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Rooms and room use in Norwich housing, 1580–1730

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SUMMARY: *The search for 'total history', combined with improvements in flexible computer techniques, has focused fresh analytical attention upon multiform documentary records relating to everyday living and working conditions. Prominent among such sources, for the early modern period of English history, are probate inventories. Their richly detailed and intricate contents are now under renewed scrutiny for many purposes. This survey looks briefly at the general problems highlighted by one batch of urban inventories; and analyses detailed evidence relating to rooms and their use, in the housing of the city of Norwich, 1580–1730. Investigation of 871 surviving inventories yields information about the number of rooms per house (and their heating), plus a survey of room use, as inferred from location of furnishings. These findings illuminate conditions of urban housing, suggest a developing specialisation in room use, and illustrate the manifold complexities of room nomenclature. The study was undertaken for the Norwich Survey, to collate the documentary with the archaeological record. Although it did not prove possible to match inventories directly with surviving seventeenth-century buildings in Norwich, the general picture confirmed the archaeological evidence—especially in showing considerable reorganisation and subdivision of housing in the later seventeenth century.*[1]

Although the concept of total history is not the same as the history of everything, the desire for the former has rightly stimulated interest in the latter. No subject has become too mundane for serious scholarly research and scrutiny. The broadening of interest to include the ordinary daily life and private history of past societies has opened up many new perspectives; but it has also demonstrated the paucity of surviving source materials, and the manifold difficulties in their interpretation. The lack of information about ordinary living and working conditions, in even relatively literate societies, in relatively recent times, is very striking. At times, it seems almost easier to recreate the subjective *mentalités* of past societies than their physical setting.

One highly important and richly-detailed source of information for the social and economic history of early modern England does, however, exist in the form of the probate inventory. The *post mortem* listing of the goods and chattels of countless private individuals, whose wills were being probated, helps at least to push ajar the door into the private household; just as their information about occupations, assets, tools, and stock-in-trade helps to illuminate the nature of the working economy. As a source, probate inventories have long been known to

historians;[2] but their protean variety and diversity have made them cumbersome for a single researcher to deploy for other then illustrative purposes. Recent developments in flexible computer technologies have, however, facilitated the systematic analysis of unsystematic data on a large scale.[3] That process has greatly enhanced the significance of the source material; but has simultaneously heightened the need for careful assessment of the valid uses to which it can be put.

The survey that follows therefore looks briefly at some of the general problems highlighted by a batch of urban inventories; and then considers their specific use in analysing the rooms and room use in the housing of a major provincial capital, the city of Norwich, over a 150-year period (1580–1730) into which the bulk of its surviving inventories fall.[4] The scheme was devised to supplement work on the ground into the archaeological and architectural history of the city. There are, of course, a number of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century buildings still extant in Norwich today. Yet almost all of these have been much altered in later centuries, and the original use of their rooms is often obscure. Furthermore, these buildings survive precisely because they were the most soundly constructed of their period, and were the property of the wealthier citizenry.[5]

The inventories, on the other hand, provide a wealth of detail about the contents of rooms, and, by inference, their use; and they were drawn up for a range of Norwich inhabitants, of markedly varying wealth and social standing.[6] It is true that they did not cover the estates of many of the very poorest people, without any property to leave. But they certainly included a number of distinctly modest patrimonies. Of the inventories studied here, 5 per cent were drawn up for people whose entire goods, chattels, and money amounted to less than £5.0.0. and a further 7.5 per cent left goods of less than £10.0.0. in value. Clearly, then, these listings surveyed the contents of fragile buildings, whose physical form has long since been swept away.[7] The number of surviving inventories is certainly small, in comparison with a total population in the city of fewer than 12,000 in the later sixteenth century, rising through successive generations to well over 30,000 by the 1730s;[8] they cannot therefore be deemed representative of anything other than themselves. As such, however, they are invaluable.

I

Probate inventories are therefore a notoriously erratic source of data on which to base quantitative analysis. The paucity and patchiness of their survival, and their inconsistency, make it difficult to reach any general conclusions about the population as a whole, or even about the middle-income group of tradesmen and artisans, from which, as far as Norwich is concerned, they are largely drawn. The fact that they do not extend equally thoroughly over all social groups must diminish the range of any variations they exhibit. In addition, there are regularly occurring omissions: some legitimately common to all inventories, such as land values, and some random, as a result of negligence by the appraisers or the precipitate removal of bequests by beneficiaries.

In *A Brief Treatise of Testaments and Last Willes,* first published in 1590,[9] Henry Swinburne, the eminent ecclesiastical lawyer at the York Consistory Court, produced a standard interpretation of the central Statute of 21 Henry VIII cap. 5 (1530). He listed certain allowable omissions, such as all lands, tenements, and hereditaments, as well as the profits of any such properties that had been willed for sale, plus in addition all debts due by the testator. Such key omissions must limit the usefulness of the inventories when total estate values are considered. Apart from those exceptions, the Statute itself ruled that 'all goods, chattels, wares, merchandises, as well moveable as not moveable whatsoever, of the said person so deceased' must be included; 'neither ought the executor to meddle with the goods . . ., before he make an inventory', added Swinburne punctiliously.[10] This procedure was to precede the payment of debts and legacies; executors were not, however, legally bound to make an inventory—though it was often advisable, as in its absence the law assumed that the executor was able to meet all claims upon the estate.

The Norwich inventories, however, provide abundant evidence that 'best practice' was not always adhered to. Often the existence of missing items is discovered only by accident. A surviving will may show goods bequeathed that do not appear in the inventory. These were usually valuables (such as plate or jewellery), perhaps removed by the beneficiaries for safety before the appraisal. Indeed, one inventory from 1711[11] contains a note that certain items were not listed because 'already bequeathed'; and in another early inventory from 1541, attached to the will,[12] three entire rooms are missing. The will includes 'Itm. I gyve and bequethe to the sayd Rycharde my son all the stuff of howsholde in the hall and p[ar]lower together with all utensylles and stuff of howsholde beyinge in the bruerne [i.e. brewhouse] as herafter appere by p[ar]celle', and lists the contents of these rooms in detail. But none of these three rooms nor their contents are listed in the inventory. Although not in fact included in the analysis, because of its early date and isolation from the main body of documents, it is an interesting reminder that idiosyncrasy flourished from the start. Whole rooms might also be omitted by appraisers, if they contained nothing of sufficient value to warrant pricing; and that again can leave a very unreliable picture of the structure of the house.

Sometimes discrepancies such as these can be spotted and allowed for. For example, the existence of an unlisted room can be inferred from the sequence and arrangement of other listed rooms: the presence of a parlour can be assumed, even if unlisted, when the room above it, the 'parlour chamber', is included. But the extent of the 'absentee' rooms cannot be fully known.

There are additional problems inherent in using the estate values given in probate inventories as indicators of an individual's wealth and social status, as has often been pointed out.[13] Certainly, these problems are amply illustrated by the Norwich inventories, comprising as they do the domestic possessions, trade goods, and monetary assets of a cross-section of a population engaged in a variety of occupations and crafts. Also included among them are testators, such as widows, clergy, and minor gentry, many of whom dealt in bonds and mortgages,

or were otherwise involved in the lending of money.[14] It is clear from many of the inventories, with their lists of named debtors, that credit played a large part in the business life of the city throughout this period, but the entry of trade and other debts was highly arbitrary. 'Desperate' debts were sometimes listed separately, after the estate total, perhaps indicating that they had been finally written off, but more often than not they were lumped together with other items, such as 'Debts, good and bad' and 'Debts and bonds'. In many cases, trade and investment debts cannot be distinguished.

Although inventories themselves were not required to include sums owed by the testator, the latter can occasionally be found in a funeral account attached to an inventory,[15] and when these are deducted, the estate total is often much reduced. For example, the inventory total of Cecily Watts, widow, (1694) amounted to £143, but her liabilities recorded in the funeral account were nearly £109.[16] The accounts of Nathaniel Beale, worsted weaver, (1728) show an even worse position, as his assets were not sufficient to meet his debts.[17] In considering industries such as the textile trade, which were dependent on an extensive network of credit, the omission of outstanding trade debts is a serious one. The case of William Burrill, a woolcomber, who died in 1700, is an illustration of this.[18] His estate was given a total of £418 in the inventory, but the 'discharge' (i.e. his liabilities), as shown in the funeral account, came to £151, including £52 owing for wool.

There are additional difficulties in interpreting valuations. Swinburne reported that prices marked should reflect the sum at which goods 'may be sold for at that time', which may indicate their second-hand value.[19] If so, the wear and tear to furnishings has to be taken into account when considering their value—something that might well vary with the age at death of the testator.

Moreover, the level of trade debts and the value at stock-in-trade may well have been subject to seasonable variation in some occupations, depending on the time when raw wool was delivered after shearing, or when grain and other crops were available after harvest. Hence, the value of an estate might vary with the date of the testator's death. Furthermore, rent outstanding was not included in the inventory, nor wages owing to servants and apprentices, although these items can sometimes be found in an attached funeral account.[20] The absence of an appraisal of real estate is a further handicap when trying to assess a testator's financial position, since the existence of a second house, for example, only comes to light when it contained items of the owner's property worthy of listing.[21] Therefore, investment tenements rented to others were usually excluded, as they would not normally have contained chattels belonging to the testator. In order to investigate the extent of unrecorded real estate, information was extracted from wills, which survive for about 40 per cent of the inventories (i.e. 570 testators). Of these, 125 owned property in Norwich, other than the house in which they lived, and 138 had properties outside the city. (31 bequeathed tenements both within the city and outside it). In other words, nearly 50 per cent of these testators owned assets not referred to in the inventory. And, of course, the capital value of the houses lived in by owner-occupiers is not represented either.

All in all, therefore, the probate inventory cannot be regarded as being a record of an individual's entire financial portfolio, and it was never intended to be that. It did, on the other hand, provide an estimate of the testator's easily disposable assets, from which liabilities could be met and bequests made.

Urban inventories, furthermore, present other particular difficulties of their own and are probably more difficult to categorize than their rural counterparts. The Norwich inventories are predominantly those of craftsmen and tradesmen (113 different trades are represented). The houses of many testators, therefore, were work-places as well as homes; and the disposition and functions of their rooms were influenced by the constraints imposed by using one room as a workshop, and accommodating raw materials and merchandise within the restricted limits of an urban tenement. The houses were infinitely varied, especially as increasing industrial development put pressure on available living space and led to infilling and the building of extra storeys.[22] A graphic illustration of the density of site development, and its variable pattern over time, is shown by FIG. 1, which is a notional reconstruction of buildings, based on evidence from excavations on a site in the city.[23] Some of the buildings may have been relatively impermanent structures, capable of extensive adaptation, or even removal.

The naming of rooms used for divers and often multiple purposes was also understandably inconsistent, and the nomenclature used in Norwich houses may well have been at variance with that used in other parts of the country.[24]

Attempts to match the houses represented by the inventories with existing houses, or even to establish their location, have been disappointing. Comparatively few appraisers included the testator's parish, although by using supplementary information from wills the parishes have been established for 45 per cent of the total. Within the parish, there is little hope of pin-pointing the house, and in the few instances in which the location can be identified with the help of other sources,[25] the house has invariably been too much altered for fruitful comparison with the inventory. Similarly, trades can be identified for about 81 per cent of the testators, using additional evidence from wills, and the contents of workshops. Unfortunately, however, both parish and trade can be established for only 38 per cent of the total of 1,408 inventories, which makes parochial, or even ward, comparisons unprofitable.

II

For computer analysis, the inventories were divided into six 25-year periods between 1580 and 1730. Using the exact quarter centuries would have meant abandoning a worthwhile number of documents dated between 1725 and 1730, after which they peter out. The 25-year period was indicated by pilot programs to be a workable interval for examining changes over time. In view of the special characteristics of inventories, absolute figures in any one period can have little validity. The intention was to look at trends taking place over the whole 150 years.[26]

A few of the inventories proved to be unsuitable for coding, either because

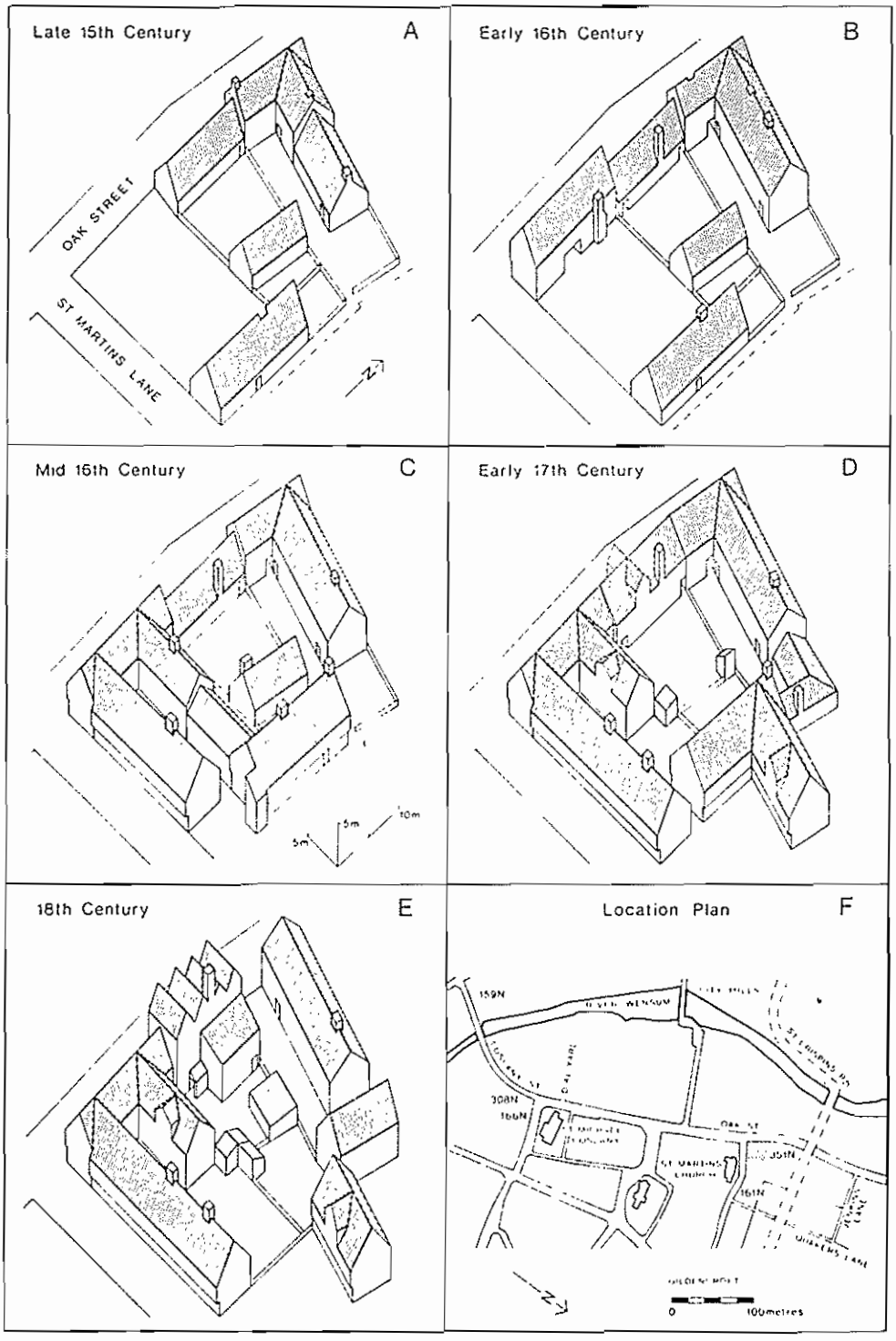


FIG. 1
Notional reconstruction of buildings and site location plan, Oak Street, Norwich.

they were badly damaged, or obviously incomplete, or sometimes because they gave no details of the house or furnishings; the total suitable for coding was 1,408. For programs concerned with buildings and room use it was also necessary to exclude the following categories of inventory from this total:-

(i) those that do not differentiate the rooms of the house.
(ii) inns. These are a class apart. They usually had a very large number of rooms, whose functions differed markedly from those of the domestic dwelling houses making up the bulk of the inventories.
(iii) inventories relating obviously to part-houses, or what might be described as 'lodgings'. They can be recognized usually by the absence of cooking equipment and the limited range of their furnishings. Their owners, for the most part, were widows, single men and women, and 'gentry'. In fact, the majority of such inventories do not list rooms, and the few that do name only one or two.

A breakdown of the total number of inventories, showing the exclusions, is given in Table 1.

TABLE 1: NORWICH INVENTORIES, 1580–1730

	1	2	3	4		5
				Part-houses		
	Overall total	Total with rooms not listed	Inns	Rooms listed	Rooms not listed	Total excluding 2, 3 and 4
1580–1604	256	128	6	2	14	120
1605–1629	263	103	6	6	30	148
1630–1654	200	69	2	2	25	127
1655–1679	152	60	5	1	21	86
1680–1704	257	66	7	5	25	179
1705–1730	280	53	13	3	15	211
	1,408	479	39	19	130	871

Source: Analysis of Norwich Probate Inventories that proved suitable for computer analysis, from surviving inventories in N.R.O. Norwich Consistory Court, Norwich Archdeaconry Court, and Norwich Dean and Chapter Peculiar.

III

Turning to the detailed results, Table 2 shows the range of house size, and its distribution over time, in those inventories that do differentiate rooms.

Attempts to estimate the size of houses from the rooms listed in inventories present special difficulties in urban areas. It would not be claimed that the table shows anything other than an approximation, for reasons which are discussed below.

The number of rooms used to compute the averages are the 'inferred totals', i.e. including rooms not listed in the inventory, but which can be assumed from other evidence; for example, where the room above is listed, the presence of the

TABLE 2: NUMBER OF ROOMS PER HOUSE
(% of total no. of inventories naming rooms in brackets)

Number of:	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730	Total no of invs.
1–3 roomed houses	24 (20%)	32 (22%)	13 (10%)	18 (21%)	34 (19%)	39 (18%)	160
4–6 roomed houses	45 (38%)	59 (40%)	55 (43%)	29 (34%)	77 (43%)	77 (36%)	342
7–9 roomed houses	30 (25%)	29 (20%)	32 (27%)	23 (27%)	31 (17%)	59 (28%)	204
10–14 roomed houses	15 (12%)	20 (13%)	21 (16%)	14 (16%)	30 (17%)	26 (12%)	126
Houses with 15 or more rooms	6 (5%)	8 (5%)	6 (5%)	2 (2%)	7 (4%)	10 (5%)	39
Total no. of inventories naming rooms	120	148	127	86	179	211	871

Source: As Table 1.

lower room is inferred; and where the appraisers have grouped rooms together, as with 'the garrets', the presence of several rooms can be assumed. In this last case, the data recorder would have entered the item as two rooms, but there may have been more. Inventories in general are likely to under-represent the total number of rooms. Listing of room names was simply an expedient form of tabulation for the appraisers, and in no way an obligatory part of inventory making. There may have been extra rooms (such as garrets and cellars) that were excluded because they contained junk too worthless to record. Conversely, service rooms and offices have been included in the totals, although some may have been simply sheds or outhouses. It is not possible to distinguish these from rooms that were an integral part of the main building. The presence of outhouses may distort relative house-size, since they were probably more numerous in the larger houses.

It is impossible to differentiate from the inventories between householders and tenants who were living before their death in single structural units, and individuals who occupied houses that were partly sub-let. Obvious part-houses or 'lodgings' have been excluded,[27] but it seems certain that there must have been more multiple occupancy than could be identified, and that some, at least, of the 1-3-roomed 'houses' were in fact part of shared buildings. It is possible, too, that single rooms, such as shops and warehouses, were rented out when no longer needed, and there are occasional references to goods in another's warehouse, and to workshops elsewhere.

Given these reservations, it is possible nevertheless, to get a general picture of the pattern in the size of these inventoried houses over 150 years. Table 2 certainly shows that the distribution of house size in fact changed relatively little, the proportions of large and small houses showing only very minor fluctuations.

Turning to the question of the heating of these Norwich houses, Table 3 shows the distribution of fixed hearths by house-size.[28]

TABLE 3: MEAN NUMBER OF HEARTHS PER HOUSE

	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730
1–3 roomed houses	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3
4–6 roomed houses	1.7	1.7	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.0
7–9 roomed houses	2.1	2.6	2.7	3.3	3.0	2.8
10–14 roomed houses	2.0	3.2	4.1	4.1	4.5	3.8
Houses with 15 or more rooms	4.3	4.1	5.5	5.0	3.0	6.0
Overall Mean	1.8	2.1	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.5
Total no. of inventories	120	148	127	86	179	211

Source: As Table 1.

The presence of a hearth was inferred from the recording of fire-irons, fire-baskets, and/or spits, and also the coppers and ovens found in workrooms and outhouses, and the 'ranges' occurring in kitchens in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It is always possible that fire-irons may have been moved before the appraisal, but the inventories give the impression that they are usually in their rightful place. Where odd pieces of hearth furniture were listed in unlikely places, especially in garrets, they were ignored for coding purposes. No doubt portable braziers were sometimes used to heat rooms with no built-in hearths, but inexplicably these are almost absent from the inventories, although charcoal, on the other hand, is listed frequently.[29]

As might be expected, there was an overall increase in the number of rooms with fixed hearths during the seventeenth century. The increase was more pronounced in the larger houses, but even in these the proportion of heated rooms remained low.

IV

One of the major objectives of this study was to investigate the uses to which rooms were put and their change with time. The method by which the coding system was arrived at needs further discussion. The aim was to avoid subjective judgements, and the alphabetical symbols assigned to the various room functions were based on a set of pre-determined guide lines which were adhered to as closely as possible. However, it had to be recognized that the nature of the inventories and the changes in furnishings over the years made absolute standardization unattainable. Establishing valid criteria was more difficult with some room functions than others, especially those which overlap and are not mutually exclusive. It is reasonably safe to identify a workroom by the presence of tools, but problems arise when trying to draw a sharp distinction between, for example, 'dining' and 'sitting'. The choice of 'tables and forms and/or stools' for 'dining' and 'four or more chairs' for 'sitting' is a workable division in the

sixteenth century when, in any case, little formal provision for 'sitting' was available at all except in wealthier households. The distinction, however, becomes blurred when houses became better appointed in the seventeenth century. Chairs were increasingly plentiful in all houses and among all social groups, and chairs in sets were used with dining tables instead of forms and stools. Tables became more varied in function and design, lighter and more portable ones being used for decoration and display and also for casual tea- and coffee-drinking in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[30]

The code then, with these limitations, was used as the basis for a numerical analysis of room function, and the numbers and names of the rooms analysed—55 per cent of all rooms mentioned in the inventories—are shown in Table 4. The detailed results are set out in Tables 5–14.

TABLE 4: ROOMS WHOSE MAIN USES COULD BE ANALYSED

	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730	Totals
Total no. of inventories	120	148	127	86	179	211	871
Total no. of rooms	772	968	923	588	1,145	1,382	5,778
Rooms analysed							
Halls	57	60	41	12	24	24	218
Kitchens	71	95	108	82	167	210	733
Parlours	93	98	82	42	101	118	534
Butteries	60	53	38	16	15	3	185
Sculleries	0	1	0	3	23	34	61
Shops	59	58	51	41	58	64	331
Parlour chambers	46	54	53	31	69	64	317
Garrets	12	43	49	44	97	130	375
Cellars	17	35	31	23	48	58	212
Wash-houses	1	11	22	27	49	90	200
Total	416 (54%)	508 (52%)	475 (51%)	321 (55%)	651 (57%)	795 (58%)	3,166 (55%)
Not analysed							
Chambers	247	312	321	191	370	409	1,850
Other	109	148	127	76	124	178	762

Source: As Table 1.

Among the remaining 45 per cent of rooms whose uses are not expressed in tabular form, the majority are groups of general-purpose room names which could not be effectively categorized, namely the many variations of 'chamber' and

'house' and, or course, 'room' itself, which term was becoming increasingly used in the Norwich inventories by the 1680s. 'Chamber' and 'house' were used synonymously with 'room', and all three words were applied in diverse and unspecific ways, making them unsuitable for inclusion in the standardized analysis programs, with the single exception of 'parlour chamber', which was selected as an example of a room used primarily for sleeping. (See Table 11). However, the varied connotations of the words 'chamber' and 'house' are themselves of interest. 'Chamber' was the most commonly occurring room name. It was applied usually, but by no means exclusively, to an upstairs room. 75 per cent of all chambers were coded from their description (e.g. 'chamber over the shop') or from their position in the room sequence, as being on an upper storey. This does not mean that the remaining 25 per cent were necessarily on the ground floor, simply that their location could not be determined with certainty. Many chambers were sleeping rooms, the 'parlour chamber' seeming to have been the principal one,[31] although the chamber above the kitchen may also sometimes have been the master bedroom, especially in the later period.[32] The term 'great chamber', although much less common than 'parlour chamber', is found quite frequently in the inventories of houses of 6 rooms or more. It usually contained a dining table and forms or sets of chairs, with or without beds also. It looks as if this may be an echo of the significance of the 'great chamber' as a reception room in great houses in the medieval period, serving as a dining room for the head of the household and his family.[33] Its description (e.g. 'great chamber over the parlour'), together with its position in the room sequence, suggests that it was normally upstairs. (The adjective 'great' may, of course, simply refer to the relative size of the room, but the inventories do give the impression that it had a specific function). 'Best chamber', a term which occurs increasingly after 1680 and apparently superseded 'great chamber', referred to a room with similar functions. From 1630 'dining chamber' is also found in some larger houses.

The word 'chamber' was also used in small houses for a general purpose living-room in which cooking took place. In connections other than living- or sleeping-rooms, the word was applied very commonly as a general synonym for 'room': e.g. for workrooms—'working chamber', 'weavers' chamber', and for storage rooms—'corn chamber', 'hay chamber', 'yarn chamber'.

The word 'house' similarly occurs frequently and was used in a variety of ways. It could be used for a place of work (e.g. 'bakehouse', 'workhouse', 'cutting house', 'scouring house') or storage (e.g. 'warehouse', 'yarn house', 'salt house'). In a rather different connotation, 'low house', 'lower house', 'fire house', and 'dwelling house' were applied to living rooms and/or kitchens in small houses. (The term 'fire house', which was still in use as late as 1684, could be used either for a living room or kitchen. One inventory shows the 'fire house or parlour', and another the 'fire house or kitchen').[34]

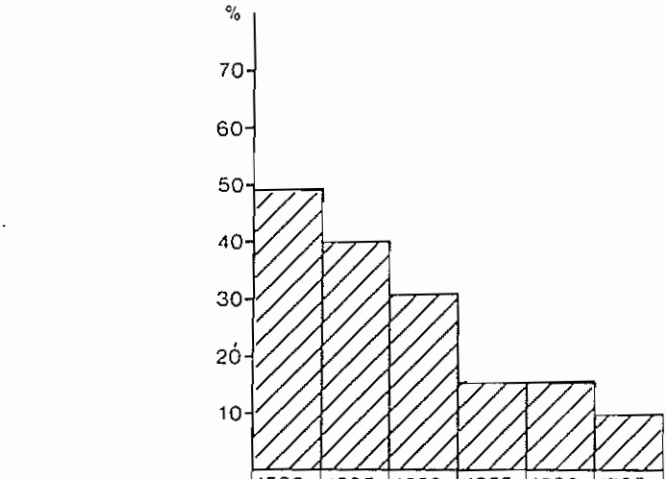
There is no evidence that 'house' was ever used for anything other than a ground floor room. The nomenclature suggests that a 'house' may sometimes have been a detached structure within the bounds of the tenement, but the inventories can provide no firm evidence of this.

V

Of the rooms that were subjected to detailed analysis, the first to be considered is the hall.

Less than 50 per cent of the houses represented by the inventories had a room known as the 'hall' in 1580–1604 (FIG. 2), seemingly fewer than rural houses at a comparable date.[35] 35 per cent of these halls had a 'hall chamber' above them, indicating that the hall had been ceiled. (This proportion is probably on the low side since other names such as 'fore chamber' could have been used for the room over the hall.) Together, these figures seem to suggest that Norwich houses by this date had already largely moved away from a traditional medieval or sub-medieval building pattern, based on an open hall, if in fact such a pattern could ever be said to have existed in the city.[36]

Excavation evidence shows that the majority of late-medieval buildings were small, and that where they were two-roomed, one room was not obviously more important than the other. Moreover, archaeological work has not revealed any marked gap in building activity at any time during the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries.[37] It may be that, at all times, urban restraints of space imposed limitations on extensive structural change, so that Norwich saw a continuous



	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730
% of halls with hearths	29	31	41	42	–	20
Total number of inventories	120	148	127	86	179	211

FIG. 2
HALLS
Percentage of houses with at least one hall.

process of renovation and adaptation rather than one clearly defined 'Great Rebuilding' of whole houses.[38] In that case, the infrequency of great open halls suggests an early pattern of experimentation and diversification of house structure in the towns.

Halls were present in small houses as well as large during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Between 1580 and 1654 several 2- and 3-roomed houses contained halls, their function being that of general purpose living room, although not necessarily the only one, since at least half of these small houses with a hall had a parlour as well. After 1655, halls are found less often in the inventories of small houses, until, after 1705, no inventory of a house with less than 5 rooms mentions a hall, and 71 per cent of halls are found in houses of 10 rooms or more.

TABLE 5: INFERENCE OF HALL USE FROM CONTENTS

% of halls used for:	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730
SLEEPING						
All beds	14	15	19	0	—	0
Main beds	12	13	17	0	—	0
Truckle beds	—	—	—	0	0	0
DINING	52	54	51	17	16	50
SITTING	17	10	22	0	25	75
COOKING	7	8	14	0	0	0
WORKING	—	—	—	17	—	0
MISCELLANEOUS	36	34	26	66	58	16
Total no. of halls	57	60	41	12	24	24

— negligible.

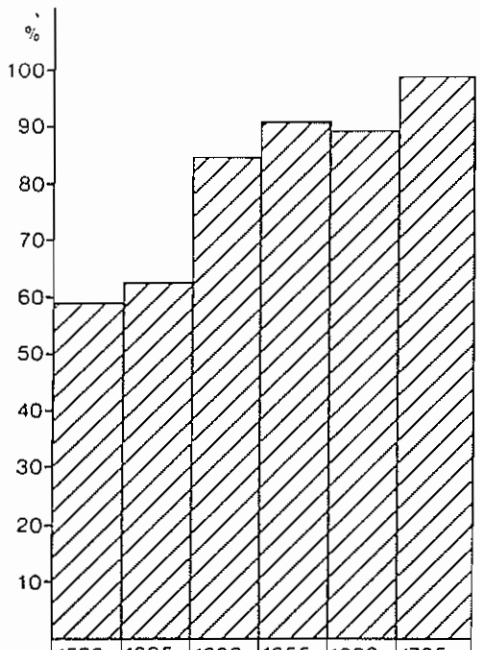
Source: As Table 1.

The hall, therefore, gradually lost altogether its function as a multi-purpose living room (Table 5). By 1654 beds had disappeared from it, and there is no longer evidence that cooking took place there. The kitchen may partly have taken over this function, but the transposition is not clear cut. Between 1580 and 1604, 77 per cent of the inventories showing a hall also list a kitchen, and, of the remaining 25 per cent with no kitchen, cooking by no means always took place in the hall. More often than not, the buttery or parlour served for this purpose.

Indeed, it seems that the term 'hall' became increasingly reserved for an entrance rather than a living room, being confined, by the end of the seventeenth century, to larger houses, and furnished for decoration rather than utility. Nonetheless, dining tables are listed there throughout the whole period, so that, no doubt, the hall could also serve as an eating room for servants or guests. The increased percentage recorded under 'sitting' reflects the proliferation of chairs

found in all rooms from the second half of the seventeenth century.[39] Armour and weapons are often mentioned in the halls of the larger mansions by that date, as prestige items in an imposing entrance to the house.

Unfortunately only a few surveys have recorded the numbers of kitchens in relation to the other rooms mentioned in probate inventories over the whole of the period under discussion,[40] but where it has been possible to make comparisons, it is clear that a room known as the 'kitchen' was more common in Norwich houses than in their counterparts in rural areas. A 'kitchen' is found in 80 per cent of all houses represented by inventories by 1630 (FIG. 3).[41] During the first fifty years, other terms as well as 'kitchen' were used for heated ground floor rooms in which cooking took place: e.g. 'low house', 'lower house', 'fire house', and sometimes 'the chamber', and during this time the hall, parlour, and buttery were also not infrequently used for cooking. Conversely, the kitchen served sometimes as a living or sleeping room without cooking facilities. But, by the second half of the seventeenth century, the kitchen, in Norwich at least, had assumed its now customary position as the sole cooking room. (Table 6).



	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705 1730
% of kitchens with hearths	90	91	97	97	96	97
Total number of inventories	120	148	127	86	179	211

FIG. 3
KITCHENS
Percentage of houses with at least one kitchen.

TABLE 6: INFERENCE OF KITCHEN USE FROM CONTENTS

% of kitchens used for:	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730
COOKING	87	90	93	85	93	95
SLEEPING						
All beds	13	8	14	15	12	10
Main beds	7	7	13	13	12	10
Truckle beds	10	—	5	6	—	—
DINING	8	24	46	61	62	68
SITTING	—	17	45	69	71	79
WORKING	—	—	—	—	—	—
MISCELLANEOUS	8	5	—	—	—	—
Total no. of kitchens	71	95	108	82	167	210

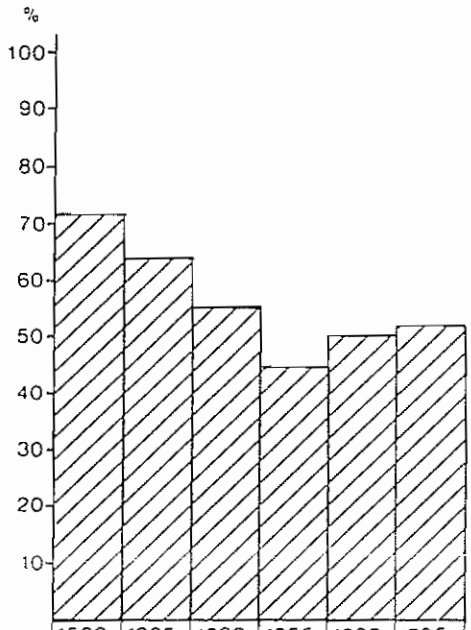
— negligible

Source: As Table 1.

Beds were sometimes found in the kitchen over the whole period of the inventories, their numbers declining only marginally. The quantity of tables and chairs, however, increased steadily, reflecting the increase in comfort generally found in most houses throughout the seventeenth century,[42] but at the same time suggesting that the kitchen became of greater importance as an auxiliary living room—perhaps for servants, but possibly for the whole family, the parlour being reserved for special occasions. It is noticeable that the amount and variety of other furniture increased also, and books, especially Bibles, were frequently among the objects listed in the kitchen, pointing to this room as a venue for family prayers. Clocks, also, were to be found in the kitchen in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It may well be that, with better-built houses and a reduced fire risk, the kitchen had become less of a service room at the back of the house, and was more likely to have been fully integrated with the main building. The increase in the number of 'kitchen chambers' towards the end of this period supports the view that the kitchen had become a more solidly built structure.

There is a slight fall in the percentage of houses with a room known as the 'parlour' between the late sixteenth and late seventeenth centuries, apparently coinciding with the emergence of a better furnished kitchen. (FIG. 4).

Even in the sixteenth century only just over 50 per cent of the parlours listed contained beds, showing that in Norwich there was already a fair degree of room specialisation among the social group whose houses the inventories surveyed, and Table 7 shows that the trend away from the multi-purpose living room towards greater privacy continued. There was a steady drop in the number of parlours with beds, and 'truckle beds', presumably occupied by servants or children,[43] eventually disappeared altogether from the parlour.



	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730
% of parlours with hearths	54	80	72	76	67	54
% of houses with a second parlour	8	5	15	7	11	9
Total number of inventories	120	148	127	86	179	211

FIG. 4
PARLOURS
Percentage of houses with at least one parlour.

The parlour was rarely used for cooking, and not at all after 1655. It was hardly ever used as a workroom, despite the fact that pressure on working space must have been acute. Over the whole period, on the other hand, a high proportion of parlours contained dining tables and forms, stools or chairs, and this room was probably the room in which meals were usually served—although it must be remembered that, from the mid-seventeenth century onwards, parlour tables may have had more diverse functions. The growing percentage of parlours used for 'sitting' again shows the greater popularity of chairs, in response to the demand for comfort in all households. By the end of the seventeenth century, chairs were by no means confined to the wealthier houses.

The siting of the parlour in Norwich seems to have been habitually the ground floor.[44] Where there is a second parlour, this is usually described as the 'little parlour'. It is not possible, however, to discern a distinctive function for rooms so designated.

TABLE 7: INFERENCE OF PARLOUR USE FROM CONTENTS

% of parlours used for:	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730
SLEEPING						
All beds	54	50	40	33	19	18
Main beds	49	49	39	33	19	18
Truckle beds	22	23	13	7	—	—
DINING	59	74	69	79	50	63
SITTING	40	26	39	50	70	79
COOKING	8	10	—	—	—	—
WORKING	—	—	—	—	—	—
MISCELLANEOUS	10	5	12	—	18	10
Total no. of parlours	93	98	82	42	101	118

— negligible.

Source: As Table 1.

Many houses also included shops, workshops, and workhouses, which can be assumed from the room sequence to have been on the ground floor. (See FIG 5.) Rooms containing tools and obviously used as workrooms do appear on other storeys (e.g. in the 'chamber over the shop' or in garrets) but such rooms were

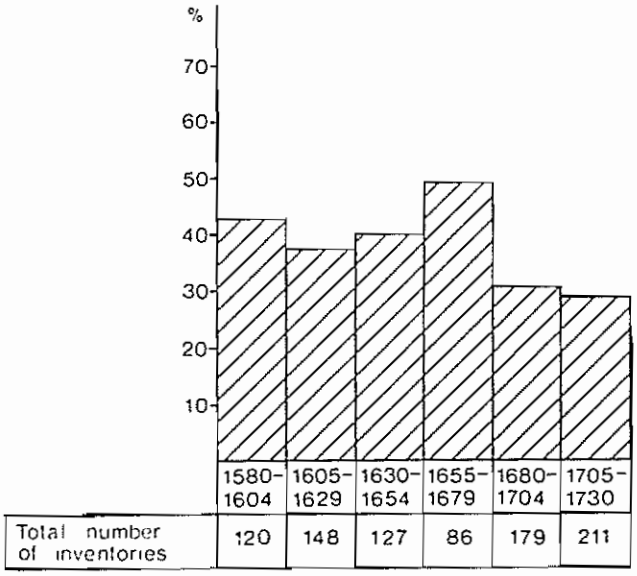


FIG. 5
GROUND FLOOR SHOPS AND WORK-HOUSES
Percentage of houses with at least one ground floor shop or work-house.

never described as 'shop' or 'house'. It is not always possible to say whether a room named as a 'working chamber' was on the first or ground floor, and it is difficult to estimate the incidence of upper-storey workrooms for this reason. The figure is likely, therefore, to under-represent the total number of shop and workshop owners, because some 'working chambers' may in fact have been ground floor workshops, or also because a shop no longer in use might have contained nothing of value and been passed over by the appraisers, or have been rented out when the owner ceased trading.

TABLE 8: INFERENCE OF USES OF GROUND FLOOR SHOPS AND WORKHOUSES FROM CONTENTS

% of total used for:	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730
WORKING	56	59	72	46	48	48
STORAGE OF TRADE GOODS	47	43	33	59	55	57
SELLING	17	19	6	37	28	25
SLEEPING	—	—	—	—	—	—
MISCELLANEOUS	8	14	—	—	—	—
Total no. of shops and workhouses	59	58	51	41	58	64

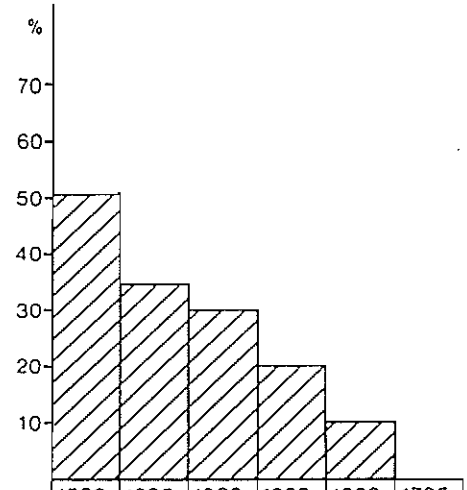
— negligible.

Source: As Table I.

These rooms were generally highly specialized in their use. They served exclusively as business premises, for the making, storing and selling of merchandise (Table 8) and were only heated when the trade demanded it, e.g. for metal working. Beds are very occasionally found in the shop, presumably for apprentices.

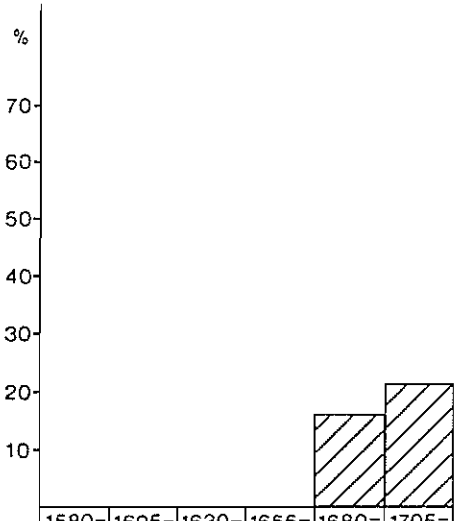
All in all, nearly 90 per cent of the shops and workhouses included in the survey contained tools, which points to the majority of these premises having been in active use when the testator died. Nearly 5 per cent of the total were owned by widows, who may have been carrying on the family business.[45]

In the course of house adaptation, some traditional rooms disappear from the inventories. The number of butteries, for example, steadily decreased (FIG. 6), until by the beginning of the eighteenth century the term had almost disappeared. The decline of the buttery coincided with the growing prevalence of sculleries (FIG. 7), which evidently took over at least some of its functions. The existence of such rooms as lean-to structures or outhouses is confirmed by archaeological evidence from various sites in the city. Indeed, excavations show that considerable re-organization and sub-division of houses took place in the second half of the seventeenth century,[46] a response perhaps to the problems of



	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730
% of butteries with hearths	27	15	–	–	0	0
Total number of inventories	120	148	127	86	179	211

FIG. 6
BUTTERIES
Percentage of houses with at least one buttery.



	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730
% of sculleries with hearths	0	0	0	0	25	20
Total number of inventories	120	148	127	86	179	211

FIG. 7
SCULLERIES
Percentage of houses with at least one scullery.

accommodating extra living and working space in confined urban tenements, in the context of urban and industrial growth.[47] It is not possible to tell from the inventories how far these sculleries are likely to have been detached, or how far they were an integral part of the main building, but enough of them had chambers above them to show that some, at least, were part of 2-storeyed structures. Excavations point to quite extensive infilling in yards, and building may have included 1- or 2-storeyed structures as well as back-additions to existing houses.[48]

TABLE 9: INFERENCE OF BUTTERY USE FROM CONTENTS

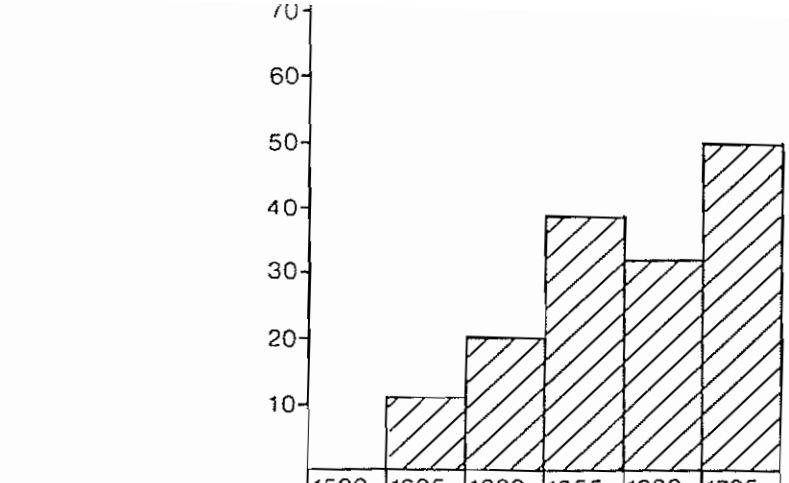
% of butteries used for:	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730
COOKING	27	17	—	12	numbers of	
DOMESTIC STORAGE	42	42	39	25	butteries	
SLEEPING	—	0	—	0	too small	
WORKING	—	—	0	0	for	
MISCELLANEOUS	33	40	50	56	assessment	
Total no. of butteries	60	53	38	16	15	3
Total no. of sculleries	0	1	0	3	23	34

— negligible.

Source: As Table 1.

By the time the Norwich inventories came to be made the buttery had largely lost its original function of housing provisions, particularly drink. It now fulfilled a wider purpose, all kinds of utensils and often the household pewter being kept there. Some butteries had hearths and were used for cooking (Table 9) and the contents of others suggest that food preparation may have been carried on there even when heating was not present. Butteries are found in the inventories of houses of all sizes, and it was usually in the smaller houses that they served as a kitchen. Their position in the inventory sequence suggests that they were usually adjacent to the hall or parlour. There is little evidence in the Norwich inventories to indicate that the buttery was simply a cupboard, as was the case elsewhere. About 25 per cent of butteries were at least large enough to have a 'buttery chamber' above them.[49] Sculleries, whose increase has already been noted, are too few to enable a viable table to be constructed for their uses. Broadly, they were also used for the storage of utensils, and occasionally for cooking, and for brewing and laundry.

In parallel with the increase in sculleries, there was an increase in the number of rooms known as 'wash-houses', or sometimes 'scouring houses' or



	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730
% of wash-houses with hearths	0	18	73	85	83	83
Total number of inventories	120	148	127	86	179	211

FIG. 8
WASH-HOUSES
Percentage of houses with at least one wash-house.

'scalding houses', from the second half of the seventeenth century (FIG. 8). A high proportion of these had some form of heating, usually facilities for heating a copper. Again, it is difficult to know how far these were outhouses, but some had rooms above them and may have been part of the main building.

Many of the owners of these wash-houses were engaged in the textile industry (Table 10). That would be expected anyway in view of the importance of the industry in Norwich at the time, but some of these rooms, when owned by woolcombers and some of the more prosperous worsted weavers, had a specific industrial function. Their contents indicate that they were chiefly used for the scouring of yarn.[50] They often contained coppers and 'scouring tubs'; and 'yarn skips', 'beacons', and 'yarn poles' (the latter two items being used in the drying process) were kept either in the wash-house itself or elsewhere in the house or yard.[51] Specifically designated 'drying rooms', sometimes with 'yarn poles', are found in some inventories.

'Parlour chamber' (Table 11) provides an example of a room used primarily as a bedroom. By definition, it was the room above the parlour and therefore on the first floor. An appreciable number of parlour chambers had fixed hearths, probably making use of the same stack as that in the parlour below.

TABLE 10: INFERENCE OF WASH-HOUSE USE FROM CONTENTS

% of wash-houses used for:	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730
COOKING	0	0	0	18	6	9
WORKING	—	18	55	52	48	31
LAUNDRY	0	36	32	30	21	24
BREWING	0	0	0	0	6	19
MISCELLANEOUS	0	45	9	7	23	33
Total no. of wash-houses	1	11	22	27	49	90
No. of owners of wash-houses in textile industry	0	3	12	13	21	54

— negligible.

Source: As Table 1.

TABLE 11: INFERENCE OF PARLOUR CHAMBER USE FROM CONTENTS

% of parlour chambers used for:	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730
SLEEPING						
All beds	83	85	83	87	88	87
Main beds	78	83	79	81	88	86
Truckle beds	37	35	23	19	14	—
DINING	6	18	26	32	10	26
SITTING	13	5	19	32	33	47
WORKING	—	—	0	0	0	0
COOKING	—	—	0	0	0	0
MISCELLANEOUS	9	5	7	6	9	6
Total no. of parlour chambers	46	54	53	31	69	64
% of parlour chambers with a hearth	24	37	43	18	45	34
Total no. of inventories	120	148	127	86	179	211

— negligible.

Source: As Table 1.

number of bedsteads was counted, and in Table 12 the results of this count are shown in relation to the size of the house.

TABLE 12: MEAN NUMBER OF BEDSTEADS PER HOUSE

	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730	Overall mean
Rooms not specified	2.3	2.1	1.9	2.2	2.0	1.7	2.1
1–3 roomed houses	2.5	2.3	3.3	2.4	1.9	1.8	2.3
4–6 roomed houses	3.7	3.6	3.6	3.0	2.9	2.4	3.1
7–9 roomed houses	4.7	4.6	4.3	4.5	3.6	3.1	3.9
10–14 roomed houses	5.5	7.2	6.2	5.8	5.4	4.6	5.7
Houses with 15 or more rooms	6.5	11.1	9.0	5.5	6.0	6.6	7.6
Overall mean	3.3	3.7	3.8	3.3	3.1	2.8	3.3
Total no. of inventories	224	219	166	120	214	246	1,189

Source: As Table 1.

It was possible to include also, for this particular survey, those inventories in which rooms are not differentiated by name, since, in the majority of these, bedsteads are recorded with apparent accuracy even when entered without reference to individual rooms. However, inns and 'lodgings' were omitted, as well as 28 inventories which list neither bedsteads nor bedding, these presumably having been removed by acquisitive beneficiaries. It should be noted that the figures are based on 'bedsteads' rather than 'beds' as the latter word usually described the feather bed or mattress. These might well have been more plentiful than the bedsteads, and were certainly more susceptible to pre-appraisal removal, since it was the feather beds and not the bedsteads that were valuable. In assessing the validity of the figures it must be remembered that settles and benches may sometimes have served as bedsteads and that some people may have slept on straw on the floor.

In the earlier inventories, bedsteads, especially the best ones, were carefully designated, for example, the 'posted bedstead' and the 'borded bedstead'. The bedding was usually recorded separately and in detail, a reflection of its value in the eyes of the appraisers. There were many references to 'truckle' or 'small' bedsteads, probably used by servants or children. However, the occupancy of 'livery'

bedsteads is not easy to determine. The derivation of the word suggests that they were used by servants, but the inventories show that they were often the only type of bedstead in humbler homes, and the term may have been applied generally to a bedstead of rougher construction. In contrast to the full descriptions used earlier, by the eighteenth century it became common to refer simply to 'the bed as it stand', which included the bedding and the bedstead. Table 12 shows the incidence of all types of bedstead. In Table 13 a distinction has been drawn between what might be called the principal bedsteads in the house (including 'livery' bedsteads) and the small or 'truckle' bedsteads.

TABLE 13: MEAN NUMBER OF BEDSTEADS PER HOUSE SHOWING MAIN AND TRUCKLE BEDSTEADS

	1580–1604		1605–1629		1630–1654		1655–1679		1680–1704		1705–1730		Overall mean	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Rooms not specified	1.7	0.6	1.4	0.7	1.4	0.4	1.8	0.4	1.7	0.3	1.7	0.1	1.6	0.5
1–3 roomed houses	1.7	0.8	1.6	0.8	2.5	0.8	2.0	0.4	1.6	0.3	1.5	0.3	1.7	0.5
4–6 roomed houses	2.7	1.0	2.5	1.0	2.5	1.0	2.5	0.4	2.5	0.4	2.2	0.2	2.5	0.6
7–9 roomed houses	3.0	1.7	3.4	1.1	3.1	1.2	3.5	1.0	3.0	0.6	2.7	0.3	3.0	0.8
10–14 roomed houses	3.9	1.6	4.8	2.4	4.7	1.5	4.8	1.1	4.5	0.9	4.1	0.5	4.5	1.2
Houses with 15 or more rooms	5.0	1.5	8.2	2.8	6.0	3.0	4.0	1.5	5.1	0.8	5.7	0.9	5.9	1.7
Overall mean	2.3	0.9	2.5	1.1	2.7	1.0	2.7	0.6	2.6	0.5	2.5	0.3	2.6	0.7
Total no. of inventories	224		219		166		120		214		246		1,189	

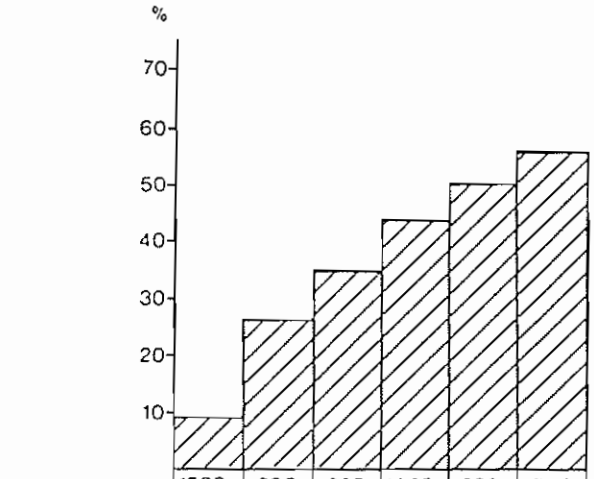
A Main bedsteads.
B Truckle bedsteads.

Source: As Table 1.

It will be seen that the decline in the overall number of bedsteads, apparent in Table 12, is concentrated in the numbers of 'truckle' bedsteads. The decline, therefore, may not necessarily signify any decrease in household size. It may simply be that the smaller 'truckle' beds lost their popularity and that the larger bedsteads replacing them made increased bed-sharing feasible.[53]

One other necessary accompaniment to daily life is omitted from the record. Not surprisingly, since they would have been fixtures or of no value, the inventories, with one exception, contain no mention of privies. Excavations, however, indicate that they were common in the seventeenth-century city, having superseded sixteenth-century cess pits.[54] Pewter chamber-pots are, however, listed frequently in the inventories, and close stools—i.e. commodes—are also mentioned occasionally.

At the top of the house, the terms 'false roof' or 'vance (or vaunce) roof' were



	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730
% of garrets with hearths	0	7	–	7	–	–
Total number of inventories	120	148	127	86	179	211

FIG. 9
GARRETS
Percentage of houses with at least one garret.

commonly used for roof space in East Anglia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[55] In Norwich, the word 'garret' first appears in the inventories in 1628, but it was not in frequent use until the 1680s, when it superseded 'false roof' and 'vance roof'. (FIG. 9 includes all three terms, but 'garret' is used in the text and diagram for convenience.) The actual number of garrets may have been higher than the figures suggest, since many may have been junk rooms and not listed.

These rooms are assumed from their nomenclature to have been usually located on the third storey, but there may have been exceptions to this (e.g. the 'uppermost garret' suggests a fourth floor, while the 'false roof over the parlour' is ambiguous). The steady increase in the percentage of houses with garrets may have stemmed from the building of third storeys or from greater use of existing roof space. From the second half of the seventeenth century onwards the number of houses with two or more garrets increased also. They are extremely characteristic of the domestic housing of that era. (See FIG. 10).

There was a growing tendency to use garrets as workrooms and warehouses from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. (Table 14). After 1680, the majority of the owners of these third floor workrooms were textile workers, especially weavers.[56] While again underlining the pre-eminence of the industry in Norwich at this time, it suggests that pressure on living and working space made it

FIG. 10
Contemporary dormers on a late seventeenth century house at 33, Timberhill, Norwich.

TABLE 14: INFERENCE OF GARRET USE FROM CONTENTS

% of total used for:	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730
SLEEPING						
All beds	66	65	53	64	55	55
Main beds	33	44	38	50	45	43
Truckle beds	50	35	21	16	13	15
WORKING	—	—	10	14	25	31
STORAGE OF TRADE GOODS	—	11	14	9	18	16
DOMESTIC STORAGE	—	6	12	9	—	—
MISCELLANEOUS	25	27	22	25	25	14
Total no. of garrets	12	43	49	44	97	130

— negligible.

Source: As Table 1.

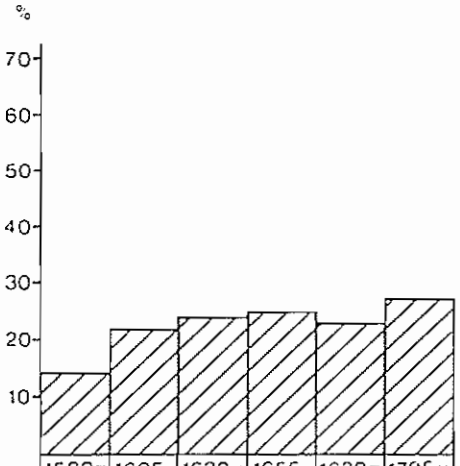
increasingly worthwhile to make fuller use of the upper storey. If, as local archaeological work has revealed, properties were being sub-divided, so that ground floor rooms became smaller,[57] the better lighted garret workshops may have been more attractive places to work at the loom. First-floor working chambers do not show a corresponding increase.

Lastly, rooms described in the inventories as 'cellar' and 'vault' are analysed together (FIG. 11), although it may be necessary to distinguish between the two terms, since possibly they were not synonymous. The term 'vault' occurs infrequently in the inventories up to the mid-seventeenth century, after which it was no longer used. Presumably it referred to a crypt or undercroft, such as still exist under some Norwich houses today. It is surprising that so few 'vaults' are listed in the inventories.[58] Possibly that may be accounted for by adverse geographical conditions in certain parts of the city. Recording of existing houses by the Norwich Survey Architectural Group has disclosed only one house with an undercroft in the large area north of the river (to which a substantial number of the inventories refer), although crypts are much more numerous to the south.[59] By contrast, the 'cellar' indicated a storage room, not necessarily underground. It may simply have been a cupboard, as is implied by such expressions as 'cellar next ye kitchen' (1630), 'cellar in ye hall' (1683), and 'cellar in yard' (1691).

The most common use for cellars was the storage of domestic goods, usually beer, wood, and coal.[60] A large proportion were junk rooms and were coded simply as 'miscellaneous'. The number registering uses other than domestic storage are negligible—such uses included storage, workrooms, and very occasionally, brewing, baking, and laundry.

VI

The inventories, then, provide unrivalled documentation of the diversity,



	1580–1604	1605–1629	1630–1654	1655–1679	1680–1704	1705–1730
Total number of inventories	120	148	127	86	179	211

FIG. 11
CELLARS
Percentage of houses with at least one cellar.

adaptability, and intricacy of Norwich housing between 1580 and 1730, during a period when the city's population and residential densities were alike increasing. Their detailed evidence affords clear testimony to the growing improvement in standards of comfort in domestic furnishings between the later sixteenth and early eighteenth centuries; and they suggest that the element of specialisation in room use, already apparent in the city's housing in the later sixteenth century, became strengthened over time. In their identification of the spread of upper-storey garrets in Norwich housing from the later seventeenth century onwards, the inventories also strikingly corroborate architectural evidence; while their association with the city's staple industry confirms countless literary references to the Norwich weavers 'in their garrets at their looms.' Later tradition in the city remembered them as cramped and poky rooms, redeemed only by the weavers' flower-gardens and pigeon-houses, kept on the roofs.[61] But at least one man, the philosopher-weaver, John Fransham, who gave lessons in a garret in eighteenth-century Norwich, thought it a desirable habitation: 'He loved a "first floor down the chimney" . . . "A garret", he would say, "is the quietest room in the house . . . Nothing to be heard but the delightful music of the rolling spheres." '[62] Few of Fransham's fellow-citizens could match his reputation for eccentricity; and their views were therefore unrecorded for posterity. The probate inventories, however, do permit the historian to recover at least some invaluable information about the rooms and room uses of the Norwich housing they inhabited.

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FOOTNOTES

[1] The research upon which this article is based was carried out for the Norwich Survey, at the University of East Anglia. The computer scheme was devised by Ursula Priestley and Helen Sutermeister, who was still working on the project, with great stoicism, right up until her untimely death in May 1979. Subsequently, the project has been undertaken by Ursula Priestley; and the text drafted and edited jointly with P. J. Corfield—with an introductory note (P.J.C.), comments on the problems inherent in the source data (P.J.C. and U.P.) and analysis of rooms and room use (U.P.). Special thanks are due to Alan Jenyon at the University of East Anglia Computing Centre, for his interest and invaluable help; to Dr. J. F. Pound for advice on sources; to all the staff of the Norwich Survey, for the production of drawings and data; to Philip Judge for his original drawing of housing on Timberhill; and particularly to Alan Carter, the Survey Director, for his unfailing encouragement and good advice.

[2] See O. Ashmore and J. J. Bagley, 'Inventories as a Source for Local History', *Amateur Historian*, IV (1959), 157–61, 186–95, 227–31, 320–3; and, among the growing corpus of studies using inventory material, M. W. Barley, 'English Farmhouses and Cottages, 1550–1725', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. VII (1955), 291–306; D. Portman, *Exeter Houses, 1400–1700* (Exeter, 1966); idem, 'Vernacular Building in the Oxford Region', in C. W. Chalklin and M. A. Havinden, eds. *Rural Change and Urban Growth: Essays in Regional History* (1974) 135–68; J. A. Johnston, 'Probate Inventories and Wills of a Worcestershire Parish, 1676–1775', *Midland History*, I (1971), 20–33; and idem, 'Worcestershire Probate Inventories, 1699–1716', in ibid. IV (1978), 191–211. And, for useful compilations of inventory materials, M. A. Havinden, *Household and Farm Inventories of Oxfordshire, 1550–90*, Oxford Record Society, XLIV and Historic Manuscripts Commission joint publication, X (1965); F. W. Steer, *Farm and Cottage Inventories of Mid-Essex, 1635–1749*, Essex Record Office publication, VIII (1950; revised ed. Chichester, 1969); and J. S. Moore, *The Goods and Chattels of our Forefathers: Frampton Cotterell and District Probate Inventories, 1539–1804* (1977).

[3] See generally E. Shorter, *The Historian and the Computer: A Practical Guide* (New Jersey, 1971) and J. H. Bettey and D. S. Wilde, 'Using a Computer for a Local History Project', *Local Historian*, XI (1974), 129–33; and specifically M. Overton, 'Computer Analysis of an Inconsistent Data Source: The Case of Probate Inventories', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 3 (1977), 317–26.

[4] This study is based on a sizeable batch of surviving probate inventories for the city and county of Norwich (i.e. the city within the walls and the closely adjacent suburbs and hamlets). The 1,408 inventories studied, of which 871 listed rooms in detail, are those made for wills proved before the Consistory Court of Norwich, plus some before the Archdeaconry Court, and before the Dean and Chapter Peculiar. All these inventories are located in the Norfolk Record Office (hereafter N.R.O.). The survival of inventories is by no means complete: the number of wills proved in these courts greatly exceeded the number of inventories, which were kept separately. Conversely, many of the will volumes are lost, and only about 60% of the inventories have corresponding wills. (Where they do survive, wills have been used to supplement the inventories). A parallel and much smaller series of inventories for Norwich wills proved in the Prerogative Court at Canterbury are held by the Public Record Office, and are in process of being catalogued. It is hoped eventually to analyse this collection in a similar manner. The Canterbury Court generally dealt with the more affluent and the more complicated wills (especially those with goods located in more than one diocesan area).

[5] The Norwich Survey estimates that over 500 buildings from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries survive in present-day Norwich, but representing the residences of only the most affluent 5–10% of the city's population.

[6] Wills, and corresponding probate inventories, were originally drawn up for at least 4,600 inhabitants of seventeenth-century Norwich, of whom 18% were women. It can be estimated very tentatively indeed that perhaps 10% of the city's adult population in the later seventeenth-century city made a will that was proved in the Norwich Courts (i.e. by comparing the estimated annual average number of wills proved with estimated annual average mortality); but that may well be a considerable underestimate, because of wills proved outside the diocese. There are certainly no grounds for assuming that the propensity to make a will remained constant over time. For a brief discussion, see Barley, *loc. cit.*, 292: in the village of Farnsfield (Notts.) the proportion of all adults dying there who left a will was 28% (1572–1600) and 21% (1660–1725); but elsewhere in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, the proportion may have been as high as an estimated 40%. See also brief comment in Portman, 'Vernacular Building', 165.

[7] See, for example, inventory of Andrew Brakee, waterman (1630), whose goods were valued at £4.5s.4d. He occupied two rooms, described as a hall and a kitchen: that may have been an insubstantial one-storey hovel, squeezed into the backyard of a larger tenement in the low-lying riverside parish of St. Peter Permountergate: N.R.O. Norwich Consistory Court, INV. 36/3 (1630).

[8] For population estimates, see P. J. Corfield, 'A Provincial Capital in the Late Seventeenth Century: The Case of Norwich', in P. Clark and P. Slack, eds. *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500–1700: Essays in Urban History* (1972), 264–67; J. Campbell, *Norwich* (Historic Towns series, 1975), 17–18; and J. T. Evans, *Seventeenth-Century Norwich: Politics, Religion, and Government, 1620–90* (Oxford, 1979), 4–5.

[9] H. Swinburne, *A Brief Treatise of Testaments and Last Willes* (1590; 1611 ed.), 252–7, 274–8. Swinburne's treatise went into at least 7 editions between 1590 and 1803, but his fame was subsequently eclipsed. See also *Dictionary of National Biography;* D. M. Palliser, *Tudor York* (Oxford, 1979), 92, 264; J. D. M. Derrett, *Henry Swinburne, . . . Civil Lawyer of York* (Borthwick Institute Papers, no. 44, York, 1973), 1–54.

[10] 21 Henry VIII cap. 5 (1530), clause VI; and Swinburne, *op. cit.*, 252.

[11] N.R.O. Norwich Archdeaconry Court, Inventory ANW/23/10/56, John Smith, baker (1711).

[12] N.R.O. Norwich Consistory Court, Will 346 Attmere, Richard Skolys, tanner (1541).

[13] Moore, *op. cit.*, 2–4; W. G. Hoskins, *Local History in England* (1959), 130–2.

[14] On the ramifications of credit, see, for example, B. A. Holderness, 'Credit in a Rural Community, 1600–1800', *Midland History,* III (1975), 94–115. And for values of goods recorded in 950 Norwich inventories between 1584 and 1675, see J. F. Pound, 'Government and Society in Tudor and Stuart Norwich, 1525–1675' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester, 1974), 37–42, 310–18.

[15] Swinburne, *op. cit.*, 274–8. Funeral accounts were often kept separately from the inventory, and their survival is very patchy. Only a few are extant for Norwich: they date mainly from the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and are usually attached to the inventory.

[16] N.R.O. Norwich Consistory Court, INV. 67A/93.

[17] N.R.O. Norwich Archdeaconry Court, Inventory ANW/23/14/27.

[18] N.R.O. Norwich Archdeaconry Court, Inventory ANW/23/5/280. On business debts, see R. Grassby, 'The Personal Wealth of the Business Community in Seventeenth-Century England', *Economic History Review,* 2nd ser. XXIII (1970), 220–37.

[19] Swinburne, *op. cit.*, 256.

[20] N.R.O. Norwich Archdeaconry Court, Inventory ANW/23/17A/16, John Dodd (1726): rent outstanding; and Norwich Consistory Court, INV. 74A/281, Thomas Matchett (1723): wages outstanding.

[21] N.R.O. Norwich Consistory Court, INV. 67A/100 (1695).

[22] M. W. Atkin and H. Sutermeister, 'Excavations in Norwich, 1977/8: The Norwich Survey Seventh Interim Report', *Norfolk Archaeology,* XXXVII, Pt. II (1978), 32–3.

[23] Drawing courtesy of the Norwich Survey, see ibid. 51.

[24] M. W. Barley, 'A Glossary of the Names for Rooms in Houses of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in I. L. Foster and L. Alcock, eds. *Culture and Environment* (1963), 479–501.

[25] Two inventories can be linked with a house in St. John Maddermarket, on evidence from the 1649 Parliamentary Survey; but the house was much restored in the 1920s, and the original rooms are now unrecognisable. See, variously, N.R.O. Norwich Consistory Court, INV. 41/72, John Brathwaight, hosier (1635) and INV. 52A/77, John Braithwait, worsted weaver (1666); and N.R.O. Dean and Chapter, R230A, for the 1649 Survey.

[26] Full information about the project and coding scheme, with the conventions used, is available on request, from the Norwich Survey, at the Centre of East Anglian Studies, University of East Anglia.

[27] See Table 1.

[28] Unfortunately, because of the problems inherent in both sets of sources, the inventory evidence on hearths cannot be simply compared with the Norwich Hearth Tax returns for the 1660s and 1670s: the latter source, of course, provides an estimate of the mean number of hearths per assessed household, but gives no guide to the size of the house in which those hearths were located; while the total number of inventories that date specifically from the 1660s and 1670s is only small, making identification of individual households elusive, and general statistical comparisons unreliable. In rural areas, direct comparisons may be easier; but note that in Suffolk the number of hearths assessed for tax (except in the smallest houses) was often greater than the total that could be assumed from the inventories: see R. Garrard, 'English Probate Inventories and their Use in Studying the Significance of the Domestic Interior, 1570–1700', in A. Van der Woude and A. Schuurman (eds.), *Probate Inventories . . . Papers presented at the Leeuwenborch Conference, . . . May 1980* (Utrecht, 1980), 55–81, esp. 66.

[29] For descriptions of hearth furniture and the use of different fuels, see L. Wright, *Home Fires Burning* (1964).

[30] E. Mercer, *Furniture, 700–1700* (1969), 132–5; and P. Agius, 'Late Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Furniture in Oxford', *Furniture History,* VII (1971).

[31] Barley, 'Glossary', 485–6.

[32] See above, p. 107.

[33] M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (1978), 88.

[34] Contrast Barley, 'Glossary', 488–9.

[35] Barley, 'English Farmhouses', 297.

[36] For a discussion of the difficulties of establishing urban, as opposed to rural, typologies, see the sectional introductions in *Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments: Stamford* (1977), l-lvii, and idem, *The County of Cambridgeshire, Vol. I.* (1968), xlv-li.

[37] M. W. Atkin and A. Carter, 'Excavations in Norwich, 1976/7: The Norwich Survey Sixth Interim Report', *Norfolk Archaeology*, XXXVI, Pt IV (1977); and Atkin and Sutermeister, *loc. cit.* Pt I.
[38] Compare W. G. Hoskins, *Provincial England* (1963), 131–48; and also R. Machin, 'The Great Rebuilding: A Reassessment', *Past and Present*, LXXVII (1977), 35–56.
[39] Mercer, *op. cit.*, 132.
[40] Barley, 'English Farmhouses', 297; Steer, *op. cit.*, 297; and Johnston, 'Probate Inventories', 20–33.
[41] See figures in Table 4.
[42] Mercer, *op. cit.*, 132–9.
[43] R. Edwards, *The Shorter Dictionary of English Furniture* (1964), 46.
[44] Contrast Portman, *op. cit.*, 32.
[45] Among the rich detail of the Norwich trade inventories, it is difficult to single out individual examples; but three are notable as illustrating the range of consumer goods available in the later seventeenth-century city. See N.R.O. Norwich Archdeaconry Court, Inventory ANW/23/1/114, John Hovell, 'haberdasher of small wares' (1682), with a vast stock of lovingly described toys, playthings, and trinkets; N.R.O. Norwich Consistory Court, INV. 63/165, John Benton, confectioner (1685), with a list of his raw materials and sweetmeats; and N.R.O. Norwich Archdeaconry Court, Inventory ANW/23/6/88, Timothy Allen, glover (1706), whose estate totalled over £1,000, and who supplied waistcoats, 'school bags' and purses, as well as a wide variety of gloves.
[46] See summary of Norwich Survey work in Atkin and Smith, *loc. cit.*, 280–4.
[47] Corfield, *loc. cit.*, 263–310.
[48] Earlier examples of backland development are contained in W. Pantin, 'Some Medieval Town Houses: A Study in Adaptation', in Foster and Alcock, eds. *op. cit.*, 459.
[49] For comparison with Exeter examples, see Portman, *op. cit.*, 34.
[50] For examples, see N.R.O. Norwich Consistory Court, INV. 45/211B, John Shales (1639), and Norwich Consistory Court, INV. 74A/57, Joseph Wild (1718).
[51] The long wool used in worsted manufacture was oiled to help the combing process, and after spinning the yarn was often scoured in soapsuds to remove all vestiges of oil: C. Tomlinson, *Cyclopaedia of Useful Arts*, XI (1854), 957.
[52] See above, p. 107.
[53] Uncertainties as to the number of people sleeping in any given bed make it difficult to assess household size from the number of beds listed. Conversely, a comparison of the mean number of bedsteads per house (and household) for the years 1680–1704 (see Table 12) with Gregory King's figures for mean household size in Norwich in 1696 (D. V. Glass, 'Two Papers on Gregory King', in D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley, eds. *Population in History* (1965), 177) shows 3.1 bedsteads to 4.2 inhabitants, or a mean of 1.35 people per bedstead; but, of course, there is no knowing whether the inventoried households matched King's mean for the whole city of Norwich.
[54] M. Atkin and R. Smith, 'Norwich', *Current Archaeology*, LXVIII (1979), 284.
[55] Barley, 'Glossary', 32.
[56] Of 23 garret workrooms in inventories between 1680 and 1704, 16 were used by weavers; of 41 between 1705 and 1730, 30 were owned by weavers, 3 by twisterers, and 2 by woolcombers.
[57] The work of the Norwich Survey summarized in Atkin and Smith, *loc. cit.*, 280–4.
[58] Only 13 rooms in the Norwich inventories are described as 'vaults', and the term is not found after 1654. For comparison, see Portman, *op. cit.*, 32.
[59] Work in progress by the Norwich Survey.
[60] 'Coal' in many of the early inventories denotes charcoal, as opposed to 'seacoal', which is listed specifically as such from 1630 onwards.
[61] *Memories of Norwich and its Inhabitants Fifty Years Ago, by a Nonagenarian* (Norwich, 1888), 16.
[62] W. Saint, *Memoirs of the Learned and Eccentric Man, John Fransham of Norwich* (Norwich, 1811), 148–9.