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Exploring Text and Objects: Escheators’ Inventories and Material Culture in Medieval English Rural Households

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Short title: Escheators’ Inventories and Material Culture

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Exploring Text and Objects: Escheators' Inventories and Material Culture in Medieval English Rural Households

by Ben Jervis,¹ Chris Briggs² and Matthew Tompkins.³

A pilot study was undertaken to assess the potential of the integrated analysis of metalwork excavated from medieval (late 13th-16th century) rural settlements in the midlands of England and inventories (dating from c.1370-c.1440) drawn from the royal escheators' records for the same region. The study aimed to explore the value and meaning of objects to the non-elite members of rural communities and focussed on three classes of artefact: metal vessels, tools and dress accessories. The analysis investigates medieval value systems by exploring evidence for aspiration, recycling and differences between town and country.

In a paper published in this journal in 1965, R.K. Field challenged the assumption that there was little historical evidence pertaining to the material conditions of peasant life in medieval England.⁴ In particular, he identified a number of entries in manor court records from Worcestershire relating to the erection of houses and the furniture placed within them. Amongst these were a series of inventories detailing the *principalia* of households of varying levels of wealth and social standing. The *principalia*, within the Worcestershire context at least, were goods belonging to the lord but present in the houses of their tenants, and which changed hands along with the holding. Importantly, these inventories detail a number of goods, such as metal vessels, comparatively rarely encountered in archaeological contexts, and provide monetary valuations of their worth, with which it might be possible to assess accurately the value to medieval communities of certain goods recovered archaeologically. Given this potential, it is perhaps surprising that, with some exceptions, there has been little attempt to explore this area further, either by seeking new inventories, or by exploring methods for the integration of historical and archaeological data relating to rural households.⁵

This paper is such an attempt, outlining the results of an interdisciplinary pilot study into the material culture of rural households based on the integrated analysis of excavated finds assemblages from rural sites in Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire and inventories drawn from royal records held in the National Archives (TNA), London. The paper focusses on three types of metalwork - vessels, tools and dress accessories, which are variously represented in the historical and archaeological records - to begin to understand the values and perceptions of these objects amongst rural communities in medieval England.⁶

ESCHEATORS' INVENTORIES

For the early modern period (c.AD 1500-c. AD 1800), studies of the possessions of ordinary households benefit from an abundance of surviving written sources, particularly probate inventories and wills.⁷ Such sources are not available in significant numbers for the medieval period. Probate inventories relating to non-elite rural individuals are very rare before c.1530.⁸ Those that do exist have already been used in important investigations of material culture.⁹ Wills (originals and register copies) survive in greater numbers before 1500 but their availability is much better for some regions than others, and in any case wills mention only a selection of the moveable property of the deceased.¹⁰ Inventories were occasionally preserved in manorial records (the *principalia* lists used by Field fall into this category) but, although these are valuable, they are rare and widely scattered across many archives.¹¹ Given that the scope for finding more probate and manorial inventories appears restricted, it is worthwhile seeking other written sources for studying material culture in this period. A key aim of the pilot study on which this article is based was thus to explore the utility of a previously unexplored and potentially much larger corpus of inventories, found in the records of a royal official called the escheator.

Each escheator was responsible for a county or group of counties called an escheatry. The crown exercised the right to seize the goods and chattels of felons (including suicides), fugitives and outlaws (for convenience the term 'felon' is used here for all these groups), and one of the escheator's responsibilities was to carry out such seizures within his escheatry. In certain circumstances the felon's goods and chattels were recorded, and a significant number of the resultant lists survive among the voluminous records of the escheator within the exchequer archive.

The details of the complex process of listing, valuing and seizing the felons' possessions are currently poorly understood by scholars. As has recently been noted, 'the history of the escheator's office has not yet been written'.¹² The escheator's duties were many, and such work as has been done has mostly focused on his responsibility for the feudal incidents owed by tenants in chief of the crown in the period before 1341.¹³ One aim of a projected larger investigation of household possessions is to deepen our understanding of the escheator's work in the area of felony forfeiture.¹⁴ However what is already clear is that the escheator was required to hold an inquest for each felon at which local juries listed the possessions of the person concerned and their value. A good example is the inquest into the property of William Hamptsshire of Great Marlow, 'pessoner' (fishmonger), held in that place on Saturday 15 December 1397. The document that records this inquest notes that it was held before Reginald Ragon, the king's escheator in Buckinghamshire, by virtue of a royal writ (a written instruction) directed to the escheator. Twelve sworn jurors are then named, followed by their listing of the goods and chattels that William possessed on the day of his suicide (by drowning in the Thames), plus their values. Crucially, the record explicitly states that *all* William's goods and chattels were forfeit to the king. The report of the inquest ends with a statement William had no further goods and chattels within the escheator's bailiwick.¹⁵ After such an inquest, the escheator was obliged to answer at the exchequer for

the value of the goods, which was apparently realised through their sale. These processes generated three separate yet related record series. The first is the escheators' files (TNA class E 153), which contain the records of individual inquests, though it is clear that the records of many inquests no longer survive in the files. The second series is the escheators' particulars of account (E 136), which consist usually of one roll per escheator per year. Finally there are the escheators' accounts (E 357), in which all the particulars of account for a group of years were enrolled in a single location. In order to find usable chattels lists or 'inventories', it is necessary to use all three record series in combination. Often, a particular inventory appears in identical form in all three record series. However, certain escheators' files were found to contain detailed lists of chattels which were not reproduced in the associated account, where only the total values of the chattels are given. Also, although the accounts and particulars seem usually to be identical, the particulars do sometimes include chattel lists which are omitted from the accounts.

It is important to emphasise that in most cases, the entries in the relevant sections of the accounts and particulars of account do not provide a list of each felon's goods but include only a statement of their total monetary value. In other instances, for reasons that are currently unclear, just one or two items for the felon are listed, and one suspects that this cannot represent the totality of his possessions. Our attention in this paper is restricted to a separate group of relatively rare instances where the record provides what appears to be a full record of the goods noted at the escheator's inquest. These fuller listings mostly seem to represent cases where the goods identified at the inquest had been withheld by local third parties and not released for sale. For instance, the inquest into the goods and chattels of William Hamptsshire of Great Marlow, cited above, ends with a note that the listed items have come into the hands of one John Monkedon, who is now answerable for them to the king. Furthermore, it is reassuring to find examples among the more detailed listings which

note where some of the goods had been sold for the crown's benefit, while other items were still withheld. Two such lists are among those considered in the discussion which follows.¹⁶ Given this practice of noting which appraised goods had been sold and which were still withheld, it is reasonable to treat inventories which do not mention a sale as complete lists of the items appraised by the juries

In what follows we analyse a selection of the detailed chattels lists gathered in a sampling of the three sets of escheators' records. Archival work focused on the counties of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire and on the period AD 1342-1527.¹⁷ Each of the three target counties almost always shared its escheator with a neighbouring county (Oxfordshire with Berkshire, Buckinghamshire with Bedfordshire, and Northamptonshire with Rutland), but while we located inventories relating to all six counties, with a few exceptions, the inventories investigated here relate to locations in the three target counties. We have concentrated on non-elite inventories from rural locations. However, a small number of chattels lists obviously pertaining to urban persons of non-elite status have also been collected in order to allow consideration of Goldberg's arguments concerning differences between peasant and 'bourgeois' value systems in this period.¹⁸

The sampling process concentrated primarily on the escheators' accounts. Forty accounts containing material on Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, all of them covering multiple years, are available for the period AD 1323-1550. The sections relating to our target counties were searched in eleven of these accounts. A smaller number of files and particulars of account were also searched. Of the 338 relevant escheators' files surviving for the period AD 1350-1485, 22 files relating to 18 different escheators were searched. Finally, we examined 26 separate particulars of account, which is a small proportion of the total of around 314 such items available for our target counties in the period AD 1350-1550. In sampling the files and particulars, we concentrated on years already

sampled via the accounts, in order to see whether we could locate additional inventories not in the accounts.¹⁹

This paper considers 33 lists of chattels identified in this restricted search (table 1), which clearly represent a very small proportion of such material potentially available in the escheators' records extant for the country as a whole. Attention is restricted here to lists which comprise three or more items. In most cases (31) these are ostensibly comprehensive lists of all items appraised at the escheator's inquest. In principle, few if any of the felon's goods were excepted from forfeiture to the crown.²⁰ However, in reality even these 31 lists may not be 'complete' inventories of all the felon's possessions, since it is possible that the juries ignored certain items, or that others were removed before the appraisal took place. As already noted, we also consider two instances (noted in table 1) where it is clear that only a selection of the goods appraised and valued are described.²¹ The 33 lists all date from the period AD 1357-1442. It appears that escheators, for reasons that are currently unclear, rarely returned information about felons' chattels before the 1360s or after the 1450s. The escheators' inventories thus have great potential to illuminate the period prior to that covered by the small number of surviving early probate inventories.

It is justifiable to question how representative this small sample of inventoried individuals are of the population as a whole. The people named in the escheators' records appear because they were associated with crime, and are therefore not an unbiased sample of the population. However, it is important to bear in mind that some of the inventoried persons had simply been accused of an offence, and had then fled or been outlawed following the accusation.²² They were not all convicted felons. Nonetheless, the late medieval felons' chattels lists are perhaps especially likely to capture members of poor and socially marginal groups. Equally, the wide range of total valuations of goods displayed in table 1 suggests that the examples we have relate to quite a broad spectrum of rural society. It is important to note

also that the sample includes not only persons mainly engaged in agriculture but also some rural craftsmen.

THE PILOT STUDY

The pilot study was designed to assess the potential of the integrated analysis of escheators' inventories and material culture excavated from rural sites of a similar date within the same region. In particular, we sought to identify patterns of convergence and divergence within the types of objects represented in the historical and archaeological record, and to begin to consider the social and economic significance of such patterns. Our analysis set out to assess whether such data could be used to address the following:

- Is it possible to begin to reconstruct the systems of value which underlie the production of inventories, and to what extent do inventory values relate to the social or economic value of objects at varying stages within their use-life?
- Does the commonly held assumption for the comparative lack of metal vessels in the archaeological record - that they were recycled - find any support in the way such vessels are included, described or valued within the inventory records?
- Are there instances where disposable income appears to have been spent on non-essential commodities, and can we begin to consider the social implications of such consumer choices?
- How do the inventories for rural settlements compare with those for towns, and can urban and rural value systems be identified?

In order to achieve these aims an archaeological dataset was collected through a rapid survey of late medieval rural sites within the study area (summarised in table 2). Data was extracted from published and unpublished site reports produced since 1975 (as earlier reports

rarely quantify data in a useable format).²³ Many of the sites were occupied for phases pre- or post- dating our study period. Therefore only objects dating from phases relating to the late 13th-16th centuries, or objects dated to this period on typological grounds, were included.²⁴ Efforts were made to ensure that objects recovered from village or farm, rather than manorial, sites were included, although the movement of waste and objects makes it impossible to be completely certain of the context of use of any specific object.²⁵ The approach to the analysis of this data is necessarily generalistic and further research into the themes to be addressed through this pilot study would require a more rigorous analysis of context, the circumstances of excavation and individual object biographies, which was not deemed appropriate at this stage. Therefore, for the purposes of this study the archaeological dataset can be considered as a sample of the rural material culture of the study area, which is likely to be representative in relation to the commonly encountered objects discussed.

SUMMARY OF THE DATASETS

A diverse range of artefacts was excavated from the archaeological sites considered (summarised in table 3). The focus of this paper is metalwork, as, other than animals, metal objects are the most abundant entries within the escheators' inventories. Subsequent discussion will focus upon the evidence for dress accessories, vessels and tools, which are the most numerous types within the archaeological dataset. Items of personal adornment, principally belt fittings (largely buckles), are particularly common.²⁶ The next largest group are items of jewellery (principally brooches and rings) with the remainder of the items consisting of footwear and miscellaneous fittings. Tools relating to a variety of tasks, principally agriculture, woodworking and textile working, were present. Although a variety of kitchen items, such as knives, ceramic pots and quern stones, were present, fragments of metal vessels were present only in small quantities.

The longest inventory in the sample – that of Thomas Wryght of Towcester - comprised some 25 different kinds of moveable item.²⁷ The shortest – that of John White of Lynford - consisted of just three cows, priced 4s each.²⁸ Overall, a wide range of items are listed in the inventories (for the presence and absence of key categories of goods, see table 1). The inventories list a diverse range of metal items including bronze pots and pans, as well as five ewers and basins and tools, principally relating to agriculture and woodworking. It is noticeable that no items of adornment are listed in the inventories, although it could be considered that these may not have been listed as separate objects, but considered as components of items of clothing, such as the three gowns listed.²⁹

Although not discussed here, it is worth highlighting that the inventories provide details of non-metal items, the presence of which in the rural home is worthy of future examination. These include items of furniture such as chairs (3 inventories), tables (5), benches (1) and beds (3; one of which is listed as being ‘blue in colour, and worked with birds’).³⁰ Textiles are also listed, in the form of linens (5), sheets (16), tablecloths (3; noticeably from inventories where tables are not listed) and towels (4). Entries also relate to agricultural produce and foodstuffs, including ‘grain’, wheat, barley, peas and salt. The majority of vessels listed in the inventories are of metal. Wooden vessels are rarely listed (3 inventories, only one of which itemises the vessels) and there is only one record relating to pottery (‘3 earthenware vessels’).³¹ It is clear therefore that the inventories and archaeological data present different, but overlapping, pictures of the goods consumed in the village household. Both demonstrate a range of tools were used, but provide contrasting information about kitchen equipment and items of adornment. It is these patterns of similarity and difference which form the focus of the remainder of this paper.³²

METAL VESSELS

The archaeological and historical records differ in the picture they present of metal vessels. From the seventeen archaeological sites considered, only 50 fragments of metal (copper alloy or iron) vessels were recovered. This contrasts with the inventory records where of the 33 inventories examined, at least one metal vessel was recorded in 21. The majority of these were listed as bronze pans (*patelle*) or pots (*olle*). It is most likely that these are cooking pots, but metal vessels were also used for other processes, such as brewing. The archaeological record would suggest that metal vessels were valued for their scrap value, being recycled, meaning that they are present in only minimal quantities on archaeological sites. In contrast to iron smelting, copper alloy working was probably a relatively small scale craft activity and recycling would have ensured that raw materials were obtained in the most economically expedient manner.³³

There is a good deal of variation in the valuations of the metal vessels listed in the inventories, suggesting that they were reached in a variety of ways. Pans vary in value from 2d to 4s 8d (or 56d), whilst pots vary from 7 ½ d to 13s 4d (or 160d) (table 4).³⁴ The inventories provide some clues as to the reasons for these variations. Some pans and pots are listed as ‘small’, whilst others are listed as ‘broken’, however these qualifications do not occur with valuations in a consistent enough manner in the present sample to confirm that these qualifications relate directly to a vessel’s value.³⁵ As indicated above, not all of the inventories relate to rural households, and it is noticeable that the highest valuation for pans, and two of the higher valuations for pots, appear in inventories from Oxford, Wallingford and Thame, suggesting perhaps that townspeople had access to higher quality metalwork or that the process of valuation varied between town and country (table 4).

The results of this study are similar to those of Field’s analysis of Worcestershire *principalia* lists, with copper alloy vessels being present in most households. An intriguing element of Field’s dataset is the presence of ewers and basins in two of the 29 inventories,

both relating to households of middling wealth.³⁶ These vessels are typically considered to relate to high status consumption, being associated with the rituals of handwashing and formal dining.³⁷ Dyer argues that their presence in ‘peasant’ inventories demonstrates that cleanliness was valued across medieval society and that handwashing was widely practiced.³⁸ No fragments associated with either metal ewers or basins were identified amongst the archaeological assemblages examined here.³⁹ However, three of the rural inventories contain these items, which are assumed to be of copper alloy on the basis of their valuation. We know nothing of the occupation or social status of the individuals to whom these inventories relate, however the total valuations of their goods are instructive. The inventories relate to William Moldesone of Langport (Northants), whose total valuation is the highest of the three at £5 0s 4d (the sixth highest of the 28 rural total valuations), William Smyth of Wolverton (Bucks) (£2 18s 7d; the ninth highest), and Nicholas Foscore of Cosgrave (Northants) (somewhat lower at £1 0s 5d; or sixteenth in the ranking of rural valuations). The valuations of the ewers and basins is relatively consistent between the inventories, with the lowest being 2s and the highest 3s 4d. These items appear similarly valued to copper alloy pots and pans and are not restricted to the very wealthiest rural households. They may, therefore, provide evidence of spending on non-essential commodities, indicating that households potentially had a degree of disposable income. This element of consumer choice is not identifiable within the archaeological record and is deserving of further research.⁴⁰

TOOLS

Woodworking tools are common from archaeological contexts (table 5), with the most frequently occurring types being chisels, files and wedges, all of iron.⁴¹ Interestingly, it is a different set of woodworking tools which feature in the inventories. Thomas Partrik, a carpenter of Bow Brickhill (Buckinghamshire) is listed as possessing a gimlet (drill bit), a knotter, a square (‘squier’) and a saw, as well as two axes.⁴² The 13th-14th centuries saw

developments in woodworking technology, and perhaps increased definition of the carpenter (and associated tradesmen such as joiners and turners) as a specialist craftsman.⁴³ Although woodworking tools are present in both the archaeological assemblages and the inventories, there is some variation in the items represented. Those tools listed in the inventories are largely specialist items, whereas the archaeological assemblages principally consist of what might be considered everyday tools, perhaps present in every home.⁴⁴ Perhaps it was only the specialist items which were considered of sufficient value or importance to be recorded in the inventory, as other tools were so ubiquitous that they were excluded from the inventorying process.

Tools associated with textile working are commonplace within the archaeological assemblage, with items such as spindle whorls, pins and awls being the most abundant finds.⁴⁵ These small, low-value items do not appear in the inventories. The inventory of John Tayllour of Coton (Northamptonshire) suggests that Tayllour was a husbandman involved in textile working. He is listed as possessing a spinning wheel and 7lbs of wool. Tayllour's is a particularly comprehensive inventory, listing a broken bronze pot for example, but makes no reference to smaller items associated with textile working, suggesting these may have been consciously ignored by the valuers.

Tayllour also undertook agriculture and is listed as possessing 8 rods of land sowed with peas and barley. It is perhaps unsurprising therefore that his inventory includes two sickles, a pitchfork and a scythe, as well as a cart and plough.⁴⁶ A pitchfork also appears in the inventory of the shepherd Geoffery Clomber.⁴⁷ A wider range of agricultural tools are present in the archaeological assemblages. Shears are the most common, and this is unsurprising given the quantity of sheep listed in the inventories from this region. Other tools present include 11 sickles, three spades and a pitchfork. No plough components are present in the archaeological sample, however they are present within the inventories.⁴⁸ John Tayllour

possessed a plough and harness (valued with a cart at 6s 4d), whilst Thomas Colyns possessed a ploughshare and a coulter (valued collectively with various household items).⁴⁹ John Longe possessed the harness and gear for two ploughs.⁵⁰ Ploughs are amongst the most highly valued agricultural tools and it is likely that iron components, such as the share and coulter, were repaired or recycled, accounting for their absence from archaeological deposits.⁵¹ It appears therefore, that with the exception of ploughs, there is a degree of conformity between the inventory and archaeological datasets in relation to agricultural equipment.

The evidence provided by tools is varied. On the one hand it appears that specialist woodworking tools and equipment associated with textile manufacture were perceived as valuable, but the smaller items, which are most common archaeologically and were probably commonplace in every home were not perceived as worthy of inclusion in the inventories. Agricultural hand tools appear in a limited number of inventories (associated with a shepherd and a husbandman), and the types present correspond well with the archaeological sample, with the exception of shears. The most obvious difference is in relation to ploughs, which were inventoried but are not present in the archaeological record. These expensive items most likely retained their value, whilst they may also have been considered suitable as scrap metal as they contained significant quantities of iron.

DRESS ACCESSORIES

A total of 349 dress accessories were recorded from the archaeological sites examined (fig 1). The bulk of these are belt fittings, the majority (226 of 256 items) of which are buckles. Whilst these fittings can be considered as functional items, recent studies demonstrate that both the decoration and materials of such items may have possessed some social significance in relation to the display of wealth or identity.⁵² Of the buckles recorded in

the current study, 74% were made of copper alloy, with the remainder being made of iron. Interestingly, in London for the period 1150-1400 around 60% of buckles were of copper alloy, with the remainder being of iron, with a small quantity of pewter/lead examples, indicating little difference between the materials used for these items in urban and rural contexts.⁵³ Other dress accessories present in the dataset are brooches, rings and pendants. Whilst plain brooches are likely to be functional, working as clothes fasteners, other jewellery may have had personal significance, for example as tokens of friendship or love.⁵⁴

No items of jewellery are listed in the inventories used in this study. This might in part be because all the inventories relate to men and items such as pendants may be more likely to have been worn by women, although men would still perhaps have required brooches to act as fasteners. It is possible that these items were not listed separately, but recorded as part of an item of clothing, although the only clothes recorded in the inventories are three gowns (*toge*). No belts are listed in the inventories, despite the fact that these were clearly common items. This perhaps has two simple explanations. The first is that simple belt fittings were clearly of low monetary worth as they were worn by villagers and therefore they may have fallen below the threshold for inclusion. Secondly, in instances where a felon was imprisoned or fled, they may have retained their belt, meaning that they were absent from the process of inventorying, demonstrating that we must exercise caution when considering why items may be absent from these lists. Because dress accessories do not feature in the inventories, they are not discussed further in any depth.

DISCUSSION: THE VALUE OF THINGS IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

The analysis presented thus far has demonstrated there to be similarities and differences between the escheator's inventories and the archaeological evidence from rural

sites. Metal vessels are ubiquitous in the inventories, but are largely absent from the archaeological record, whilst the opposite is true of dress accessories. Tools display a more complex pattern, whereby specific types of tool appear to feature in inventories. Whereas the archaeological record presents evidence for a variety of specialist and non-specialist tools, the inventories do tend towards recording tools associated with specific craft or agricultural functions. The presence of a plough and plough components in the inventories, as well as their absence from the archaeological record, emphasises the value, both monetary and functional, of these items, which are likely to have been repaired or recycled, rather than dumped, when broken.

Although archaeological objects are often studied in isolation from historical research, scholars working on rural non-elite material culture in this period have made attempts to examine the archaeological and documentary evidence side by side. Such work has shown patterns of convergence and divergence between the two records that are echoed in our comparison of finds evidence and escheators' inventories.⁵⁵ One obvious way of combining material and written evidence in this field has been to show how one source category can make up for gaps in the other, or provide a greater level of context in which the significance of items beyond their functional value might be appreciated.⁵⁶ However, an alternative approach, and one that is favoured here, is to interrogate the complex differences and similarities between the archaeological and documentary records – in this case the escheators' inventories – in a more ambitious fashion as a route to understanding the ways in which objects became meaningful to those who used them.

The question of how to go about integrating history and archaeology in the study of the Middle Ages has long vexed medieval archaeologists. The short-lived 'New Medieval Archaeology' of the 1980s and subsequent applications of post-processual thought to medieval material attempted to move away from using history as providing a framework for

archaeological interpretation, forcing archaeologists to interpret archaeological data on its own terms.⁵⁷ Post-processual thinking encouraged archaeologists to interpret artefacts as ‘texts’, which, if read in a contextualised manner can inform us about medieval ideologies and experiences.⁵⁸ Such an approach however introduces a problem, as it is reliant upon meaning becoming inscribed within an object to be read off. However, as we interact with objects they become meaningful in new ways. Furthermore, texts can also develop multiple meanings as they are utilised in practices. Therefore, rather than seeing material culture as text, it might be more appropriate to consider texts as a distinctive form of material culture, which both carry meaning, but also develop new meanings as they are drawn into social processes.⁵⁹

Such approaches have begun to be adopted by historical archaeologists working in the United States, where probate inventories are routinely used as source material in studies of 17th-19th century material culture.⁶⁰ As with our late medieval examples, there are a number of discrepancies between the archaeological and inventory records, principally in relation to vessels of metal, ceramic and wood. Rather than relating this solely to the low monetary value of such items, scholars argue that we must seek to understand the processes behind the formation of both the historical and archaeological records, and understand the relationships between these processes.⁶¹ Inventories provide a great deal of information about what elements of objects were valued by past society (eg colour, function, source),⁶² whilst the valuations listed give us an idea of the relative, if not the actual market, value of objects. Patterns of omission are as useful as patterns of inclusion however, particularly where variability is apparent. What is considered un-noteworthy in one situation may not be considered as such in another and therefore a simple link between monetary worth and the attention paid to an object cannot be drawn. Objects may be valued for the value of their material (eg as scrap metal) whilst the quantity and quality of objects in some households

may make the presence of lower value items noteworthy. The American example demonstrates that communities had particular systems of value which varied through space and time, with inventorying being but only one process through which value was defined. Therefore, by focusing on the processes through which the archaeological and historical records were co-formed we can develop a greater understanding of the systems of value which were established and played out in medieval society.⁶³

One way in which to develop such an approach is to consider inventorying as an episode in the ‘biography’ of the objects being recorded.⁶⁴ The historical and archaeological records capture objects at different stages in their biography; whereas the archaeologist encounters the object after it has been deposited, with previous stages being reconstructed through close analysis, the process of inventorying captures an object within its context of use, and forces a process of valuation upon it.⁶⁵ By studying patterns of similarity and difference in the historical and archaeological records we can better understand these episodes in the life history of an object and, furthermore, begin to consider how this process was connected to the wide range of interactions, in the workshop, the market and the home, through which objects were encountered, became meaningful and played a role in the social and economic lives of medieval people.

In assessing the significance of these patterns of similarity and difference we must consider the process of inventorying. As well as the seemingly unwritten rules applied by the escheators’ juries to valuation, some items were evidently overlooked in this process, perhaps the most obvious being dress accessories. These were common archaeologically, but may have been absent from the home at the time of inventorying as they were still being worn by the imprisoned or escaped felon. Other objects that we would expect to find in the household are also missing from the inventories, however, although in some cases the object may have been removed from the home prior to the escheator’s inquest, as suggested above. In

considering the systems of value in place for the compilation of early modern probate inventories studies indicate that a number of factors determine patterns of inclusion and exclusion, for example the social (as opposed to monetary) value of an object and the purpose of an inventory.⁶⁶ A useful means of thinking about this process is to adopt the approach of ‘thing theory’, derived from the work of Bill Brown.⁶⁷ Items can be considered as meaningful objects or as ‘things’, which merge into the background and go un-noticed. Things become objects as they are drawn into social engagements in which they become meaningful in relation to people, objects, materials and spaces. As such, the same item can become multiple objects, as it is drawn into different sets of social relationships, can lose its meaning as these relationships dissolve and, crucially, gain new meaning as it is drawn into new social relationships.

Fundamental to understanding the criteria used when compiling an inventory is the development of an appreciation for the motivations behind the formulation of these documents; whether they were intended as a record of the objects possessed, or rather, of the value of these goods and chattels. Patterns of inclusion and exclusion, as well as the manner in which objects are described and valued within the inventories offer clues to the criteria used and, therefore, which ‘things’ became enacted as ‘objects’ through the process of inventorying.⁶⁸ An example of this can be seen through a consideration of the recycling of copper alloy vessels and iron shod tools.

Scientific analysis and documentary sources show recycling to have been commonplace in medieval society, and demonstrate there to have been a market in scrap metal.⁶⁹ A recent study has also demonstrated how other objects found new value and meaning through re-use, for example pot sherds being fashioned into objects such as spindle whorls or gaming pieces.⁷⁰ The evidence for recycling demonstrates that objects retained a value beyond their function. Whilst a damaged object may have retained its functional worth

within a household, inventorying offered an opportunity for its value to be reconfigured.

Although we currently understand little of the criteria used by the escheator or local juries when compiling an inventory, the process can perhaps be seen as capturing the transition of a metal object to a resource for recycling. Within the inventories objects are identified by their material and function, but condition is also noted, suggesting that this was of relevance in the negotiation of its value.⁷¹ Given the variability in the valuations of metal vessels in the inventories, we might consider whether any vessel once reclaimed by the lord or crown would have been reused for its functional purpose, or whether by being included in an inventory, we are in fact seeing a process of renegotiation as the object is drawn out of the domestic context where it found utility into a new context where it was most valuable as scrap.

Whereas it was perhaps the material of the ubiquitous copper alloy pots which was perceived as being of value, it may have been the function and craftsmanship of specialist tools which was valued. There is some debate over the availability of iron in this period. Whilst it was clearly available, archaeological evidence suggests smithies to have been controlled by seigniorial elites. The key difference is that iron shod tools are present in the archaeological record, whereas copper alloy vessels are comparatively rare. Iron shod tools are valued highly in manorial records (although there are few valuations in the current set of inventories), further supporting the idea that their utility and function may have been taken into account by the escheators' juries.⁷² Whereas the inventorying of a tool might be seen as capturing its functional value and utility, we might consider whether the inventorying of a copper alloy vessel marks a transitional episode in the biography of these objects, where they ceased to be enacted as vessels and become valued as something else altogether. Further analysis of a larger sample of inventory records may help us to better understand this process,

and how the values reached through this process relate to other sets of values (both economic and social) held within medieval society as a whole.

Further complications arise in relation to tools. Items such as needles, which are common archaeologically, do not feature in inventories, remaining as background ‘things’ as they were not enacted. Whilst this may relate to their low monetary worth, it is perhaps also worth considering their lack of re-sale value and their ubiquity in the rural home. In contrast iron agricultural and specialist tools had a functional value. They could be re-sold, recycled or even be re-used on the demense. Furthermore, in the early modern period some specialist wood working tools appear to have been imported and purchased at annual markets, rather than being produced locally. If this was the case in the Middle Ages the scarcity and novelty value of these items may have been a consideration in their valuation.⁷³ Such patterns of presence and absence may hold the key to understanding the criteria used in the production of inventories, whether as a record of objects, or of value.

It is unclear whether the same criteria were used by escheators across a region or the country as a whole and through time, and currently our sample of inventories is too small to make such a judgement. We can, however, compare our sample of rural inventories with urban examples, to consider whether similar systems of value existed within town and country. Such questions have been approached using both historical and archaeological evidence. Geoff Egan concluded that it was not possible to identify particular ‘rural’ material culture (although some items may be considered particularly ‘urban’), but rather issues such as social status underpin the distribution of metalwork between site types⁷⁴. Examining inventories from late medieval towns, Jeremy Goldberg has argued that villagers and town dwellers had different systems of value and uses inventories to argue that town dwellers used certain objects to develop a ‘bourgeois’ identity.⁷⁵ Whilst town dwellers invested in luxury items, for rural people a higher quantity of household assets consisted of animals and farming

equipment. In particular, Goldberg takes the presence of silver spoons to be a key indicator of wealth within urban communities and it is therefore unsurprising that only one appears in one of the inventories collected in the current study, that of William Hampttshire, a fishmonger from Great Marlow.⁷⁶ It is likely that this is, in fact, an urban inventory, as the parish of Great Marlow included the town of Marlow, as well as surrounding hamlets and this is supported by the fact that Hampttshire has a defined trade.

Goldberg argues that the key difference between urban and rural communities is that whereas town dwellers could rely on the market, rural communities had to focus their expenditure on the items which would help them to produce a surplus.⁷⁷ This is reflected in the high quantity of tools and animals listed in the rural inventories, and the comparative lack of luxuries such as furnishings. This pattern is also reflected within the current dataset. Two of the urban inventories, those of John Cawode of Thame and William Waldram, a labourer from Oxford, include sets of pewter dishes.⁷⁸ These are absent from the rural inventories and, like silver spoons, may have acted as a form of savings, a role which in the rural context, would more usefully have been fulfilled by the acquisition of stock. As discussed above, the inventories also provide some indication that systems of value varied between town and country, based on the variation in the value of pots and pans. Whilst this may relate to the quality of these vessels, our currently undeveloped understanding of the process of inventorying may mask some difference in the criteria used by the escheators' juries in an urban context, for example they may have perhaps been valued for re-sale in the town market, rather than as scrap.

Both the inventories gathered through this study and the archaeological dataset demonstrate, however, that the rural population did occasionally invest disposable income in metal goods. Archaeologically this is apparent through the presence of copper alloy and iron dress accessories and within the inventories through the presence of ewers and basins. The

social significance of this investment offers fruitful ground for further study into the aspirations and values of medieval society, as has also been demonstrated by Dyer's argument that decorated pottery and other elaborate objects from rural sites indicate that peasants had some spending power (also supported by increasing numbers of coin finds from rural locations) and 'acquired a mentality of individual improvement'.⁷⁹ The collection of a larger sample of inventories and the comparison of urban and rural archaeological assemblages should allow for the development of a greater understanding of the consumption habits of medieval households. These habits are likely to be highly complex and extend beyond the emulation of elite dress and potentially reveal concealed attitudes held by the medieval wider population, for example as potentially demonstrated by the presence of ewers and basins which may be indicative of the importance of cleanliness and hygiene.⁸⁰ We may, for example, be seeing evidence for the adoption of urban value systems identified by Goldberg amongst the wealthier members of the rural population, who may have chosen to invest in ewers and basins in a similar manner to the silver spoons and pewter plate discussed above, supporting Egan's conclusions regarding the relationship between urban and rural artefact assemblages.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This pilot study set out to assess the potential for interdisciplinary analysis of escheators' inventories and archaeological material culture. The study has shown that this potential is considerable, especially since we have used here only a very small proportion of the escheators' inventories believed to be extant. Through analysis of patterns of inclusion and exclusion it has been possible to begin to consider the criteria and considerations which underpinned a specific medieval value system. It has been proposed that inventorying was a process which could mark the transition in the life history of metal objects, particularly in relation to recycling. The qualitative descriptions of metal vessels and the variation in the

valuations of these objects may provide further evidence for recycling, and, given the scarcity of metal vessels in the archaeological record, we can begin to see inventorying as a process which has a bearing upon the formation of the archaeological record. By exploring the intersection between the process through which the documents were formed and the biographies of the objects being recorded, we can begin to develop a deeper understanding of the place of objects in medieval society. We can consider, for example, that certain specialist tools seem to have been highly prized, whereas others appear to have been too ubiquitous to warrant mention in the inventories. The study has also supported previous suggestions of differences in the value systems held and practiced by urban and rural communities. Continued analysis of a larger sample of inventories and archaeological data will permit further consideration of the differences in the values held by urban and rural communities, and how such perceptions of the worth of objects may have varied both regionally and through time. The archaeological evidence of dress accessories and the entries of ewers and basins in rural inventories does suggest some investment of disposable income in non-essential commodities. Clearly there is scope for the continued analysis of these sources as evidence for the consumption choices of rural communities, and to understand the social significance of these choices. Inventories can be considered a form of material culture in themselves. They develop through social engagement in the act of inventorying, a process through which the meanings of things are re-formulated as their values are judged against unwritten criteria. By exploring patterns of inclusion and exclusion we can not only better understand these value judgements but also consider differences in the ways in which things were valued between communities and through time.

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Figure Captions:

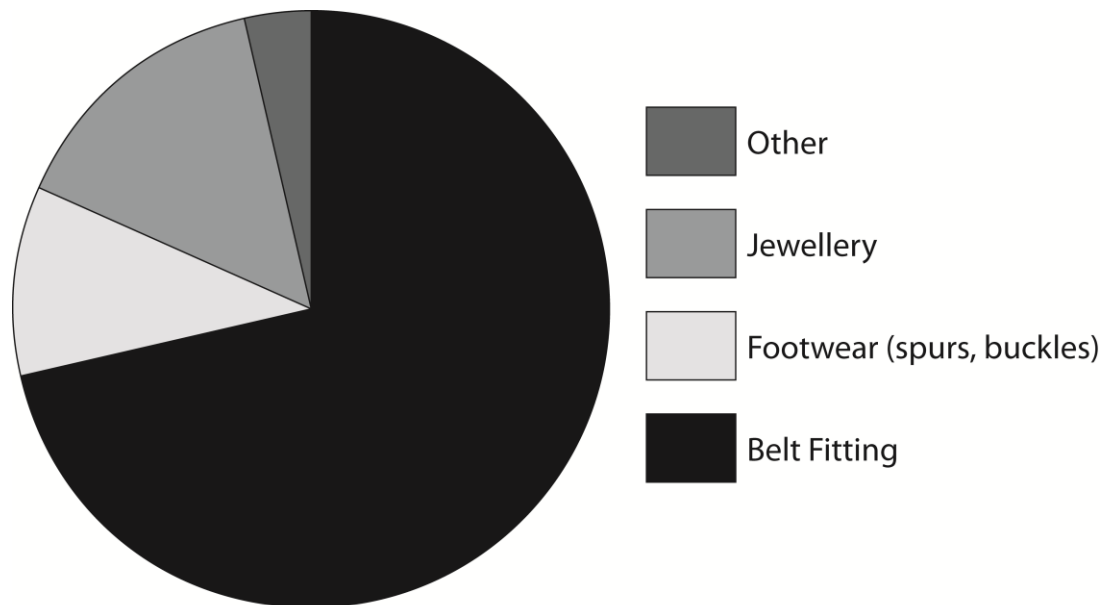


FIG 1

Pie chart illustrating the presence of dress accessories by type within the archaeological assemblage. Drawing: Ben Jervis.

Table Captions

TABLE 1

Inventories from the escheators' accounts and files used in this study 1371-1447.

Sources: All references are to documents in The National Archives (TNA). 1: E 357/7, m.2r; 2: E 357/27, m.4r; 3-4: E 357/27, m. 32r; 5: E 357/28, mm. 50d-51r ; 6: E 357/35, m. 148d; 7-8: E 357/35, m. 149r; 9: E 153/1264 no. 5; 10: E 153/1264 no. 6; 11: E 153/1264 no. 7; 12: E 153/488B, no. 2; 13: E 153/488B, no. 3; 14: E 153/488B, no. 7; 15: E 153/1289, no.1; 16: 153/1289, no.3; 17-22: E 136/11/27; 23-5: E 136/19/2; 26-7: E 136/176/1; 28: E 136/150/1; 29: E 357/13, m. 30r; 30: E 357/35, m. 148d; 31: E 153/1264, no. 8; 32-3: E 136/176/1.

Notes: ^a Although the total valuation of all Arderne's seized goods are given, the inventory lists only a selection of these (sheep, oxen and cows).

^b Although the total valuation of all Saundres' seized goods are given, the inventory lists only a selection of these (mainly household utensils). Total valuation of his goods excludes large sums of cash belonging to Saundres, plus debts owed to him.

TABLE 2

Summary of the archaeological excavations from which the material studied is derived. Note that the excavators' terminology has been used to define phases as 'medieval' in some instances.

TABLE 3

Summary of the metal small finds from the archaeological excavations considered. See table 2 for details of the sites and material included.

TABLE 4

Valuations of brass/bronze pots and pans in inventories of felons' chattels from a sample of escheator's records, 1371-1447

TABLE 5

The presence of tools within the archaeological assemblages studied.

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>landholding</i>	<i>Animals?</i>	<i>Grain and fodder?</i>	<i>Farming equipment?</i>	<i>Craft equipment?</i>	<i>Household goods?</i>	<i>Total valuation</i>
<i>Rural inventories</i>											
1	John Smyth	Foxcote, Bucks	1371-2	Parson	None stated	Y	Y	N	N	Y	£16 5s 4d
2	John White	Linford, Bucks	1422-3	None stated	None stated	Y	N	N	N	N	15s
3	John Arderne ^a	Quinton, Northants	1422-3	None stated	One messuage 12 acres of land and 10 rods meadow	Y	N	N	N	N	£13 5s 3d
4	Thomas Colyns	Northants, no exact location	1422-3	None stated	None stated	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	£6
5	John Saundres ^b	Sibford Magna, Oxon	1424-6	None stated	None stated	N	Y	N	Y	Y	£4 3s 6d
6	John Priour	Gayton, Northants	1430	Husbandman	None stated	Y	N	N	N	Y	£1 8s 8d
7	John Hendes	Hartwell, Northants	1438-9	Husbandman	None stated	Y	N	N	N	Y	£1 16s 8d
8	Thomas Partrik	Bow Brickhill, Bucks	1440	Carpenter	None stated	N	N	N	Y	Y	£4 13s 8d
9	John Longe	Little Casterton and Pynwell, Rutland	1397-9	Cobbler (<i>sutor</i>)	None stated	N	Y	Y	N	N	£43 11s 8d
10	John Tayllour	Coton, Northants	1397-9	None stated	8 rods of land sown with peas & barley	Y	Y	Y	Y	y	£2 11s 8d
11	Geoffrey Clomber	?Gedington, Northants	1397-9	Herde (i.e. shepherd)	2 rods land sown with peas	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	£1 10s 0d
12	William Bryd	Tingewick, Bucks	1422-3	None stated	None stated	Y	Y	N	N	N	19s 2d
13	Thomas atte ?	? Magna, Bucks	1422-3	None stated	None stated	Y	N	N	N	Y	No valuations
14	John Scot	Wing, Bucks	1422-3	None stated	3 selions barley	N	Y	N	Y	Y	13s 2d

15	John Shirborne	Aynho, Northants	1424-6	Husbandman	1 messuage 1 virgate of land	Y	N	N	N	Y	15s 2d
16	Nicholas Foscole	Cosgrove, Northants	1424-6	None stated	None stated	Y	N	N	N	Y	£1 0s 5d
17	William Moldesone	Lamport, Northants	1371-2	None stated	None stated	Y	Y	N	N	Y	£5 0s 4d
18	Ralph Parchemen	Northants, no exact location	1371-2	None stated	None stated	N	N	N	Y	Y	17s 6d
19	William Russel	Catesby, Northants	1371-2	None stated	None stated	N	Y	N	N	Y	4s 4d
20	William Duk	Hellidon, Northants	1371-2	None stated	None stated	N	Y	N	N	N	15s
21	Henry Beek	Farthingstone, Nothants	1371-2	None stated	None stated	Y	N	N	N	Y	£2 14s 4d
22	John Shephirde	?Ketton, Rutland	1371-2	None stated	1 cottage and 1 acre of land	Y	Y	N	N	Y	£6 14s
23	Richard Cooupere	Milnho, Beds	1419-20	None stated	None stated	Y	Y	N	N	Y	£1 0s 10d
24	William Smyth	Wolverton, Bucks	1419-20	None stated	3 acres wheat	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	£2 18s 7d
25	William Fynchamstead	Eton, Bucks	1419-20	None stated	None stated	N	N	N	N	Y	16s 8d
26	William Harry	Little Milton, Oxon	1419-20	Husbandman	None stated	Y	Y	N	N	Y	8s 4d
27	William Fleccher	Crowell, Oxon	1419-20	Husbandman	None stated	Y	N	N	N	Y	13s. 2½d
28	Richard West	Watford, Northants	1446-7	Husbandman	None stated	Y	N	Y	N	Y	9s

Urban inventories

29	William Hamptsshire	Great Marlow, Bucks	1397-9	Fishmonger	None stated	Y	Y		N	Y	£10 10s.
30	William Waldram	Oxford	1440	Labourer	None stated	N	N	N	N	Y	£3 10s 8d
31	Thomas Wryght alias Carpenter	Towcester	1397-9	None stated	None stated	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	£5 10s

32	John Cawode	Thame	1419-20	Chapman	None stated	Y	N	N	N	Y	12s 9d
33	John Chaloner	Wallingford	1441-2	Husbandman	None stated	Y	N	N	N	Y	£1 3s 1d

Table 1

Site	Notes	Reference
<i>Bedfordshire</i>		
Marston Moretaine	Five phases of medieval activity were identified, largely relating to arable agriculture. Material from phases 2-6 (12 th -16 th centuries) included.	Crick 1999
<i>Buckinghamshire</i>		
143 Buckingham Road, Bletchley Caldecotte	A 13 th -16 th century croft boundary and related activity was excavated. Material from phase 1 (13 th -16 th century) included.	Newton and Sparrow 2009
	Excavations within the medieval village identified a number of structural and associated features, dating from the 13 th -15 th centuries. Material from phase 2 (medieval) included.	King et al 1994
Chichley Hall	A number of ditched features and pits were excavated, revealing a small quantity of material culture. It has been suggested the site is related to a manorial centre. Material from phase 1 (1150-1500) included.	Phillips 2012
Great Linford	Substantial excavations of a deserted village site, revealing evidence of multiple buildings and associated features of 12 th -15 th century date. Finds of medieval date included.	Mynard and Zeepvat 1991
Loughton	Ditched field boundaries, pits and structural features were found in association with earthworks, dating from the mid 13 th -late 15 th century. Material from phase 4b (mid 13 th -late 15 th centuries) included.	Pine 2003
Tattenhoe	Nucleated settlement, where a number of structures and associated features were excavated. The settlement was at its peak in the 13 th -14 th centuries, declining in the 15 th , before being abandoned. Material from period 2 (late 13 th to early 16 th centuries) included.	Ivens et al 1995

Walton	Excavations within a deserted medieval village revealed evidence of a modest settlement of 12 th -15 th century date. The settlement was in decline from the 14 th century. Material from phase 3 (1250-1500) included.	Wardill et al 2012
Westbury	Dispersed settlement. A number of structures and associated features were investigated. As with the neighbouring settlement of Tattenhoe, the settlement was at its peak in the 13 th -14 th centuries and had been abandoned by the 16 th . An unusually large open area excavation took place, investigating around 75% of the earthworks. Material from period 5 included (13 th -16 th centuries).	Ivens et al 1995
<i>Hertfordshire</i>		
Caldecote	5 crofts were excavated, providing evidence of peasant structures and a range of associated activity and material culture. The site was largely dependent on arable farming and was deserted by the 17 th century. Material from phases 3-4 (12 th -14 th centuries) included.	Beresford 2009
<i>Northamptonshire</i>		
Lime St., Irthlingborough	Excavations identified a number of pits and ditch features of 12 th -13 th century date, with substantial buildings relating to a farm being constructed in the 14 th century. This may be a manorial farm, but there are no distinctively high status finds amongst the assemblage. All finds of later medieval date included.	Chapman et al 2003
Raunds	A major excavation project examined a medieval manor in detail. The excavation focussed on the evolution of Furnells Manor, but the data selected here is from two lower status sites at Berrystead and Langham Road. Medieval finds included.	Chapman and Audoy 2008
Southwick	A medieval building was excavated, associated with evidence for iron working. Material from phases 1-6 (1250-1500) included.	Johnston et al 2001

West Cotton	Nearly half of the deserted medieval hamlet was excavated, with a number of peasant tenements being excavated. The site was gradually deserted from the 14 th century. Medieval (1250-1400) material included.	Chapman 2010
<i>Oxfordshire</i>		
Lewkner	Three structures, trackways and evidence of land division was recorded during the construction of the M40 motorway. The site dates from the 13 th -14 th centuries and therefore all excavated finds are included.	Chambers 1974
Old Grimsbury	Occupation from the 12 th century onwards was identified, including a number of ditch features and postholes. Agricultural buildings dating from the late 13 th century were identified. Material from phases 3-5 (13 th -17 th centuries) included.	Hardy 2001
Seacourt	Extensive excavations revealed evidence of the deserted medieval village and recovered a large assemblage of finds. The site has been included despite its early publication date due to the wide range of objects which have been recovered and published, however, the date of this excavation means that re-analysis would prove fruitful. Finds of later medieval date included.	Biddle 1962

Table 2

<i>Site Name</i>	<i>Dress Accessory</i>			<i>Kitchen Equipment</i>		<i>Agricultural</i>	<i>Tool</i>			<i>Other Metal Object</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>Belt fitting</i>	<i>Jewellery</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Other</i>		<i>Leather/Textile Working</i>	<i>Woodworking</i>	<i>Other</i>		
143 Buckingham Road, Bletchley			1		1					3	5
Caldecote	6		3	1	8	5	1	1	3	13	41
Caldecotte (Bucks)	6	4	3	1	2				1	3	20
Chicheley Hall			1								1
Great Linford	14	3	8	6	11	2	9	5	1	32	91
Lewknor, Oxfordshire										3	3
Lime Street, Irthlingborough	2									9	11
Loughton	4		2		2			1	1	3	13
Marston Moretaine									1	2	3
Old Grimsbury, Banbury					2					2	4
Raunds (Burystead and Langham Rd)	7	2	3			1				6	19
Seacourt	7	8	5	2	11	3		4	2	34	76
Southwick	2	1	1							3	7
Tattenhoe, Milton Keynes	38	2	2	19	10	1	7		1	32	112
Walton			1							6	7
West Cotton	34	23	5	1	63	7	44	21	11	798	1007
Westbury, Milton Keynes	136	8	7	20	76	22	23	12	3	122	429
Grand Total	256	51	42	50	186	41	84	44	24	1071	1849

Table 3

<i>Inventory no. (see table 1)</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Valuation of unit, in pence (d.) (as given, or estimated)</i>
<i>POTS</i>		
6	1 brass pot	40
7	1 brass pot	160
15	1 small brass pot	16
16	1 brass pot	24
17	1 brass pot	40
18	1 brass pot	60
19	1 brass pot	20
21	1 brass pot	24
23	1 brass pot and 1 posnet, 20d.	<20
24	2 brass pots, 15d.	7.5
29	1 brass pot	57
30	2 brass pots, 3s 4d each	40
32	1 brass pot of 2 gallons	20
33	2 brass pots, 4s 6d	27
<i>PANS</i>		
6	1 brass pan	48
10	1 small pan	20
14	1 small pan	2
15	2 small brass pans, 2s.	12
16	1 brass pan	36
17	2 brass pans, 5s.	30
18	2 pans, 5s.	30
23	1 pan	6
30	2 brass pans, 4s 8d each	56
32	1 brass pan of 3 gallons	40
33	2 small brass pans, 4s	24

Sources: see Table 1.

Note: Table only includes cases where individual values for pots and pans are given in the document, or an approximate value can be estimated. Where a total value for two pots or pans is given, each pot or pan is assumed to have been worth half of the total. **Table 4**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Artefact Name</i>	<i>Total</i>
Agricultural Tool	Pitchfork	1
	Shears	22
	Sickle	11
	Spade	3
	Weed Hook	4
<i>Agricultural Tool Total</i>		<i>41</i>
Woodworking Tool	Chisel	13
	File	2
	Gauge	1
	Nail Lifter	1
	Saw	1
	Scoop	1
	Spoon Bit	1
	Wedge	3
	Woodworking Tool	1
<i>Woodworking Tool Total</i>		<i>44</i>
Leather/Textile Working	Awl	26
	Creaser	2
	Needle	5
	Pin	21
	Scissors	4
	Spindle Whorl	19
	Thimble	4
	Woolcomb	3
<i>Leather/Textile Working Total</i>		<i>84</i>

Table 5

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⁴ Field 1965.

⁵ Work by Christopher Dyer is the most notable exception: Dyer 2009; 2012a; 2012b; 2013, 2014. Other work which attempts to combine archaeological and inventory data to study peasant possessions includes Hanawalt 1989; Goldberg 2008, Briggs in press.

⁶ A consideration of the value of ceramics, largely absent from these documents, has also been undertaken, and has been published elsewhere (Jervis 2014, 36-50).

⁷ Eg Weatherill 1996; Overton et al 2004.

⁸ Dyer 2013, 20.

⁹ Especially Goldberg 2008; Dyer 2013, which both rely heavily on a group of around 50 probate inventories from the diocese of York, printed in Stell 2006. Pre-1500 probate inventories from the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (TNA class PROB 2) are also available, but only about 12 are extant from the period before 1480.

¹⁰ Dauteuille 2005, 28-35; Orme 2007, 1-11.

¹¹ For a discussion see Briggs, in press.

¹² Deller 2012, 208.

¹³ See especially Stevenson 1947; Bean 1968; Waugh 1988.

¹⁴ Kesselring 2009 is an important work on this topic covering a longer period.

¹⁵ TNA, E 153/467, no. 7; see also E 357/13, m. 30r.

¹⁶ See Table 1: TNA, E 357/28, m. 50d (John Saundres of Sibford Magna, Oxfordshire); E 357/27, m. 32r (John Arderne of Quinton, Northamptonshire).

¹⁷ The archival work was undertaken by Matthew Tompkins.

¹⁸ Goldberg 2008.

¹⁹ We also searched a related class of records described as ‘miscellaneous inventories’ (TNA class E 154), but as we found few usable inventories this material is ignored here

²⁰ Kesselring 2009, 207-8

²¹ The two exceptions are the lists of Saundres and Arderne.

²² For example, the land and goods of John Arderne of Quinton were forfeited because he was indicted of diverse felonies, and had fled; TNA, E 357/27, m. 32r.

²³ An exception is Seacourt for which the report (Biddle 1962) presents an exceptional corpus of finds.

²⁴ Due to the wide date ranges of phases at some sites it was not possible to correlate the archaeological deposits with the inventories more accurately.

²⁵ See Standley 2013, 9 for a summary of issues associated with datasets of small finds from medieval rural sites.

²⁶ This result corresponds well with Sally Smith’s (2009) examination of peasant dress accessories in the north of England.

²⁷ TNA, E 153/1264, no. 8. Thomas possessed one two-gallon pan, two brass pots, one old basin with ewer, three wrights’ axes, four wimbles [ie gimlets] with one hatchet, two old coverlets, three sheets, one meat cloth, one small towel, two *whu’les* [currently unidentified], one salt cellar [*saltsaler*], two old arks [ie chests], one chair, one table without trestles, two tubs, one old vat [*fat*], one parcel of barley and peas in sheaves, one mare, one heifer, one ‘nude’ cart [ie with plain wooden wheels] with harness, and eight hoggets [yearling sheep].

²⁸ TNA, E 153/488B, no. 4.

²⁹ The gowns belonged to Thomas Partrik (TNA, E 357/35, m. 149r) and William Fynchamstead (two gowns; E 136/19/2).

³⁰ *..unius lecti debilis blodii coloris operat' cum avibus precii iiis. iiid....* (TNA, E 136/176, m.6r). See Dyer (in press) for a discussion of furniture in rural homes

³¹ Although it is possible the salt cellar in the inventory of Thomas Wryght of Towcester is of ceramic, rather than metal; see note 26 above.

³² Albarella 1999 has drawn attention to similar patterns of similarity and dissimilarity between the archaeological and historical records in relation to animal husbandry in the Medieval period.

³³ Goodall 1981, 63

³⁴ John Scot of Wing had a 'small pan' valued at 2d (TNA, E 153/488B, no. 7); William Waldram of Oxford, labourer, had two brass pans worth 4s 8d each (E 357/35, m. 148d); William Smyth of Wolverton had two brass pots valued at 15d (E 136/19/2); and John Hendes of Hartwell had a brass pot valued at 13s 4d (E 357/35, m. 149r).

³⁵ References to 'old' or 'broken' pots and pans: Geoffery Clomber, probably of Gedington, had 2 'old' brass pans and 1 broken brass pot valued collectively at 3s 9d (TNA, E 153/1264 no. 7; this example is excluded from Table * because the values of the individual vessels cannot be estimated). John Tayllour of Coton had a 'broken brass pot' in addition his little pan, valued at 20d: E 153/1264 no. 6

³⁶ Ewers and basins are also present in the probate inventories of the diocese of York dated 1427-1507 and relate to wealthier members of a group Dyer (2013, 20) refers to as peasants.

³⁷ See Lewis et al 1987; Verhaege 1991; Redknapp 2010 for further discussion of this vessel type.

³⁸ Dyer 2013, 22. Note, that this contrasts with Hinton's argument (2010, 103) that the general absence of ewers and aquamanile from village sites suggests that the peasantry had

no such interest and that where they do occur such vessels are likely to have been considered more akin to elaborate serving vessels. A comprehensive survey of handwashing related material culture in archaeological and documentary sources is required to fully understand the significance of these vessels.

³⁹ It should be noted that examples of ewers have been reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme (www.finds.org.uk). For example: Oxfordshire (BERK-SB69D3; BERK-6CF4F0; SUR-1B3AC1; BERK-EA1383; LANCUM-CD9471; BERK-135A64) and Buckinghamshire (BUC-919BA5; BUC-401B44; BUC400C21; BUC-D64864). However, as metal detected finds these are out of context and it is not possible to ascertain the kind of household in which they were consumed.

⁴⁰ It should be noted that ceramic aquamanile, believed to be ceramic versions of metal ewers, were produced in the study area (see, for example, Nenk and Walker 1991), but none were present amongst the assemblages used in this study.

⁴¹ See Goodall 2011, chapter 3 for a summary of the woodworking tools found from archaeological contexts.

⁴² TNA, E 357/ 35, m. 149r.

⁴³ Walker 1982, 355; Munby 1991, 386-9 has reviewed the historical evidence for the carpentry trade.

⁴⁴ Possible specialist tools present in the archaeological dataset might include a bit from Walton, Buckinghamshire and a gouge bit from Seacourt, Oxfordshire: Goodall 2011, 36.

⁴⁵ See Goodall 2011 chapter 5 for a summary of iron textile working tools from medieval sites.

⁴⁶ TNA, E 153/1264, no. 6.

⁴⁷ E 153/1264 no. 7.

⁴⁸ Only 2 dated later medieval plough coulter are known from excavations in England, both from London: Goodall 2011, 77. Goodall only publishes 1 dated ploughshare from the study period, from Huish, Wiltshire (Goodall 2011, 84), demonstrating the general rarity of these items from archaeological contexts.

⁴⁹ TNA, E 153/1264 no. 6; E 357/27, m. 32r.

⁵⁰ TNA, E 153/1264 no. 5.

⁵¹ See also Dyer 2014, 11.

⁵² Smith 2009; Willemsen 2012, 184.

⁵³ Egan and Pritchard 1991, 21; See also Smith 2009.

⁵⁴ See Standley 2013, chapter 3.

⁵⁵ For example Dyer 2013 begins to explore the significance of discrepancies between the historical and archaeological records and Albarella (1999) considers similar issues from an archaeozoological viewpoint.

⁵⁶ The majority of recent work falls into this category, for example Hinton 2005; Smith 2009; Gilchrist 2012; Standley 2013.

⁵⁷ Rahtz 1983; Hodges 1983; Austin 1990; See McClain 2012 for a recent review of the development of theoretical approaches in later medieval archaeology.

⁵⁸ Driscoll 1984, 109; Arnold 1986, 37; Austin 1990, 34-5.

⁵⁹ Andrén 1998, 145-6; Moreland 2006, 139.

⁶⁰ For example Beaudry 1988a; Beddel 2000; Brown 1988; Hodge 2006.

⁶¹ Brown 1988.

⁶² Beaudry 1988a.

⁶³ Interdisciplinary is used here in the sense defined by Nancy Wicker (1999) to refer specifically for research focused upon the connections between disciplines.

⁶⁴ Kopytoff 1986; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Mytum 2010. See also Gerrard 2007; Gilchrist 2012; Wheeler 2012; Standley 2013 for applications within medieval archaeology.

⁶⁵ See Tabaczynski 1993.

⁶⁶ Martin 1989; Beddel 2000, 238; Hodge 2006.

⁶⁷ Brown 2001.

⁶⁸ We might also consider that certain items were noticed but intentionally not drawn into the act of inventorying, potentially being enacted as ‘non-objects’; See Jervis 2014 for an attempt at developing such a concept in relation to the absence of pottery from inventories.

⁶⁹ See for example: Heyworth 1991, 394-5 on dress accessories from London; Quinn 1937, 21; 28.

⁷⁰ Wheeler 2012.

⁷¹ See examples cited in note 34.

⁷² Astill 1997, 209-11.

⁷³ Fleming 2012, 115.

⁷⁴ Egan 2005, 205-6.

⁷⁵ Goldberg 2008.

⁷⁶ Goldberg 2008, 135; TNA, E 153/467, no. 7.

⁷⁷ Goldberg 2008, 130.

⁷⁸ It should be noted that Cawode’s occupation is ‘chapman’ and therefore some of the items in his inventory may be stock rather than personal possessions, however with the exception of the pewter dishes his possessions are limited to a horse, a bullock and 2 brass pots.

⁷⁹ Dyer 2014, 19; See also Smith 2009 on the use of dress accessories by medieval peasants; Hinton 2005, 209; Hinton 2010 on coins.

⁸⁰ See also Smith 2009 on the possibility that objects were used by the peasantry to develop ‘resistant’ identities.