 1780.
P222/18/10	Leeds warrant to apprehend runaway husband, 1828.
U908/E16/1	Leigh-next-Tonbridge inventory, 1777.
P224/18/12	Lenham Mackelden's goods, n.d.
P224/18/18	Lenham household goods for kindnesses and money received, 1727.
P224/12/2	Lenham overseers' assessments and disbursements, 1748-1760.
P224/18/7-8	Lenham lists of parish goods, 1735-1738.
P224/18/19-20	Lenham mortgages of household goods for debt, 1737.
P224/18/9	Lenham Daniel Chapman's goods, 1738.
P224/18/21-22	Lenham mortgages of household goods for debt, 1738-1739.
P224/18/10-11	Lenham lists of parish goods, 1742.
*P224/8/1	Lenham vestry minutes, 1731-1789.
P224/18/24	Lenham sale of household goods, 1774.
P224/8/3	Lenham vestry minutes, 1787-1788.
P224/12/14	Lenham overseers' bills and vouchers, 1738-1829.
P242/28/1	Leybourne inventory, 1793.
*P82/12/1	Little Chart overseers' accounts, 1734-1778.
P168/12/7	Lower Halstow overseers' bills and vouchers, 1734-1835.
P168/18/1	Lower Halstow inventory, 1781.
P241/19/10	Maidstone auction catalogue, 1836.

U24/E26	Mann family miscellaneous bundle, c.1750-1772.
P244/16/5	Marden inventories, c.1775-1809.
P247/18/3	Mereworth confirmation of an order, 1754.
P247/21/1	Mereworth surveyors' accounts, 1802-1830.
P250/12/2	Milstead overseers' assessments and accounts, 1688-1727.
P253/16/1	Milton Regis overseers' appeals, 1708-1816.
P309/11/4	New Romney overseers' assessments and accounts, 1766-1786.
P309/18/27	New Romney workhouse inventory, 1798.
P279/8/3	Otford select vestry book, 1825-1827.
*P279/8/2	Otford public vestry book, 1820-1838.
*P287/18/5	Penshurst inventory, 1724.
P289/7/1	Pluckley inventory of clothing, 1768.
*P289/8/2	Pluckley vestry minutes, 1760-1782.
P289/18/1	Pluckley overseers' journal, 1799-1823.
*P289/18/2	Pluckley overseers' journal, 1810-1843.
P295/8/3	Queenborough vestry book, 1800-1830.
Qb/ZB/91	Queenborough poor house inventory, 1832 .
P308/12/1	Rolvenden poorhouse accounts, 1727-1745.
P308/12/2	Rolvenden poorhouse accounts, 1726-1743.
P308/12/8	Rolvenden paupers' ledger, 1795-1808.
*P312/11/1	Ryarsh overseers' accounts and disbursements, 1690-1768.
*P321/12/3	Sandhurst overseers' accounts, 1759-1778.
P321/18/3	Sandhurst inventories, 1785-1796.
P339/11/4	Smarden poor rate book, 1690-1703.
P339/28/40	Smarden account of goods and chattels, 1716.

P339/28/39	Smarden list of goods, 1716.
P339/28/32	Smarden bill of sale, 1719.
P339/11/7	Smarden poor rate book, 1765-1780.
*P339/8/1	Smarden vestry orders and supplements, 1744-1813.
U442/O22/3-4	Snave overseers' miscellaneous bills, 1678-c.1835.
P344/18/18	Speldhurst summons for individual parishioners, 1691-1811.
*P344/18/20	Speldhurst Inventories, 1775-1819.
P344/18/8	Speldhurst workhouse daily accounts, 1817-1818
P344/18/9	Speldhurst workhouse inventories, 1818-1822.
P344/18/5	Speldhurst parish work book, 1817-1833.
P317/12/B/2	St. Mary in the Marsh overseers' vouchers, 1768-1796.
P317/16/1	St. Mary in the Marsh miscellaneous overseers' papers, 1707-1870.
*P347/12/4	Staplehurst overseers' assessments and disbursements, 1686-1695.
*P347/18/10	Staplehurst inventories, 1742-1831.
P347/18/1	Staplehurst workhouse book, 1754-1833.
P347/12/10	Staplehurst overseers' assessments and disbursements, 1781-1800.
P347/12/12	Staplehurst overseers' assessments and disbursements, 1816-1826.
P347/18/3	Staplehurst workhouse inventory, 1824.
P364/18/4A	Tenterton John Fill's bill of sale, 1717.
P364/18/3	Tenterton Thomas Colebrook's bill of sale, 1729-1741.
P364/18/2	Tenterton bill of sale, 1745.
P364/18/19	Tenterton poor house inventory, 1763.
P364/18/16	Tenterton inventory, 1771.
P364/18/7	Tenterton workhouse inventory, 1827.
P364/18/9	Tenterton workhouse inventory, 1829.

U442/E8/6	Tonbridge goods of William Smith, 1816.
P243/18/164	West Malling sale of household goods and kitchen utensils, 1687.
P285/18/3	West Peckham workhouse inventory, 1764.
*P285/18/4	West Peckham inventories of goods, 1763-1781.
P285/12/2	West Peckham overseers' assessments and disbursements, 1802-1822.
P389/6/E/2	Westerham inventory and deed of bargain and sale, 1674.
P389/16/4	Westerham inventories, 1740-1768.
P390/12/93	Westwell overseers' bills, memoranda, notes of disbursements, n.d.
P390/12/14	Westwell overseers' bills, 1735-1737.
P390/18/9	Westwell inventory, 1757.
P390/12/15	Westwell overseers' bills, 1736-1799.
*P390/18/2	Westwell minutes of committees held at the workhouse and vestry, 1792-1798.
P406/28/2	Wrotham conveyance certificate, 1744.
P406/12/6	Wrotham overseers' disbursements, 1763-1782.
P406/18/17	Wrotham workhouse inventories, 1830-1835.

Lancashire Record Office, Preston

DDSC 2/10	Account of money raised at sale of goods of John Simkin, 1749.
QSP/838/4	Goods of Elizabeth Barnes distrained for rent, 1699.
FRL 2/1/33/95	Inventory, n.d.
DDSC 2/9	Inventory, 1749.
PR 3053/14/26	Accrington notice of distraint, 1815.
QSP/1556/33	Aighton, Bailey and Chaigeley inventory, 1745.
PR 1349	Barnacre-with-Bonds miscellaneous letters and documents, 1807-1827.

PR 3440/7/18	Barnoldswick notice of distraint , 1833.
PR 2392/1	Billington inventory, 1751.
PR 2392/5	Billington inventory, 1826.
PR 2392/6	Billington notice of distraint, 1834.
PR 3073/7/1	Blackburn overseers' accounts, 1750-1754.
QSP/2477/39	Blackburn order for seizure of goods and inventory, 1802.
PR 3431/7/1	Bolton by Bowland overseers' accounts, 1735-1796.
PR 2851/12/6	Bretherton valuation of goods, 1778.
PR 2851/12/7	Bretherton inventory, 1791.
PR 1288	Burscough inventory, 1732.
DDX 188/24	Castleton list of goods distrained for rent, 1826.
RCCL/2/2-3	Claughton inventories, 1766-1767.
RCCL/2/24	Claughton list of John Jempson's goods, 1797.
*UDCL/12/2	Clayton-le-Moors overseers' ratebook, 1808-1811.
*UDCL/9/7	Clayton-le-Moors inventory, 1814.
*MBC/637	Clitheroe inventory, 1763.
DDX 8/3	Colne inventory, 1700.
QSP/2453/7	Colne inventory, 1801.
QSP/2453/8	Colne order for seizure, 1801.
QSP/2453/9	Colne instructions for motion for order to sell goods, 1801.
MBRA/acc9017/11	Cowpe Lenches, New Hall Hey and Hall Carr overseers' accounts, 1806-1850.
PR 627	Cronton inventory, 1719.
*PR 2853/1/5	Culcheth overseers' accounts, 1818-1824.
*QSP/1629/15	Ditton order to seize and make an inventory, 1750.

PR 2956/3/13	Downholland will, inventory and overseers' accounts, 1732-1733.
PR 2956/3/4	Downholland overseers' general vouchers, 1733-1794.
PR 2956/3/15	Downholland workhouse inventory, 1740.
PR 2995/11/2	Easington distress upon the goods of John Holden, 1840.
QSP/2348/3	Eccleshill inventory, 1794.
PR 2942/4/5	Ellel miscellaneous poor law papers, 1741-1810.
RCHY 2/1/45	Farleton papers relating to the distraint of goods, 1730-1731.
QSP/1824/9	Great Singleton inventory, 1762.
PR 2725/17	Halewood miscellaneous papers, 1757.
PR 2725/19	Halewood inventory, 1764.
DDHE 62/154	Hesketh Bank miscellaneous papers, 1827-1828.
QSP/1564/5	Inskip-with-Sowerby inventory, 1746.
DDPR 16/9	Kirkham notice of distraint and inventory, 1797.
QSP/1740/6	Layton with Warbreck inventory, 1757.
QSP/374/14	Livesay and Tockholes inventory, 1671.
QSP/391/6	Pennington inventories, 1672.
DDX/8/66	Roughlee notice to pay rent and inventories, 1826.
DDX/8/67	Roughlee inventory, 1826.
DDHE 108/16	Shevington inventory, 1841.
QSP/1374/6	Tarbock inventory, 1734.
QSP/1374/7	Tarbock maintenance of Sarah, wife James Stockton, husbandman in gaol, 1734.
DDHE 111/38	Tarleton inventory, 1835.
PR 2765/1	Tockholes inventory, 1770.
DDHE 116/21a	Wrightington sale book, bill of sale, notice of distraint, 1841.

Liverpool Record Office and Local History Library, Liverpool

354 EVE/5/123 Everton inventory, 1690.

Manchester Archives and Local History, Manchester

M10/4/2/1a Blackley paupers' labourer accounts, 1820-1824.

L82/2/1 Goodshaw overseers' and churchwardens' accounts, 1691-1743.

L21/3/4/1 Holcombe overseers' accounts, 1754-1779.

L21/7/2/1-2 Holcombe inventories, 1832-1835.

M10/16/5/23 Levenshulme poor rate accounts, 1815-1817.

Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Rochester

*P52/18/6 Burham inventory of Laurance's goods, n.d.

P110/18/52 Dartford overseers' agreement, 1724.

P110/18/52 Dartford overseers' agreement, 1724.

P193/12/3 Horton Kirby overseers' vouchers, 1770-1779.

P193/18/1 Horton Kirby inventory, n.d.

P193/12/3 Horton Kirby overseers' vouchers, 1770-1779.

P193/12/5 Horton Kirby overseers' vouchers, 1790-1799.

P193/12/15 Horton Kirby workhouse poor book and overseers' accounts, 1810-1826.

P306/18/17 Rochester churchwardens' and overseers' minutes, 1798-1806.

P336/12/12 Shorne overseers' accounts, 1780-1799.

P336/12/14 Shorne overseers' accounts, 1802-1817.

P343/18/1 Southfleet workhouse inventory, 1757.

P343/18/2 Southfleet overseers' agreement and inventory, 1768.

P343/18/3 Southfleet workhouse inventory, 1778.

Norfolk Record Office, Norwich

PD 548/71	Ashill inventories of goods and furniture in the workhouse and of clothing of resident paupers, 1780-1786.
*PC 88/1	Ashwellthorp Book, 1693-1798.
*PC 88/2	Ashwellthorpe overseers' accounts, 1741-1775.
PD 326/58	Barnham Broom, with Bickerston, Kimberley and Carleton Forehoe overseers' accounts, 1714-1775.
PD 187/58	Barton Turf churchwardens' accounts, 1745-1827.
PD 309/51	Besthorpe inventory of John Webster, 1742.
*PD 309/52	Besthorpe inventory of Widow Stephenson, 1776.
*PD 309/53	Besthorpe inventory of John Dunnett, 1803.
PD 276/35	Bintry overseers' accounts, 1731-1771.
PD 434/42	Blickling inventories of paupers' goods, 1791.
*PD 111/170	Bressingham pauper inventories, 1693-1773.
*PD 111/114	Bressingham pauper inventories, 1719-1815.
PD 111/115	Bressingham workhouse inventory, 1817.
*PD 477/43	Brockdish overseers' accounts, 1772-1811.
*PD 712/49	Bunwell overseers' accounts, 1756-1776.
*MC 2941/2, 1025X2	Carbrooke overseers' accounts, 1776-1803.
PD 254/92	Carleton Rode Book of orders and resolutions of parishioners relating to the workhouse, 1785-1831.
*PD 193/93	Cawston inventories, 1699 and 1826.
HIL 3/61-2, 879X4	Dersingham inventory, 1822-1823.
PD 603/128	Dersingham workhouse inventory, 1825-1826.
PC 15/42	Dickleburgh with Rushdall workhouse inventories, 1812-1817.
PD 100/335	Diss draft bill of sale, n.d.

PD 100/139	Diss deed of sale, 1691.
PD 100/140	Diss inventories, 1696-1795.
PD 100/105	Diss overseers' disbursements, 1777-1785.
PD 100/155	Diss workhouse inventory, 1834.
PD 219/94	East Harling overseers' accounts, 1809-1828.
*PD 219/114	East Harling inventories, 1821-1825.
PD 447/58	East Tuddenham overseers' accounts, 1774.
PD 447/57	East Tuddenham overseers' vouchers, 1769-1788.
PD 144/67	Fersfield overseers' accounts, 1800-1825.
*PD 421/133	Forncett overseers' accounts, 1778-1791.
PD 50/47	Gissing overseers' accounts of expenditure, 1671, 1732.
*PD 50/44	Gissing town book, 1688-1741.
PD 50/68	Gissing deed of sale of household goods, 1726.
*PD 50/71	Seven inventories of goods, 1726-1742.
*PD 50/45	Gissing overseers' accounts, 1741-1759.
PD 50/46	Gissing overseers' accounts, 1797-1824.
PD 34/39	Great Bircham with Bircham Newton and Bircham Tofts inventory, 1758.
*PD 489/29	Great Moulton, with Little Moulton overseers' accounts, 1695-1738.
*PD 489/30	Great Moulton, with Little Moulton overseers' accounts, 1747-1757.
*PD 489/31	Great Moulton, with Little Moulton overseers' accounts, 1757-1764.
*PD 489/51	Great Moulton, with Little Moulton inventories, 1767-1770.
PD 5/22	Guestwick inventory, n.d.
*PD 236/51	Hapton Pauper Inventories, 1796-1831.
PD 437/91	Hardwick inventories, 1643-1692.

PD 435/27	Heydon with Irmingland overseers' accounts, 1724-1758.
PD 382/40	Hilgay overseers' accounts and vouchers, 1721-1732.
*PD 382/45	Hilgay overseers' vouchers, 1804-1805.
PD 382/78	Hilgay inventory, 1825.
PD 678/36	Hindolveston guardian's accounts, 1786-1802.
*PD 575/128	Hingham inventories, 1706-1731.
*PD 629/50	Holme-next-the-Sea overseers' accounts, 1704-1783.
PD 2/97	Holt inventory, n.d.
PD 2/106	Holt notice of distraint, 1795.
PD 2/167	Holt workhouse accounts, 1821-1832.
PD 2/134	Holt inventories, 1830-1834.
*PD 563/49	Hopton overseers' accounts, 1718-1842.
PD 642/38	Horningtoft valuation on sale, n.d.
*PD 642/35	Horningtoft overseers' accounts, 1689-1775.
PD 713/64	Horsham notices of distraint, 1759-1772.
PD 713/55	Horsham inventory, 1769.
PD 691/74	Ingoldisthorpe inventory, 1789.
*PD 521/26	Ingworth town book, 1768-1798.
PD 521/34	Ingworth notice of distraint, 1785.
PD 521/37	Ingworth Inventory, 1802.
PD 439/67	Itteringham Inventories, 1742-1820.
PD 108/84	Kenninghall overseers' accounts, 1683-1747.
*MC 76/50, 534X10	Letton overseers' accounts, 1744-1791.
*PD 595/22	Loddon overseers' accounts, 1720-1752.
PD 672/6	Longham town book, 1755-1807.

PD 653/98	Ludham inventories, 1817-1821.
PD 404/54	Marlingford town book, 1776-1829.
*PD 710/68	Martham overseers' accounts, 1744-1785.
PD 313/41	Methwold various accounts, 1675-1820.
PD 93/31	Morton-on-the-Hill inventory, 1758.
PD 83/15	Newton Flotman inventories, 1774-1789.
PD 209/211	North Elmham grant of administration, 1676.
PD 338/13	North Lopham churchwardens' accounts, 1813-1867.
PD 654/48	North Pickenham workhouse inventory, 1779.
PD 711 box 47	North Walsham workhouse inventory, n.d.
*PD 499/79	Norwich inventories, 1734-1772.
PD 53/46	Pulham bill of sale and inventory, 1762-1763.
*PD 295/102	Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell overseers' order book, 1708-1743.
*PD 295/93	Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell overseers' accounts, 1692-1721.
PD 295/94	Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell overseers' accounts, 1721-1751.
PD 295/113	Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell miscellaneous overseers' papers, 1732-1743.
PD 295/116	Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell inventory, 1743.
*PD 295/117	Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell inventories, 1744-1762.
PD 295/133	Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell inventory, 1800.
*PD 295/106	Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell order book, 1828-1831.
PD 465/59	Reymerston churchwardens' book, 1567-1750.
PD 335/9	Rocklands overseers' accounts, 1808-1824.

PD 80/46	Shelfanger distraint for rent, 1767-1768.
PD 358/33	Shelton various accounts, 1611-1817.
*PD 358/41	Shelton overseers' accounts, 1670-1734.
*PD 358/61	Shelton various papers, 1704-1769.
*PD 358/42	Shelton various accounts and papers, 1735-1779.
*PD 102/32	Shimpling churchwardens' accounts, 1761-1810.
PD 102/36	Shimpling town book, 1769-1799.
*PD 337/158	Shipdham inventories, 1720.
PD 147/31	Skeyton overseers' accounts, 1800-1829.
PD 122/50	Stratton Mortgage of goods, 1698.
*PD 122/54	Stratton accounts of weekly collections of the poor, 1770-1813.
*PD 122/38	Stratton vestry minutes, 1783-1812.
*PD 122/39	Stratton vestry minutes, 1814-1832.
PD 611/37	Surlingham overseers' accounts, 1707-1738.
*PD 611/38	Surlingham overseers' accounts, 1739-1764.
PD 52/404	Swaffham folder of papers, 1681-1928.
PD 52/206-207	Swaffham workhouse inventories, 1772-1778.
PD 44/32	Swannington inventory, 1756.
PD 199/54	Swardeston inventory, 1793.
*PD 708/84	Tharston draft overseers' accounts, 1777-1793.
PD 228/104	Thorpe Episcopi inventory, 1764.
PD 515/73	Tibenham conveyances, 1728.
PC 35/13	Tilney overseers' accounts, 1824-1830.
*PD 216/90	Trowse inventories, 1694-1786.
PD 496/64	Wacton churchwardens' accounts, 1689-1748.

PD 496/79	Wacton overseers' accounts, 1806-1818.
PD 218/3	Watton overseers' accounts, 1716-1802.
*PD 27/21	West Harling overseers' accounts, 1771-1828.
*PD 553/79	Wighton inventory, 1819.
PD 78/91	Winfarthing workhouse papers, 1810-1832.
*PD 78/66	Winfarthing inventories, 1816.
PD 259/6	Woodbastwick overseers' accounts, 1732-1785.
PD 259/46	Woodbastwick inventories, 1757-1762.
PD 388/74	Yaxham inventory, 1755.
*PD 316/46	Yelverton with Alington overseers' accounts, 1720-1748.

Oldham Local Studies and Archives, Oldham

B-UDR 2/4/5/10/14 Royton workhouse expenditure and materials used, 1830-1837.

Rochdale Local Studies and Archive, Rochdale

F/8/4/MATT/4 Spotland bill of sale, 1745.

Salford City Archive, Salford

P12/AZ7/1-5 Worsley inventories, 1746-1769.

P12/024/1-27 Worsley overseers' bills and receipts, 1812-1849.

St. Helens Local History and Archives Library, St. Helens

*PAR/2/6/1-79 Parr overseers' accounts, 1690-1828.

PAR/10/15 Parr miscellaneous township accounts, 1800-1828.

Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre, Ashton-under-Lyne

*PCA/DEN/11/1 Denton overseers' accounts, 1751-1799.

Wigan Archives Service, Leigh

TR/Ab/1-3 Abram miscellaneous papers, 1668-1819.

TR/Ab/5-7	Abram particulars of disbursements of the overseers, constables and supervisors, c.1691-1800.
TR/Ath/C/2/37-58	Atherton vouchers for overseers' accounts, 1693-1834.
*TR/Ath/F/13	Atherton inventory, 1741.
TR/Ath/F/17	Atherton inventory, 1787.
TR/Ath/C/7/17	Atherton workhouse inventory and schedule of inmates, 1834-1837.
TR/Hi/C/7/2	Hindley notice of distraint of goods, 1818.
DP 17/12/23/1-40	Lowton overseers' vouchers, 1708-1836.
DP 17/12/3	Lowton general accounts, 1781-1782.
DP 17/12/11	Lowton ledger for outdoor relief, 1821-1834.
DP 17/8/3	Lowton vestry minutes, 1824-1850.
DP 17/12/7	Lowton general disbursements, 1825-1836.
DP 17/17/21	Lowton inventory, 1827.
DP 17/17/15	Lowton workhouse inventory, 1828.
DDHE 87/68a	Mawdesley notice of distraint, 1839.
DDX 188/36	Milnrow inventory, 1841.

York Archives and Local History, York

Accession 38 Pawnbroker's pledge book, 1777-1778.

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331/2005, Ash chair with a rush seat, c.1780-1820 [From: <http://www.geffrye-museum.org.uk/collections/explore-our-collections/item-detail/?id=O98&index=4>.

Accessed 19/08/2014]. Photograph by Morley von Sternberg.

M 420, Iron rushlight and candle holder with a wooden base, c.1700-1800 [From: <http://www.geffrye-museum.org.uk/collections/explore-our-collections/item-detail/?id=O21635&index=1>. Accessed 24/11/2014].

M 300, Pewter plate, cast pewter, c.1700-1900 [From: <http://www.geffrye-museum.org.uk/collections/explore-our-collections/item-detail/?id=O21493&index=15>. Accessed 15/12/2014].

331/2005, Side chair, ash, with a rush seat, c.1780-1820 [From: <http://www.geffrye-museum.org.uk/collections/explore-our-collections/item-detail/?id=O98&index=4>. Accessed 19/08/2014].

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A26007, Earthenware candlestick, c.1550-1700 [From: http://archive.museumoflondon.org.uk/ceramics/pages/object.asp?obj_id=114227. Accessed 16/08/2014].

5457, Glass bottle, c.1671-1695 [From: http://archive.museumoflondon.org.uk/ceramics/pages/object.asp?obj_id=148804. Accessed 16/08/2014].

A27766, Glass tumbler, c.1701-1800 [From: http://archive.museumoflondon.org.uk/ceramics/pages/object.asp?obj_id=475231. Accessed 16/08/2014].

A12586, Wine glass, c.1701-1800 [From: http://archive.museumoflondon.org.uk/ceramics/pages/object.asp?obj_id=465913. Accessed 16/08/2014].

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M.177A-1977, Brass candlestick, cast and turned, c.1795 [From: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O94314>. Accessed 25/06/2013].

702B-1891, Trencher, wood probably beech or sycamore, c.1500-1700 [From: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O131241>. Accessed 07/05/2013].

1462-1870, Warming pan, brass with a brass mounted iron handle, the lid perforated and engraved, c.17th century [From: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O77414>. Accessed 25/06/2013].

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WAG 2001.8, Skillet, copper alloy, c.1650.

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