

‘Consumption and poverty in the homes of the English poor, c. 1670-1834’

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Abstract

The consumer behaviour of the poor in the long eighteenth century has attracted more historical attention in recent years. Yet, we have little understanding of whether regional factors affected consumption or how the poor's ownership of household goods was influenced by level of poverty and the life-cycle. By focusing on Kent and drawing comparisons to other counties, this article argues that the material lives of the poor were improving by the late eighteenth century, but finds that there were distinct regional differences as the poor acquired more and better goods in London and the Home Counties than in relatively remote areas. Moreover, by using pauper inventories and labourers' probate inventories, the research finds that the poor were not a homogeneous group with similar levels of material wealth, but should be considered in terms of different subgroups which often led very different material lives to one another due to life-cycle-related problems including sickness and old age. Labourers' probate inventories are found to represent a minority of the poor who were materially richer than most, whilst pauper inventories appear to represent a more typical subgroup of the poor that struggled to make do and owned most types of goods in smaller numbers.

Keywords

Poverty, consumption, life-cycle, labouring poor, paupers

The literature on the material lives of the middling sort and elite has grown considerably over the past thirty years to become a cornerstone of early modern and modern British history. Academics have found that with each new generation the middling sort and elite increasingly acquired more and better possessions from the mid-sixteenth century.¹ Whilst this literature has grown apace the history of the poor's consumer behaviour has largely been neglected. Some scholars have suggested that the poor are too difficult to study as there are not enough sources,² or have implied that there is little point in researching them since they could not afford anything more than food and a few basic household items.³ Recent work, however, has shown that sufficient sources do survive and these have been used to demonstrate how the poor could consume a wide range of goods over the eighteenth century. John Styles, Sara Horrell et al. and Anne Helmreich et al., for example, recently used Old Bailey court records to argue that the poor had access to a wide range of goods such as watches, tea equipment and silver items over the eighteenth century.⁴ The dynamic field of research on clothing has equally shown how ordinary people increasingly consumed more fashionable and better-quality clothing over the eighteenth century.⁵ Other studies have assessed the poor's household economy and food consumption.⁶

A small number of notable publications have used pauper inventories and probate inventories of labourers' goods to study the poor's household belongings. Pauper inventories, which are lists of paupers' goods made by poor law officials, have generally only been used to study the experience of poverty in East Anglia. In 1997 Peter King used 51 pauper inventories to argue that the material lives of paupers in Essex improved over the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁷ Barbara Cornford also found similar trends through analysis of 13 pauper inventories from Martham in Norfolk.⁸ Additionally, probate inventories, which

list the possessions of deceased people for the purposes of inheritance and debt, were recently used by Craig Muldrew and Ken Sneath to assess labouring consumption during the early modern period. They found similar results to King and Cornford which suggested that labourers were increasingly acquiring a greater range of belongings during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This trend was particularly pronounced after 1700, as the number of labourers who owned items such as looking glasses increased significantly.⁹

These influential studies have allowed us to study the poor's material culture. However, there remain gaps in this literature. We lack detailed and nuanced studies which assess factors such as the effect of regional variations on household consumption. Studies of the middling sort, on the other hand, have found that regional differences were very important in determining the levels at which people acquired new and old consumer goods. Residents of the capital and Home Counties, for example, were generally the first individuals in the country to consume new goods, whilst people in distant and rural counties such as Cumbria and Cornwall obtained these goods in smaller numbers.¹⁰ We simply do not know whether the same regional factors affected the poor.¹¹ There is also a lack of literature on how the poor's ownership of household goods changed over the life-cycle,¹² meaning that we have a limited understanding of whether the poor accumulated items over their lifetimes or whether most people were forced to sell off their belongings during times of poverty.¹³

Pauper inventories and probate inventories allow us to address these historiographical lacunae. Both sources list relatively complete collections of household goods and can be found around England, allowing for systematic analysis across time and space. However, there are misunderstandings and uncertainties in our understanding of both types of inventories. Pauper inventories have only been used for parts of Essex and Norfolk,

meaning that we have little understanding of whether pauper consumption grew elsewhere and do not know how representative these results are of other areas. Our overall understanding of what pauper inventories are, what they can tell us, and who they capture is also deficient due to misunderstandings in the literature regarding the mechanisms behind the making of pauper inventories. Adrian Green, for instance, recently studied 206 'pauper' inventories from Norfolk, but did not appreciate that the inventories needed to be checked against wider parish sources to determine to whom the goods in the inventories belonged or why the inventories had been made. Consequently, around one-third of his sample was made up of non-pauper inventories such as rent-arrears inventories and was inclusive of wealthier members of society who did not receive any poor relief.¹⁴ Probate inventories taken of labourers' belongings are also potentially problematic. By law, for example, people needed an estate worth at least £5 to have their goods inventoried.¹⁵ Although appraisers sometimes neglected this procedure,¹⁶ many poor people were nonetheless excluded from the process when they fell beneath this threshold, meaning that it is possible that only a small percentage of the labouring poor who were relatively wealthy had their goods appraised. A number of writers such as Lorna Weatherill and Barry Coward have subsequently argued that labourers' probate inventories are largely unrepresentative of the wider labouring population.¹⁷

With these issues in mind, this article seeks to examine the material lives of the poor over the long eighteenth century and to determine how regional factors and life-cycles of poverty affected the poor's ownership of furniture and luxury goods. From a methodological perspective, this article seeks to examine what types of poor people are captured in pauper and probate inventories, and to evaluate the extent to which they are reliable sources to study the poor.

By focusing on Kent and drawing comparisons to other counties such as Dorset and Essex, it will be argued that being in receipt of poor relief was not necessarily incompatible with ownership of decent material goods and that the material lives of many poor people were broadly improving over the long eighteenth century. The research, however, indicates that changes in consumption were not uniform. First, there could be distinct regional differences. The poor in London and the Home Counties appear to have been the first people to own new consumer goods, whilst the poor in more distant areas such as Dorset owned many of the same goods in much smaller numbers. Second, whilst the middling sort increasingly acquired a greater range of belongings between the late seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries, it was not until the late eighteenth century that these goods seem to have entered the homes of the poor in significant numbers. Finally, the research finds that the poor were not a homogenous group with similar types of material goods, but were rather a heterogeneous grouping of people, displaying very different levels of material wealth. Labourers' probate inventories appear to represent a minority of labourers who often had access to land and were able to acquire new consumer items sooner than most poorer households. The paupers represented in pauper inventories, on the other hand, were materially poorer than the people from labourers' probate inventories, as they were on poor relief and their goods more often went through cycles of being pawned and sold to provide money for food and other necessities. The research refines our definition of poverty by showing that the 'poor' should be placed into a number of hierarchical subgroups, in which people often lived very different material lives to one another depending upon factors such as health and the availability of work. The article starts by discussing the samples of inventories used and explains the choice of Kent as a case study. The samples of pauper inventories and labourers' probate inventories are then analysed to examine poverty and

consumption, and assess how reliable the sources are for studying the poor and their material lives.

BACKGROUND TO KENT

This article focuses on inventories from Kent, although samples from Dorset and Essex are also used to add a comparative and regional element to the research. Kent was relatively prosperous over the long eighteenth century due in part to the huge demand for food from London. This meant that the county was well connected to the capital through water and road networks, had one of the highest densities of retail outlets in the country, and that the Kent labouring poor received some of the highest agricultural wages in England throughout the period. The county is thus a particularly interesting case study to investigate the poor's consumer behaviour, as the poor in Kent were generally better off than their counterparts elsewhere and had greater access to market-produced goods. Historians have often noted that the middling sort in Kent were some of the first people to acquire new consumer goods over the long eighteenth century, due to the county's proximity and connections to the fashion, trade and manufacturing centre of London.¹⁸ No research has been conducted to see if the Kentish poor also acquired goods before their counterparts in more distant and remote areas.

FIGURE 1 AROUND HERE

61 pauper inventories have been found for Kent from between 1679 and 1835. One inventory has been omitted since it mainly lists clothing. The Kent pauper inventories were made in 29 different settlements, most of which were located in the central and southern parts of the county broadly known as the Scarpfoot and Weald regions. The article also uses

49 probate inventories of labourers' goods from Kent dated 1700-49. These came from 33 different settlements, of which most were located in the eastern half of the county. Although large settlements such as Canterbury, Dover and Maidstone are captured in the samples, most of the inventories were made in rural settlements (figure 1). The majority of people in the samples were thus likely to have been employed predominantly in agriculture, and any crafts or industries that people were engaged in would have been a side-line to agricultural work. Whilst the pauper inventories are evenly split between men and women, all of the labourers' probate inventories were made of male-headed households due to the term 'labourer' being an occupational title that was only used by men. These differences in the gender profile of pauper inventories and labourers' probate inventories mean that the two samples are difficult to analyse together. One could, for instance, argue that because men had greater earning power than women the labourers' probate inventories will list more goods than the pauper inventories. On the other hand, it could be argued that because women were more susceptible to poverty the parish quickly stepped in and offered them higher relief payments, allowing them to retain many of their possessions and not sell them for food and other necessities. These issues probably have some impact on the goods that were recorded in the inventories, but it is difficult to precisely determine what effect without a larger sample of sources. These problems, however, are worth bearing in mind.

Most of the Kent pauper inventories are dated between the 1700s and 1780s, meaning that the late seventeenth century and 'crisis' years of the old poor law (1790s-1830s) are relatively poorly covered in the sample. In a similar manner, the labourers' probate inventories have chronological problems. Most of them are dated between 1700-1729 and their numbers decline from the 1730s. Any changes in pauper ownership over time must

therefore be viewed as *suggestive*, as the samples are too small for the evidence to be viewed as irrefutable. Despite this, the numbers are sufficient to assess broad trends in ownership and other samples of inventories from Dorset and Essex are used to back up the findings. Additionally, the inventories will be subjected to qualitative analysis and be used alongside sources such as pawnbroking records and pauper letters to reveal evidence of consumer culture and show that, at the very least, being poor did not always exclude people from owning decent material goods and forming a relatively pleasant home.

PAUPER INVENTORIES

Probate inventories have been extensively used to analyse middling consumption patterns and their usefulness as historical sources has been written about at length.¹⁹ Pauper inventories, on the other hand, have rarely been used by historians and so it is important to assess what they are, why they were made and how reliable they are. Poor law officials made pauper inventories to record the possessions that somebody who received regular or casual poor relief (a pauper) owned at one point in time. The paupers would generally then continue to use their goods and at a later date, usually when they died, the goods would eventually revert to the parish when they would be sold, given to other paupers or be used to furnish the parish poorhouse/workhouse. Only six of the pauper inventories recorded the goods of deceased parishioners. In every case these recipients had been dead for around one or two weeks when their belongings were appraised by the parish. This means that pauper inventories do not record possessions that were in transit, but goods that were generally located where their owners had left them.²⁰ Pauper inventories are very difficult to find and time-consuming to use. Most of them are un-catalogued in archives and need to be compared to wider parish records to check that the person whose goods were appraised was on poor

relief, and that the inventory was not made for unrelated reasons such as arrears of rent or non-payment of poor rates.²¹ The practice of inventorying pauper goods was not ubiquitous but nor was it uncommon, since it is not unusual for overseers' accounts to record the costs associated to appraising parishioners' belongings. The only reason that more do not survive today is because most of them were written on loose pieces of paper and were thrown away after the parish had taken the pauper's goods.²² The majority of inventories that have survived only do so because the overseer wrote or copied the inventory into their account book.

Pauper inventories are generally formulaic in structure. Most start by detailing to whom the goods in the inventory belonged, who appraised the goods, and where and when it was made. The household goods are then listed one by one and occasionally rooms or valuations of the goods are recorded. As with probate inventories, one should not use pauper inventories with the assumption that they are complete. They should rather be viewed as a representation of the home. Some appraisers, for example, may have prioritised writing down the most valuable goods and some paupers may have hidden their belongings if they knew that somebody was coming to inventory their possessions. It is, of course, impossible to know the extent to which these factors affected the range of goods that was recorded in the inventories. Nonetheless, the majority of pauper inventories record a relatively representative range of cheap, mundane and valuable items. Moreover, various vestry minutes suggest that when parish officials came to appraise the goods of paupers they made surprise visits,²³ meaning that paupers would have had limited scope to hide or conceal their goods.

REPRESENTATIVENESS

Over the long eighteenth century, around two-fifths to half of the contemporary population received poor relief at one point or more in their lives, stemming from reasons such as unemployment, sickness and death.²⁴ Tim Wales' research, for instance, found that approximately two-fifths of the population in a small number of seventeenth-century Norfolk communities received poor relief at least one point in their lives.²⁵ Henry French found that in Essex at least 55 per cent of Terling's population recorded in the 1801 census received some sort of relief over time.²⁶ The pauper inventories thus potentially represent a considerable number of 'typical' poor people, as many individuals would have been in receipt of some form of poor relief at one point or more in their lives over the long eighteenth century. Before one makes such a claim, however, it is important to first contextualize the inventories and assess the extent to which those to whom the goods belonged were representative of paupers. It is possible, for example, that parishes only appraised the goods of people who were materially rich, or inventoried the possessions of paupers who were formerly of the middling sort but had fallen on hard times.

It is difficult to assess pauper inventories from one county as a single collection, as systems of poor relief varied from parish to parish and local practice was dependent upon the economic, legal and cultural features of the respective parishes.²⁷ Some parishes, for example, inventoried parishioners' goods to recoup some of the money that they had paid out in relief to the pauper, whilst other parishes used the inventory process as a method to control the numbers of claimants for relief. In Ightham the parish ordered that 'Overseers take an Inventory of all goods and Cloaths' of '*all* person receiving pay or Allowance' in 1783.²⁸ In Staplehurst the parish appraised the goods of several parishioners who were sick or 'in need'.²⁹ Parishes would thus appraise the possessions of paupers at a range of life-cycle

points: some were made of the goods of people who had received poor relief for long periods of time; some were made of the possessions of people as soon as they started to receive relief; and some were made because the parish expected to pay out large sums of money in the near future. In total, 32 per cent of the Kent pauper inventories were made around the same time that the person started receiving relief. The remainder had been on relief for at least two months prior to their goods being appraised. Most of these people, however, had been dependent on relief for longer periods of time, often numbering years or decades. These differences in local poor law administration and variations in when officials appraised parishioners' goods mean that there is a limit to how far one can claim that pauper inventories are representative of all pauper populations across the old poor law. It may also mean that there are slight differences in the types of goods that are recorded in the inventories.

Despite these problems, most of the pauper inventories record the belongings of comparable *types* of paupers who were on relief due to life-cycle-related problems such as sickness and old age. The bulk of the secondary literature on poverty in the south and east of England has found that before 1770 most paupers were widowed or single women.³⁰ The Kent pauper inventories broadly mirror this trend as 55 per cent of the inventories were made of women's possessions. Most of these women were widowed or single. After 1770, this trend was reversed as the poor law reached its crisis years and more men applied for relief due to increased unemployment and underemployment, as well as life-cycle problems such as sickness.³¹ Again, the pauper inventories reflect this broad switch in poor law priorities, as 59 per cent of the inventories were made of the belongings of male-headed households between 1770 and 1834.³² These men, however, predominantly represent male parishioners who received regular and casual relief from the parish for life-cycle-related problems, such as old

age and sickness, rather than unemployment and those who received help through allowance systems such as Speenhamland and roundsman schemes. Most of the men in the sample appear to have been a mix of widowers, bachelors and married men. It has been difficult to determine the ages of the people from the inventories. Despite this, through the use of a small sample of 17 pauper inventories from Dorset, Essex, Kent and Norfolk in which paupers' ages could be discerned, the average age appears to have been relatively high at 61 years old. Moreover, four of these people with a recorded age were in their 80s and ten were aged between 60 and 86 years old. In most parishes long-term regular relief was only given to a minority of paupers, whilst most other people had to make do with short-term casual relief.³³ Pauper inventories, on the other hand, appear to predominantly represent paupers who received regular relief,³⁴ as only 31 per cent of the Kent inventories were made of the possessions of paupers on casual relief.

It is possible that parishes prioritised inventorying the goods of paupers who were materially richer than most, such as those who were previously of the middling sort before they became pauperised. Yet, there are a number of reasons to suggest that this was generally not the case and that parishes actually appraised the goods of a wide spectrum of paupers. First, whilst some pauper inventories listed hundreds of items, half of them listed no more than 60 items. Moreover, just under one-fourth listed no more than 30 items. Of course, these numbers are not precise and inevitably under-represent the goods paupers owned; however if materially rich paupers were a priority then one would expect the inventories to record many more items. Second, the Kent pauper inventories recorded estates worth a total average of £9 12s. 3d. from 1681 to 1783. This figure is based on only five pauper inventories and so is very tentative, but nonetheless suggests that materially rich paupers were not a

priority as the amount is relatively low. The probate inventories of labourers' goods from 1700 to 1749, on the other hand, record estates worth an average value of over three times as much at £35 2s. 1d. In addition, the probate inventories of the Kent middling sort used in Mark Overton and his co-writers' study on consumption and production recorded average household values of £196.96 between 1720 and 1750.³⁵ Third, one would expect animal ownership to be much higher if pauper inventories represented the materially richest of the dependent poor, particularly given the rural nature of the inventories. However, animals were only recorded in 8 per cent of pauper inventories; whilst 51 per cent of the sample of Kent labourers' probate inventories recorded animals.³⁶ The probate inventories of the Kent middling sort also suggest that around half of people owned animals between 1600 and 1750.³⁷

As a final means to assess how representative pauper inventories are, one can check whether the people from the inventories had paid poor rates earlier in their lifetimes and whether these amounts of money were significant sums of money. In the village of Martham in Norfolk, 12 pauper inventories survive between 1758 and 1772. Of these twelve inventories, only four or five were made of the goods of people who had previously paid rates or had partners who had done so.³⁸ The amounts that they had paid were mostly small and sometimes irregular. For example, in the 25 years before Roger Riches had his goods appraised in 1772, he had only paid 9d. for half a year of rates between 1753 and 1754. The other people from the sample tended to pay no more than around 2s. or 3s. in rates for the year. Each person had stopped paying rates for a number of years before their goods were inventoried.³⁹ Unfortunately, I was unable to find a sample from Kent where I had a large number of pauper inventories and a series of overseers' rate books from the same place to

back-trace rate payments over several decades. Despite this, the results from Martham strongly suggest that paupers who had their goods inventoried were not from rich backgrounds and were consequently not atypical of most other paupers who did not have their goods appraised.

Although pauper inventories were not made of every person who received poor relief and appear to have generally been made of the elderly and pensioners, they nonetheless reveal a fascinating and unique snapshot of pauper material wealth. Furthermore, this analysis has shown that pauper inventories are in other ways broadly representative of many other paupers who did not have their goods appraised by the parish. This suggests that pauper inventories are relatively reliable sources through which to evaluate levels of material wealth of individuals in receipt of poor relief.

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR OF PAUPERS

The lack of literature on the poor's consumer behaviour is particularly surprising considering that the 'poor' – defined in its broadest sense to include the labouring sort, the homeless, vagrants, people in receipt of poor relief or charity, and people exempt from taxes – made up at least 50 per cent of the population throughout the long eighteenth century. This section seeks to address this gap by using the Kent pauper inventories to analyse the goods that those in receipt of poor relief owned.⁴⁰ The inventories will be analysed quantitatively to generate a broad overview of how material life changed over the long eighteenth century, and be examined qualitatively alongside additional sources to assess consumer culture. The findings show that being in receipt of poor relief was not necessarily incompatible with ownership of decent material goods, and indicate that the material lives of many paupers were improving over the period.

TABLE 1 AROUND HERE

Table 1 records the types of furniture that were listed in Kent pauper inventories. The findings suggest that beds were ubiquitous in pauper homes by the late seventeenth century. This is important as before the seventeenth century it was not uncommon for people to sleep on the floor or on makeshift beds such as straw pallets.⁴¹ Decent beds were increasingly seen as necessities to paupers and linked to a need for physical comfort. In pauper letters written by William James to the overseer of Chelmsford, he stated that he had ‘only our Bed, & a few things’ and asked the overseer for help ‘to stop the threatening proceedings of my Landlady, to take away the *Comfort*, of our few goods from us’.⁴² Thus, even for paupers who owned very little, beds and a few small material goods for comfort were still important. The pauper inventories suggest that for some paupers sleeping arrangements could be relatively comfortable. 35 per cent of pauper inventories, for example, recorded one or more feather beds. The increased ownership of bed hangings by the late eighteenth century would also suggest an improvement in the quality of pauper beds. Bed hangings were particularly useful possessions as they helped to prevent draughts, keep the warmth in and provided a private and intimate space in which people could sleep or rest.

The results from table 1 indicate that paupers in Kent had access to a wide range of storage units. Boxes (including coffer, trunks, chests etc.) and cupboards appear to have been the most common storage units that paupers owned; however, the pauper inventories also indicate that there was a significant increase in the number of paupers that owned chests of drawers and dressers over the period. This suggests that there was an important change in pauper material culture, as the increased ownership of storage units implies that paupers owned more possessions over the eighteenth century that needed storing. It also suggests

that paupers were increasingly adopting more practical, specialised, decorative and fashionable storage units which had shelves, cupboard compartments, and/or drawers. Dressers, for example, often came with shelves which were used by people to display their finest dishes, adding a decorative quality to rooms. Widow Marchant from Chiddingstone owned 'One Dresser with 3 Drawers & Shelves', and on the shelves were '½ Dozen 3 b[l]ue Edge plates [,] 4 Bassons, ½ Dozen Cupps & Sawyers [saucers], 1 Rummer Glass, 2 wine Glasses, 3 b[l]ue Plates, one Queens wares bowl, 2 Quart, 2 pint [,] one ½ half pint Pott'.⁴³ Storage units could also add a decorative quality to rooms in other ways. For example, Isabella Brown, who used the pawnshop of George Fettes in York nearly 40 times between July 1777 and February 1778, pawned a box containing artificial flowers on one occasion.⁴⁴ William Pocock from Penshurst owned 'One large *handsom* Trunk' according to the individual who appraised his goods.⁴⁵ Levels of pauper ownership of seating and tables appear to have been high throughout the period. From the late eighteenth century, every pauper inventory recorded some form of seating and tables. Moreover, some of these items appear to have been relatively fashionable and point towards a more comfortable and decorative home. The pauper inventories, for instance, indicate that arm chairs and elbow chairs became slightly more common after 1770, and that painted furniture and items made from mahogany and ash were more frequently owned by paupers. There is, however, a limit to how comfortable and fashionable pauper furniture became as upholstered seating was rarely recorded in the inventories. In comparison, it was ubiquitous in the homes of Kent gentlemen, yeomen and people employed in service or retail sectors.⁴⁶

TABLE 2 AROUND HERE

Table 2 shows the percentage of Kent pauper inventories which record select luxury goods.⁴⁷ 'Luxury' is broadly defined here to include items which were not necessary to running the home and people's basic physical welfare. This includes items that were strongly linked to decoration, status, vanity, novelty, display and imitation, and items that were owned in superfluous numbers. The results suggest that c. 1679-1769 only a minority of Kent paupers owned luxury goods, but that by the late eighteenth century the ownership of luxuries had increased and that the material lives of paupers were improving. Items such as looking glasses and clocks could be used to assess one's appearance or check the time. They could also be used to decorate the home. Clocks, for instance, were often noted with wooden cases in pauper inventories and pawnbroking records.⁴⁸ Looking glasses could be used with other bundles of goods such as candles and rushlights to create a more comfortable domestic environment that seemed brighter and more spacious.⁴⁹ Some of the looking glasses that paupers owned were probably quite expensive. Mrs Buckwell from Canterbury owned '1 swing glas' and two 'pier glas[ses]'.⁵⁰ The ownership of window curtains meant that people could display taste to the outside world, in addition to being able to prevent draughts, soften outside noise, keep the heat in and obtain some privacy from passersby.⁵¹ Most of the books recorded in the sample of inventories were bibles or prayer books. The autobiographies of the vagrant Mary Saxby and labourer Joseph Mayett indicate that when poor people had religious books they read them for enjoyment, as well as the pursuit of religious knowledge and spiritual devotion.⁵² Mayett even claimed that 'I have read many authors but... always prefer the bible before any other book'.⁵³

The slight increase in the ownership of knives and forks (table 2) suggests that eating habits had started to move away from using one's hands and/or a knife and spoon.⁵⁴ Very few

people owned tea items before 1770; however, after this date tea items appear to have become common in pauper homes. Moreover, some paupers even owned a range of tea paraphernalia, such as tea tables, tea cups and saucers and tea caddies, as well as tea pots and kettles. Francis Dungay and his wife, for example, had '1. Wainscot Tea Table', '1. Painted ROUNG [round] Deal Tea Table', a range of earthenware vessels and '1 Japan [lacquered] Tea board & Tea Ware' in their 'Front Room' in Maidstone. Alongside these goods were other bundles of interconnected luxury goods such as '6 small pictures', a '30hour Clock [with] Wainscot Case' and '6. Ash. Rush bottom Chairs'.⁵⁵ This suggests that there may have been an element of ritualised tea drinking in some pauper homes and that consuming tea could be an enjoyable activity which went beyond thirst and taste. These results overall indicate that a number of paupers owned a range of luxury goods by the late eighteenth century and that these items may have even been increasingly seen as necessities, reflecting patterns of ownership amongst the Kent middling sort and elite from the late seventeenth century or earlier.⁵⁶ Despite this, it is important to point out that paupers did not acquire all of the same luxuries as richer people did. Gold and silver items, for example, were rarely recorded in the sample.

TABLE 3 AROUND HERE

The Kent middling sort were generally the first people in England to consume new goods on a mass scale after London.⁵⁷ Research on Old Bailey sources and clothing has suggested that the poor in London could live relatively rich material lives by the second half of the eighteenth century;⁵⁸ however, since there is a lack of comparative research on the poor outside of the capital we have little understanding of whether the London poor were exceptional and whether the same regional factors that influenced the middling sort also

affected the poor. Thus, in order to test whether levels of consumption was highest in Kent and other Home Counties, table 3 shows the percentage of Dorset, Essex and Kent pauper inventories which record select items between 1770 and 1834. Each of the samples are comprised of inventories that were predominantly made in rural areas and included people who were mostly dependent on agriculture.⁵⁹ The samples of pauper inventories from each of the counties are small, but nonetheless suggest that paupers in Kent were amongst the first in England to acquire a wide variety of consumer items. Likewise in Essex, another Home County that was heavily dependent and influenced by London, paupers appear to have been able to acquire many goods before paupers in more remote areas such as Dorset. This can be seen with paupers in Essex and Kent appearing to own more chests of drawers, clocks/watches, pictures, looking glasses and tea goods to their counterparts in Dorset. The qualitative evidence from the inventories also suggests that paupers in Essex and Kent were more likely to own items made from decorative woods and painted and coloured furniture than paupers in Dorset. London was at the centre of trades such as printing and the manufacture of items including chest of drawers and timepieces.⁶⁰ This probably meant that many goods would have been widely available and relatively easy to acquire in the surrounding areas from new and the second-hand market. As a result of this the goods were also probably cheaper to obtain. Moreover, because London was at the centre of fashion and consumer trends, the desire to own these items was probably higher in neighbouring Home Counties as they would have been more visible in shop windows and the homes of friends and relatives.⁶¹ It is important to note that the results suggest that paupers in Dorset could also own a wide range of possessions by the late eighteenth century. However, when the Dorset inventories are compared to the inventories from Essex and Kent, the findings indicate

that increased consumption was not uniform and was often highly dependent upon where one lived and regional economic factors.

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR OF INVENTORIED LABOURERS

This section continues to analyse the poor's consumer behaviour through the use of labourers' probate inventories and other sources such as pawnbroking records and pauper letters. Until recently, it was thought that probate inventories of labourers' goods were too few in number to assess labouring consumption patterns. In Weatherill's ground-breaking book *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture*, for example, she was only able to find 28 inventories of labourers' goods out of a random sample of 2902 probate inventories.⁶² However, through better archival cataloguing it has become easier for historians to find labourers' probate inventories. Muldrew and Sneath recently used nearly 1000 and 300 labourers' probate inventories respectively to assess the consumption patterns of the labouring poor. They both found that labourers increasingly consumed a greater range of items over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their results suggested that this trend was particularly pronounced after 1700, as the numbers of labourers who owned items such as looking glasses increased significantly.⁶³

Muldrew and Sneath's detailed work is a welcome addition to the historiography. However, the extent to which labourers' probate inventories are typical of the labouring population as a whole is questionable. Sneath stated that his sample of labourers' probate inventories probably represented a subgroup of the labouring sort who were better off than most. In contrast, Muldrew claimed that his sample was representative of the wider labouring population who did not have their goods appraised.⁶⁴ There are a number of reasons why labourers' probate inventories may have been made of an atypical richer subgroup of the

poor as Sneath and others have suggested.⁶⁵ Muldrew found that 68 per cent of his sample owned animals and that 51 per cent grew crops.⁶⁶ It was not unusual for labourers to produce some of their own food but the numbers seem very high. For instance, Muldrew found that 54 per cent of the sample owned cattle at an average of nearly four each.⁶⁷ This is more indicative of relatively large-scale farming since cattle needed a large area of land to graze on, which common land or smallholdings would have struggled to accommodate.⁶⁸ Research by Keith Snell and Leigh Shaw-Taylor, and contemporary observations made by Nathaniel Kent, Frederic Morton Eden and David Davies, have similarly found that cows and other animals were only owned by a minority of the poor.⁶⁹

Muldrew compared the ownership patterns of five different items from the labourers' probate inventories to the same goods in King's Essex pauper inventories in order to prove that his sample was representative. The comparison indicated that paupers and labourers owned similar frequencies of goods to one another and that any differences between the two sets of inventories were not sizeable enough to suggest that the two samples were made of disparate people. Muldrew used this as evidence to claim that his sample of inventories 'is broadly representative of the labouring population as a whole'.⁷⁰ This assertion can be challenged. Muldrew compared probate inventories from all six of his counties (Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Hampshire, Kent, Lincolnshire and Norfolk) to King's Essex pauper inventories, but in doing this he did not take into account the considerable influence that regional differences could have on consumption and did not account for the considerable influence that London had on consumers in Essex and other Home Counties (see above). His inventories for Kent would have been a much fairer comparison to Essex. Additionally, two of the five goods that Muldrew compared to King's results are problematic as Muldrew stated

that two of them, linen and candlesticks, were under-recorded by the appraisers of probate inventories.⁷¹ Overall, this suggests that any claims that the two samples are similar is tentative and that further research is needed to determine which types of people are represented in labourers' probate inventories.

TABLE 4 AROUND HERE

In order to test the reliability of Muldrew's results and examine the extent to which labourers' probate inventories are representative of the poor, table 4 compares the goods recorded in 25 Kent pauper inventories to a sample of 49 Kent labourers' probate inventories between 1700-49. The samples are small; however, by focusing on only one county the analysis is fairer than Muldrew's comparison of the two sources. The dates 1700-49 were chosen as there are very few probate inventories dated after 1750 and fewer surviving pauper inventories for Kent dated before 1700. Crucially, the results suggest that the labourers' probate inventories were made of a materially richer group of people than the pauper inventories as they recorded a much greater range of goods. The figures indicate that over half of the labourers from probate inventories owned farm animals, whilst less than one-tenth of the Kent pauper inventories recorded animals. This suggests that the people from the labourers' probate inventories had a number of advantages over the people from the pauper inventories. Owning a cow, for example, had many benefits such as the availability of milk and meat to consume and sell on. Jane Humphries calculated that a cow was worth over half an adult male labourer's annual wage to a family.⁷² Without animals, the people from the pauper inventories probably had less protein and calcium in their diets, and were less self-sufficient and thus spent more money buying groceries.⁷³ Additionally, labourers' probate inventories record a greater number of people with stock-in-trade and expensive tools and

equipment used for producing food and drink. In 1748, for example, the probate inventory of the labourer Thomas Gower from Wittersham recorded a plough and stocks of hay and corn in the barn.⁷⁴ Stephen Ridding's home in Great Chart had a wash house and milk house which contained equipment for preserving food and producing beer, butter, cheese and bread in 1709.⁷⁵ The pauper inventories, on the other hand, indicate that only one pauper was involved in dairy production and that five people brewed their own beer between 1700-49.

A greater range of household goods can also be seen in the labourers' probate inventories. Over half of the labourers' probate inventories recorded chests of drawers between 1700 and 1749, whereas only 8 per cent of pauper inventories did. Clocks, feather beds, gold/silver items, jacks, looking glasses and saucepans were also recorded in greater numbers of labourers' probate inventories. In 1704 the labourer James Dix of Minster, for example, owned '3 Bibl[e]s and Sum other boocks', a looking glass, window curtains and 'one watch 2 Sillver Spoons 1 Chil[d]s spoon of Sillver 1 Small Sillver cup' worth £4 10s. in total.⁷⁶ The labouring probate inventory of John White's goods in Faversham recorded two feather beds, two chests of drawers, a jack and an old clock and watch in 1736.⁷⁷ Overall, this suggests that there were notable differences between the two samples and that pauper inventories recorded the goods of people that were materially poorer than labourers whose belongings went through probate. Crucially, the results suggest that knives and forks, tea items and upholstered seating had not reached people from either sample in any great number between 1700 and 1749. This is important as it indicates that the labourers' probate inventories were not made of people from the middling sort, but from a higher subsection of the poor as some of these items were relatively common in the homes of the middling sort during the first half of the eighteenth century (table 4). Overton et al.'s research on the probate inventories of

the Kent middling sort, for instance, indicates that around 77 per cent of them owned upholstered seating, 1700-49. Likewise, the probate inventories of the Kent middling sort also recorded higher numbers of clocks, jacks and chests of drawers than the labourers' probate inventories.

This comparison indicates that Muldrew misjudged his sample by claiming that pauper inventories and labourers' probate inventories represent similar samples of the poor. Instead, these results strongly suggest that labourers' probate inventories list the goods of people who were poor, but materially richer than other individuals such as paupers. The labourers whose goods were subject to probate appear to have been more similar to husbandmen in some ways. For example, 19 and 34 per cent of Kent husbandmen represented in Overton et al.'s sample of probate inventories owned jacks and looking glasses between 1700-49, compared to 20 and 39 per cent of labourers' probate inventories.⁷⁸ The labourers from the Kent probate inventories appear to have had a number of advantages that most poorer households did not have. A significant number of them appear to have had access to land, which meant that they could rear animals and grow crops. Most other labourers, however, had little access to land during the period and further lost what access they had as parliamentary enclosure grew apace during the eighteenth century.⁷⁹

Another key reason why labourers' probate inventories record more items than pauper inventories appears to stem from the life-cycle of poverty. Every person who had their goods appraised in a pauper inventory was in receipt of poor relief and was living through problems such as sickness, old age and disability. This meant that many had already gone through periods of selling and pawning their goods to make ends meet. The pawnbroking pledge book of Fettes, for example, shows that when people needed money they sold and

pawned items such as watches, tea items and gold/silver items in significant numbers.⁸⁰ Pauper letters indicate that paupers would commonly sell their belongings to make do and acquire necessities such as food. In December 1824 Thomas Smith wrote to the overseer of Chelmsford in Essex to ask for relief. He said that he had 'been out of employ for about a month' and so had 'pledged what furniture we can possibly spare... [including] my own wearing apparell – all our Silver Spoons and my Watch'.⁸¹ In a similar letter written by William King, he asked the overseer of Braintree, Essex for relief. He said 'I Cannot Do without Soume Help. Every thing of My Wearing apparel and Even My wifes Ring is Put of [pawned] to Procure food'.⁸² Some paupers even risked angering overseers by selling the items that the parish had given to them. In 1816 the parson William Holland wrote in his diary that 'The times are growing very hard and corn rising and no work to be found and... several [paupers] were found to sell the things they were given by the Parish'.⁸³ It is likely that the paupers whose belongings were recorded in pauper inventories sold and pawned their goods in a similar manner when poverty struck, meaning that the pauper inventories represent a materially poorer sample than the labourers' probate inventories. Of course, labourers whose goods went through probate probably also had intermittent money problems and endured bouts of sickness; however, they had greater resources to avert disaster and could avoid applying for relief since they often had land, animals and crops which they could feed themselves with or sell. Labourers who had probate inventories made of their belongings also had a greater selection of belongings to sell if they needed to quickly raise money. Most pauper inventories, on the other hand, were made of the belongings of people that had been on poor relief for years or even decades prior to their goods being appraised by the parish. Moreover, many of these people who later had their goods inventoried by the parish would have spent long periods of time making do on their own resources, and using makeshift economies including

the help of kin and ad-hoc work such as nursing and washing clothes prior to receiving relief.⁸⁴ Although probate inventories were taken after death and often a period of sickness beforehand, it is probable that the people captured in labourers' probate inventories had had longer periods of relative prosperity than people from the pauper inventories and were thus materially richer.

HIERARCHIES OF MATERIAL POVERTY

Labourers' probate inventories, pauper inventories and other sources such as pauper letters allow us to construct a more nuanced concept of poverty. 'The poor' were clearly not a homogeneous group, but were instead made up of a number of subgroups which often lived very different material lives to one another depending upon a range of factors including age, health and access to land. Labourers' probate inventories represent a subgroup of the poor that were at the top rung. They often but not always had access to some land and were able to grow crops and rear animals. This meant that they had a number of economic advantages over most landless labourers. This was a social level which most poor people could feasibly aspire to, but one which most would never reach.

Below the labouring people captured in probate inventories are the more typical labouring sort, whose goods generally did not go through probate when they died. This group included people who worked for hourly/daily wages and included a wide variety of occupations such as agricultural labourers, weavers, servants, miners, artisans, soldiers, sailors, blacksmiths, porters, builders, wheelwrights and various industrial workers.⁸⁵ Some of these working people, such as blacksmiths and wheelwrights, had stock-in-trade and tools which could be sold or pawned during difficult periods. However, perhaps more importantly, most of these people were poorer than those captured in labourers' probate inventories since

they did not have enough access to land to rear animals or grow crops, especially with many of them moving to urban areas and increased parliamentary enclosure over the eighteenth century.⁸⁶ During young adulthood and middle age these people were at their earning peak and able to acquire a range of goods to furnish their homes and clothe themselves. Of course, it was initially very costly to set up a new home, food was constantly expensive, and debt was common when people had children that were too young to work and contribute to the household economy.⁸⁷ But if they were healthy and had regular employment this was the time in their lives when they were generally able to acquire a number of possessions.⁸⁸ It was also during these years when people appear to have generally been more susceptible to trends and fashions. Adam Smith, for example, claimed that many young poor men worked tirelessly to obtain 'conveniences', but that 'in the last dregs of life... he begins at last to find that wealth and greatness are mere trinkets of frivolous utility'.⁸⁹

Life-cycle problems such as sickness and injury, and work-related problems including low wages, underemployment and unemployment, however, were inevitable and meant that considerable numbers of people had to turn to some sort of poor relief or charity at one stage or more in their lives.⁹⁰ The pauper inventories represent many people at the point when they turned to poor relief. Even among paupers there was a wide spectrum of material poverty. Probably stemming from longer periods of earlier prosperity or prompt intervention by parish authorities, a minority of paupers were able to retain a considerable range of possessions, whereas a small number of paupers owned very few goods when their belongings were appraised by the parish. More typically, the majority of pauper inventories record the possessions of individuals that fell somewhere between these two extremes. The material wealth of paupers was not as rich as the people represented in labourers' probate inventories

and the poor that did not need relief. With regular or casual relief rarely being enough to live off,⁹¹ most people would have gone through periods of selling and pawning their goods before and during the time that they received poor relief, as well as extensively using other makeshift economies including neighbourly charity and ad-hoc work such as nursing to make do.⁹² Pauper inventories consequently represent the goods that people kept after a number of their possessions from more prosperous times had been sold. Crucially, the fact that the results from the pauper inventories suggest that paupers could nevertheless own a wide range of goods, shows that being in receipt of poor relief was not necessarily incompatible with ownership of decent material goods, and is suggestive of major changes in the poor's material culture over the long eighteenth century.

There were also subsections of the poor who fell below the people captured in pauper and probate inventories: the homeless and mobile poor. As Tim Hitchcock's work has demonstrated, these people often did not even have a bed to sleep in and owned little more than the clothes on their backs.⁹³ The homeless and mobile poor were thus the poorest of the poor, whilst pauper inventories represent the material lives of the poor at the point that they were on poor relief but still had a home to live in. There were also other groups of the poor such as workhouse inmates who fell somewhere between the homeless/mobile poor and those on outdoor relief.⁹⁴

Of course, this is an oversimplified discussion of the different categories of poor people and there was inevitably overlap between the subgroups. Nonetheless, this comparison of different sources shows that we need a more nuanced awareness of the wide varieties and life-cycles of poverty. Once we are aware of these multifaceted features of poverty and of the fact that each subgroup often led different material lives to one another

and that people's position and material wealth could fluctuate over the life-cycle, we can begin to develop a fuller and more detailed analysis that is less optimistic than that which Muldrew suggested, but one which still shows that the material lives of many groups of the poor improved over the long eighteenth century.

CONCLUSION

Over the past ten years historians of consumption have increasingly turned their attention to the poor. These historians have often taken a positive perspective and argued that the poor could consume a wide range of consumer goods over the long eighteenth century.⁹⁵ Meanwhile, welfare historians have written a wealth of literature that discusses the struggles of being poor during certain life-cycle points such as old age.⁹⁶ This article has bridged the gap between these two schools of literature by showing that the lives of the poor were often very difficult, but that many people could still build up a reasonable collection of belongings and create a decent home. Through this, the article has helped us to refine our definition of poverty by showing that the poor were not a homogeneous group but one made up of a number of subgroups, in which people often lived very different material lives to one another and could move between the subgroups depending upon factors such as employment and health. Contrary to what Muldrew argued, labourers' probate inventories list the goods of the minority of people who were at the top rung of the labouring sort and not the general labouring population, whilst pauper inventories represent many poor people at the times in their lives when they received poor relief. Future research needs to recognize these nuances and consider how different sources can capture dissimilar subgroups of the poor.

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¹ For example, L. Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760* (London, 2nd edn., 1996); J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993); C. Shamma, *The Pre-industrial Consumer in England and America* (Oxford, 1990); M. Overton, J. Whittle, D. Dean and A. Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750* (London, 2004); J. Stobart, 'Gentlemen and shopkeepers: supplying the country house in eighteenth-century England', *Economic History Review*, 64, 3 (Sep. 2011), 885-904; A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's lives in Georgian England* (New Haven, 1998); A. Hann and J. Stobart (eds.), *The Country House: Material culture and consumption* (London, 2015).

² Weatherill, *op. cit.*, 194; Overton et al., *op. cit.*, 170; T. Hitchcock, *Down and Out in Eighteenth-century London* (London, 2004), 239.

³ R. W. Malcolmson, *Life and Labour in England 1700-1780* (London, 1981), 149; E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1991, reprint of 1963 edn.), 351.

⁴ J. Styles, 'Lodging at the Old Bailey: lodgings and their furnishings in eighteenth-century London' in J. Styles and A. Vickery (eds.), *Gender, Taste, and Material culture in Britain and*

North America 1700-1830 (New Haven, 2006), 61-80; S. Horrell, J. Humphries and K. Sneath, 'Consumption conundrums unravelled', *Economic History Review*, 68, 3 (Dec. 2015), 830-57; Idem, 'Cupidity and crime: consumption as revealed by insights from the Old Bailey records of thefts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' in M. Casson, and N. Hashimzade (eds.), *Large Databases in Economic History: Research methods and case studies* (Abingdon, 2013), 246-67; A. Helmreich, T. Hitchcock and W. J. Turkel, 'Rethinking inventories in the digital age: the case of the Old Bailey', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 11 (Dec. 2014), 1-25.

⁵ J. Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday fashion in eighteenth-century England* (New Haven, 2007); B. Lemire, *Fashion's Favourite: The cotton trade and the consumer in Britain, 1660-1800* (Oxford, 1991); Idem, *Dress, Culture and Commerce: The English clothing trade before the factory, 1660-1800* (Basingstoke, 1997).

⁶ For example, S. Horrell and J. Humphries, 'Old questions, new data, and alternative perspectives: families' living standards in the industrial revolution', *Journal of Economic History*, 52, 4 (Dec. 1992), 849-80; S. Horrell, 'Home demand and British industrialization', *Journal of Economic History*, 56, 3 (Sep. 1996), 561-604; Shammass, *op. cit.*, 121-56; C. Muldrew, *Food, Energy and the Creation of Industriousness: Work and material culture in agrarian England, 1550-1780* (Cambridge, 2011).

⁷ P. King, 'Pauper inventories and the material lives of the poor in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries' in T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharpe (eds.), *Chronicling Poverty: The voices and strategies of the English poor, 1640-1840* (Basingstoke, 1997), 155-91.

⁸ B. Cornford, 'Inventories of the poor', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 35 (1970-73), 118-25.

⁹ Muldrew, *op. cit.*, 163-207; K. Sneath, 'Consumption, wealth, indebtedness and social structure in early modern England' (Ph.D., Cambridge, 2008), 231-328.

¹⁰ Weatherill, *op. cit.*, 43-69; Overton et al., *op. cit.*

¹¹ An important exception is: J. Styles, 'Clothing the north: the supply of non-élite clothing in the eighteenth-century north of England', *Textile History*, 25, 2 (Jan. 1994), 139-66. In the article Styles found that readymade clothing was more widely available in London and the Home Counties than in the north of England.

¹² Most of the literature on consumption over the life-cycle focuses on clothing and linen. For example: Styles, *Dress, op. cit.*, 229-45; B. Lemire, *The Business of Everyday Life: Gender, practice and social politics in England, c. 1600-1900* (Manchester, 2005), 82-109.

¹³ See: Lemire, *Business, op. cit.*, 82-109. Lemire's work presents a fascinating assessment about how people used clothing and accessories as 'alternative currencies' to obtain other provisions.

¹⁴ A. Green, 'Heartless and unhomely? Dwellings of the poor in East Anglia and north-east England' in J. McEwan, and P. Sharpe (eds.), *Accommodating Poverty: The housing and living arrangements of the English poor, c. 1600-1850* (Basingstoke, 2011), 69-101. This is my calculation based on the same Norfolk inventories.

¹⁵ Shammass, *op. cit.*, 19.

¹⁶ Muldrew, *op. cit.*, 186.

¹⁷ Weatherill, *op. cit.*, 191-4; B. Coward, *The Stuart Age: England, 1603-1714* (Harlow, 3rd edn., 2003), 55; Sneath, *op. cit.*, 102; P. King, *op. cit.*, 156, 176.

¹⁸ A. Armstrong, (ed.), *The Economy of Kent 1640-1914* (Woodbridge, 1995); F. W. Jessup, *A History of Kent*; K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social change and agrarian England, 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 1985), 411-7; M. Freeman, 'Transport' in J. Langton and R.

J. Morris (eds.), *Atlas of Industrializing Britain, 1780-1914* (London, 1986), 80-93; Shammass, *op. cit.*, 225-65; H. C. Mui, and L. H. Mui, *Shops and Shopkeeping in Eighteenth-century England* (London, 1989); Weatherill, *op. cit.*, 43-69; Overton et al., *op. cit.*; E. A. Wrigley, 'A simple model of London's importance in changing English society and economy 1650-1750', *Past and Present*, 37 (Jul. 1967), 44-70; L. C. Orlin, (ed.), *Material London, ca. 1600* (Philadelphia, 2000).

¹⁹ For example, T. Arkell, N. Evans and N. Goose (eds.), *When Death do us Part: Understanding and interpreting the probate records of early modern England* (Oxford, 2000) and see note 1.

²⁰ Inventories which record pauper goods in the process of being taken by the parish have been categorised separately to pauper inventories as they are often incomplete. For example, some of these inventories record the parish taking only a small number of goods to pay the funeral expenses of a spouse or child.

²¹ Among Kent parish/miscellaneous archival records, I found a total of 463 inventories. 61 were pauper inventories, whilst the remaining inventories related to poorhouses/workhouses, debt, parish payments in kind, seizure of pauper goods and family abandonment. For further information on these various types of inventories, see: J. Harley, 'Material lives of the English poor: a regional perspective, c. 1670-1834' (Ph.D., Leicester, 2016), 68-72.

²² Contemporary writings also suggest that the practice was not uncommon. For example, J. Scott, *Observations on the Present State of the Parochial and Vagrant Poor* (London, 1773), 48.

²³ For example, E. Melling (ed.), *Kentish Sources: IV: The poor* (Maidstone, 1964), 104.

²⁴ The literature on the life-cycle of poverty is considerable, including: T. Wales, 'Poverty, poor relief and life-cycle: some evidence from seventeenth century Norfolk' in R. M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-cycle* (Cambridge, 1984), 351-404; B. Stapleton, 'Inherited poverty and the life-cycle poverty: Odiham, Hampshire, 1650-1850', *Social History*, 18, 3 (Oct. 1993), 339-55; S. A. Shave, 'The dependent poor? (Re)constructing the lives of individuals "on the parish" in rural Dorset, 1800-1832', *Rural History*, 20, 1 (Apr. 2009), 67-97; S. Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-cycle under the English Poor Law 1760-1834* (Woodbridge, 2011), 101-30.

²⁵ Wales, *op. cit.*; S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850: A regional perspective* (Manchester, 2000), 80.

²⁶ H. French, 'How dependent were the "dependent poor"? Poor relief and the life-course in Terling, Essex, 1752-1834', *Continuity and Change*, 30, 2 (Aug. 2015), 201.

²⁷ S. King, *op. cit.*; Shave, 'Dependent Poor?', *op. cit.*, 67-97; Williams, *op. cit.*; S. Hindle, *On the Parish? The micro-politics of poor relief in rural England c. 1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004).

²⁸ Kent History Library Centre (KHLC) P202/8/1. My italics.

²⁹ KHLC P347/18/1.

³⁰ S. King, *op. cit.*, 164-7.

³¹ P. Dunkley, *The Crisis of the Old Poor Law in England 1795-1834: An interpretive essay* (London, 1982).

³² More precisely, between c. 1670-1769 21 pauper inventories were female-headed and 17 were male-headed. Between 1770-1835, 9 inventories were female-headed and 13 were male-headed.

³³ Hindle, *op. cit.*, 10, 227-99, 361-449; Shave, 'Dependent Poor?', *op. cit.*, 86; H. French, 'An irrevocable shift: Detailing the dynamics of rural poverty in southern England, 1762-1834', *Economic History Review*, 68, 3 (Aug. 2015), 777, 785, 797-805.

³⁴ Many of these pensioners were also given casual relief, such as extra money and clothing.

³⁵ Overton et al., *op. cit.*, 140.

³⁶ Sometimes select vestries would make people sell off animals or livestock before they were entitled to relief. See: S. A. Shave, 'The impact of Sturges Bourne's poor law reforms in rural England', *The Historical Journal*, 56, 2 (Jun. 2013), 419-20. However, no records of this have been found with the paupers in this sample, suggesting that claimants generally did not own animals or owned them long before they received relief from the parish.

Contemporary comments and secondary evidence also suggests that ownership of livestock was low among the poor during the long eighteenth century. See note 69.

³⁷ Overton et al. did not precisely say what percentage of probate inventories recorded animals. However, based on their tables which show activities such as butchering, dairy production and combined arable/pastoral production, it is likely that around half of the inventories recorded animals. Overton et al., *op. cit.*, 33-86.

³⁸ One person could not be firmly identified as there were two people in the records with the same name.

³⁹ Norfolk Record Office PD 710/68; Cornford, *op. cit.*, 118-25. The last time that these paupers paid rates was 4, 8, 10 and 18 years before their goods were inventoried.

⁴⁰ Due to the limits of space other important items such as clothing, linen and fire irons are not discussed.

⁴¹ L. Wright, *Warm & Snug: The history of the bed* (Stroud, 2004, reprint of 1962 edn.), 18.

⁴² T. Sokoll (ed.), *Essex Pauper Letters, 1731-1837* (Oxford, 2001), 390, 410. My italics.

⁴³ KHLIC P89/12/17.

⁴⁴ York Archives and Local History (YALH) Accession 38.

⁴⁵ KHLIC P287/18/5. My italics.

⁴⁶ Overton et al., *op. cit.*, 191.

⁴⁷ For further context, see: M. Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Oxford, 2005); J. E. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort Sensibilities & Design in Early Modern Britain & Early America* (Baltimore, 2001), 141-70.

⁴⁸ YALH Accession 38.

⁴⁹ Crowley, *op. cit.*, 122-30.

⁵⁰ Canterbury Cathedral Archives and Library (CCAL) U3/100/11A/2.

⁵¹ Overton et al., *op. cit.*, 113; Weatherill, *op. cit.*, 81-3; Sneath, *op. cit.*, 275-78.

⁵² A. Kussmaul, (ed.), *The Autobiography of Joseph Mayett of Quainton (1783-1839)* (Chesham, 1986), 41, 72; M. Saxby, *Memoirs of a Female Vagrant* (London, 1806), 4, 16, 24, 30-2, 37-8, 40.

⁵³ Kussmaul, *op. cit.*, 41, 72.

⁵⁴ G. Brett, *Dinner is Served: A history of dining in England 1400-1900* (London, 1968), 60-4.

⁵⁵ KHLIC P347/18/10.

⁵⁶ Overton et al., *op. cit.*, 111-4.

⁵⁷ See note 18.

⁵⁸ See notes 4-5.

⁵⁹ See 'Background to Kent' section; note 18; A. F. J. Brown, *Essex at Work* (Chelmsford, 1969); Idem, *Prosperity and Poverty: Rural Essex, 1700-1815* (Chelmsford, 1996); C. N. Cullingford, *A History of Dorset* (Chichester, 3rd edn., 1999); B. Kerr, *Bound to the Soil: A social history of Dorset 1750-1914* (London, 1968).

⁶⁰ Weatherill, *op. cit.*, 47-51; Overton et al., *op. cit.*, 95-7; P. Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, society and family life in London* (London, 1989), 23, 27; T. Clayton, *The English Print 1688-1802* (New Haven, 1997), 3-24; R.W. Symonds, *A Book of English Clocks* (London, 2nd edn., 1950), 30-1, 59-60.

⁶¹ Weatherill, *op. cit.*, 43-69; Wrigley, *op. cit.*, 44-70; Orlin, *op. cit.*; Mui and Mui, *op. cit.*

⁶² Weatherill, *op. cit.*, 168.

⁶³ Muldrew, *op. cit.*, 163-207; Sneath, *op. cit.*, 231-328.

⁶⁴ Sneath, *op. cit.*, 235; Muldrew, *op. cit.*, 187-92.

⁶⁵ Sneath, *op. cit.*, 102; Weatherill, *op. cit.*, 191-4; Coward, *op. cit.*, 55; P. King, *op. cit.*, 156, 176.

⁶⁶ Muldrew, *op. cit.*, 166.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 250.

⁶⁸ Overton et al., *op. cit.*, 40-1.

⁶⁹ Snell, *op. cit.*, 174-9; L. Shaw-Taylor, 'Labourers, cows, common rights and parliamentary enclosure: the evidence of contemporary comment c. 1760-1810', *Past and Present*, 171 (May 2001), 95-126; N. Kent, *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property* (London, 1775), 236-7; F. M. Eden, *The State of the Poor*, Vol. 1 (London, 1797), 531-2; D. Davies, *The Case of Labourers in Husbandry* (London, 1795), 37-8.

⁷⁰ Muldrew, *op. cit.*, 187-92.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, 196-7.

⁷² J. Humphries, 'Enclosures, common rights, and women: the proletarianization of families in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', *Journal of Economic History*, 50, 1 (Mar. 1990), 24-31.

⁷³ Eden, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, 531-2; Davies, *op. cit.*, 35-8, 47-8.

⁷⁴ KHL C PRC27.

⁷⁵ KHL C PRC11.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ One should not, however, push this similarity too far since husbandmen were still more likely to own most types of goods compared to labourers. Overton et al., *op. cit.*, 190-4.

⁷⁹ Snell, *op. cit.*, 138-227.

⁸⁰ YALH Accession 38.

⁸¹ Quoted from Sokoll, *op. cit.*, 196.

⁸² Quoted from *ibid.*, 121-2.

⁸³ J. Ayres, *Paupers and Pig Killers: The diary of William Holland, a Somerset parson 1799-1818* (Gloucester, 1984), 278.

⁸⁴ S. King and A. Tomkins, *The Poor in England 1700-1850: An economy of makeshifts* (Manchester, 2003); Williams, *op. cit.*, 131-59; Hindle, *op. cit.*, 15-95, 361-449.

⁸⁵ This list is not exhaustive. For further context, see: Eden, *op. cit.*, Vols. 1-3; Davies, *op. cit.*; Thompson, *op. cit.*; J. Rule, *The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England 1750-1850* (London, 1986); E. Griffin, *Liberty's Dawn: A people's history of the industrial revolution* (New Haven, 2013).

⁸⁶ Snell, *op. cit.*, 138-227.

⁸⁷ Horrell and Humphries, *op. cit.*; Horrell, *op. cit.*; Snell, *op. cit.*, 320-73; Wales, *op. cit.*, 375-6; Griffin, *op. cit.*, 58-83, 109-33.

⁸⁸ Some people were, of course, poor all their lives. Hindle, *op. cit.*, 94.

⁸⁹ A. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Indianapolis, 1982, reprint of 1776 edn.), 181.

⁹⁰ There were also many people that needed poor relief or charity but received nothing.

Hindle, *op. cit.*

⁹¹ S. King, *op. cit.*, 258; Williams, *op. cit.*, 65; Hindle, *op. cit.*, 276-8. On average, the paupers on regular relief in the sample received a weekly pension of 2s. 6d. from the parish (men 1s. 9d. per week and women 3s. 3d. per week). Most pensioners also received intermittent help through cash or relief in kind.

⁹² See note 84.

⁹³ Hitchcock, *op. cit.*, 23-48, 97-123.

⁹⁴ J. Harley, 'Material lives of the poor and their strategic use of the workhouse during the final decades of the English old poor law', *Continuity and Change*, 30, 1 (May 2015), 71-103; A. Tomkins, *The Experience of Urban Poverty, 1732-82: Parish, charity and credit* (Manchester, 2006), 36-78; S. R. Ottaway, *The Decline of Life: Old age in eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 2004), 247-76.

⁹⁵ See for example: Styles, *Dress, op. cit.*; Muldrew, *op. cit.*; Sneath, *op. cit.*

⁹⁶ For instance: Ottaway, *op. cit.*