

FAMILIES AND THEIR PROPERTY IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

A STUDY OF FOUR COMMUNITIES ON THE YORKSHIRE OUSE, 1660-1760

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Table of Contents

List of Tables, Illustrations and Appendices	1
Acknowledgements	3
Abstract	4
List of Abbreviations	6
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	7
<u>PART 1 PROPERTY OWNERSHIP</u>	
<u>CHAPTER 1 THE AGRARIAN ECONOMY</u>	27
Agricultural Property and Patterns of Husbandry	32
Degrees of Farmers	49
<u>CHAPTER 2 CRAFTS AND TRADES</u>	66
Village and Market Town Crafts	70
River Trade	79
Shopkeepers	86
<u>CHAPTER 3 PROPERTY AND LIFESTYLES</u>	101
Houses	103
Decorative and Luxury Goods	112
• Books	118

List of Tables, Illustrations and Appendices

Tables

1:1	Status and Farming in the Inventories of the Four Communities	33
1:2	Proportion of Inventories Listing Different Livestock	36
1:3	Mean Size of Herd/Stud/Flock	36
1:4	Proportion of Inventories Listing Different Crops	42
1:5	Proportion of Inventories Listing Different Agricultural Implements	46
2:1	Number of Inventories Belonging to Tradesmen or Craftsmen in Different Communities	70
3:1	House-Size as Indicated by the 1674 Hearth Tax : Differences Between Parishes	105
3:2	House-Size as Indicated by the Inventories : Differences Between Parishes and Over Time	107
3:3	Proportion of Inventories Listing Different Luxury Items	115
3:4	Proportion of Inventories Listing Luxury Items According to Social Status	117
3:5	Illiteracy Rates : Differences Between Parishes and Over Time	120
3:6	Bookownership in the Four Parishes According to Social Status	124
4:1	The Distribution of Bequests Beyond the Nuclear Family : Differences Between Parishes and Over Time	148
4:2	The Distribution of Bequests Beyond the Nuclear Family : Social Differences	159

4:3	The Distribution of Bequests Beyond the Nuclear Family : Life-Cycle and Sex Differences	164
6:1	Beneficiaries of the Dwelling House According to Family Situation	221
6:2	Beneficiaries of Unspecified or Additional Real Estate According to Family Situation	228
6:3	Executorship of Wills According to Family Situation	233

Illustrations

Part of Thomas Jeffreys's Map of Yorkshire, 1775	28
Boats on the Ouse at Cawood, c.1700	81

Appendices

Appendix 1	Percentage of Male Decedents Leaving Inventories by Parish and Decade	255
Appendix 2	Percentage of Male Decedents Leaving Wills by Parish and Decade	256

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Abstract

This thesis contains an analysis of property ownership and family attitudes as reflected in the probate inventories and wills of four Yorkshire parishes (Cawood, Riccall, Selby and Wistow) during the period 1660-1760. Probate records are a well-known source to early modern historians, but there have been relatively few attempts to use this evidence to explore the variation in property ownership between market town and village, or the relationship between property distribution at death and family attitudes. In the first part of the dissertation the agricultural, trading and domestic property belonging to different families is studied to show how people earned a living and to reveal something of their lifestyles and cultural horizons. In the second part the intentions of testators are examined in order to measure attitudes towards distant relatives, children and wives.

The central thesis of my work is that the material and mental environment of property-owners in these four parishes was essentially 'modern' by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The types and amounts of property owned by some families reveals a highly-developed local economy containing commercially-oriented farmers and tradesmen. At the same time, their houses, furnishings and books suggest a lifestyle of increasing sophistication. It is argued, however, that significant differences in property ownership can be found between neighbouring market towns and villages. Each community had a distinctive economy and the lifestyles of their inhabitants varied accordingly.

Most of the work on family attitudes in early modern England has concentrated on the analysis of diary evidence, and wills have been mainly used to assess the economic and social effects of different inheritance practices. This thesis shows that the decisions which testators made concerning the distribution of their property at death, and the language which they used to express their choices, can reveal a great deal about the family attitudes of ordinary people. A major contention is that many of the 'modern' attitudes found in seventeenth - and eighteenth-century diaries - limited kinship recognition, companionate marriages, caring parents - can also be found in wills. However, the point in the life-cycle which testators had reached and differences in social status had a marked effect on family attitudes.

List of Abbreviations

- B.I.H.R. Borthwick Institute of Historical Research,
University of York
- P.R.O. Public Record Office
- Y.A.J. Yorkshire Archaeological Journal
- V.C.H. Victoria History of the Counties of
England

INTRODUCTION

The Vale of York bisects the county of Yorkshire from north to south. It is sixty miles long and about thirty miles wide in most places. The Vale is bordered on the east by the North Yorkshire Moors, the Howardian Hills and the Yorkshire Wolds; on the west lie the Dales and, further south, the manufacturing district of the old West Riding. Though linen-weaving was established in some areas, the Vale's economy during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was dominated by agriculture. A range of soil types produced a mixed husbandry, but the fertile clay lowlands were particularly suitable for pasture and many farmers concentrated on raising cattle for their milk, meat and hides.¹ Writing of the Vale of York at the end of the eighteenth century, William Marshall stated: "... if we estimate the Vale of York by the number of its rivers and the richness of its marginal banks it would perhaps be difficult in any county to equal it." ² The greatest of these rivers, the Ouse, was a crucial trade route in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Sea-going vessels could navigate the river as far as York, from where smaller craft could sail further north to the foothills of the Pennines.³ York was the most important port on the river and the major provincial capital. The city had declined during the century up to 1560 as the textile industry had shifted to the West Riding, but by the second half of the seventeenth century it had recovered its former position as the second town of England with a population of about 12,000.⁴ More typical of early modern communities, however, were the nineteen market towns and hundreds of villages scattered throughout the Vale.⁵ Four of these settlements, contiguous parishes located to the south of York and adjoining the Ouse, are the focus of this thesis.

Fifteen miles south of York lay the market town and inland port of Selby. With a population of just over a thousand in 1672,⁶ Selby was the largest settlement on the Ouse between York and the Humber estuary. Its prosperity in the middle ages had depended largely on the wealth of its abbey, but after the dissolution in 1539 the community was thrown back on its position as a market town and an important route centre.⁷ Selby's ferry service across the river meant that the town continued to be a convenient halting point for travellers between London and the north, and in 1686 it was estimated that the town's inns contained fifty-eight guest-beds and had stabling for eighty-nine houses.⁸ Cawood, another Ouse port lying five miles north of Selby was a smaller settlement of about 690 people. During the medieval period Cawood's most striking feature had been the castle which served as the country residence of the Archbishop of York, but after the demolition of the castle in 1646, the town's position on the Ouse ensured its continuance as a trading centre.⁹ Between these two towns lay the village of Wistow. The village was a rather straggling settlement with a population of around 430 in 1672. Though its fields bordered the river, the settlement itself was set back from the Ouse and, unlike its neighbours, Wistow's economy was almost entirely agricultural. The fourth of our communities, Riccall, lay on the opposite side of the river in the East Riding of Yorkshire. With some 500 inhabitants, the village was slightly larger than Wistow and its houses were more compactly built around the village church which lay about a mile away from the river. As far as we can tell, nearly all Riccall's inhabitants earned a living by farming, though linen-weaving was an important by-industry in the village during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

These contiguous parishes have been chosen as the geographical context for this thesis in the hope that, by examining a small group of communities of different size and occupational structure, we can bring into sharper focus the uniqueness of each and, at the same time, contribute to an increasing appreciation of the structures and dynamics of English rural society in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The study of early modern rural communities is now a well-established avenue of historical research. Though it encompassed a much longer time-span than the early modern period, one of the earliest studies of this kind was W.G.Hoskins's work on the Leicestershire village of Wigston Magna.¹⁰ More recently, the villages of Terling in Essex and Myddle in Shropshire have been subjected to intensive analysis and important questions have been asked, not only about the economic and social structure of these communities during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but also about the spiritual and cultural world of their inhabitants.¹¹ Alan Macfarlane, in his invaluable introduction to the sources available for reconstructing historical communities, has argued for the exhaustive study of the records belonging to an individual community and has subjected the villages of Earls Colne in Essex and Kirkby Lonsdale in Cumbria to this type of analysis.¹²

Studies of single villages which attempt to look at all the available sources in order to obtain a 'total' history of a particular community are, however, only one approach to the analysis of early modern rural society. An alternative methodology has been the study of a small group of communities, where historians have focused on a more limited range of questions and have exposed a smaller number of relatively self-sufficient sources to rigorous examination. One of the first scholars who successfully used this approach was Margaret Spufford who

studied land distribution, education and religion in three contrasting Cambridgeshire villages during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹³ A similar methodology was used by Victor Skipp in his study of demographic, economic and social change in five Warwickshire parishes¹⁴ and, more recently, by Susan Dwyer Amussen who explored the themes of gender and class in early modern England by focusing on three Norfolk parishes.¹⁵ In addition, much recent work on such subjects as demography, witchcraft, crime and kinship have clearly shown that many specific problems can be addressed by using only one or two of the sources available for a complete community study.¹⁶ Indeed, as Keith Wrightson has pointed out, for many issues such as literacy, service, crime, childhood or social control, the study of a group of communities is essential in order to obtain a sufficient body of evidence.¹⁷ Our study of four parishes on the Yorkshire Ouse during the period 1660-1760 will follow this approach. Though a range of sources, including parish registers, hearth tax returns, manorial records and a memorandum book will be used, it will essentially be based on an analysis of probate evidence. Three major themes will be explored : the way in which people earned a living, the nature of their domestic environment and the quality of their family life.

As historians have become more concerned with the lives of ordinary people in early modern England wills and inventories have been increasingly used. Scholars engaged in such diverse fields as religion, education, inheritance, agriculture, early industrialisation and domestic architecture have all used probate evidence to illuminate their subjects. The great potential of these documents for exploring early modern society lies in the fact that they were left by tens of thousands of men and women. Indeed, after parish registers, they contain information about more people than any other sources for the

early modern period. The four parishes in this study were chosen primarily because each possesses a rich supply of probate evidence. This material is particularly abundant for the years between 1660 and 1760, and therefore allows us to study a period which is much under-researched in comparison with the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. A second important factor in determining the choice of parishes was their position on the Ouse. As yet, we have very little knowledge about river-trading communities in early modern England, despite the fact that inland ports played a vital role in the economy.¹⁸ Ideally a much larger sample of riverside communities would have been used; however, the study has been restricted to four parishes in order to keep the probate material within manageable bounds and permit the use of supporting evidence. The four communities represent an area small enough for detailed research yet large enough for effective comparisons both between communities and between different occupational groups.

Despite the fact that probate records are well known to early modern historians there has yet to be a detailed account of the administrative framework which produced these documents. Such a survey is obviously outside the scope of this study, yet in order to understand something of their nature it maybe useful, briefly, to explain how these documents were created. Before 1858 probate law was administered by the church through a variety of different courts, but the process of probate was broadly similar in each. This process differed, however, according to whether or not the deceased had produced a will. If a will had been made, the named executor was responsible for having the will proved in the appropriate church court. The executor and one or two extra sureties were required to sign a bond which forced them to pay the debts and legacies of the

deceased, and produce an inventory of his or her goods and chattels in order to prevent fraud or excessive claims on the estate. Should a person have died intestate the most common procedure was for the next of kin to divide the property as they saw fit without bringing the matter before the court. In some cases, however, the next of kin sought the court's authority to divide the deceased's property according to the law and in these cases administration bonds were signed and inventories produced. Should a person have died leaving young children, the executors or administrators were sometimes required to sign a tuition or curation bond agreeing to take care of them. Probate records therefore took three main forms: wills, by which property was bequeathed; inventories, which listed and valued the deceased's property; and bonds, which granted administration or curation.¹⁹

Administration or curation bonds were standardized documents and therefore contained only a limited amount of information. Apart from the legal wording of the bonds themselves they usually included the name, status and place of residence of the deceased and the two or three bondsmen, together with the marks or signatures of the latter. As a result, they have been virtually ignored by historians, though they contain useful data on occupations, residence and literacy. Far more widely used has been the inventory. This is hardly surprising as inventories form the great bulk of probate records and contain much fascinating information. They were made shortly after death²⁰ by appraisers who were creditors, legatees, relatives or neighbours of the deceased.²¹ The appraisers usually wrote the date of the inventory, together with the name of the decedent and his or her place of residence, at the top of the document; at the bottom they either signed their names or made their marks.²² Most commonly the

appraisers began by evaluating the clothes and money of the deceased. After this, they moved through the house listing the contents of each room, in more or less detail. Next, they moved outside into the farmyard and fields where they appraised farm implements, livestock and crops. Finally, a list of credits and sometimes debts might also have been included.

It has often been pointed out that inventories do not present a complete profile of property ownership for different individuals. In the first place the law stated that appraisers were to be concerned only with the goods and chattels of the deceased and that real estate was to be ignored. Secondly, items which were considered to be an integral part of the freehold such as grass, trees, or fish, together with heirlooms and certain fixtures belonging to the fabric of the house were also omitted. Thirdly, debts which the decedent owed during his or her lifetime were, in theory not be included, though, in practice they often were. Finally, items belonging to the wife - "bona paraphernalia" - were excluded from the inventory. In addition to these legal omissions, the contents of inventories were subject to the variable ability and diligence of appraisers. Sometimes, especially when a time lag occurred between death and the making of an inventory, certain items such as foodstuffs or crops, may have perished or have been sold; while, in addition, some goods might have already been transferred to creditors or legatees. Moreover, though some inventories contained hundreds of items with individual valuations, others consisted of little more than brief summaries of the decedent's property.²³ Inventories then have their intrinsic limitations as evidence of property ownership, yet, at their best, they record in minute detail the material environment of early modern England. Much of this information is unavailable elsewhere and it is

far too valuable to ignore.

For a number of years historians have realized the potential of these documents for studying different aspects of early modern society. Many people have used them to look at the distribution of wealth, agricultural practices, trades and crafts, or the size and plan of houses; a smaller number of scholars have begun to analyse them for the information they yield on credit networks and the domestic environment.²⁴ Some historians have been content to employ inventories in a qualitative way, analysing particularly detailed inventories of specialist tradesmen or using single documents to verify general statements; but increasingly, large numbers of inventories from wide-ranging geographical areas have been subjected to quantitative analysis. This method has been extremely useful in providing sound statistical information on such issues as the diffusion of different crops or of consumer goods, but in attempting a solely statistical approach we run the risk of ignoring the contextual and particular which can very often greatly illuminate the experience of early modern men and women. Over a hundred year period the inventories from a small group of communities provide sufficient data for meaningful statistics to be produced; at the same time the material allows the full context of the documents to be explored, either by focusing closely on particularly interesting inventories or by linking the inventory evidence with that contained in other sources. This study of the 880 probate inventories available for our four parishes during the period 1660-1760 therefore attempts to combine both the qualitative use of inventories and statistical analysis.²⁵

Our focus is on the actual artefacts contained in the inventories

rather than on valuations and wealth levels. The inventories from our four parishes provide a wealth of detailed information on agricultural property and this will form the basis of our discussion of local husbandry in chapter one. In particular we shall be concerned with the type of husbandry practised in the area, the degree of commercialization among farmers and the differences in property ownership among various groups within the farming community. In the second chapter greater qualitative use will be made of the inventories belonging to tradesmen and craftsmen. As yet we know very little about such subjects as village crafts, river trade and shopkeeping during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the discussion in chapter two is intended to go some way to filling this gap. In the third chapter we shall move away from the way in which people earned a living to their lifestyles. After analysing the size of houses and the ownership of luxury items, we shall focus on the question of bookownership and reading; a subject about which relatively little is known in the context of early modern communities.

In contrast to the wide-ranging and well-established research on probate inventories, wills have, until recently, been relatively neglected by early modern economic and social historians. In part, this may be due to the fact that they are a more tantalizing historical source and present more difficulties of interpretation than inventories. The information which wills contain does not fit readily into neat categories, nor does it yield patterns easily. Used carefully, and in conjunction with other sources, however, wills are an invaluable form of evidence; their wide availability and intimate nature make them one of the most useful and fascinating personal documents produced for early modern men and women. The amount of detail in wills varies enormously, but in format they followed a

fairly standard pattern. Testators usually began with a statement that this was, in fact, their last will and testament and that they were, at the time of writing, "of sound mind". They followed this with a religious preamble in which they bequeathed their soul and made arrangements for the disposal of their body. The main part of the will however, consisted of a more or less detailed disposal of the temporal estate of the testator. Their bequests could involve several forms of property ranging from cash sums, book debts and mortgages to physical artefacts and real estate.²⁶ The testator concluded by appointing an executor, who was usually the residuary legatee; in some cases overseers or supervisors were appointed to ensure that the executor acted properly. Finally, the testator either signed or made a mark at the foot of the document and obtained the signatures or marks of several witnesses.

The information which the 684 wills from our four parishes contain on the ownership of different types of property make them a useful source with which to supplement the inventory evidence, and they will be used for this purpose in the first three chapters. Our main concern, however, will be to tap these documents for their abundant evidence on the quality of family life within the communities. As long ago as 1964, Joan Thirsk argued that the history of the family ought to be a central concern of English historians and that wills, which she described, "...faithful mirrors... of the quality of family life", were a potentially important source for this subject.²⁷ Since that date the family has indeed become an important research area for early modern historians, and it has proved to be a subject capable of generating much debate. However, in their efforts to discover the structural and attitudinal patterns of family life, scholars have been largely content to base their research on demographic and literary

sources.²⁸ Thirsk's plea for the use of wills has been largely ignored and, when analyses of family relationships using testamentary evidence have been undertaken, these have usually been as adjuncts to broader studies.²⁹

The small beginning which has been made on research into testamentary evidence has revealed that wills provide information on many aspects of family life. They can, for example, tell us which family members were entrusted to act as executors, and whether family or friends were preferred as supervisors, trustees and witnesses. More important, the actions which testators took in disposing of their property can shed much light on the economic context of family life. Most fascinating of all are those wills in which men and women verbalized their attitudes and feelings towards family members: care, concern, respect, love, gratitude and occasionally annoyance, are all sometimes witnessed in the testamentary records. Wills are not easy documents with which to determine the quality of family life: the individuals named in them are often difficult to identify; they leave much unsaid about the innermost workings of the family; a property appreciation of their contents demands a clear understanding of the context in which they were produced. However, they are one of the few sources which can reflect family attitudes among ordinary people in early modern England. In this thesis they will be used to analyse three aspects of family life. Chapter four will be concerned with the complex issue of kinship, analysing, in particular, the ways in which distant relatives might be called upon to provide different forms of assistance, and the extent to which they were recognized in the distribution of property at death. In chapter five we shall look at the ways in which offspring were provided for in both moral and material terms, asking what this can tell us about attitudes towards children. Finally in

chapter six we shall turn to the provision which husbands made for their wives and what this reveals of the conjugal relationship in our communities.

Research which is highly dependent on probate records demands a critical awareness of their limitations as historical evidence. Some difficulties associated with their use have already been touched upon and further intrinsic problems in using wills and inventories as guides to property ownership and family life will be discussed in the relevant chapters of this thesis. However, a problem which needs to be confronted at the outset is the extent to which these documents are representative of the population in our four parishes during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In one respect the survival of probate records in Wistow, Riccall, Selby and Cawood, is much better than for many Yorkshire parishes. The bulk of probate in Yorkshire was administered by the Exchequer Court and inventories rarely survive for this court before 1689. However, probate jurisdiction in the four riverside communities was in the hands of peculiar courts (exempt from normal diocesan jurisdiction) and this means that inventories are extant for the entire period 1660-1760. Moreover, because probate was administered at a local level in peculiar jurisdictions, it is likely that a larger number of decedents appeared before the courts than in other neighbouring parishes.³⁰ Nevertheless, only a minority of the population in our four parishes came before the probate courts. The question of exactly what proportion of the population are represented by probate records can be tested by comparing the adult male burials in the parish registers of our four communities with the number of surviving wills and inventories (see Appendices 1 and 2). The figures reveal that nearly twenty-seven per cent of the adult male population left inventories while almost twenty per cent left wills. Clearly

those leaving probate records were in a minority. In what ways might they be unrepresentative of the population in general?

Almost any sane man and any sane unmarried woman could make a will during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though in practice not everyone chose to do so. Scholars who have worked on testamentary records have stressed different reasons why some people chose to leave a will and others did not. Margaret Spufford, in her study of late sixteenth century wills from the village of Willingham in Cambridgeshire found that the determining factor was the family responsibility of the decedent in terms of the number of children he had to provide for.³¹ Similarly, Cicely Howell also regarded age and family situation to have been the crucial factors in will-making at Kibworth Harcourt, in Leicestershire, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³² If arranging for the material well-being and guardianship of children was an important factor in determining who made a will, other studies have shown that so too was the amount of property a person owned. Those with little estate would not have found it necessary to make a will as their property would have passed automatically to their next of kin. Keith Wrightson and David Levine, in their study of Terling in Essex, and Richard T.Vann, in his examination of the wills from Banbury in Oxfordshire, argued that wealth and status were important factors in making a will, though they stressed that will-making was not universal among the elite and that testamentary evidence was available for all social groups.³³ Clearly, a number of factors were at work in deciding whether or not a person made a will. As well as family responsibility and wealth, religious conviction and a desire to conform might also have been important considerations, though the significance of such factors is difficult to measure.

In theory the survival of inventories should not be subject to the same social bias as wills as the law required that inventories should be produced for all adult male decedents and all spinsters and widows. What then accounts for the relatively small number of surviving inventories? Of course, not all inventories which were made in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are extant today and their survival may have been purely fortuitous. However, the extent to which inventories were produced in the first place depended on the efficiency of the ecclesiastical courts. Though there is little substance in the claim made by some historians that decedents with property worth less than five pounds were not required to go through probate,³⁴ it would appear that, in practice, those with little property would have been the group most likely to have been overlooked by the probate courts. Firstly, poorer people were less likely to have made wills and therefore to have had inventories made for them. Secondly, the inheritance of their property would have been more straightforward than for their wealthier neighbours, and the administration of their estates would therefore have been less likely to have come before the probate courts. Thirdly, they would have provided the courts with only nominal fees and the ordinaries (the officials entitled to grant probate) may have therefore been less vigilant in enforcing probate law where poorer people were concerned.³⁵ Thus, although the inventories from Wistow, Riccall, Cawood and Selby do include decedents with only small amounts of property and with estates valued at only a few pounds, it is likely that the poorer inhabitants of our four parishes are under-represented in the sample.

To establish accurately the social bias of those inhabitants who came within the purview of the probate courts is an impossible task.

However, that poorer people are under-represented there can be little doubt. A rough measure of the social bias in the documents is provided by comparing the occupations of those leaving probate records with those of all decedents. Unfortunately, information on occupational status is only contained in one of our burial registers (Selby) for a limited period (1699-1701)³⁶; yet even a comparison for this short time shows that very few poorer people left probate records. Of the thirty-four men who were buried in Selby in the years 1699-1701 two were described as gentlemen and one as a grocer (a prestigious trade); all three of these men left wills and inventories among the Prerogative Court records. Four of the fourteen small tradesmen mentioned in the register came before the probate courts, but only one of the seven day labourers and one of the four almsreceivers left probate records. The inventory of the almsreceiver, Gilbert Faucet, listed furniture valued at only fifteen shillings, but also included two small leases. His accompanying will explained that his unusual appearance in the probate records derived from a desire to leave these two leases to his grandchildren.³⁷ Clearly, under special circumstances wills and inventories were left by poorer members of the community, but such cases were exceptional and, generally speaking, our evidence relates to middling and higher social groups.

Because the communities from which our sample of probate records have been obtained were peculiar jurisdictions, they were unusual in possessing an extensive series of wills and inventories for the period 1660-1760. These sources provide a rich archival base for our study of property ownership and family life in the four parishes, but research which is based on one or two types of documentary evidence alone can present only a limited understanding of historical reality.

The wills and inventories will therefore be supplemented by other sources which can help us to interpret their contents and lead to a further understanding of our chosen themes. In the first place, the parish registers, which are virtually complete for each of the parishes during the period 1660-1760, will be used for the incidental information which they contain on occupations, and on the age and family situation, of individual testators. Secondly, the hearth tax returns, which are extant for all four parishes during the 1670s, will be used as a preliminary guide to the size of houses in the four communities. Thirdly, though there are lacunae in the manorial records of our four communities, the court rolls and estate papers of the manor of Wistow do provide a great deal of incidental information on agriculture, and permit a much deeper understanding of the way in which property was transmitted to family members than the wills alone allow. Finally, we are extremely fortunate that a rare and fascinating document was left by one of our parishioners. The memorandum book written by William Storr, a yeoman farmer in the village of Wistow during the early years of the eighteenth century, provides a unique insight into his daily life. The memorandum book contains much information on William Storr's farm, his family, interests and reading habits; it is an invaluable source with which to supplement the probate evidence.

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19. A.J.Camp, Wills and their Whereabouts (London, 1974), pp.xvii-xxi; J.S.W.Gibson, Wills and Where to Find Them (Salisbury, 1974), pp.xiv-xvi; C.C.Webb, A Guide to the Genealogical Sources in the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research (York, 1981), pp.35-45.
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21. N. and C.Cox, "Probate inventories : the legal background - part 1", The Local Historian, 16 (1984), pp.134-135.
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24. These studies are far too numerous to list here. Those which are most valuable for comparative purposes will be mentioned in the footnotes of the relevant chapters. For a recent bibliography of published work on probate inventories see M.Overton, Bibliography of British Probate Inventories (Geography Department, University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1983). A useful collection of research papers which considers the potential of inventories in Europe and North America is A. van der Woude and A. Schuurman (eds.), Probate Inventories : A New Source for the Study of Wealth, Material Culture and Agricultural Development, A.A.G.Bijdragen, 23 (1980). A good introduction to work on British probate records is P.Riden, Probate Records and the Local Community (Gloucester, 1985).
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diocese and during visitations) and in the Prerogative Court of York (which administered the probate of decedents with goods in more than one jurisdiction). Citations of wills and inventories will give the name of the decedent (where not indicated in the text), the court administering probate and the month and year of probate (or if this is not known, the date of the will or inventory). The dates given are Julian ones until 1752 and Gregorian ones thereafter. All the probate records are deposited in the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research.

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30. I owe this suggestion to Dr.W.J.Sheils.
31. M.Spufford, "Peasant inheritance customs and land distribution in Cambridgeshire from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries", in Goody, Thirsk and Thompson, Family and Inheritance, pp.169-171.
32. Howell, "Peasant inheritance customs in the Midlands", p.141.
33. Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, pp.906-97; Vann, "Wills and the family", pp.348-356.
34. N. and J.Cox, "Probate inventories", p.134.
35. For a detailed discussion of the effects of poverty on inventory coverage, see J.P.P.Horn, "The Distribution of Wealth in the Vale of Berkely, Gloucestershire, 1660-1700", Southern History, 13 (1981), pp.81-109.
36. B.I.H.R., Selby Parish Register, 5.
37. Selby Peculiar Court, April 1699.

PART 1 PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

CHAPTER 1

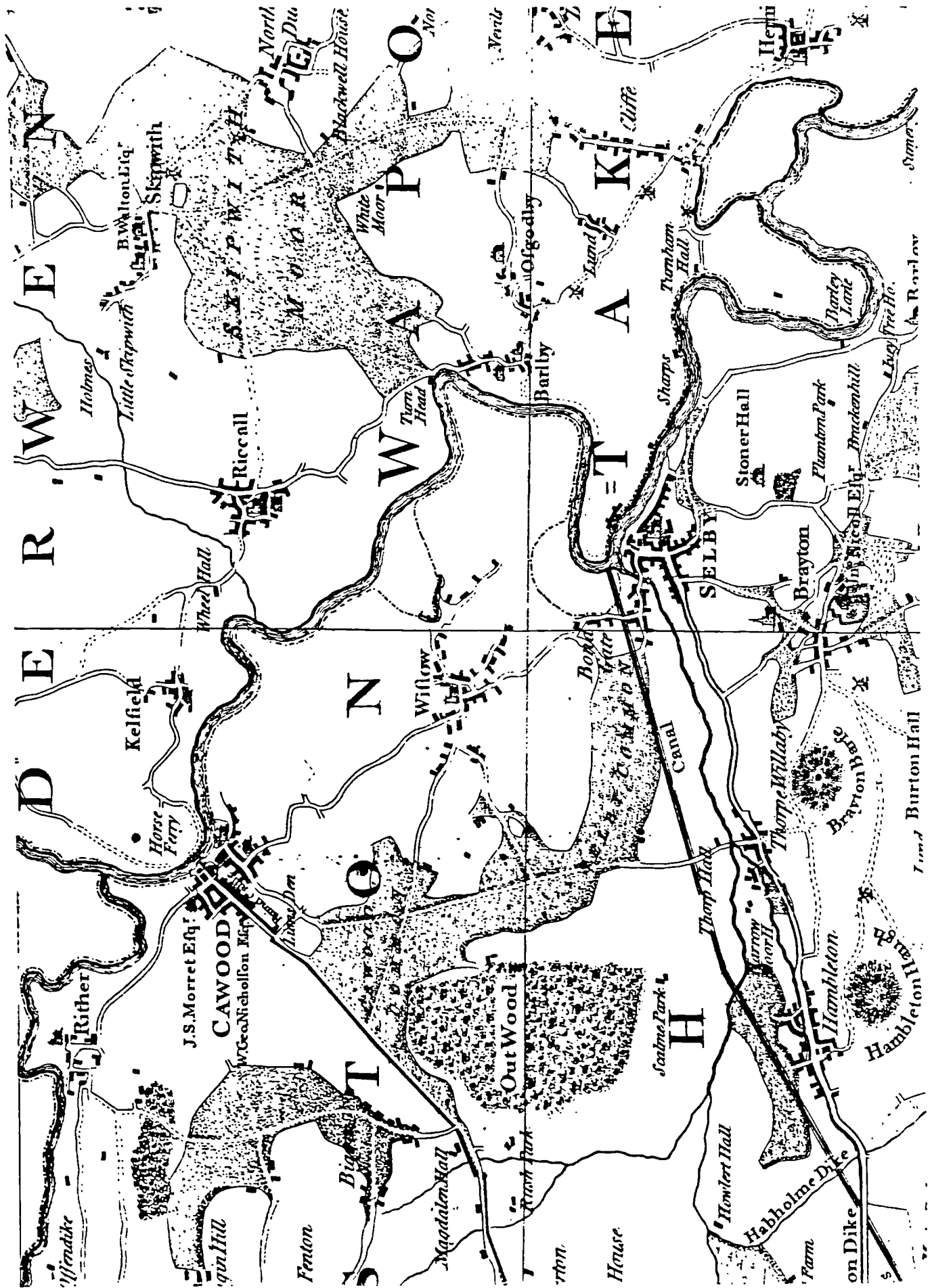
THE AGRARIAN ECONOMY

In his survey of the agriculture of the West Riding of Yorkshire, published in 1799, Robert Brown, the Board of Agriculture surveyor, wrote:

"...a large proportion of the district is of a quality naturally favourable to the purposes of good husbandry, and, under a proper system of management, will amply repay the farmer for whatever trouble and expense he bestows on its cultivation"¹

Nowhere was this more the case than in the southern Vale of York, where our four communities were located. Here, a mild climate and a benign landscape combined to create agricultural conditions which greatly favoured the farmers of the area during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. As the extract from Thomas Jeffreys's 1775 map of Yorkshire on the following page clearly shows, the most dominant feature of this rural landscape was the river Ouse. The river could, of course, create problems for local farmers. One needs only to glance at the lists of fines imposed by the Wistow Manorial Court to realize that constant attention was always required to see that river banks were kept in good order and flooding prevented.² Yet the river also had compensations, for not only did it facilitate the carrying of agricultural produce to York, Hull and the growing urban centres of the West Riding, but the alluvial land at the water's edge provided rich pasture and meadow land. Elsewhere in the four parishes, the soils consisted mainly of outwash, sands and clays which were eminently suitable for the cultivation of corn and other crops.³

Jeffreys's map also illustrates that, even in the later part of the eighteenth century, extensive areas of common pasture survived on the edge of the parishes. In the eastern part of Riccall, the villagers



Part of Thomas Jeffreys's Map of Yorkshire, 1775

enjoyed common rights on Skipwith Moor, one of the largest expanses of common pasture in the Vale of York, while the inhabitants of Selby benefited from Selby Common to the west of the town, and the farmers at Cawood and Wistow had the large area of Cawood Common at their disposal. These areas of common land yielded a variety of products (many villagers at Riccall, for example, cut turf from Skipwith Moor), but their most important function was the provision of grazing. In this respect the copyholders of Cawood and Wistow were particularly favoured for, as an entry in the Wistow custumal of 1708 stated:

"The tenents ought to have common of pasture for any number of catell, beast or swine at all times of ye year in and through all the lord's hags that shall happen to lye open, and in and through all ye comon woods or outwoods of Wistow and Cawood with pavnage on the same."⁴

The woodland indicated on Jeffreys's map as "Out Wood" was all that remained of a once much more extensive area of forest; nevertheless, during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the wood still provided valuable pannage for the manorial tenants of Cawood and Wistow.

If common pasture was an important element in the rural economy of our four parishes during this period, common arable seems to have been much more restricted. The southern Vale of York, in general, was an area of early piecemeal enclosure and for many parts of the Vale, the enclosure awards of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, if they exist at all, refer only to common pasture, the open arable land having long since been enclosed by agreement.⁵ At Selby there were no common arable fields at the end of the eighteenth century and no evidence has been found for their existence at any time during the period 1660-1760.⁶ At Riccall parliamentary enclosure of the open fields and commons did not take place until 1883, but there had been extensive early enclosure and the three open fields were relatively

small during our period.⁷ The situation was similar at Cawood and Wistow where the petition for enclosure in 1775 estimated that within the two manors there were some 2000 acres of woods, marshes, ings, carrs, commons and other waste ground, but only about twenty acres of open field lands.⁸ The early enclosure of all four of our parishes must have brought advantages to the farmers of the area. Indeed, when Richard Brown visited Selby at the end of the eighteenth century, he estimated that the difference in value between open and enclosed land was as much as thirty-three percent.⁹

The farmers of our four communities operated within a strong manorial framework. Both Wistow and Cawood formed part of the Archbishop of York's estates, there being a separate manor for each settlement. Also included within the Cawood parish boundary was the smaller manor of Keesbury Hall. The Riccall lands were divided between two manors (one belonging to the Bishop of Ripon and the other to the Prebendary of Riccall at York Minster). Selby too followed this pattern, the town's fields being divided between the two manors of Over Selby and Selby-cum-Membris.¹⁰ In none of our communities do the surviving manorial records allow us to piece together a full picture of land-holding, but wills and court rolls leave us in little doubt that copyhold was the most significant form of tenure in the area. We should not imagine however, that the impositions of manorial courts and the prevalence of copyhold land imposed undue restrictions on farmers. At Wistow, where documentation is most plentiful, copyholders were secure in their holdings, and customary land could be bought, sold and mortgaged in the same way as freehold. In the manorial court rolls of Wistow we find clear evidence that farmers in the parish at the end of the seventeenth century, were operating within a vigorous and highly developed land market.¹¹

Overall, perhaps the most important point about the agrarian landscape and tenurial arrangements of these riverside communities is that the area held plenty of potential for those farmers willing and able to invest in its cultivation. How did farmers respond to the favourable agricultural conditions of the area? What was the overall importance of farming in the domestic economies of the inhabitants of our four communities? What type of husbandry did they practise and how did this vary between parishes, over time and among the various members of the farming community? We can go some way to answering these questions by analysing the agricultural property contained in the farmers' inventories and combining these with more eclectic sources which cast the odd gleam of light on farming practice. In the first part of this chapter we shall quantify the different types of agricultural property found in the inventories in order to determine the agricultural interests of farmers. In the second section we shall turn our attention to the different experiences of gentlemen, yeomen, husbandmen and labourers. There are, however, inherent difficulties in using probate inventories to reconstruct the way in which our farmers made a living and it is salutary to consider some of these before discussing the findings.

Perhaps the most obvious problem is that, as we have seen, inventories tend to represent the upper echelons of the farming community and, because of this, the husbandry of humbler folk is largely hidden from our view. However, in addition to this problem of inventory coverage, the documents have intrinsic difficulties of which we should be aware. Probate inventories, for a number of reasons, may omit to mention agricultural property. Theoretically, crops, livestock, farming implements and stored produce belonging to the decedent should have been listed in the inventory, but agricultural property mentioned in wills and transferred to legatees before probate does not sometimes appear

in the inventories. In addition, the law did not require certain property to be included, the most serious omission in this respect being real estate, for although some types of leasehold property should have been entered, both freehold and copyhold real estate were not required to be appraised for probate.¹² Moreover, the omission of property was sometimes fortuitous; the season in which the inventory was made, for example, would obviously affect its agricultural contents, especially crops and livestock. Even when property was included, it was not always accurately appraised. Clearly, appraisers varied in their diligence and while some carefully listed individual cereals or types of cattle, others were content with a perfunctory "crops in the field" or "quick goods in the barn". Such practice became more common from the 1730s and many of the mid-eighteenth century inventories are disappointing in their details of agricultural property. These then are the most serious drawbacks in using inventories to reconstruct local patterns of husbandry. Yet, despite these problems, inventories remain one of the few sources from which a quantitative assessment of farming activity can be made during the early modern period and, if they provide a less than complete picture of agricultural practice for certain individuals, they at least allow the broad characteristics to be defined.

Agricultural Property and Patterns of Husbandry

In order to obtain some impression of the significance of agriculture in the economy of these river communities and in the lives of their inhabitants, the probate inventories from the villages and market towns have been grouped according to the status of the deceased person, and the proportion of each group whose inventories reveal at least some investment in agriculture has been calculated. (Table 1:1).

TABLE 1:1 Status and Farming in the Inventories of the Four Communities

	Wistow		Riccall		Selby		Cawood		Total	
	No. Farming	%	No. Farming	%	No. Farming	%	No. Farming	%	No. Farming	%
Gentlemen	6	100.0	3	100.0	24	54.2	8	75.0	41	68.3
Yeomen	40	87.5	26	92.3	19	78.9	31	93.5	116	88.8
Husbandmen	7	100.0	15	100.0	7	57.1	1	100.0	30	90.0
Labourers	4	100.0	7	100.0	1	100.0	3	66.7	15	93.3
Craftsmen, Tradesmen and Professions	13	69.2	24	92.0	145	46.9	45	75.6	227	58.8
Unknown Status	43	90.7	82	91.4	103	51.5	50	78.0	278	74.0
Women	15	33.3	45	60.0	81	40.7	32	34.4	173	43.9
Total	128	82.0	202	85.6	380	49.2	170	71.8	880	66.7

In some cases (especially at Selby) agricultural investment was minimal and represented little more than the fattening of a pig or the cultivation of a few crops in the garth. Nevertheless, these people have been counted as being involved in farming activity, although those who possessed only horses (which may have been bought by tradesmen for carriage purpose) or crops in storage (which could have been purchased rather than cultivated) have not been included among the farming inventories.

Overall the table reveals the great importance of farming within the local economy during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, with some 66.7 percent of the inventoried population from all four parishes being involved in agriculture to some degree. Yeomen, husbandmen and labourers accounted for well over a third of all known male occupations and the high proportion of unknown status with agricultural interest indicates that many of these men are also likely to have been farmers. Moreover, it is evident that many of those following trades, crafts or professions were also involved in agriculture and that many women were also dependent, to some extent, on farming. As we should expect, the degree of agricultural involvement varied between communities. The figures for Wistow and Riccall are roughly comparable: although a greater number of tradesmen, craftsmen, professional men and women appear to have had no interest in the land at Wistow, both villages reveal a high level of participation in farming, with over eighty percent of the inventories indicating some form of agricultural activity. However, at Cawood nearly thirty percent of inventories showed no direct interest in husbandry, and at Selby agricultural property was absent in nearly half the documents.

Although the proportion of people involved in agriculture differed from one community to another, the type of husbandry practised was broadly similar in each. The inventories leave us in no doubt that the most important element in the agrarian economy of all four parishes was the raising of cattle. Table 1:2 reveals that a total of 57.4 percent of inventories listed cattle and, although the proportion of inventories including cows fell between 1690 and 1710, and again in the 1740s, in most decades between fifty-five percent and sixty-five percent of decedents owned dairy and fat stock or both.¹³ In the 485 cases where it has proved possible to calculate the mean size of the herd, the figures show a similar fluctuation, but the mean size of the cattle herd over the entire period was relatively high (7.2) when we consider that many people, especially widows or craftsmen and tradesmen, owned only one cow which satisfied their domestic needs.¹⁴ It is notable that Wistow, where the mean herd size was as high as twelve head of cattle, far outstripped its neighbours in terms of cattle raising. In the village of Riccall, where there are more inventories belonging to small husbandmen, and in the market towns, where many cows were kept by craftsmen and tradesmen, herds tended to be smaller. In all four communities, however, the herd of cattle was the mainstay of most farms and represented the most important form of investment for many people. It is not surprising therefore, that, in 1680, when Anthony Scholey of Cawood died, with arrears of rent owing to the Archbishop of York, it was his six calves, heifer, steer and their fodder which were distressed for repayment; the less valuable pigs, corn and agricultural implements being left to his executors.¹⁵ In more straightforward cases, when the appraisers listed the "quick goods", they invariably began with the cattle and, in their valuations, beef and dairy stock frequently approached the combined value of the remaining agricultural property and the household

TABLE 1:2 Proportion of Inventories Listing Different Livestock

	No. of Inventories	Cattle	Horses	Oxen	Sheep	Pigs	Poultry
1660-9	162	62.3	40.1	4.3	5.6	33.3	14.8
1670-9	105	61.9	39.0	3.8	13.3	31.4	17.1
1680-9	100	59.0	56.0	2.0	13.0	30.0	8.0
1690-9	111	49.5	40.5	3.6	11.7	21.6	3.6
1700-9	67	43.3	43.3	3.0	18.0	20.9	4.5
1710-9	74	64.9	41.9	2.7	13.5	27.0	12.2
1720-9	86	64.0	85.5	1.2	10.5	18.6	3.5
1730-9	53	58.5	50.9	0.0	13.2	18.9	1.9
1740-9	68	39.7	39.7	1.5	8.8	16.2	0.0
1750-9	54	64.9	44.4	5.5	16.7	22.2	0.0
Total	880	57.4	44.5	3.0	11.6	25.5	8.0

Parish Totals

Wistow	128	75.0	64.8	4.7	25.0	38.3	23.4
Riccall	202	76.2	52.0	4.5	11.4	29.2	9.9
Selby	380	39.7	29.5	1.3	5.5	18.4	3.2
Cawood	170	61.8	57.6	5.3	15.3	25.3	2.9

TABLE 1:3 Mean Size of Herd/Stud/Flock

	No. of Inventories	Cattle	Horses	Oxen	Sheep	Pigs	Poultry
1660-9	162	5.5	3.4	3.1	21.6	2.8	6.6
1670-9	105	6.7	4.4	4.8	23.4	4.3	9.9
1680-9	100	9.7	4.1	3.0	19.4	4.1	4.6
1690-9	111	7.4	4.3	4.0	45.5	2.8	12.0
1700-9	67	7.1	2.6	3.0	27.5	4.1	4.3
1710-9	74	12.1	4.4	4.0	30.8	3.2	4.0
1720-9	86	6.1	3.5	4.0	16.4	5.8	-
1730-9	53	5.4	3.1	-	27.1	2.2	-
1740-9	68	6.7	3.2	-	16.8	4.7	-
1750-9	54	6.8	5.2	4.0	31.5	3.1	-
Total	880	7.2	3.8	3.9	27.1	3.3	6.7

Parish Totals

Wistow	128	12.0	5.3	5.0	30.7	2.7	8.1
Riccall	202	5.4	3.6	3.7	20.0	2.7	5.3
Selby	380	4.7	3.0	4.0	38.0	3.8	5.3
Cawood	170	8.8	3.8	3.3	20.7	4.9	9.0

artefacts. In October 1710, for example, when the appraisers of Richard Baynes of Wistow valued his agricultural possessions, they reckoned that his unthreshed corn and other "houstm[e]nts" in the barn were worth £2.0.0 while four horses were appraised at £18.0.0; in addition, however, the appraisers listed:

"6 haystacks in ye closes and some in ye barn	60.0.0
12 fat cows at £3 10s per cow is	42.0.0
8 less cows, some fat and some lean at £3 per cow is	24.0.0
1 bull and some calves	3.0.0" ¹⁶

The value of Richard Baynes's cattle and fodder amounted to some 43.2 percent of his total worth and represented his most important form of investment. In the market towns, farmers such as Thomas Tenant, a yeoman of Cawood, whose herd of thirty cattle represented 40.3 percent of his wealth,¹⁷ or James Stotherd, a Selby cordwainer, whose cattle, valued at £30.5.0, accounted for thirty-one percent of his entire worth,¹⁸ were also heavily dependent on livestock raising for their incomes and were by no means exceptional.

It is difficult to make precise judgements as to the relative importance of beef and dairy farming in the local economy. Where the appraisers were specific in their descriptions, bullocks, stirks and steers were frequently listed, indicating that beef production was important; but the inventories leave us in no doubt as to the overwhelming significance of dairy farming in the local economy. They also point to the highly commercialized and market-oriented nature of dairy production. Altogether some eight percent of farms possessed a milkhouse or dairy, and although only two percent of the inventories listed quantities of butter, nearly seven percent contained stocks of cheese. Cheese presses and other cheese-producing utensils were commonplace and many households must have produced cheese for home

consumption; but it is clear that a large number of people were involved in cheese production which far outweighed their domestic needs. Nowhere is this more evident than at Wistow where more than sixteen percent of decedents possessed stocks of cheese, many of which must have been intended for local markets. In 1717, for example, the yeoman Thomas Cussons, had fifteen milking cows and the chamber over his house contained sixty-six cheeses valued at £5.0.0,¹⁹ while in 1678, another yeoman, George Walkington, owned twelve milking cows and had a stock of 128 cheeses which he had produced in his purpose-built "cheese press house".²⁰ Although the commercial production of cheese was less widespread in the other three communities, many farmers and some tradesmen and craftsmen had chambers or milkhouses stocked with large quantities of dairy produce. Thus in 1694, John Bickers, a Riccall yeoman, possessed eighty cheeses and ten firkins of butter worth £13.0.0,²¹ and the milkhouse of the Selby cordwainer, Thomas Tarboton, contained forty-one cheeses valued at £4.2.0, when his inventory was made in 1731.²²

Despite the heavy concentration on dairy farming, the typical farmer of the area extended his investment to other forms of livestock, and, after cattle, horses were the most frequently mentioned animals in the inventories. It can be seen in Table 1:2 that, over the whole period, 44.5 percent of inventories contained references to horses; a percentage which fell to 29.5 percent in the market town of Selby and rose to 64.8 at Wistow. Horses, of course, had a wide variety of uses in the pre-industrial economy and this is reflected in the individual inventories. Samuel Rawlinson, a Selby bachelor, who owned "...one black bald nagge with an ould sadle and brydle" was typical of many decedents who possessed only one or two horses for riding.²³ Some tradesmen, notably those involved in the leather or textile trades,

maintained a small number of horses to transport their wares, and this explains the relatively small mean size of studs in Selby. Even in the villages, the inventories suggest that many horses were bred for work on the farm concerned, with the typical farmer possessing, at the most, two or three mares and their foals. Some yeomen were, however, involved in large scale horse-breeding and the aptly-named Thomas Horseman, a yeoman of Wistow, with his one stoned horse, seven mares, three foals, four fillies and three colts, worth £32.0.0,²⁴ or John Marshall, another yeoman of the same village, with a sizeable stud of eighteen horses in 1672,²⁵ must have been breeding horses for sale at the local horse fairs of Howden, Sherburn, Snaith and York.²⁶

Compared to the areas of prolific wool and mutton production in the Dales, Moors and Wolds of Yorkshire, sheep-rearing was of minor importance in the Vale of York.²⁷ Farmers whose sheep flock was their major form of agricultural investment such as Thomas Hartely of Selby who owned 104 sheep worth £25.0.0 in 1699,²⁸ or John Stagg, a carrier of the same town, who owned no livestock beyond his flock of fifty-five sheep,²⁹ were relatively scarce and there were few men from our four parishes who could be described primarily as sheep farmers. Table 1:2 reveals that far fewer people kept sheep than owned cattle or horses and Table 1:3 indicates that where flocks were raised they tended to be small in size, averaging just over twenty-seven sheep. Nevertheless, sheep farming played an important subsidiary role in the local economy, especially at Wistow, where a quarter of farmers supplemented their incomes by producing mutton and wool. Typical of these was Thomas Romans, a prosperous Wistow yeoman, whose inventory reveals that he invested mainly in cattle and horses, but also that he had a flock of twenty-three ewes and seven lambs.³⁰

If some farmers were willing to extend their husbandry to include sheep-rearing, and if at least some sheep were kept on a commercial scale, the evidence suggests that this was even more the case with pig-keeping. Just over a quarter of all decedents kept at least one pig and the number of inventories listing swine was relatively high throughout the period. No doubt many copyholders at Cawood and Wistow took advantage of the custom of the manor which, as we have seen, gave them pannage in the common woods; but in all four communities pigs were widely kept. Unlike horse-breeding and sheep-raising, pig-keeping was associated with poorer as well as wealthier farmers, and many craftsmen and tradesmen in the market towns also fattened a pig for the autumn killing. Even the impecunious Selby widow, Ann Abbott, who eked out a meagre living by spinning woollen yarn and picking ockum owned "... one p[ar]te of a pig", valued at £0.4.6, and had a flitch of bacon hanging in her parlour.³¹ Most people kept one, or at the most, two sows (hence the low mean size of pig herds in Table 1:3), but examples of pig-keeping on a larger scale, though rare, can sometimes be found. At Cawood, for example, pigs must have made a valuable contribution to the incomes of people like Abraham Gibson, the cooper, who owned nineteen hogs worth £4.0.0 in 1685³² and Patience Madera, the widow, who, ten years later, possessed two sows, thirteen pigs and one gilt pig appraised at £4.13.6.³³

Just as many people, of all occupations, had a pigsty in their garth, so many of our parishioners kept a few hens and geese. It is difficult to know how much reliance to place on the figures for poultry-keeping in Tables 1:2 and 1:3, for appraisers may have been less careful in recording hens and geese than other forms of livestock. After about 1710, fowls were often lumped together as "pullein" and specific descriptions or numbers of poultry were not

recorded in the inventories, while during the last two decades of our period, no poultry at all were listed. It would seem, therefore, that the apparent diminution in this type of farming represents the more perfunctory nature of the eighteenth-century inventories rather than a real decline. However, even in the seventeenth century, poultry appear to have been rarely farmed on a commercial scale with most flocks being valued at less than ten shillings. Generally speaking, both poultry and pigs were very much a side-line on the farms of our riverside communities. The main emphasis was on cattle rearing and dairy production with pig farming, *horse-breeding* and, to a lesser extent, sheep-farming, representing important secondary activities.

Pasture resources were thus central to the rural economy of the area, but the inventories plainly show that, though pastoral farming was the principal source of livelihood for most farmers, many were also involved in arable farming. The overall importance of crop production vis a vis livestock farming is difficult to assess from the inventories, for the mention of crops depended, as has already been pointed out, on the time of year when the inventory was made. Yet even if we studied only those inventories produced between seed-time and harvest, we should still be confronted with the problem that information as to types and acreages of various crops sown tended to be imprecise. The evidence for the scale and nature of arable farming is therefore rather impressionistic, yet Table 1:4 reveals that, despite the overall emphasis on cattle, most farmers within the four parishes operated within a system of mixed husbandry. It also demonstrates that, just as farmers diversified their livestock interests, so too they invested in a variety of crops.

TABLE 1:4 Proportion of Inventories Listing Different Crops

	No. of Inventories	Corn	Wheat	Rye	Barley	Oats	Pulses	Flax	Hemp
1660-9	162	17.3	11.1	20.4	19.8	14.2	16.0	14.2	25.9
1670-9	105	13.3	8.6	12.4	18.1	15.2	12.4	8.6	9.5
1680-9	100	23.0	11.0	8.0	12.0	13.0	4.0	7.0	10.0
1690-9	111	18.0	9.9	9.9	14.4	11.7	4.5	2.7	6.3
1700-9	67	20.9	7.5	4.5	9.0	11.9	9.0	3.0	1.5
1710-9	74	24.3	8.1	4.1	9.5	14.9	10.8	4.1	2.7
1720-9	86	19.8	2.3	4.7	5.8	8.1	2.3	8.1	14.0
1730-9	53	26.4	9.4	5.7	7.5	9.4	3.8	9.4	9.4
1740-9	68	20.6	5.9	2.9	2.9	11.8	1.5	11.8	7.4
1750-9	54	13.0	5.6	0.0	3.7	11.1	7.4	5.6	1.9
Total	880	19.2	8.4	9.1	11.9	12.5	8.1	8.0	10.8

Parish Totals

Wistow	128	43.0	19.5	5.5	14.8	28.1	14.8	16.4	19.5
Riccall	202	25.7	5.9	19.8	23.8	13.9	13.9	16.8	30.2
Selby	380	6.1	5.3	5.3	4.2	5.8	2.1	3.4	2.1
Cawood	170	22.9	10.0	7.6	12.9	14.1	9.4	1.8	0.6

It can be seen that, in a large number of inventories, the type of arable crop mentioned was undifferentiated, being described simply as "corn". However, it would appear that appraisers sometimes used the word "corn" to describe wheat, and it seems likely that wheat was the most frequently grown arable crop. Certainly, in those inventories which provided details of sown acreages of different crops, wheat seems to have been grown in greater quantities than other types of cereal. Rye was frequently sown with wheat (sometimes being described as "hard corn") and may therefore have been more common than the inventories suggest. Rye appears to have been a more important crop at Riccall than in the other three communities, but overall its cultivation declined during our period. Similarly, the cultivation of barley, also more frequently mentioned at Riccall than elsewhere, was reduced during the eighteenth century, whereas oats remained an important crop throughout the period, especially at Wistow.

The inventories suggest that many farmers from the four parishes extended their agricultural investment beyond cereal production to other types of crops. Several farmers grew small quantities of rape; William Storr, for example, provided hints on the cultivation of rape in his memorandum book and recorded that "In 1685 my father did thresh rape upon the 24th August. And in 1709 I sould to Mr. Bever rape-seed at 24 pound a last".³⁴ Without doubt, however, the most important commercial crops other than cereals were pulses, flax and hemp and their significance can be plainly seen in Table 1:4. Peas, which are particularly suited to light soils, were only infrequently listed in the inventories, but beans, being more at home in the heavier soils of the area, were much in evidence, especially at Wistow and Riccall, where they were sown alongside oats in the spring. However, it was the cultivation of flax (usually described as "line") and, more especially, hemp (particularly suited to the rich alluvial soils of the area), which differentiated the villages from the market towns. At Wistow and Riccall both crops were found growing in relatively large quantities in the garths and backsides and their cultivation formed the basis of the local weaving and rope-making crafts which were an integral part of the local economy.³⁵

Thus the quantitative analysis of arable farming in the inventories suggests that, though there was an emphasis on wheat production, a wide variety of crops were cultivated. This finding is corroborated by close inspection of individual inventories which shows that most people were careful to maintain a balance between their different crops. In April 1685, for example, the appraisers of Stephan Chamberlaine, a Wistow weaver, noted that his sown corn included three acres of wheat worth £6.0.0 together with oats and line valued at £2.0.0; in addition, they valued "ground, tild for barley" at £1.10.0.³⁶

The inventory of Roger Ellis, a butcher, illustrates that a similar balance was being maintained in eighteenth century Wistow; his inventory of May 1742 included hay and corn in storage worth £1.10.0, three and a half acres of wheat in the field valued at £8.15.0 together with two acres of oats and two and a half acres of rape totalling £11.0.0.³⁷ Among men who were described as gentlemen or yeomen, large acreages were cultivated, but, like the part-time farmers, they too attempted to balance their crops. In March 1702, for example, the Wistow yeoman, George Walkington, possessed large quantities of corn, barley, beans, peas and hay stored in his barn and chambers, together with "rapes on the ground" valued at £27.0.0, "oats new sown" appraised at £4.2.0, four acres of wheat and corn worth £6.0.0 and six acres of land ploughed for the spring sowing of barley which was estimated at £1.0.0.³⁸ At Riccall, acreages of sown crops tended to be smaller than at Wistow, but farmers were equally anxious to diversify in terms of their arable production. Thus, in June 1669, the Riccall yeoman, Richard Maskall, possessed four and a half acres of rye, four acres of oats, three acres and one rood of barley, three acres of hemp and three acres of peas and beans.³⁹

Some farms were evidently deeply involved in producing corn and other crops for local markets and the inventories contain numerous examples of men with large acreages devoted to arable production whose incomes must have been heavily dependent on the sale of their crops. In only a few cases, however, do we find direct evidence of the marketing of crops. In 1662, the inventory of William Myers, a Selby draper, recorded that, in addition to the corn growing in his close and the "cabbides, unions, psnips and caretts" in his barn and yard, he also had hay and line "sold to John Huby" for £2.16.0.⁴⁰ In 1753, Robert Knowles, a Wistow yeoman, was also involved in commercial arable

farming; his appraisers noted oats, malt, wheat and maslim in storage worth £38.0.0, four acres of rape, eight acres of wheat and nineteen acres of oats, worth a total of £54.0.0, together with "oats sold" for £16.0.0.⁴¹ Such examples provide only tantalizing glimpses of the marketing of agricultural produce, but there can be no clearer illustration of a farmer acutely aware of local markets and anxious to obtain the best possible price for his crops than the entry in William Storr's memorandum book which reads:

"In the year 1698 I sould mean wheat at £1.2.6 a load, but good wheat was sould from that price to 30 shillings in seed time. I had a parcell of wheat soe small that it would not sell in the markt soe that I put litle on it amongst my bread corn and soe got it sould, but at the last I had 7 load of it left, soe I went to Selby and brought 3 load of rye and mixed it with that small wheat and then with it to Wetherby market and there sould it to Mary Banks, a baker, for 21 shillings a load... I sould oats that year for £1.2.6 a qtor to George Smith and I sould Mary Child and John Jackson ots at the same prize in 1709 and all corn was dear accordingly and continued at good prizes sume time after."⁴²

Here then, was a man with a keen sense of profit, desirous to make the most of his investment in cereals. Many farmers from the area who, like William Storr, invested heavily in arable crops, must have used local grain markets in this way, although their activities have rarely left any traces in the records.

An analysis of the agricultural implements found in the inventories reinforces the impression that tillage was an important form of investment for many farmers; it also suggests that, generally speaking, most farms in the locality were well equipped. In Table 1:5 the agricultural implements have been analysed by decade and parish. It can be seen that the most commonly found heavy implements in the inventories were ploughs and harrows and that, despite apparent short-term fluctuations, there was little change in the proportion of farmers owning these implements over the hundred year period. Not

everyone, of course, possessed a plough or harrow, and the 1672 inventory of Leonarde Metcalfe, a Wistow yeoman, which listed two debts owing "...by Ralph Wood, for plowing £0.5.0" and "...by Elizabeth Hall, for plowing, £0.3.0" reveals that poorer people were sometimes dependent on their more fortunate neighbours in this respect.⁴³ However, if not ubiquitous, ploughs and harrows were very common, and many examples could be cited of even quite poor farmers, with relatively small acreages under cultivation, who nevertheless had a plough and a couple of harrows in their yards.

TABLE 1:5 Proportion of Inventories Listing Different Agricultural Implements

	No. of Inventories	Ploughs	Harrows	Hand Tools	Wains	Waggon	Carts
1660-9	162	14.2	13.0	8.6	5.6	0.0	9.3
1670-9	105	13.3	15.2	10.5	2.9	1.0	11.4
1680-9	100	21.0	18.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	20.0
1690-9	111	16.2	9.9	1.8	3.6	8.1	9.0
1700-9	67	7.5	6.0	0.0	0.0	7.5	10.4
1710-9	74	20.3	13.5	1.4	1.4	14.9	5.4
1720-9	86	25.6	20.9	2.3	0.0	23.3	4.7
1730-9	53	26.4	15.1	1.9	0.0	26.4	3.8
1740-9	68	11.8	7.4	1.5	0.0	17.6	1.5
1750-9	54	18.5	14.9	1.9	0.0	18.5	5.6
Total	880	17.0	13.5	4.1	2.2	9.5	8.7
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Parish Totals							
Wistow	128	31.3	28.9	12.5	3.1	14.0	16.4
Riccall	202	25.7	17.3	4.0	3.0	16.8	5.9
Selby	380	5.8	5.8	1.8	0.5	3.7	4.7
Cawood	170	21.2	14.7	2.9	4.1	10.6	15.9

Unfortunately, the figures for hand tools are less reliable than for other types of agricultural implements. From the 1680s appraisers tended to give increasingly perfunctory accounts of cheaper agricultural tools, lumping them together as "husbandry gear" or "other furniture", or, in one case, "other useful things".⁴⁴ It is unlikely, therefore, that there was a reduction in the proportion of people

owning hand tools from the last two decades of the seventeenth century as the figures in Table 1:5 at first sight suggest. When appraisers did provide details of hand tools, the most commonly noted implements were rakes, forks and shovels of various kinds. Turf spades were common in Riccall, where turf was used as a domestic fuel, while brakes, used for crushing hemp, were much in evidence in the two villages. Threshing implements which included such items as winnowing fans, sieves, riddles, scuttles and sieving cloths were sometimes itemized in detail, although such equipment was valued at only a few shillings.

Of much greater significance in terms of overall agricultural investment were wheeled farm vehicles which included wains, waggons and carts. Indeed, wheeled vehicles and their accessories were frequently the most valuable pieces of farm equipment as the inventory of John Ellis of Wistow demonstrates. In 1748, the yeoman's stable contained "2 pair of iron gears, 3 sadles, 3 swindle trees, 4 pair of gears, 3 colters, 5 pair of blinkers", worth a total of £1.14.6; in his barn were "One winnowing fan, scutles, rudles, shovls, forks, rakes", valued at £5.0.0, together with "2 plows, 2 pair of harrows and sledges belonging", worth £1.0.0; by far his most expensive equipment however, were his "Two waggons and all thereunto belonging", which his appraisers valued at £6.0.0.⁴⁵ Although John Ellis's waggons were certainly used on the farm, we cannot be sure that all the wheeled vehicles mentioned in the inventories were used in farm work. It would seem likely, however, that carting and carrying facilities were well-developed on the farms of the area. Moreover, the figures reveal a significant change in the type of vehicle employed over the course of the century. Clearly, the four-wheeled waggon was gradually superseding the two-wheeled wain and cart as the

period progressed; a change which must have greatly facilitated the marketing of cereals and other crops.⁴⁶ Though not apparent in the figures in Table 1:5, another improvement was the diffusion of iron-bound vehicles. Such carts and wains were not unknown in the mid-seventeenth century, as the inventory of Thomas Brindholme, a yeoman of Cawood, which listed "2 iron bunn waynes" in 1660 reveals,⁴⁷ but their use became much more widespread during the next hundred years. The gradual adoption of waggons and other iron-bound vehicles, even on quite small farms, suggests that many farmers in the region had the wherewithal to invest in improved equipment and confirms our impression that the system of mixed farming found in the river communities created a prosperous farming community.

Overall, the evidence of farming activities in the probate inventories suggests that the agrarian economy of these river communities was based on mixed farming with a bias towards dairy farming. In this respect the villages and market towns conformed to a pattern which was probably typical of *riverside parishes the southern Vale of York as a whole*.⁴⁸ The sources also reveal a high degree of commercialization among the farmers of the area with production for local markets, both in terms of livestock and arable, being commonplace on many farms. Moreover, although we have seen that changes in agricultural investment did take place over the period 1660 to 1760, the balance of arable and livestock and the willingness of farmers to produce for the market were enduring characteristics of the local rural economy. These two features were also common to both market towns and villages though the communities evidently differed from each other in terms of their overall involvement in different forms of agricultural production.

Degrees of Farmers

Just as it is important to be sensitive to the variation in farming practice between neighbouring communities, so too, if we are to fully appreciate the complexity of the rural economy in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, is it necessary to differentiate between farmers of different standing. We have seen that many people in the riverside communities earned a living by farming, yet the word 'farmer' does not begin to appear in local documents until the 1750s. Before that date contemporaries recognized four broad status groups within the farming community: gentlemen, yeomen, husbandmen and labourers. Historians have shown that these descriptions are a useful, though imprecise, tool with which to dissect early modern rural society. Despite attempts to define these groups in terms of the size of their farms, the tenure under which they held their property, their personal wealth or lifestyles, our perception of the rural hierarchy remains rather vague.⁴⁹ In particular, we have only a partial understanding of the relationships between status descriptions and the ways in which different groups earned a living. What can an analysis of agricultural property in the inventories reveal about the economic activities of labourers, husbandmen, yeomen and gentlemen?

Because the labourers for whom inventories were made tended to represent the more affluent members of the labouring population, it is difficult to gain more than a limited and rather skewed impression of their agricultural activities and the ways in which they earned a living. From the fifteen labourers' inventories which survive for our four parishes, it would appear that these men were rarely entirely dependent on wage-labour for their livelihood, although it should be reiterated that the sample is probably unrepresentative, and among the

labouring population generally there are likely to have been many who kept no livestock and grew no crops. Even among the inventoried sample, however, few labourers had substantial investments in agriculture. Although it was not unknown to find hand tools listed among a labourer's property, only the 1664 inventory of Henry Leadham, of Wistow, listed a plough alongside his scythe and forks,⁵⁰ and no labourers apparently owned harrows, waggons, wains or carts. Given the difficulty of identifying labourers in the Wistow manorial documents, it is impossible to say how much land a labourer might have owned. The inventories do reveal, however, that some men tilled small acreages (William Horsley, of Riccall, for example, had one rood of winter corn and a half acre of barley when his inventory was made in 1694),⁵¹ but they also suggest that such men were exceptional and, generally speaking, crop cultivation was restricted to larger farms. Instead, labourers supplemented their incomes by investing in livestock. Here the emphasis was on cattle, pigs and poultry; horses were only rarely found among the labourers' livestock and sheep never appeared. A typical example of the type of agricultural investment found in the labourers' inventories is provided by that of George Richardson, of Riccall, whose appraisers, in 1669, listed a cow and fodder (together with a small quantity of cheese and butter), one sow and four pigs, one stag, two old geese and some young ones, together with "all the poaltrie"; in addition, he possessed a small quantity of "line unbraked", a half acre of peas and oats and one rood of barley.⁵² George Richardson's farming activities must have gone some way to satisfy his domestic needs, but there could have been little left over for him to sell in local markets.

In early modern England, the designation "husbandman" could be used either as a generic term to mean all tillers of the soil, or, more

specifically, to indicate small farmers possessing anything from five to fifty acres of land.⁵³ In the local documents from our four river communities, the word "husbandman" was used in this more specific sense to indicate those in the rural hierarchy who found themselves placed above the lowly labourer in terms of their farming wealth. In some cases, husbandmen represented the younger members of the farming community who had not yet had chance to establish themselves as successful and prosperous farmers. In 1743, for example, when Thomas Herriman, of Riccall, made his will at the age of twenty-seven, he described himself as a "husbandman", but his appraisers preferred to call him a "singleman".⁵⁴ Similarly, in 1695, Robert Storr of Scalm Park made a bequest in his will to "William Storr, husbandman, my deare son", who was then aged thirty-seven;⁵⁵ yet, William was to become one of the most influential members of the Wistow community, and by the time he wrote his own will in 1731, was describing himself as a "gentleman".⁵⁶ Husbandmen were not, of course, always younger men, and it is not difficult to find examples among the testamentary records of husbandmen who were middle-aged, or who had retired from farming, having handed over the farm to their sons. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that, for some at least, their status as husbandmen may have represented a transitional phase in their farming lives.

An analysis of agricultural property in husbandmen's inventories, suggests that there was considerable degree of overlap in terms of farming investment between these men and labourers. Some smaller husbandmen possessed agricultural property which failed to match that of more substantial labourers. In 1726, for example, when William Pallister died, his appraisers listed only a small parcel of tow (the shorter fibres of flax or hemp), six pecks of barley and a small

parcel of hay in his barn together with "...2 old drape cows and a why" and "...3 poor small calves"; the combined value of his livestock and crops totalled only £6.15.0.⁵⁷ Even more impecunious was Thomas Tallery, who kept only a horse and cow on the two acres of land attached to his house.⁵⁸ At the other extreme were men like William Smith of Selby, whose appraisers listed cows, horses, pigs and poultry to the value of £55.1.0; corn and hay worth £20.0.0; and agricultural implements which included two waggons, a cart, a plough, two harrows and horse-gear.⁵⁹ Such men could not be distinguished from middling yeomen in terms of their farming activity and their difference in status must have been attributable to other factors. However, despite the fact that some husbandmen were more akin to labourers or yeomen in terms of their agricultural investment, it *is* possible to differentiate between the farming activity of the three groups and to visualize the farm of a typical husbandman.

Most husbandmen clearly concentrated their investment on livestock production and were primarily dairy farmers; large studs of horses or flocks of sheep were noticeably absent from the husbandmen's livestock, and although arable farming was sometimes undertaken, it was unusual for more than ten acres to be under cultivation. A good example of this pattern of agricultural investment is provided by the case of Edward Foster, of Wistow, who, when he died in 1730, farmed eleven and a half acres in three closes and possessed the following farming property according to his appraisers:

"Itm in the dairy one chern, one cheese press, twelve bowls with other small things	0. 8. 0
Itm in the chamber one chaf bed, one cimlin with some wheat	0.18. 0
Itm two cows, two heifers, two calves	10. 5. 0
Itm one mare, two followers	7. 0. 0
Itm hay and corn	10. 0. 0" ⁶⁰

Edward Foster's arable production was evidently insufficient to necessitate the possession of heavy implements, but husbandmen with larger acreages under cultivation sometimes invested in ploughs and other gear. The inventory of Christopher Durham of Wistow, for example, reveals that, although his main investment was in his dairy herd of three cows, three calves and three young beasts, he nevertheless had five acres of corn worth £6.10.0. and possessed a waggon, two harrows, a plough and gears.⁶¹ Generally speaking, however, husbandmen, though more likely to own heavy implements than labourers, were still dependent on the ploughs and harrows of their more prosperous neighbours.

Far more numerous than either the inventories of husbandmen or of labourers were those belonging to the yeomen of our four parishes. Yeomen formed the largest group of inventoried farmers in each community and far outnumbered husbandmen. Indeed, at Cawood, some thirty-two inventories were made for yeomen while only one husbandman was represented in the sample. The number of husbandman and yeoman inventories is more balanced in the other three parishes (especially at Riccall), yet the yeomen formed such a substantial group in all four parishes that it is difficult to generalise about their ownership of agricultural property. Unlike the situation in parts of southern England, where its use was usually reserved for the more prosperous members of the farming community, at Wistow, Riccall, Selby and Cawood, the term encompassed a wide range of men spanning a broad spectrum of farming investment.⁶²

The overlap between husbandmen and yeomen in our four parishes was considerable, and it is not difficult to find examples of yeomen whose

investment in agriculture was well below that of the average husbandman, and, in some cases, even fell short of that of the wealthy labourer. In September 1701, for example, the appraisers of Thomas Featherston's goods, recorded that his agricultural investments consisted of "...one cart with hay and corn...three cows, four calves, one mare and foal, one follower, one horse" and were worth £25.0.0.⁶³ Yet Thomas Featherston was by no means the poorest yeoman: at Riccall, Robert Robinson's four cows and two horses, together with his one acre of winter corn, his manure and share in a haystack, were worth only £14.15.0⁶⁴ while John Gelstropp's two cows, three horses, seven sheep, one pig and hens came to a meagre £9.0.8.⁶⁵ Even at Wistow, where inventoried farmers tended to be wealthier than across the river, we find men like Jervaise Bell who, despite calling himself a yeoman in his will, possessed only a small quantity of unbroken hemp, a parcel of hay and straw, a load of manure, two kyne and "Two foles that is sick and cannot rise of themselves"; the sum total of his farming investment was less than £6.0.0.⁶⁶

If some yeomen were indistinguishable from husbandmen and even from labourers in terms of their investment in agriculture, the probate evidence nevertheless shows that the highly commercialized farms of some of the larger and more prosperous yeomen were worlds apart from the smaller concerns of their humbler neighbours. In addition to their large dairy herds, many of these men maintained large flocks of sheep and sizeable studs of horses; some had over fifty acres under arable cultivation and nearly all possessed at least one plough, two harrows and a number of carts, wains, and waggons. Examples of substantial yeomen, farming large acreages and deeply involved in production for local markets, could be cited from any one of our four parishes, but nowhere was the farming wealth of this group more in

evidence than at Wistow. The example of William Naylor can be used to illustrate a level of farming investment which was by no means unusual in the village. When the yeoman died in 1711, his appraisers listed his extensive and valuable farming property. He possessed a large dairy herd of eighteen cows which, together with his bull, was appraised at £70.0.0. In his buttery was to be found his dairy equipment - shelves, barrels, bowls and cheese-presses - which, when added to the stock of cheeses and shelves in his chamber, were worth £18.0.0. William Naylor's livestock interests extended beyond dairying however, for he also possessed a further thirty-seven head of beef cattle, a stud of nine horses, a flock of eighty-seven sheep and lambs, a tup and four pigs, adjudged to be worth a further £159.15.0. In the ensuing winter months, his animals would have been foddered on the large quantities of hay which the yeoman had in several stacks scattered around the village fields and on the river banks. Moreover, although livestock formed the basis of his farming activities, William Naylor also cultivated extensive acreages of crops: the corn and the rape not yet harvested were valued at £20.0.0, while the rape-seed, wheat, maslen, oats, beans and barley safely stored in his barn were worth another £57.0.0. His three carts, two ploughs, three harrows and other farming equipment brought the sum total of his agricultural investments to some £401.15.0.⁶⁷

In terms of their ownership of agricultural property, it is difficult to differentiate between prosperous yeomen like William Naylor and those who were designated "Mr", "Gent", or "Esquire" in the local documents. Some of these forty-one gentlemen for whom inventories survive, especially those from Cawood and Wistow, were the owners of sizeable farms. One of the wealthiest of these was James Wilkinson of Cawood, whose appraisers made the following assessment of his

agricultural property in 1710:

"Two wagons, 2 plows and harrows and plow geer	10. 0. 0
Five calves, 4 oxen, 3 steers, 3 calves in the wood	32.10. 0
2 fillys, a colt, an old horse, a galloway, an old mare	10. 0. 0
An old gray horse, 2 mares and foals, 4 foals a year old	11. 0. 0
A foal 2 yrs old, one 3 yrs old a bay filley	9. 0. 0
2 pigs, 8 cows, a bull	22.10. 0
Wheat, beans, barley, oats, 23 acre and half	60. 0. 0
Hay in the closes, hay in the church end	54. 0. 0
Beans and mault in the chamber	14. 0. 0" ⁶⁸

James Wilkinson was evidently farming on a considerable scale, but it is notable that the value of his farmstock was just over half that of William Naylor. Indeed, few gentlemen could even match James Wilkinson's investment in agricultural property. The majority owned only one or two cows, a few riding horses and a pig, while few had sizeable acreages under cultivation or owned extensive agricultural equipment. In many cases, the home farms of gentlemen appear to have been considerably smaller than those of wealthier yeomen.

Our analysis of the agricultural property found in the probate inventories of labourers, husbandmen, yeomen and gentlemen, has shown that the level of farming activity as recorded in these sources is a very blunt tool with which to dissect the different groups within the farming community. To a certain extent this is a reflection of the inadequacies of the documents; we have seen that it is rarely possible to perceive anything of the husbandry practised by the poorer farmers, while, for the reasons discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the inventories provide a far from complete picture, even for middling and higher ranks. Yet the impossibility of producing a neatly-packaged hierarchy of the ownership of farming property within our four communities, which can be conveniently seen in terms of a four-fold

division within rural society, is also a reflection of reality. We have seen that the designation "yeoman" covered too wide a socio-economic spectrum for these men to be seen as a distinctive group of farmers, while, at the same time, the imprecision with which the terms labourer, husbandman and gentleman were applied in our four communities, suggests that perceptions of individual farmers were susceptible to a great deal of subjective judgement. Clearly other material and cultural factors were of fundamental importance in determining the applicability of these terms. One final criterion which partially accounts for the rather blurred distinctions between members of the farming communities, and which should be discussed here, was the tendency of all ranks within late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century society to participate in a wide variety of economic activities. Indeed, it is somewhat inaccurate to speak of a distinct "farming community" within the local rural economy for the probate records plainly reveal that many of those described as gentlemen, yeomen, husbandmen and labourers, were deeply involved in a range of professions, trades, crafts and other forms of economic activity.

The wills of the gentry are illuminating in this respect for they reveal that many were large owners of real estate, widely scattered over the southern Vale of York and beyond. There can be no doubt that the rents from this property formed a major source of income. Because of the fragmentary nature of the evidence, it is difficult to present a complete picture of gentry land-holding; however, the case of Partridge Ashton, a gentleman of Cawood, neatly illustrates the point that direct cultivation of the soil formed only part of the gentleman's income, and goes some way to explaining the limited amount of agricultural property found in gentlemen's inventories. When his

inventory was made in July 1697, Partridge Ashton's home farm was stocked with four cows, four calves, thirteen heifers and steers and three horses which were valued at £30.0.0. According to his will, made a few months earlier, however, he owned, in addition to his property in Cawood, a parcel of land in Lincolnshire and further real estate in the parish of Garthrop, which was to provide his daughter with a yearly annuity of £7.10. 0 after his death.⁶⁹ This must have been a meagre amount however, in comparison with the real estate of the Selby gentleman, Nicholas Smith, who, in 1756, bequeathed to his only son his "...lands and tenements in Selby, Wistow, Cawood and Barleby, or elsewhere in Yorkshire...",⁷⁰ or with the property of William Marton, also of Selby, who left a quarter of the royalties of the manor of Rothwell, together with five cottages and thirty-nine and a half acres in the same manor to his unborn child.⁷¹

If the evidence from their wills suggests that, for many market town gentlemen, investment in real estate may have been of greater importance than direct involvement in husbandry, their probate records also reveal urban gentlemen who were primarily tradesmen or professional men. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, a quarter of Cawood gentlemen and nearly a half of those from Selby possessed no livestock, crops, or agricultural equipment. Occasionally, a discrepancy between the designation used in their wills and in their inventories, makes it clear that these men were lawyers or prosperous tradesmen. In 1693, for example, when Paul Odingsell, of Selby, made his will, he described himself as a "gentleman", but the following year his appraisers preferred to call him an "attorney".⁷² Similarly, in 1692, Thomas Marshall, of the same town, was designated "woollen draper" in his inventory, but assumed gentry status in his will.⁷³ If some gentlemen were wholly devoted to

professions and trades, others, like Bethel Staggs, of Selby, combined an interest in agriculture with investments in real estate and trade. In his inventory of 1748, he was accorded the title "Mr", but described himself as a "currier" in his will of the same year. Bethell Staggs was evidently a reasonably large farmer - his appraisers listed livestock worth £54.17.0 together with extensive acreages of crops under cultivation and large amounts in store - yet his inventory reveals that as well as farming and dressing leather, he was also dealing in tea, tobacco, rum, brandy and compounds, while his will shows that he owned large amounts of copyhold and freehold property, not only in Selby, but also in neighbouring villages.⁷⁴

Although it is not difficult to find examples of yeomen from our four parishes who possessed no agricultural property, such cases probably represented retired farmers rather than yeomen who were, in fact, tradesmen or craftsmen. Yeomen appear to have been primarily farmers, but we should not think that this militated against them becoming involved in other forms of economic activity. For more prosperous yeomen this could mean participating in the river trade. Robert Wilson of Cawood, for example, termed himself a "yeoman" in his will and though his inventory indicated that he was a small farmer, possessing wheat, barley and oats valued at £5.0.0 and a herd of fifteen cattle, his appraisers chose to call him a "mariner".⁷⁵ Similarly, in 1660, when John Watson also of Cawood, died, his appraisers described him as a yeoman and listed his extensive agricultural investments; but his will revealed that, in addition to farming, John Watson also relied on his maritime investments, for he left his wife "...one eighth part of one ship called the Marian and one sixteenth part of one ship called the Unitye", while his brother was also to receive "...one sixteenth part of one ship called

Maryeman".⁷⁶ Moreover, while no yeomen appear to have been large merchants, the inventory of John Wilkinson of Cawood indicates that they could be involved in small-scale retailing, for in 1726, his appraisers listed, in addition to the yeoman's farming property, a small shop which contained a long table, a chest, candles, soap and grocery-ware worth £1.0.0.⁷⁷

The inventories suggest that poorer yeomen, husbandmen and labourers were also involved in economic activities other than farming. Indeed, one of the most notable features of the domestic economy of these men (especially among the labouring population) was the extent to which they were dependent on various sources of income. In 1666, for example, William Swann, a labourer of Cawood, combined carpentry (his inventory listed a table-leaf and other timber in his shop) with farming and working for wages in order to support himself and his family.⁷⁸ Without doubt, the most common form of supplementary income came from the textile trades. Stocks of wool, hemp and flax were frequently found in the inventories of labourers, husbandmen and small farmers, while spinning wheels and quantities of yarn were also numerous. Even more important than spinning however, was the making of cloth. The Woodalls of Wistow, provide an apposite example of a weaving and farming family. In 1666, when William Woodall died, he was described in his inventory as a "yeoman", but six years before he had appeared in a probate bond as a "linen webster".⁷⁹ When his two sons died in the 1690s they were continuing their father's dual occupation; Thomas's appraisers listed "in ye chamber...A p'cell of yarne wth workeing geers" and "In ye shopp one loome wth other workeing geere" in addition to his farm goods;⁸⁰ while his brother, describing himself as a "yeoman" in his will, also owned a loom.⁸¹ Nowhere was weaving more important than in the village of Riccall

where it appears to have been a useful supplement to the agricultural income of many small farmers. Here, William Blanshard, who, in 1705, left his son "...one loume with all things belonging the loume" together with "...half an accker of hay in the low marsh, two lands of beans and peas on the far sid of the baglan hill" provides a good example of a small husbandman-weaver.⁸²

Thus, there is a great deal of evidence that farmers of all social ranks were involved in a variety of economic activities in addition to the rearing of livestock and the cultivation of crops. For wealthier farmers, these forms of investment represented an opportunity to boost their already ample agricultural incomes, while for those lower down the farming ladder, they probably meant the difference between a satisfied and a hungry belly. Whatever the motivation behind such activities, the probate inventories show that, though agriculture was fundamental to the rural economy, other forms of economic activity were also important in our riverside communities. Exactly what these activities were, and how they related to the local agrarian economy, will be our concern in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 2

CRAFTS AND TRADES

One of the factors which distinguished market towns from villages in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was their occupational structure. As we have seen, many people in lesser market towns like Cawood were heavily dependent upon farming for their livelihood but, though agriculture pervaded the economies of small towns in this period, a significant number of their inhabitants relied on trade to provide them with a living. The typical market town offered a variety of services and possessed a range of crafts, trades and professions which made it a distinct community from surrounding villages.¹ Like the majority of pre-industrial market towns and villages, none of our communities has an extant contemporary listing which provides comprehensive details of the occupations of its inhabitants. However, some of the most useful alternative documents in this respect are parish registers and we are fortunate that the registers from both our market towns contain some occupational data.²

Between 1698 and 1759 the entries in the Selby registers of baptisms and marriages were frequently accompanied by occupational designations and this information was also sometimes provided for those buried between 1698 and 1705. Even for these years the coverage was far from complete, and any attempt to gauge proportions of people working in different occupations would be over-stretching the evidence; yet the registers leave us in no doubt that the range of occupations within the larger of the two market towns was extremely wide and that many of its inhabitants were working in relatively specialized jobs. Overall, the 657 entries in the registers which were accompanied by occupational designations covered some eighty-four different

vocations. Many of these met the basic needs of the market town and were concerned with building, woodwork, metalwork, leatherwork and the production, processing or retailing of food, drink, clothing, footwear or other necessities such as pots, baskets and candles. Others, however, were catering for a more specialized demand and included such trades as hatter, gingerbread maker, clockmaker and chimney-sweep. Selby's position as a river-trading entrepot created employment for a large number of mariners and shipwrights together with excisemen and ferrymen, while its role as a local market and cultural centre, demanded the services of innkeepers, specialized shopkeepers, apothecaries, barber-surgeons and even a dancing-master.³ The Cawood parish register is of more limited use than that from Selby. No occupational information is given in the marriage registers, and although occupations are sometimes recorded for burials and baptisms from 1717 onwards, the evidence is far from complete. However, the occupational data contained in the register suggests that, though Cawood lacked the varied and specialized economic structure of its larger neighbour, the lesser port nevertheless contained a wide variety of occupations. Some forty-one different trades were mentioned among the 254 specific entries in the register, including a number of mariners and shopkeepers and such specialist jobs as chair-maker, bone-setter and stay-maker.⁴

Unfortunately, comparative data is not found in the parish registers from the villages of Wistow and Riccall, which only rarely recorded occupations during the period 1660-1760, and we are therefore forced to use less useful sources. For both villages the occupations of bondsmen were systematically recorded in the administration bonds while wills, inventories and manorial court papers also contained names linked with occupational designations. These documents are much

less socially comprehensive in their coverage than parish registers, for bondsmen were mostly chosen from the higher echelons of village society, while testators were biased towards wealthier inhabitants and those mentioned in manorial documents towards the farming community. Despite these problems, the occupational information which these documents yield suggests that, though the great majority of people in the villages were yeomen, husbandmen or labourers, some at least were primarily involved in producing and selling the necessities of everyday life. Indeed, at Riccall, the large number of linen-weavers found in local documents suggests that this was an important industry in the village.

The overall occupational structures of Selby, Cawood, Wistow and Riccall, defy detailed and systematic analysis, but even a cursory examination of the available evidence suggests a complex and sophisticated local economy containing a wide variety of trades and callings. The occupational designations found in parish registers and other local sources provide useful prolegomena to the study of trades and crafts within rural society, but it is important to realize that these descriptions can present a misleading impression of the ways by which people earn their living in the pre-industrial economy; just as many men labelled as gentlemen, yeomen, husbandmen or labourers, had economic interests outside agriculture, so too, many of those described as tradesmen and craftsmen in local records invested in agriculture or in trades outside their specialist calling. The example of John Whittill, of Selby, will suffice to show just how diverse these activities could be. In his will of 1675 Whittill described himself as a "cordwinder" and his inventory listed his stock-in-trade from this occupation comprising 134 pairs of boots and shoes together with substantial quantities of leather. In addition, however, he owned a

a $\frac{1}{32}$ share of a ship worth £8.0.0 and was involved in the domestic production of yarn, while his inventory also indicated that the bulk of his investment (over £100.0.0) was in agriculture and his will revealed that he was a substantial landowner, not only in Selby, but in the neighbouring parish of Cliffe.⁵ Probate records provide a far from complete picture of the activities of tradesmen and craftsmen like John Whittill, but as this example clearly shows, they do allow us to penetrate beneath the misleading simplicities of occupational designations to the more varied ways in which people earned a living.

The dual or multiple nature of occupations in early modern England is now well-attested, not only in areas of early industrial production, but also in predominantly agricultural villages and small market towns.⁶ The degree to which tradesmen participated in agriculture varied a great deal from trade to trade. As Keith Wrightson and David Levine have pointed out, rural craftsmen whose skills were continually in demand might have restricted themselves wholly to their trade while wealthy tradesmen may have invested in land without actually working it themselves.⁷ The inventories from our four parishes allow us to explore in detail the extent to which different tradesmen involved themselves in agriculture and provide much evidence on the scale of investment in stock-in-trade, tools and ships. The types of trading property revealed in the inventories, however, are too diverse to allow a detailed tabulation of the contents of workshops and shops, and the approach in this chapter will therefore be more descriptive. The first section of the chapter will be based on those inventories belonging to village and market town craftsmen. In the second section we shall concentrate on the river trade, looking in detail at the economic activities of Cawood and Selby mariners. Finally the lengthy and highly informative inventories belonging to market town

shopkeepers will be tapped for the information they provide on late seventeenth - and early eighteenth-century retailing.

Village and Market Town Crafts

In Table 2:1 the probate inventories belonging to the tradesmen or craftsmen from the four parishes have been grouped according to occupation. The table clearly shows Selby's position as the most economically complex of the four communities and suggests that, numerically, the most important tradesmen in the town were mariners and leather workers. At Cawood we also find a handful of inventories belonging to these trades, but, in general, Cawood was a much more agriculturally-based community than its neighbour. Tradesmen's and craftsmen's inventories from the village are few in number, though the evidence of linen-weaving at Riccall is confirmed in the probate records. Let us first concentrate on the last six groups of trades in the table: those men who were involved in the production or processing of goods rather than their distribution. What was the scale of their enterprises? How did they combine them with farming? What differences can we find between craftsmen in different communities?

TABLE 2:1 Number of Inventories Belonging to Tradesmen or Craftsmen in Different Communities

	<u>Wistow</u>	<u>Riccall</u>	<u>Cawood</u>	<u>Selby</u>
Total Number of Inventories	128	202	170	380
Mariners	1 (0)*	0 (0)	5 (0)	29 (3)
Shopkeepers	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (1)	16 (7)
Victuallers	1 (1)	4 (1)	8 (0)	14 (2)
Leather Workers	1 (0)	4 (1)	6 (1)	45 (9)
Textile Workers	3 (1)	8(16)	3 (1)	10 (3)
Wood Workers	3 (1)	3 (4)	9 (1)	13 (4)
Metal Workers	2 (0)	1 (1)	6 (2)	7 (3)
Miscellaneous	0 (0)	1 (0)	4 (2)	8 (4)

*The figures in brackets indicate the number of inventories which contained tools or stock of the trade concerned, but did not specify the occupation of the decedent.

As we should expect, it was in the two villages that the combination of workshop and farm was most apparent. The village occupations in which the dual livelihood of farming and trade was most obvious were milling and butchering. Inventories of millers and butchers suggest that they were usually prosperous tradesmen and that their wealth derived not only from the processing, but also from the rearing and cultivation of agricultural produce. In May 1742, for example, the appraisers of Roger Ellis, a butcher of Wistow, valued his personal estate at £88.18.0 and noted that in addition to his four mares, seven young horses and two cows, he also owned a waggon, plough, harrow and other husbandry gear as well as three and a half acres of wheat, two acres of oats and two and a half acres of rape under cultivation.⁸ Similarly, the probate papers of William Bell of Riccall, who described himself as a miller in his will of 1693, revealed nothing of his trade, but he did make bequests of copyhold land in Riccall to his children and his inventory included a sizeable herd of cattle, horses and pigs together with a waggon, ploughs and corn, both sown and in storage, the total value of which came to £47.6.6.⁹

The village miller or butcher farmed on a fairly large scale and his agricultural investments equalled those of some prosperous yeomen. Though the involvement of poorer village craftsmen in farming tended to be on a much lesser scale, these men were also heavily dependent on their farms as a source of income. The inventory of Richard Richardson of Riccall, provides a valuable insight into his dual livelihood. Richardson was a poor wheelwright who, in 1664, occupied a three-roomed house attached to which was a work-house containing his wood and tools valued at only £0.18.0. Of much greater value were his livestock and crops which consisted of barley and beans stored in the barn, worth £2.0.0, three cows and their fodder valued at £5.0.0 and

a pig, geese and bees appraised at £1.5.0.¹⁰ This reliance upon two sources of income was nowhere more evident than in the case of Thomas Bell, who, in his will of June 1657, described himself as a "home carpenter", but who was designated a "yeoman" by his appraisers when they came to draw up his inventory some two months later.¹¹

Most of the craftsmen in the two villages were concerned with processing agricultural produce, with servicing the needs of local farmers or with producing basic goods for their fellow villagers. Only rarely were two men of the same trade found in the village at the same time, but one occupation in which a number of people, especially at Riccall, appear to have been employed was linen-weaving. As we saw in the previous chapter, nearly seventeen percent of the inventories from Riccall, contained reference to flax and the tools and equipment listed in these documents suggests that this crop formed the basis of an important rural industry. "Brakes", "swingletrees" and "heckles", all used in the preparation of line, were frequently found in the inventories of Riccall farmers and craftsmen, and the large number of households with spinning wheels suggests that the spinning of linen thread was an important form of employment in the village. Looms, too, were frequently noted by appraisers, being found in some twenty-eight inventories. Linen-weaving was a domestic industry in which different occupations participated on a part-time basis, but as well as providing an additional source of income for farmers and craftsmen, the trade appears to have formed the primary mode of livelihood for some men. Altogether six Riccall villagers were specifically described as weavers or websters in the probate records, but of the remaining twenty-two decedents owning looms, the status of some sixteen was not given, and had these men been ascribed an occupation, they may well have been described as weavers.

Weaving was a trade which required relatively little investment. Most looms were valued at about ten shillings and an old loom could be worth half that amount. Even when all the additional equipment such as loom gears and warping bars were included in the valuation, looms were rarely appraised at more than a pound. Typical in this respect was the weaving equipment of William Cooke which his appraisers itemized in 1673:

"Item in the shoppe two loums and one warping fatt and ringtrees and bartrees and geers belonging to them and one old wheel	1. 6. 8
Item ten yards of harden cloth	0. 5. 0
Item for hemp and line unbracked	0.10. 0" ¹²

None of the Riccall weavers owned more than two looms and the majority owned only one, working not in a specialized weaving shop, but in a parlour or chamber. The inventories do not, of course, provide information on the income of weavers, but their earning capacity must have been limited and it is hardly surprising that nearly all the Riccall inventories which contained looms also listed agricultural property. The importance of farming in the household economy of Riccall weavers is clearly illustrated in the case of Robert Corney, whose inventory was drawn up in April 1677. Corney left no will and his appraisers did not state his occupation when making his inventory; however, in 1667 he had been described as a weaver when acting as a bondsman,¹³ and when he died he owned a work-house containing "...one loome, yarn and all materialls belonging to the loome and one old loome" in addition to a pillion seat, four saddles and a pannell (a wooden saddle) for the transportation of his cloth. This property, together with hemp, yarn and finished sackwebb was valued at £7.19.8; but his agricultural property which included a cart, plough and harrow, together with a variety of livestock and crops, totalled £32.4.8.¹⁴ Clearly, although weaving was fundamental to the rural

economy of Riccall during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, it largely represented a part-time occupation for men who were primarily small farmers. Even for those craftsmen who described themselves, or who were described by their neighbours, as linen-weavers or websters, agricultural earnings remained an important source of income.¹⁵

Thus, as far as can be determined from the available evidence, weavers and other rural craftsmen at Riccall and Wistow, remained deeply involved in agriculture throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Their investment in craft tools and equipment was limited, and most craftsmen had a great deal more money tied up in their farms than in their workshops. To a lesser extent this was also true of the craftsmen of Cawood. Of the thirty-six men whose craft was stated in the Cawood probate papers, twenty-five possessed agricultural property at their death, and although some of the men kept only a cow or pig with which to supplement the family diet, examples of much greater involvement in farming were not difficult to find. Typical of those Cawood craftsmen who continued to work both as a farmer and a craftsman until well into the eighteenth century was William Baker, who described himself as a shipwright in his will of October 1724. When he died, a few weeks after making his will, the only evidence of his trade which the appraisers found were a saw, two axes and an adze, which they valued at a mere £0.2.0. Of much greater value, however, was his agricultural property which included a herd of fifteen cattle, four horses, a pig, oats stored in the barn and a harrow with other tools worth £25.11.2.¹⁶

Craftsmen-farmers like Baker were less common in the larger market town of Selby, but even here dual occupations were not unknown and,

amongst craftsmen, ownership of agricultural property was common. Of ninety-seven Selby decedents who were described as craftsmen, fifty-three possessed livestock, crops or farm equipment at their death, and although the majority of these maintained only a few cows or pigs, investment in agriculture (especially by innkeepers, butchers and millers) was sometimes quite substantial. Overall, however, it was the lower level of farming activity on the part of Selby craftsmen, coupled with a proclivity to invest large amounts of capital in their trades, which distinguished them from their counterparts in the two villages and the smaller market town of Cawood. Of course, by no means all Selby craftsmen had large amounts of capital tied up in trade and craft property. There is no evidence to suggest, for example, that market town carpenters and blacksmiths were operating on a larger scale than those in the villages, and a study of their inventories revealed that investment in equipment and raw materials could be minimal. In 1732 the tools and materials belonging to the house-carpenter Joseph Champney were worth only £6.0.0,¹⁷ while of even less value was the craft property of the carpenter Robert Johnson, which was listed by his appraisers in 1662:

"His workeing tooles	0.14. 0
Takels and ropes and saw horses and poles	0. 6. 8
One load of loose wood in the garth	0. 6. 8
Wood before the doore	0. 7. 0" ¹⁸

Joseph Speight, a Selby blacksmith, whose workshop contained only a pair of bellows, a small anvil, a hammer, a pair of vice, four old coach wheels and an old cart, worth a total of £2.5.0 must have been hard-pressed to make ends meet, especially as he could not rely on farming to supplement his income. Indeed, Speight was so poor that his widow was forced to borrow the £1.0.0 which was needed to cover the cost of his funeral.¹⁹

Examples such as these, however, were atypical; the majority of inventoried Selby craftsmen were operating on a scale which demanded much larger investment and which permitted a lifestyle of comfort and some luxury. One of the wealthiest Selby craftsmen found in the probate records was John Jackson, who was described by his appraisers as a cabinet-maker. In 1757 Jackson's shop contained work benches and tools worth £8.11.0, while in his "silvering room" were "An organ unfinish'd" and "Silvering tables, lead weights and glass frames" valued at £8.10.0. In addition, the cabinet-maker had an extensive stock of timber in his yard which was worth £95.19.7 and which included oak, mahogany, walnut and "Jamaica plank". Most interesting, however, were the goods in his chambers which consisted not only of such items as glue, nails, joints, castors, drawer locks, keys, and brass handles, but also included an extensive stock-in-trade which is worth quoting in full:

14 swing glasses with drawers at	8s	5.12. 0
8 " " " " "	5s	2. 8. 0
1 doz. small com. glasses	" 8d	0. 8. 0
19 tea chests	" 3s	2.17. 0
2 coffee mills		0. 5. 0
1 double chest of drawers mahogany		4. 0. 0
2 mahogany desks		6. 0. 0
1 wainscott "		2. 0. 0
1 4 foot mahogany dining table		1.11. 6
1 wainscott dining table		0.12. 0
1 mahogany tea table		0.18. 0
3 wainscott " "		0.18. 0
8 walnut tree chairs, unfinished		3. 3. 0
10 hand boards and bottle stands		0.10. 0
18 line wheels	at 2s	1.16. 0
2 sets clock furniture		0. 3. 0
1 mahogany bracket chest		2.12. 6" ²⁰

John Jackson's business as revealed in his probate inventory, provides an apposite reminder, not only of the scale of investment which market town craftsmen could sometimes undertake by the mid-eighteenth century, but also of the demand which must have existed for luxury items of furniture.

As with village craftsmen it is rarely possible to find more than a handful of Selby decedents with the same occupation, and isolated examples of their property ownership such as the ones discussed above, though informative, do not permit generalisations to be made about the typical levels of investment among particular craftsmen. However, in the case of the leather crafts, there exist a sufficient number of inventories with which to explore, in detail, the economic activities of a specific occupational group.²¹ That the processing of leather and manufacture of leather products was of great importance in an area where pasture farming predominated and where supplies of bark and water were close at hand, is hardly surprising. A total of fifty-four Selby inventories indicated involvement in the leather industry, the majority of these belonging either to tanners (twenty-two) or to shoemakers (twenty-four), with the remainder being made for five curriers, three fellmongers and a glover.

The probate records suggest that shoemaking was a trade which required little capital investment. The inventory of Thomas Roodes, whose appraisers recorded only "...shawes and boates one pare and lasts with workeing geare £2.0.0.",²² or that of John Rickall, whose only equipment was "...his seat with his toules", valued at £0.1.6,²³ reveal the minimal outlay which the craft required. Yet we should not think that shoemaking was entirely a bespoke trade undertaken on a small scale. In 1695, James Stotherd, a Selby cordwainer, had in his shop, "In ware made up in lasts and tools and in leather unwrought and other implements £18.0.0" while a debt of £25.0.0 "owing by the testator for leather" suggests that he was operating on some scale.²⁴ The wealthiest Selby cordwainer was John Whittill, who, as we have seen, had a large stock of over 130 pairs of boots and shoes in his workshop.²⁵

If shoemakers inventories display a wide range of investment, those belonging to tanners clearly show that this was a trade which demanded a universally high level of capital outlay. Details of property ownership found in the tanners' inventories reveal that the tan yards (where raw hides were first soaked in lime pits to remove hair and then placed in tan tubs to soak in tannic acid for several months) were sizeable establishments. The 1682 inventory of George Cooke provides a clear indication of the scale and type of investment found among tanners:

"In the work house	
one waggen with bark chopt and unchopt and other things there	7. 0. 0
20 daiker of leather in the pitts and limes unwrought up at f5 a daiker	100. 0. 0
one boat with certaine oke wood	2.10. 0
working toolles for the calling with certaine lumb[er] in the yard and backside	2. 0. 0" ²⁶

No other tanner appears to have transported oak wood in his own boat, but the scale of investment evidenced in Cooke's inventory was by no means unusual. Clearly, the working tools of the tanning trade - knives, bills, working trees, weigh-scales and wheelbarrows - were of little value, and few appraisers itemized them separately in the inventories. However, the tan tubs and lime pits which were not required to be appraised must have represented a substantial capital outlay. Most tanners had leather worth between f50 and f150 and also owned large stocks of bark. Typical in this respect was William Todd, who, when he died in 1743, owned a large tan yard in Gowthorpe, Selby's main street. Todd's tan yard contained "spouts and wheelbarrow and other utensills belonging the yard" valued at only f0.16.0, but his bark was worth f15.0.0 and in addition his appraisers found 191 calf skins valued at f30.2.0 together with "2 tubbs of hides" worth f30.0.0 and a further "30 hides in the owze" appraised at f15.0.0.²⁷

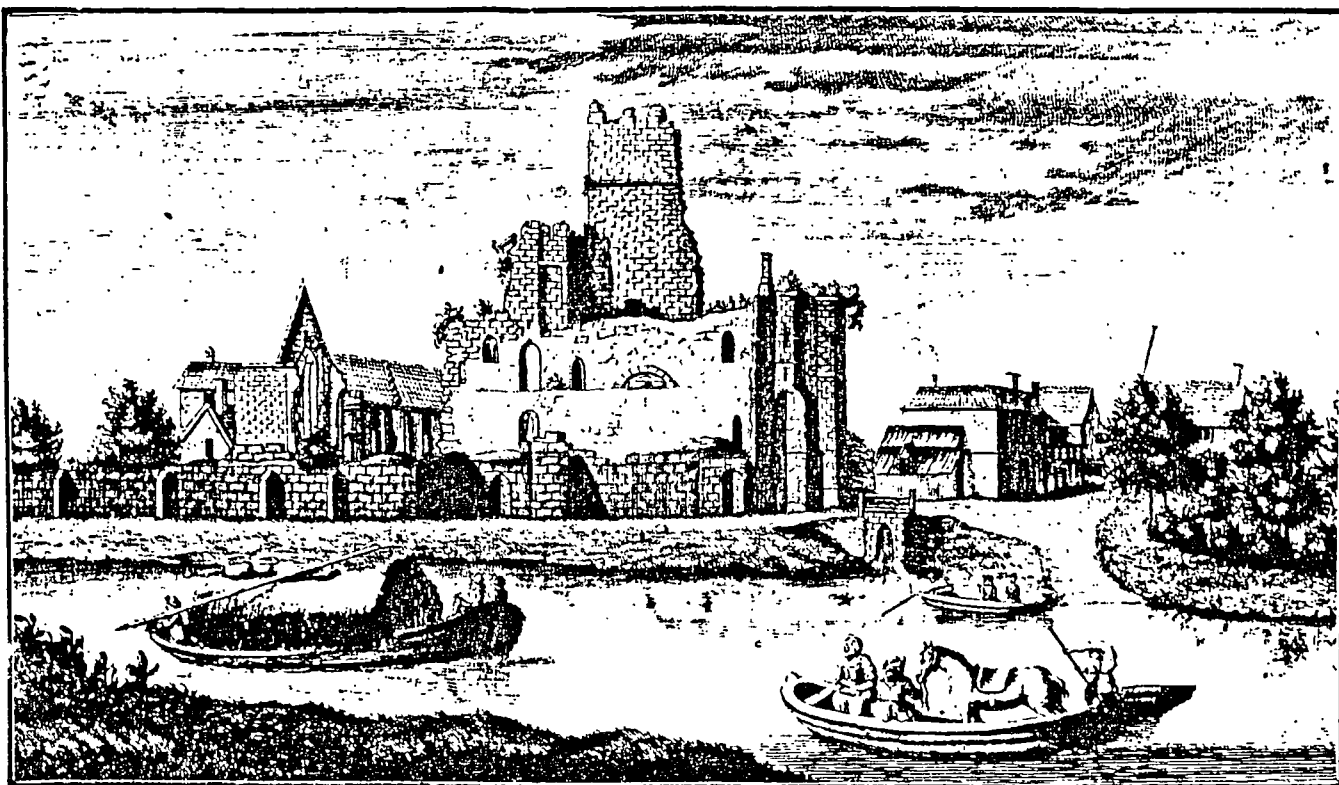
Investment on this scale was obviously beyond the reach of most tradesmen. As we have seen, many village and market town trades required only minimal investment and the income they provided must have been little more than a supplement to farming profits. However, the inventories reveal that in some market town trades, especially tanning and other specialized crafts, there was a much greater investment in raw materials and equipment. That many of these tradesmen invested in land is evidenced by the considerable amount of real estate found in their wills. There is little evidence to suggest, however, that they were actively engaged in farming during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In this respect these tradesmen resembled the market town mariners and shopkeepers whose economic activities we shall now examine.

River Trade

The pioneering work of T.S. Willan and the subsequent research of J.A. Chartres, has shown the crucial role which river transport and coastal shipping played in the pre-industrial economy, especially during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when many improvements to river systems were made.²⁸ The Ouse and its tributaries formed an important part of this water-borne trade and were vital arteries in the transportation of bulk commodities like coal and grain throughout Yorkshire. Indeed, Willan estimates that in 1732 the river Ouse was producing £600 in tolls per annum, representing the carriage of some 20,000 tons of cargo.²⁹ Until the development of Goole in the nineteenth century, the main inland ports on the Ouse were York and Selby, both of which accommodated coastal vessels. In addition a number of smaller ports such as Cawood, Boroughbridge, Tadcaster, Snaith and Howden, also benefitted from the river trade of the Ouse

and its tributaries, without participating directly in coastal shipping.

By the late seventeenth century, silting in the middle reaches of the Ouse, had lead to a reduction in the tonnage of vessels that were able to reach York, and it was Selby which, more than any other of the Ouse ports, benefited from the growing cloth industry of the West Riding. In 1673, Richard Blome wrote that Selby was "...seated on the Owse which gives passage for small vessells to York, by means of which it is a great town of some trade"³⁰ and a quarter of a century later, the town was described as the "place upon the Ouze to wch most goods either imported from abroad or to be exported tither are now brought and to be carryed by land to and from Leeds".³¹ This trade however, suffered a serious setback in the early eighteenth century after the construction of the Aire and Calder Navigation in 1698, which gave the cloth towns of the West Riding a more direct link with the Humber. The surveyors for the second Trinity House report on the proposed navigation recommended the river improvement for the sake of the West Riding woollen industry, but stated that Selby would, "...if the ... rivers be made navigable goe neare totally to loose the benefitt of being the thoroughfaire it now is".³² Evidently Selby was not reduced to being a rural backwater during the early eighteenth century for when Daniel Defoe visited the town in the 1720s he noted that it was "...of good trade...being seated where the Ouse is navigable for large vessels" and that it had "a good share of the shipping of the river". However, something of Selby's decline is perhaps captured in Defoe's comment that the town was "of no great consideration".³³ The reduction in the trade of the lower Ouse must have lead to economic difficulties for many river tradesmen and it is noteworthy that of the twenty-eight inventories in our sample which belonged to mariners and shipwrights,



Boats on the Ouse at Cawood c.1700. From H Speight,
Lower Wharfedale (London, 1902), p.25.

only six were made after 1700. The inventories, in general, provide some interesting insights into the economic activities of those men whose livelihoods were primarily dependent on the river trade and those for whom the river offered a useful additional source of income.

The evidence suggests that small boats could be purchased relatively cheaply: John King, a Selby shipwright, who was producing small boats in the early eighteenth century, possessed "...timber for boats building and other timber" worth £7.0.0 together with "a boat that was built ready to sell" appraised at £2.10.0.³⁴ It is not surprising, therefore, that many people of different trades and callings owned small boats which, like the ones in the illustration, must have been used for carrying agricultural produce and people. In 1729, for

example, John Wrightson, of Cawood, whose livelihood consisted of a mixture of carpentry, spinning and small-scale farming, possessed a boat worth £1.14.0.³⁵ In 1683, Anthony Collier, a prosperous Selby innholder, had a boat in his yard worth £2.0.0³⁶ and in 1669 the appraisers of Jarvis Rayner, a Selby gentleman, found a boat valued at £5.0.0 alongside the beehives, helme (shed), wood and manure in his garth.³⁷ Some of these smaller craft were undoubtedly used for fishing and, although none of the inhabitants of our riverside communities were specifically referred to as fishermen, fishing must have been a useful side-line for many tradesmen and yeomen. The inventory of William Wright of Riccall, for example, indicates that he was supplementing his meagre income from farming and ale-brewing with "His fishing boat and netts" valued at £1.2.0.³⁸ At Selby the poor shoemaker, Edward Webster, also had a small boat valued at £1.0.0 and five nets worth £0.12.6³⁹ while Phillip Burnell, a wealthy tradesman owned "certain fishing netts" which were stored in *his* lodging chamber.⁴⁰

If small boats represented a relatively small outlay, investment in the more substantial sailing vessels which plied the Ouse required larger amounts of capital. Sailing barges must have been a common sight on the river during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and they were frequently mentioned in the inventories. These vessels, of shallow draught, with bluff bows and sterns and square sails were sometimes described by appraisers as "keels" or "pinks" and were usually valued at between £50 and £200.⁴¹ Occasionally, a smaller keel had a single owner, as in the case of Thurston Cowlin, a yeoman of Selby, who owned "one keele upon ye river appraised to £50.0.0"⁴² or that of John Webster of the same town, who had "one keel with masts, sails, boat stowers and appurtenances

thereto belonging" worth £55.0.0.⁴³ A fully equipped barge evidently represented a substantial piece of investment and it is therefore not surprising that most vessels were jointly owned, with individual mariners or other tradesmen usually possessing a sixteenth share of a craft and master-mariners owning about a quarter of the shares.

It is difficult to obtain a satisfactory picture of the building of these vessels, but there can be little doubt that many were constructed locally. That Selby was an important ship-building centre is suggested by the names of such vessels as "The Mary Anne of Selby", "The Endeavour of Selby" or "The Content of Selby", and by the frequency with which the occupation of shipwright occurs in the Selby parish register. T.S. Willan has suggested that Cawood too was a ship building town during this period (the ship carpenters of Cawood presented a petition against the Aire and Calder Navigation on the grounds that the drainage of small rivers would impede their supplies of wood) and has also claimed that many smaller riverside communities such as Wistow, Stillingfleet, Naburn and Fulford, were also involved in boat building.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, evidence of this activity is largely absent from the probate material, but the inventory of William Wiseman, a Selby shipwright, dated 1678, which listed his various tools, (including saws, axes, adzes, wombles, iron cranes and "other small work tools") and his timber (which consisted of thirty tons of oak wood, planks, boards, props, tenalds and wedges, worth £46.9.0) provides a glimpse of the considerable investment in raw materials which the ship-building trade required.⁴⁵

Fortunately, the economic affairs of mariners are much more fully documented in the probate records than those of ship-builders and their inventories reveal a great deal about their business inter-

ests.⁴⁶ It would appear that, in addition to income earned from transporting other people's commodities, many Selby mariners were dealers who actually owned the cargoes they shipped. Of course, the inventories cannot provide a complete picture of the commodities in which mariners dealt, but they plainly reveal that one of the most important of these was salt.⁴⁷ It is noteworthy that all the references to the salt trade in the Selby inventories occur before the town's decline as a river trading centre in the early eighteenth century. In 1662, for example, the appraisers of Robert Hodgson, who described himself as a master-mariner listed "salt in the dinge" which they estimated was worth £9.0.0.⁴⁸ One of these appraisers was Robert Aske, whose own inventory of 1680 described him as a mariner and revealed that he owned a sixteenth share of a vessel belonging to Samuel Bell and "Salt in the ding valued to £10.0.0".⁴⁹ The 1673 inventory of Leonard Wilkinson Jnr, who was described as a "navigator" in the accompanying administration bond, contained no reference to shares in a ship, but the entry "In the ding and owing for salt £17.0.0"⁵⁰ clearly shows him to have been a salt-dealer. Evidence of even larger sums invested in the salt trade is found in the probate inventory of Leonard Wilkinson's father, who described himself as a "Marener" in his will of 1675. The appraisers of his inventory noted that he had a large stock of salt:

"In the salt dinge in Micklegate	
12 weigh of salt	30. 0. 0
In the salt dinge at the dwelling	
house 5 weigh of salt	12.10. 0"

and also provided an indication that salt was shipped from the North East to Selby in their note that Leonard Wilkinson owed £5.0.0 "for salt at Shields to Robert Lynton".⁵¹

Investment in the salt trade was the best documented example of econ-

omic diversification found in the mariners inventories, but it was by no means the only trade in which these men participated. Four examples will suffice to show the wide range of economic interests which mariners could have. The first one is provided by the case of Joseph Thompson of Cawood, who, in 1693, possessed "several doz. ordinary potts" which, together with a half weigh of salt in the salt ding was valued at £2.10.0. Thompson apparently possessed no kiln and it seems unlikely that he was manufacturing pots; rather he appears to have been a small dealer, for his appraisers recorded that in the shop were "1 seeing glass with other goods belonging to the shop" valued at £3.12.4 and that he was owed £14.7.5 "for goods delivered in the shopp booke".⁵² Our second example is found in the inventory of Richard Mason of Cawood, who was described as a mariner in an administration bond of 1738,⁵³ but who, in 1753, appears to have been making a living as a small grocer with a shop containing "one nest of drawers, some shelves, one old counter and other huslements" worth £0.7.6 and "Spiritous liquors and dry goods" valued at £5.0.6.⁵⁴ Nearly seventy years earlier we find John Todd, a Selby mariner, who combined his maritime investments with ale-house keeping. In his will of 1683 he left his son Edward:

"All that ny sixteenth part of the keel knowen by ye name Caire for All whereof Samuel Bell is mastor and the sixteenth pte of yet cogg boate...one lead or copper for brueing together with all the brueinge vessell and all the stands and barrells for holdinge of beare or alle, as also all flaggons, quarts, bottles, drincking glasses and puther cupps"⁵⁵

When making his inventory two years later, Todd's appraisers made no mention of his shares in the boats or his brewing equipment, which presumably had already passed to his son, but they did find evidence of his ale-house keeping for "in ye little drinking parler" were "1 square table and benches, 2 old lanthens and 2 picters."⁵⁶ The final example of a mariner with diverse interests is provided by John

Chambers, a master-mariner of Selby, whose inventory was made in 1676. Chambers owned a quarter of the shares in a keel called "The Mary and Anne" estimated to be worth £30.0.0; he also possessed two salt dings in Selby where salt valued at £50.0.0 was stored. In addition, the master-mariner appears to have been a part-time timber-merchant for in the chambers above one of his salt dings and in his yard and "deal house" was stored a large quantity of latts, deals and poles, valued at £47.7.0. Finally his inventory revealed that Chambers was also the owner of a small dairy herd and had four acres of wheat and rye under cultivation.⁵⁷ This decedent was unusual in combining an interest in agriculture with river-trading, for, generally speaking, by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Selby mariners were almost completely divorced from the land.⁵⁸ However, as these tantalizing glimpses of their property clearly reveal, *some mariners were not* entirely dependent on profits from the transshipment of other people's goods and had a wide range of economic interests.

Shopkeepers

During the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries a number of outlets existed for the marketing of agricultural and manufactured produce. One of the most important of these was the fair, and inhabitants of our four communities were well served in this respect. According to William Owen's The Book of Fairs, first published in 1756, Cawood's fair was held annually on 12 May and specialized in cattle and wooden-ware, while at Selby three annual fairs were held on Easter Tuesday, 22 June and 10 October; cattle, wood, line, tin- and copper-ware being the main commodities traded. Owen listed a total of ninety-five Yorkshire fairs and many of these were found in the southern Vale of York.⁵⁹ That the dates of these fares were well known at

the beginning of the eighteenth century is evidenced in the Book of Remarks of William Storr, who noted:

"York has 7 Head Fares, that is Whitson Monday, St. Peeter Day and Lammas Day called the Nought Fares, kept out at Bootham Barr and the Soulmas Fare and Martinmas Day and Candlemas Fare, being Thursday before Candlemas, and Palmson Fare which is kept the Thursday before Palm Sunday, all in the towne and this fare setts all the Fortnith fares for the year round."

and went on to list the dates and in some cases the commodities of a further twenty livestock and other fairs scattered throughout the county.⁶⁰

Fairs must have been of great importance for those buying or selling bulk commodities, but for the smaller-scale consumer or producer, the local weekly market would have been of more significance. Both Cawood and Selby had weekly markets during the period 1660-1760, but there are few sources which allow us to study this trade in any detail. By the early nineteenth century Cawood's market was almost moribund, but we learn from a report in the Leeds Intelligencer of 1822 that "...it formerly possessed one of some consideration."⁶¹ Contemporary evidence of Selby's flourishing market is found in the diary of Sir John Reresby, who recorded that a quayside brawl in which he was involved in 1660 "...gave..alarme to the country people their met together upon the occasion of the market".⁶² Beyond scanty and scattered references such as these, little can be learned of the market-trading in the towns.

The probate inventories from our four parishes shed little light on buying and selling in the market place, but they do reveal a great deal about retailing from fixed premises and are one of the best sources for the study of this type of economic activity. Of course, much retailing took place in the workshops of small-scale producers

and the craftsman-retailer continued to play an essential role in marketing throughout the period. However, during the course of the seventeenth century, many craftsmen added to their stock-in-trade to become general shopkeepers, while those traders who were principally importers and distributors of goods - merchants, mercers, drapers and grocers - established retail outlets. T.S. Willan has suggested that during the seventeenth century retail shops existed in market towns as well as in provincial centres,⁶³ while in her recent study of seventeenth century chapmen, M. Spufford has argued that small retail shops were found in villages as well as in market towns and were becoming ubiquitous by the later part of the century.⁶⁴ As yet however, we have only a partial and limited understanding of the distribution of rural shops and the way in which they operated during the century before the onset of industrialisation.⁶⁵

Although we cannot be certain that there were no shopkeepers in our two villages during the period 1660-1760, none of the villagers was described as such in any of the probate papers or in any other records. At Cawood, two inventories are extant for men who were specifically designated "grocers", while a further inventory belonging to a Cawood widow also suggests that she was running a small shop. Evidently there was insufficient demand in the less populous of the two market towns to necessitate a large number of shops, but it is noteworthy that certainly two, and possibly all three, of the inventoried shopkeepers were operating contemporaneously during the 1690s. At Selby some twenty-one inventories from our sample belonged to shopkeepers and it would appear that even as early as the mid-seventeenth century, Selby's shops attracted a clientele from the neighbouring countryside. In the 1660s, for example, when Sir Miles Stapleton, the recusant owner of Carlton Hall, near Snaith, was building his taber-

nacle, it was to Selby that the servants were despatched in order to procure silk, hinges, latches and locks from the town's shopkeepers.⁶⁶

Of the nineteen shopkeepers from Cawood and Selby whose trades can be discovered from the probate records, eight were described as "grocers", a further six were designated "drapers" and the remaining five consisted of a "haberdasher", a "pinner and hosier", a "mercier", an "apothecary" and one who, though specializing in fabrics, was simply described as a "shopkeeper". In reality the nomenclature was rather vague, and an examination of their stock-in-trade shows that the distinction between the different shopkeepers was a blurred one. However, it *is* possible to see a basic division between the grocers who stocked a variety of household provisions, and those retailers who specialized in textiles, clothing, haberdashery or pharmacy.

At Cawood both the grocers for whom inventories survive appear to have been running relatively small -general stores. John Hallilah, who described himself as a "grocer" in his will of 1719, was primarily a farmer; his livestock, crops and agricultural implements were valued at £96.0.0 and his small shop contained only small quantities of salt, buttons, canvas, soap and "some small druggs" which, together with the fixtures and fittings, was appraised at a meagre £2.10.0.⁶⁷ On the other hand, the earlier inventory of Robert Crayke suggests that he was totally dependent on the grocery trade for his livelihood; the appraisers made no reference to farm stock or equipment and his shop contained a wider variety of goods including fabrics, haberdashery, dried fruits, sugar, oils, spices, drugs, books, soap and other household requirements. It would appear however, that Crayke dealt in relatively small quantities for the total value of his stock-in-trade amounted to a modest £22.7.8.⁶⁸

In the larger market town of Selby grocers tended to be much more substantial tradesmen. Evidence of the range of commodities found in a Selby store, even as early as 1663, is found in the detailed inventory of John Hubie's stock-in-trade. His appraisers listed staple groceries such as soap, starch, sugar, treacle and wax, together with an array of spices and dried fruits and large quantities of tobacco. Hubie's shop also contained several reams of white paper and a small stock of books, together with such items as combs, looking glasses and spectacles. In addition, the appraisers also found an assortment of haberdashery which included various types of thread, inkell and other tape, codpiece and coat buttons, whalebone, past-board (used for making head-dresses), lace and pins. In terms of value the most important items were his fabrics (dimity, fustian, say, buckram, linen and silk), which pushed the total value of his stock to £77.1.4.⁶⁹ Compared to the eighteenth century Selby grocers, however, Hubie's business was relatively *modest and it is noteworthy that while he combined his grocery trade with farming (his inventory listed a dairy herd and other livestock together with corn under cultivation and various farm implements), none of the later Selby grocers appear to have invested in agriculture on any scale.*

One of the most substantial of Selby's early eighteenth century shopkeepers was Thomas Pickering, who described himself as a "grocer" in his will of September 1715, and whose appraisers accorded him the title of "Mr." when they made his inventory two months later. The detailed list of Pickering's shop goods ran to some seventy-five different items and included large stocks of basic household commodities, as well as haberdashery, books, spices, drugs and confectionaries such as "candid lemon", "biskett drops" and "comfitts". In the two chambers and garret above the shop were stored forty-four

different products including bulk stocks of goods for sale in the shop below, together with additional merchandise like spirits, dyes, beesoms, pipes and a further assortment of drugs and spices. Like most grocers of the period, Pickering was a wholesaler as well as a retailer and his appraisers listed warehouses stocked with large quantities of both indigenous and imported goods. In one warehouse they found eleven casks and ten boxes of variously graded tobacco worth £65.11.2 alongside substantial stocks of alum, soap, molasses, pitch, vinegar, oil, rosin and brooms; a second warehouse at the riverside contained various spirits including thirty-six gallons of "malt spirit". Not content with wholesaling and retailing, Pickering was also a producer, for his appraisers noted that he owned:

"In Candlehouse	
One iron pann	16.19. 0
16 Doz. rodts, stage trough and knives	1. 0. 6
Weigh balk and scales, 30s	1.10. 0
28 stone 7 lb. weights at 18d p'stone	2. 2. 9
In Colehouse in Candlehouse	
3 barrels tarr	3.18. 0
38 doz. candles	8.11. 0
10 lb. tallow at 30s.	15. 0. 0
4 lb. coppis at 6s.	1. 4. 0 ⁷⁰

Chandlery evidently provided a profitable sideline and it is interesting to note that Pickering's candle-making equipment and stock amounted to considerably more than that belonging to Stephen With, a specialist tallow-chandler of Selby, who, in 1694, possessed only:

"One copper, 6 stone of tallow, 3 doz. of candles	2. 3. 1
One candle case with ye rest of ye working tools	0. 5. 4 ⁷¹

The only other Selby grocer who appears to have been a part-time chandler was Joshua Topham, whose appraisers found in his candlehouse tallow worth £45.0.0, 60 doz. candles valued at £12.0.0 and various candle-making equipment including, scales, weights and coppers. In

addition, the appraisers estimated that he had about 100 dozen candles for sale in his shop and recorded that he owned a large stock of tallow in London worth £140.0.0. Yet chandlery was only one part of Topham's expensive wholesale and retail trade. Though he did not deal in cloth, haberdashery or books, his stock of spices, dried fruits, sugar, drugs, tobacco, dyes and spirits, was even larger than that belonging to Pickering and his six warehouses, which included a "tobacco warehouse", a "treacle warehouse" and a "warehouse by water-side" suggest that he was a more important wholesaler. The total value of Topham's stock-in-trade, *excluding the book debts of £230.0.0* owing to him was a staggering £1,261.13.11.⁷² This made him the wealthiest of Selby's inventoried shopkeepers, but, apart from his chandlery, the pattern of his trading activity was typical of grocers in general. Overall, the inventories suggest that during the eighteenth century, most Selby grocers were both retailers and wholesalers, that they handled a wide range of commodities and that as well as satisfying the basic needs of the local population they also catered for the more expensive tastes of a wealthier class of customer.

One aspect of the market town grocery trade which was rather surprising for this period, was the retailing of medicines and drugs, for, in theory, this trade was the preserve of apothecaries. In his recent study of the professions in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century England, G.Holmes has argued that the period saw a transformation of the apothecary from a shopkeeper into a general medical practitioner, though it was not until the late eighteenth century that the apothecaries ceded their retail trade to chemists; he has also suggested that these years witnessed an expansion of the pharmaceutical trade, so that even by the early eighteenth century few

market towns were without at least one apothecary's shop.⁷³ Though the evidence from Selby and Cawood is rather fragmentary, it tends to confirm this general picture. That even the smaller of the two market towns had a resident apothecary in the early decades of the eighteenth century is evidenced in the probate papers of James Blackbeard, whose appraisers, unfortunately, made only a perfunctory assessment of his shop goods:

"Itm. in the shop, one mortar,
2 stills with all the convenience
thereto belonging 25. 0. 0"⁷⁴

At Selby five apothecaries can definitely be identified from the probate records although only one of these left an inventory of his shop. In 1695 the appraisers of John Hitching valued "All the shop goods both drugs and compound medsons with all ye woodwork and morters" at £87.1.7 and noted that "all ye lickquerish growing in ye lickquerish garth and other things their growing" were worth £12.0.0. In addition they found in a closet "15 pound of conserves roses in beeswax, 2 bottles surrop, some books and other things" which they appraised at £3.6.0. It is disappointing that Hitching's appraisers did not itemize his drugs and medicines, but the inventory nevertheless reveals that his shop was a relatively large establishment; it also suggests that the trade was a lucrative one, for the apothecary was the owner of shares in two keels and had "bills and bonds in ye shop booke" which amounted to £73.10.0.⁷⁵

Large retail shops were not, however, restricted only to the pharmaceutical and grocery trades, for an ability to stock large quantities of expensive as well as cheaper goods and to provide the middling and upper ranks of market town and village society with a wide choice of merchandise was also a characteristic of those Selby shopkeepers who specialized in fabrics, clothing and haberdashery.

One of these tradesmen was Robert Wharrey, whose appraisers made a very careful and detailed valuation of his stock-in-trade in 1752. They listed well over fifty different types of material (including silks such as "lusting" and velvet), together with a range of hats (comprising twenty-five "straw hatts", ninety-four "leghorn hatts", thirty-one "fine men's hatts" and nineteen "felt hatts"), a wide array of hosiery, a choice of handkerchiefs in eight different colours, and a selection of seven different types of gloves. The total value of his fabrics and millinery was £343.5.10.⁷⁶ In his will of 1752, Wharrey described himself as a "mercier", but a study of his inventory reveals that this description belied the varied nature of his trade. Indeed most Selby shopkeepers who were nominally specialist tradesmen attempted to maximize their profits by stocking a variety of other goods. An apposite example of the extent to which retailers could diversify their stock-in-trade is provided by an analysis of the inventory of Joshua Wood, who, according to his will, was a "haberdasher". These men, of course, had originally dealt in hats, and Wood's stock of

"1 doz. of Carolina hatts	4. 0. 0
3 doz. of men felt hatts	2.14. 0
4 doz. of coarse hatts for boys	1. 8. 0
2 doz. of coarse hatts for men	1. 4. 0
Hatt bands and lining and looping	3. 2. 0
17 woolen caps	0. 5. 8
half a doz. hatt cases	2. 2. 0
3 straw hatts and 3 shades	0. 3. 0"

represented the most valuable part of his merchandise. However, the appraisers also noted that he had thirteen different types of cloth, a selection of stockings and was also dealing in cheese, beeswax, quills and clocks.⁷⁷ An even greater discrepancy between occupation and stock-in-trade was found in the probate papers of John Bew, who described himself as a "pinner and hosier" in his will of 1692, but whose merchandise consisted of a wide array of different cloths,

haberdashery and hosiery as well as a variety of groceries, staple goods (tobacco, spirits, soap and sugar), confectionary, medicines, books, spectacles, pipes, nails and "tinwares".⁷⁸ Maintaining a varied stock-in-trade was only one way in which these shopkeepers diversified their business interests. The inventories plainly show that some drapers were also involved in trades and crafts other than shopkeeping. In 1741, for example, George Hutchinson, as well as dealing in cloth, was also producing pots: his appraisers recorded a wide range of pottery-ware for sale in his shop, together with fifteen dozen pots in his kiln.⁷⁹ Similarly, in 1698, Benjamin Ward, another woollen-draper, had eighty quarters of malt in his malt kiln and the appraisers recorded that he was owed £90.0.0 for malt.⁸⁰ Five years before, Thomas Marshall described himself as a "gentleman" in his will, but his appraisers designated him a woollen-draper and indicated that he was not only the owner of a large shop, but also possessed a share in a pink called the "Delight of Selby".⁸¹

The range of shopkeepers represented in the inventories is obviously far from complete and it is impossible to be certain as to the overall distribution of different retail trades. The records clearly confirm Selby's position as the most important trading community, but they also suggest that the market town lacked the specialized shops which were to be found in larger towns and cities. The occupations recorded in Selby's parish register do not include ironmongers, tobacconists, confectioners or booksellers; nor do these tradesmen appear in the probate records. However, both the registers and the probate evidence suggest that during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the river port contained a number of grocers and a handful of specialist retailers. An examination of their inventories clearly reveals that there was a considerable overlap between the stock-in-

trade of the Selby shopkeepers; it also suggests that between them, the Selby dealers not only provided for the basic needs of the local population, but also supplied a variety of merchandise which added a degree of comfort and luxury to their lives. The lifestyles of the inhabitants of our parishes will be the subject of the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 3

PROPERTY AND LIFESTYLES

In April 1745 the appraisers of Mathew Carvile's estate made a careful and detailed inventory of this Selby gentleman's house. Unusually, they decided to begin upstairs in the best chamber. Here they found a well-appointed room where Mathew Carvile himself slept and entertained. Dominating the chamber was the large four-poster with its feather bed and hangings, and around the walls were arranged several items of furniture including a dressing table with its mirror, a chest of drawers, a tea-table and six upright chairs. Before leaving the room the appraisers added to their inventory the window curtains, an arm-chair and the picture hanging above the fire-place. Next door they entered another chamber, this time unheated, which may have been where Carvile's children or guests slept. Here were to be found two bedsteads, a dressing-table, several trunks, boxes and a close-stool. After assessing the two principal chambers, the appraisers moved quickly through the closets (one of which contained Carvile's library of about sixty books), the garret and the maid's chamber. They then descended the stairs, stopping briefly at the top to value the carpet, the small tea-table, the clock and case and the thirty small pictures which lined the stair-case. At the foot of the stairs was the hall which was used as an entrance and reception room and which contained seven large pictures and a further thirty smaller ones. Carvile's most impressive array of pictures, however, was to be found in the adjoining dining-room, for it was here that the family portraits were hung. The dining-room was the most sumptuous room in the house, containing a variety of furniture made from modish woods together with substantial collections of glass-ware and china. Finally the appraisers passed through the service rooms - kitchen,

back-kitchen and cellar - where they added to their inventory the cooking and brewing utensils used by Carvile's servants. These included such rarefied objects as a fish pan, a cheese toaster, a tea kettle and a coffee pot.¹

Mathew Carvile's inventory enables us to obtain a vivid impression of the lifestyle which he enjoyed. His large house provided ample space to accommodate servants and entertain guests. Furnishings such as arm-chairs, feather beds, close-stools and carpets must have provided a high level of domestic comfort, and the many decorative and fashionable goods listed by the appraisers depict Carvile as a man of refined and expensive taste. Rooms which were well-furnished and contained items such as clocks, pictures and family portraits displayed to visitors something of the social standing of their owner; they presented Mathew Carvile as a man of lineage and status. His large stock of books reveal a gentleman with interests which ranged much wider than the petty preoccupations of the market town.

However detailed and intriguing an individual inventory such as this one might be, the insight into the domestic environment which it provides is of limited historical significance. For a more satisfying picture of lifestyles in our four parishes we must place Mathew Carvile in context. Was a nine-room house unusual in Selby during this period? How typical were the luxury goods found in Carvile's house? How common was book-ownership among the middling sort represented in the inventories? In this chapter we shall leave the barns and workshops of our parishioners and enter their halls and chambers. The first section will use the hearth tax and inventory data to analyse the variation in house-size and room-use between the four parishes. In the second section we shall consider the decorative

and luxury items contained in the inventories, asking what these goods can tell us about levels of domestic ornamentation and display during the period 1660-1760. Finally, we shall focus on the question of book-ownership in the inventories; by placing this in the context of literacy rates and by combining it with the detailed evidence we have of William Storr's reading habits, we shall hopefully be able to perceive something of the cultural horizons of our yeomen and tradesmen.

Houses

The idea of a Great Rebuilding of English houses in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, first propounded by W.G.Hoskins in 1953, is no longer accepted by historians. In Yorkshire and other northern counties the rebuilding of rural houses took place not in the late Tudor and early Stuart period, but in the years between 1640 and 1750.² In their survey of Yorkshire vernacular houses B.Harrison and B.Hutton found that many of the houses in the southern Vale of York, which were rebuilt in this period (particularly those in the wealthy riverside parishes) were of a particularly high quality. Many of these late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century dwellings were full two-storied houses, containing a separate kitchen as well as chambers and parlours.³ If any of these houses existed in Selby they must have been rebuilt out of recognition in the nineteenth century for there is little physical evidence in the town of early modern rebuilding. The same applies at Riccall and Wistow where nearly all the surviving farm-houses date from the nineteenth century. However, Cawood abounds in handsome brick and pantile houses of the period 1680-1720. These substantial dwellings with their moulded string-courses, diamond-shaped chimney stacks and curvilinear gables are

tangible testimony to the wealth of Cawood's inhabitants during our period.⁴ By examining the documentary evidence relating to these and other houses in our four parishes we can gain an interesting insight into the lifestyles of their owners.

The most comprehensive source which can be used to indicate house-size in the late seventeenth century is the hearth tax. It should be stressed, however, that the hearth tax returns provide only a relative indication of the size of dwellings and do not allow the exact size of the house to be determined. The tax was levied on all occupiers of houses based on the number of fire-places within the household, but because the relationship between the number of hearths and the number of rooms in individual houses does not follow a simple formula we cannot judge house-size from hearth tax records with any degree of certainty. However, the returns do provide a relative guide to house-size in different communities. J.D.Purdy has undertaken a comprehensive study of the Yorkshire hearth tax returns and his research reveals the area around Selby to have been particularly well-hearthed, with the parishes on the banks of the Ouse containing an especially high proportion of large houses. However, the degree of variation between neighbouring parishes in the area was very striking and this is clearly demonstrated by an analysis of the 1674 returns from our four communities.⁵

Table 3:1 shows that Wistow and Cawood had very similar hearth tax profiles. The percentage of households containing one or two hearths was similar in each community and though Cawood appears to have been slightly better hearthed (with more households in the 4 - 6 hearth category than Wistow) what distinguished both parishes was the large size of their houses. Slightly different in its hearth tax profile

was Selby where, of the 251 chargeable households, over sixty three percent had between two and four hearths. Here there were fewer one hearth houses than in Wistow and Cawood, but also fewer larger houses; only 7.2 percent of Selby's households contained houses with five or more hearths compared to eleven percent at Wistow and over fifteen percent at Cawood. The most noticeable feature in the table, however, is the completely different profile of Riccall housing. The village was dominated by one-hearth houses and only a small proportion of households contained over two hearths. Riccall's hearth tax profile therefore confirms the inventory evidence in revealing the village to have been a poorer community than its three neighbours.

Table 3:1 House-Size as Indicated by the 1674 Hearth Tax:
Differences Between Parishes

<u>No. of hearths</u>	<u>Wistow</u>		<u>Riccall</u>		<u>Selby</u>		<u>Cawood</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
1	35	38.5	72	68.6	74	29.5	36	32.7
2	21	23.1	18	17.1	64	25.5	26	23.6
3	18	19.8	9	8.6	55	21.9	14	12.7
4	7	7.7	0	0.0	40	15.9	18	16.4
5	5	5.5	3	2.9	13	5.2	8	7.3
6	1	1.1	0	0.0	2	0.8	3	2.7
7	2	2.2	0	0.0	1	0.4	2	1.8
8	0	0.0	2	1.9	1	0.4	2	1.8
9	1	1.1	1	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Over 9	1	1.1	0	0.0	1	0.4	1	1.8
Total no. of chargeable households	91		105		251		110	

These documents provide a handy profile of house-size in different communities during the latter part of the seventeenth century, but they leave many questions about the domestic environment unanswered.

How many rooms did the typical house in each of our four parishes contain? To what extent did house-size vary over time? How were rooms used and what can this tell us about the domestic arrangements of different occupational groups? There can be little doubt that the document which sheds most light on these questions is the probate inventory, for, in making their assessments, appraisers frequently listed the different rooms in the house. Analysis of room information found in probate inventories is, however, by no means straightforward, and it is instructive to consider some interpretive problems before discussing the findings. The underlying difficulty is that appraisers were not obliged to list the rooms of the house; rather, this was a procedure which many used in order to make their task an easier one. Thus, some appraisers made lists of personal estate only and provided no room information. These inventories, together with those too damaged to use for room information, have therefore been excluded from our sample. In other cases the room data is partial or unspecific; for example, an appraiser sometimes omitted to mention the hall as this was usually the first room to have its contents assessed and in these cases the presence of a hall has been assumed. On other occasions appraisers grouped rooms together by listing goods "in the chambers" or "in the garrets"; where this has happened it has been assumed that there were in fact two chambers or garrets, though this could obviously be an underestimate. For these reasons the figures in Table 3:2 cannot be totally accurate; nevertheless they do provide a useful guide to the house-size of the inventoried population in the four communities.⁶

The figures in Table 3:2 confirm the evidence from the hearth tax returns in showing Wistow to have been an extremely well-housed community. They indicate that, over the period as a whole, nearly two

Table 3:2 House-Size as Indicated by the Inventories:

		<u>Differences Between Parishes and Over Time</u>								
		<u>1660-1709</u>			<u>1710-1759</u>					
		<u>Wistow</u>	<u>Riccall</u>	<u>Cawood</u>	<u>Selby</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Wistow</u>	<u>Riccall</u>	<u>Cawood</u>	<u>Selby</u>
No of houses in sample	66	79	81	182	408	37	71	31	86	225
% of houses containing										
1 room	1.5	6.3	0.0	0.4	1.7	2.7	7.0	0.0	0.0	2.7
2 rooms	12.1	31.6	14.8	10.4	15.7	13.5	49.3	12.9	1.2	20.0
3 rooms	13.6	31.6	11.1	11.0	15.4	10.8	22.5	6.5	17.4	16.4
4 rooms	10.6	13.9	21.0	11.5	13.7	13.5	9.9	16.1	14.0	12.9
5 rooms	22.7	7.6	13.6	20.9	17.2	21.6	5.6	22.6	8.1	11.6
6 rooms	9.1	6.3	14.8	14.8	12.3	18.9	2.8	19.4	17.4	13.3
7 rooms	7.6	0.0	7.4	8.8	6.6	10.8	1.4	6.5	17.4	9.8
8 rooms	9.1	1.3	9.9	7.1	6.9	0.0	0.0	3.2	8.1	3.6
9 rooms	4.5	0.0	2.5	4.4	3.2	2.7	1.4	6.5	7.0	4.4
10 rooms	7.6	1.3	3.7	2.7	3.4	2.7	0.0	0.0	4.7	2.2
over 10	1.5	0.0	1.2	7.7	3.9	2.7	0.0	6.5	5.8	3.6

thirds of the inventoried population of the village lived in houses containing five or more rooms. A close inspection of the types of rooms found in the Wistow inventories reveals that one important feature contributing to the large size of its houses was the presence of upper stories. Only about a quarter of Wistow's inventoried houses were without a first floor and many dwellings contained a number of chambers. The inventories show that these rooms were used largely for sleeping and storage. In smaller houses, with only one chamber, beds, stores of agricultural produce and sometimes farm gear were found in the same room. In larger houses, however, the chambers had separate functions. The blacksmith William Hodgson's house, for example, had an upper story consisting of three chambers: the first, positioned over the parlour, contained a feather bed, chair, form, table and chest together with two spinning wheels; the chamber over the house was an inferior sleeping room with an old chaff bed, three chests and three buffet stools; the third chamber, built over the kitchen, was devoted entirely to the storage of barley.⁷ This arrangement was typical of many upper stories in Wistow during our period. Another characteristic of the village's houses which contributed to their large size was the presence of a kitchen in nearly half the inventoried sample. This had important ramifications for the domestic arrangements on the ground floor, for although some kitchens were used only for the storage of foodstuffs and occasionally for brewing or dairying, others (especially those in larger houses) were used as the main cooking room of the house. This meant that the hall or 'house' - which in many houses was used as an all purpose sitting, cooking and dining room - could be used solely as a living or dining room. Such an arrangement can clearly be found in the inventory of John Ellis whose 'house' contained a range (without the associated cooking irons), brass-ware, pewter, pottery, a clock, three tables and seven

chairs. Cooking took place in the kitchen where the appraisers found a table, a dresser, an oven, various pots and pans, a cheese-press and a wash-tub.⁸ This house was appraised in 1748, but from the very beginning of our period many Wistow gentlemen and prosperous yeomen like John Ellis occupied houses in which cooking and dining took place in separate rooms.

The specialization in room-use indicated by the Wistow inventories was much less developed in the adjacent parish of Riccall. Table 3:2 indicates that in the period 1660-1709 nearly two thirds of all Riccall's inventoried houses contained only two or three rooms and that the proportion of small houses increased during the eighteenth century. Few inventories from Riccall mention kitchens and the most frequently found houses in the village had only one story comprising a hall and parlour with the occasional service room. A typical two-roomed dwelling belonged to Thomas Harrison, a carpenter, who, when he died in 1715, occupied only a parlour which he used as a sleeping room, and a house which contained some basic items of furniture, a range, fire-irons and a few cooking utensils.⁹ The small size of most Riccall houses meant that there was little differentiation between living and working space for many families. In 1684, for example, the appraisers of Valentine Husband found a house which not only functioned as a sitting, cooking and eating room but also served as a weaving workshop.¹⁰ Similarly, in 1676, Elizabeth Nelstrupp's 'house' contained her cheese and butter-making equipment as well as cooking utensils and items of furniture.¹¹ At Riccall the small size of the houses meant that individual rooms were expected to fulfil a variety of different functions and it was this feature of the domestic environment in the village which made it very different from its neighbours.

Small houses could, of course, be found in the other three communities. When Cawood labourer, John Mason, died in 1662, his appraisers recorded only two rooms: a house containing an iron range, a few sticks of furniture, pewter and milking vessels; and next to the house a parlour where the labourer slept.¹² Such houses were probably much more common than the inventories reveal but Table 3:2 shows that, compared to Riccall, relatively few of Cawood's population inhabited two- or three-roomed dwellings. In the small market town most of the inventoried householders occupied houses containing four, five or six rooms, and an analysis of the types of rooms they occupied shows that nearly ninety percent of houses had upper stories and that just over sixty percent included a kitchen. As at Wistow, the large size of Cawood's houses allowed their owners to achieve a high degree of specialization in terms of room-use. This pattern is clearly illustrated in the house of Richard Bell, a yeoman, whose inventory was made in 1710. He occupied a six-roomed house, the ground floor of which comprised a 'house', parlour, kitchen and milk-house. The furnishings found in these rooms reveal that each had a specific function: dining, sleeping, cooking and dairy work were activities which clearly took place in separate rooms. Upstairs the appraisers found two chambers: the contents of the first included a bed, trunk, chest and two chairs, indicating that this was used as an additional sleeping room; the second chamber was used solely for the storage of cheese.¹³ Six-roomed houses of this type were common among the town's middling yeomen and craftsmen and the degree of specialization in room-use which such houses permitted led to living arrangements which must have been much more agreeable than those found at Riccall.

How did house-size and room-use differ in Selby the most urban of the four communities? The figures in Table 3:2 suggest that Selby's

housing profile was not unlike that of Wistow and Cawood. In the larger market town there were few two- or three-roomed houses and over the period as a whole the most frequently inventoried house contained six rooms. However, an analysis of the types of rooms found in the Selby inventories reveals that the domestic environment in the town was very different from that of its more rural neighbours. We have seen that Selby contained many craftsmen and tradesmen and it is not surprising therefore to find that a number (just over fifteen percent) of inventoried houses included workshops. Poorer craftsmen such as small weavers or shoemakers sometimes worked in their 'houses' or kitchens, storing raw materials and stock-in-trade in the chambers. However, among middling craftsmen and tradesmen it was more common to find a separate workroom which was usually located on the ground floor of the house. Such a pattern can be seen in the house of Joseph Champney, a house-carpenter whose inventory of 1732 provides interesting details of the domestic arrangements of a Selby tradesman. On the ground floor the appraisers found a kitchen (which served as an all-purpose cooking-, dining- and sitting-room) together with a pantry and shop, the latter containing the carpenter's lathe, tools and stores of wood. On the first floor were two chambers one of which was used for sleeping and the other for storage. At the top of the house the appraisers found a garret which held two chests and further stores of wood.¹⁴ Champney's inventory clearly demonstrates the pressure on living space which the urban topography and economy created. In medium-sized houses of this type the provision of working space within the household meant that the 'house', the parlour or the kitchen had to fulfil a number of domestic functions. Part of the solution to this problem of lack of space was the construction of garrets which were used as additional storage space or as servant's sleeping chambers, and which became increasingly common in Selby from the 1680s.

Despite their limitations the probate inventories from our four parishes have enabled us to bring the evidence of the hearth tax returns into sharper focus. Overall, the figures suggest that throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the bulk of inventoried inhabitants from Wistow, Cawood and Selby owned substantial houses of between four and six rooms. This was in marked contrast to the poorer village of Riccall where relatively few people occupied houses of more than three rooms. Moreover, the different occupational structures of the four parishes had important ramifications in terms of room-use. At Riccall house space was extremely limited and we therefore find the same room used for a variety of domestic activities as well as the storage of farm equipment and the weaving of linen cloth. In the other three communities there was a greater specialization in room-use, but the function of the rooms was obviously very dependent on the occupation of the householder. Thus at Wistow, and to a lesser extent at Cawood, chambers were frequently used for the storage of farm produce and a large proportion of houses contained butteries, dairies or milk-houses. At Selby such service rooms were uncommon; workshops were far more in evidence with chambers and garrets being used for the storage of tools and stock-in-trade.

Decorative and Luxury Goods

Historians have made much use of probate inventories to study improvements in the structure of English vernacular houses during our period; in comparison, little systematic work has been undertaken on the contents of houses. The few studies of domestic artefacts which have been made suggest that developments in building were paralleled by important advances in the quantity and quality of domestic furnishings. For example, Margaret Spufford in her study of the wares of

seventeenth century chapmen, has argued that the period saw vast improvements in the clothes and soft furnishings to be found in English houses.¹⁵ Similarly Peter Earle, in his examination of the inventories of London's 'middling sort', found important qualitative changes in the contents of their houses during the period 1660-1730: houses became lighter, furniture increased in comfort, decorative items became much more common.¹⁶ To what extent did such improvements affect provincial as well as metropolitan society?

The probate inventories from Wistow, Riccall, Cawood and Selby provide a bewildering amount of data on domestic furnishings. For a number of reasons, however, they may present a less than complete picture of the range of artefacts found within any one household. In the first place articles were sometimes given away before death and it is not difficult to find examples of furnishings which were bequeathed in the will and which do not therefore appear in the inventory of the testator. Secondly, some appraisers made a less than complete inventory of domestic furnishings. In a handful of cases we find a bald statement such as "Household furniture being but small and very bade";¹⁷ more often, we have a partial list with individual items hidden under such headings as "All the linen", "In plate" or "Other huslement". Thirdly, where individual items were recorded, appraisers only occasionally provided details of the quality of artefacts or the way in which they were used. A table, for example, could be anything from a roughly hewn board resting on trestles to a beautifully finished mahogany dining-table, but there is frequently little indication in the inventory as to the type of table listed.

Given these drawbacks one might think that the main difficulty in using probate inventories to study domestic furnishings is one of

paucity of evidence. In reality exactly the opposite is true for, despite these limitations, the most frustrating problem arises from the sheer quantity of data which the inventories present. A statistical analysis of household goods in a large sample of inventories would supply enough material for a doctoral dissertation in itself. Here we must content ourselves with a more limited study of a number of selected consumer goods which can be used as indicators of levels of domestic ornamentation and display. Table 3:3 shows the frequency with which certain items were recorded in the inventories according to date and parish. All the goods listed can be seen as luxuries in the sense that they were relatively uncommon items which fulfilled more than basic needs. For these reasons they were rarely subsumed under more general headings and appraisers appear to have recorded them with accuracy throughout our period. Silver-ware and looking glasses were included in the table because they were decorative as well as useful goods which could be used to give rooms a certain ambience. Delf-ware, the glazed earthenware originally produced at Delf in Holland, was also a decorative product, but this was chosen primarily because it was an item which first appeared in households during our period. Finally, clocks and pictures were used because they were "information goods" which imply participation in a wider cultural and commercial world.¹⁸

Table 3:3 reveals that a substantial proportion (16.6 percent) of the inventoried population from our four parishes owned silver items. The percentage of inventories listing silver peaked in the first decade of the eighteenth century, but overall the probate evidence suggests that silver-ware was a widely-owned luxury item. A close study of those

Table 3:3 Proportion of Inventories Listing Different Luxury Items

	No. of Inventories	Silver	Looking Glasses	Delf- Ware	Clocks	Pictures
1660-9	162	16.7	15.4	0.0	0.6	4.3
1670-9	105	16.2	17.1	0.0	0.0	5.7
1680-9	100	15.0	24.0	0.0	4.0	5.0
1690-9	111	27.0	27.0	0.0	9.0	6.3
1700-9	67	26.6	29.9	0.0	11.9	9.0
1710-9	74	14.9	23.0	0.0	12.2	12.2
1720-9	86	9.3	14.0	2.3	9.3	7.0
1730-9	53	9.4	11.3	7.5	9.4	15.1
1740-9	68	13.2	20.6	23.5	19.1	13.2
1750-9	54	11.1	14.8	25.9	20.4	16.6
Total	880	16.6	19.8	4.1	7.4	8.2
Parish Totals						
Wistow	128	7.8	12.5	0.8	3.1	1.6
Riccall	202	2.5	2.5	0.5	2.8	0.5
Selby	380	26.8	33.2	7.9	12.6	17.4
Cawood	170	17.1	15.9	2.4	7.0	1.2

inventories listing silver shows that it represented a considerable investment for some decedents, for though some people owned only one or two silver spoons valued at a few shillings, many others had much larger collections consisting of watches, tumblers, cups and tankards which together were often appraised at several pounds. The figures show that, like silver, looking-glasses were also widely owned, with nearly twenty percent of inventoried households containing at least one mirror. Looking-glasses could be obtained for anything between a shilling and a pound and many families could therefore afford several. If both mirrors and silver-ware were widespread from the beginning of our period, delf-ware represented a consumer good which only appeared in the inventories during the third decade of the eighteenth century. However, the figures are especially interesting in revealing the speed with which the pottery appeared in many houses: by the 1750s over a quarter of all inventories contained delf plates, pots and dishes. Turning to the information goods we find that in the seventeenth

century both clocks and pictures were less widely owned than decorative items. However, the ownership of both these goods gradually increased over the period until, by the mid-eighteenth century, over a fifth of all inventories contained clocks and more than sixteen percent listed pictures.

In addition to charting the ownership of selected household goods over time, Table 3:3 also allows us to see how this varied between the different communities. The figures reveal a remarkable consistency in the distribution of luxury items. They indicate that, in terms of each of the artefacts studied, Selby was by far the best-furnished community. In the larger market town over a quarter of all inventoried households contained silver items and a third had looking-glasses. The incidence of information goods was also much higher in Selby than in the more rural parishes while the vogue for delf-ware during the middle decades of the eighteenth century was almost an entirely market town phenomenon. It can be seen that the inhabitants of Cawood and Wistow lagged far behind those of Selby in their ownership of luxury items, though the decedents in the larger and more urban of the two communities had a slightly higher level of domestic comfort than those in its more rural neighbour. It was at Riccall, however, that we find little evidence of the ownership of decorative and information goods. The inventories belonging to the inventoried farmers and craftsmen of Riccall rarely contained more than a few items of basic furniture and cooking utensils.

These variations in the ownership of household goods were obviously created by differences in supply and demand between the four communities. On the supply side we know, for example, that a clockmaker was operating in Selby during the later seventeenth

century, but no clockmaker has been identified in any of the other three communities.¹⁹ As far as other goods were concern, it can probably be assumed that the trading activities of the market town's mariners and merchants increased their availability. However, it would surely not have been too difficult for these goods to have found their way to neighbouring parishes had there been sufficient demand. Perhaps a more accurate explanation for the varying levels of ownership lies in the different social structures of the parishes. The hypothesis that demand for, and ownership of, luxury items could be related to social status is tested in Table 3:4 where the incidence of the selected items has been linked to different social groups.

Table 3:4 Proportion of Inventories Listing Luxury Items
According to Social Status

	No. leaving Inventories	Silver	Looking glasses	Delf- ware	Clocks	Pictures
Gentlemen	41	34.1	34.1	12.2	31.7	26.8
Professions	13	30.8	53.8	7.7	7.7	38.5
Dealing Trades	88	37.5	42.0	9.1	15.9	22.7
Craft Trades	127	13.4	15.7	6.3	12.6	7.9
Yeomen	116	14.7	14.7	2.6	6.0	1.7
Husbandmen	30	3.3	6.7	6.7	0.0	0.0
Labourers	15	0.0	6.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Women	173	17.3	20.2	1.2	4.0	4.0
Unknown	277	13.2	14.8	8.5	4.8	6.6
Total	880	16.6	19.8	4.1	7.4	8.2

Due to the fact that the social status of a large number of people cannot be determined, the sample in Table 3:4 is an *unavoidably small* one; however, the figures do reveal some interesting variations between the different social groups. As we should expect, a high proportion of gentry households contained luxury items, but only in terms of clocks and delf-ware were the gentry the largest owners. The table shows that the professions and dealing trades had very similar ownership patterns to the gentry. Professional men such as vicars, physicians and schoolmasters, were the largest owners of pictures and looking-glasses, while ownership of silver items was highest among

dealing tradesmen.²⁰ Lower down the social scale ownership of luxury items was more restricted. Possession of long-established luxuries such as silver and looking-glasses was similar among both yeomen and craftsmen, but the latter were much more likely to own delf-ware and they also owned a higher proportion of information goods. Finally, the table suggests that the limit of ownership for our selected luxury items extended only to the level of poorer craftsmen and yeomen, for although we occasionally find a husbandman or labourer with delf-ware or a looking-glass among his household possessions, these occupations tended on the whole to own only basic household goods.²¹

Overall, the evidence which the probate inventories contain in the ownership of luxury items suggests that, for a large number of people, the domestic environment was becoming much more comfortable and luxurious during the course of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The selected furnishings which have been studied can be seen as indicators of a change in the domestic interior which took place on a much broader front and which included the improvement of well-established furniture and utensils as well as the introduction of a range of new goods such as chests of drawers, close-stools, barometers, glass-ware, coffee pots and many others. Yet the probate records also show that the ownership of furnishings was subject to enormous variation. One of the most interesting findings is the degree to which the ownership of luxury items could vary from one community to the next and between families of different means.

Books

If reconstructing the material environment of early modern people is a complex and difficult business, then discovering something of their

mental world is even more problematic. However, one avenue into this subject which has proved reasonably accessible to modern scholarship has been the subject of popular literacy. The reading and writing skills of early modern men and women is an area of social history which, for a number of years has attracted the attention of historians, and the work of David Cressy, Roger Schofield, Margaret Spufford, Robert Houston and other pioneers have placed the subject on a firm foundation.²² A number of different approaches to the study of early modern literacy have been developed, but much of the research has centred on the statistical analysis of signatures and on the provision of education. In comparison, little work has been undertaken on the uses of literacy and only a handful of studies have been made of the ownership of books as revealed in probate and other records.²³ It is hoped that a study of bookownership and reading in Wistow, Riccall, Selby and Cawood during the period 1660-1760 will contribute to this relatively neglected field of enquiry.

Before discussing the extent of bookownership as reflected in the inventories it is worthwhile considering the potential demand for books in the four parishes by measuring the reading ability of their inhabitants. There is, of course, no quantifiable way of directly measuring the reading skills of men and women during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, in the absence of such data historians have focused their attention on the ability to sign one's name in full as a possible guide to reading literacy. Although the exact relationship between signing ability and reading skills has yet to be fully determined, it seems a reasonable, though by no means certain, assumption, that the capacity to write a signature indicates the possession of basic reading ability. Thus, changes in the number of people able to sign their names probably indicates a parallel change in the number

able to read.²⁴ Evidence of literacy rates at Wistow, Riccall, Selby and Cawood has been extracted from two different sources: in the first place wills have been used for the information which they yield both on the signatures of testators and those of witnesses; secondly, the probate bonds have been analysed in order to measure the signing ability of bondsmen and -women. Overall, these two types of document provide a substantial corpus of evidence (some 4119 signatures or marks) and the figures, which can be seen in Table 3:5, provide some interesting insights into the variation in literacy between neighbouring parishes and over time.

Table 3:5 Illiteracy Rates : Differences between Parishes and Over Time

	<u>Testators</u>			<u>Witnesses to Wills</u>			<u>Witnesses to Bonds</u>		
	<u>No. sampled</u>	<u>No. mark</u>	<u>% mark</u>	<u>No. sampled</u>	<u>No. mark</u>	<u>% mark</u>	<u>No. sampled</u>	<u>No. mark</u>	<u>% mark</u>
1660-9	90	61	67.8	276	74	26.8	261	142	54.4
1670-9	62	40	64.5	162	38	23.5	146	83	56.8
1680-9	57	35	61.4	174	42	24.1	176	90	51.1
1690-9	59	33	55.9	194	40	20.6	190	78	41.4
1700-9	48	23	47.9	151	22	14.6	159	42	26.4
1710-9	50	19	38.0	127	35	27.6	151	39	25.8
1720-9	76	35	46.0	224	22	9.8	227	80	35.2
1730-9	51	21	41.2	158	16	10.1	145	40	27.5
1740-9	59	18	30.5	169	18	10.7	142	35	24.6
1750-9	44	10	22.7	140	11	7.9	149	39	26.2
Total	596	295	49.5	1775	318	17.9	1746	668	38.3
<u>Parish Totals</u>									
Wistow	84	41	48.8	266	56	21.1	286	127	44.4
Riccall	104	77	74.0	291	94	32.3	427	234	54.8
Selby	280	115	41.1	833	96	11.5	648	157	24.2
Cawood	128	62	48.4	385	72	18.7	385	150	40.0

Each of these three measurements of signing ability is, of course, subject to biases and distortions. Social bias is a problem in each case: testators were drawn from propertied groups; witnesses may have been chosen specifically because they were literate; bondsmen were usually people of middling rank and above. Moreover, there is the

further problem in the case of testators that many were elderly or incapacitated when they made their will and were unable to sign though they were, in fact, literate. Such distortions perhaps explain the discrepancy in illiteracy rates between testators, witnesses and bondsmen/women which can be seen in Table 3:5.

These potential sources of bias in the data, however, do not negate the fact that illiteracy rates among testators, witnesses and bondsmen declined from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. During the period 1660-1760 illiteracy among signatories to administration bonds fell by over fifty percent while there were reductions in the order of seventy percent among testators and witnesses to wills. By the 1750s only around one in four testators were illiterate while fewer than one in ten witnesses were unable to sign their names. All four parishes experienced this increase in literacy, but the figures in Table 3:5 suggest marked variations between the different communities. At Riccall literacy rates were consistently lower than in the other three parishes, while the ability to sign one's name was much more common in the market town of Selby than in the smaller, more rural communities. The reasons behind these differences are difficult to determine. Educational provision was probably better in the market towns; according to Archbishop Herring's Visitation of 1743 each of the four parishes had a charity school, but only Cawood and Selby possessed grammar schools.²⁵ However, of more significance may have been the varying demand for literacy created by the different occupational structures of the parishes; thus, at Riccall, where the inventoried population consisted largely of small farmers and weavers, literacy rates lagged far behind those of Selby where testators, witnesses and bondsmen were drawn mostly from wealthier tradesmen or craftsmen.²⁶

It is interesting to compare these differences in literacy rates as evidenced by the ability to sign one's name with the figures for book-ownership in the four parishes. During the entire period 1660-1760 books were noted by appraisers in just over nine percent of the 880 inventories. The proportion of decedents from each parish who, according to their probate inventories, owned books at the death, neatly paralleled the literacy rates for individual communities. Thus, at Riccall only 1.5 percent of the inventories contained references to books, but in the village of Wistow and in the market town of Cawood the proportion rose to 7.8 percent and 5.9 percent respectively. As we should expect, it was in the larger market town of Selby that book-ownership was most common; some 15.5 percent of inventories listing books among the house contents. Turning to change over time we find that bookownership, contrary to our expectations, declined from 11.7 percent during the period 1660-1710 to 5.1 percent in the period 1710-1760. Overall, these figures suggest that access to books, especially in rural communities, was becoming more restricted in the eighteenth century: almost certainly they are an underestimate of the ownership of books among the middling and upper ranks of provincial society and present a distorted picture of changing levels of bookownership over time.²⁷ Though we cannot be certain that appraisers sometimes overlooked books completely when drawing up the inventories, a more plausible explanation of the falling level of bookownership (at a time when literacy rates were rising) is that books were increasingly included under the heading "other huslement" or "other things". As we have seen, the inventories generally become much more perfunctory after the 1720s and one result of this is the apparent decline in bookownership. However, though probate inventories are an inaccurate guide to the ownership of books, they do provide evidence of the social variation in bookownership, of the type and value of books

found in peoples homes, and of attitudes towards printed material.

The records leave us in little doubt that bookownership was a socially restricted phenomenon during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It can be seen from Table 3:6 that of the eighty-one decedents whose appraisers noted books, the occupation of some sixty-two can be discovered, and the majority of these were overwhelmingly drawn from the gentry, professions and dealing trades. No labourers' or husbandmen's inventories contained books and only around one in twenty inventories belonging to yeomen and craftsmen listed them among the house contents. Bookownership among the gentry, however, was in excess of thirty percent and rose to nearly seventy-seven percent among professional men. This is not to say, however, that bookownership was entirely confined to the upper ranks of village and market town society, for some of the yeomen and craftsmen who owned books were men of few means. In 1666 for example, Christopher Bond, a Wistow yeoman, had a bible and "...some other small books" though the furniture in his two-room house was appraised with his farm stock at only £21.0.0.²⁸ Similarly, Joseph Robinson, a poor Selby joiner, whose total wealth was only £14.18.4, had "one bibel with other books" when he died in 1702.²⁹

When we turn to the question of the types of books found in the inventories the evidence becomes more problematic for only rarely did appraisers specify the titles of books they listed. One exception, however, was the bible which was separately named in thirty-four of the eighty-one inventories containing books. Some households appear to have contained a number of bibles: in 1669, for example, Thomas Romans, a Wistow yeoman, had two bibles in his kitchen and further two in the chamber over the hall;³⁰ four years later the appraisers of

Thomas Leake, another yeoman of the same village, found three bibles and other "small books" in his kitchen;³¹ similarly, in 1691, James Smith, a Selby gentleman, was able to leave a "great bible" to his son Jonah and two further bibles to his daughters Frances and Martha.³² David Cressy has pointed out that though bibles were commonplace in early modern England this does not necessarily mean to say that they were read by their owners.³³ It is true that some (perhaps like the "...embroyder'd bible set with pearle" owned by Mary Sikes, a Cawood widow, in 1703,³⁴ may have been kept for there aesthetic appeal, while more ordinary bibles could have had symbolic or superstitious functions. However, no case of an illiterate bible-owner has been found in our four parishes and the fact that most people who owned bibles also owned other books suggests that the bible-owners in our sample were usually able to read them.

Table 3:6 Bookownership in the Four Parishes
According to Social Status

<u>Status</u>	<u>No. leaving inventories</u>	<u>No. of inventories containing books</u>	<u>%</u>
Gentlemen	41	31	31.7
Professions	13	10	76.9
Dealing Trades	88	16	18.2
Craft Trades	127	6	4.7
Yeomen	116	7	6.0
Husbandmen	30	0	0.0
Labourers	15	0	0.0
Women	173	10	5.8
Unknown	277	19	8.3
Total	880	81	9.2

If bibles were numerous in some households so too were other books. Though it is impossible, in the majority of cases, to discover what these books actually were, we do sometimes find evidence of the reading tastes of our parishioners. Some of the titles hidden under the description "other small books" or "some few books" were undoubtedly devotional in content. Occasionally these were specifically

mentioned by testators and appraisers: in addition to her embroidered bible, for example, Mary Sikes also owned "One psalme book wrote in characters;"³⁵ similarly, Emanuell Marshall, a Selby gentleman, bequeathed to his granddaughter "...her late grandmothers Common Prayer Book";³⁶ and John Todd, a mariner of the same town, owned, in addition to his bible "...a booke called davids repentance".³⁷ Bookownership, however, was not restricted to theological tracts, for practical works of occupational or professional interest were also found on occasions. Two mariners inventories contained references to "waggoners" (books of charts for nautical use) while a third referred to a "seabook" which was probably used for the same purpose.³⁸ Other practical works were owned by Robert Towrye, a gentleman and physician, who stated in his will of 1663, "...if any of Sir Thomas Remington's sones have a desire and will to studye and practyce physick, I give unto that sonne all my physicke books".³⁹ The most extensive and detailed description of books owned by a decedent is found in the probate papers of Thomas Cooper, vicar of Riccall, who, in 1746, left his "small library of books" to his successor and ordered that a catalogue of this library be annexed to his will. The compilers, dividing his collection into folios and quartos, recorded some seventy-eight separate works. Predictably, the majority of these (forty-nine books) were religio-moralistic tracts, but the vicar's library also included more varied reading. The catalogue recorded secular works of history and geography such as "Clarendon's History of the Rebellion", "Salmon's Modern History" or "Marden's Geography", while works of reference including "Chambers' Dictionary", "Fuller's Pharmacopoeia" and "Miller's Gardner and Florist's Dict[ionary]" also featured in the catalogue.⁴⁰

It is difficult to know how Thomas Cooper's library compared with collections of books belonging to other decedents in terms of its size

and diversity. Not only did appraisers usually fail to list separate titles, but they invariably omitted to specify the number of books owned and usually lumped them together with other household goods so that their value is difficult to determine. Where books were itemized separately they were rarely appraised at more than a few shillings and were usually described as consisting of "severall", "a parcell" or "a shelf" of books. This was especially the case among humbler people - smaller yeomen and craftsmen - whose collections must have consisted of only a few cheap volumes. Such works were rarely given special house-room but instead were scattered throughout their houses in halls, parlours, chambers and kitchens; there is little evidence that these social groups used books for display purposes. Some gentlemen and professional men, however, owned more substantial collections which were housed in separate closets, studies or libraries. We have seen that in 1745, for example, Mathew Carvile had a closet containing about sixty books;⁴¹ the appraisers of William Potham, another Selby gentleman noted, "In the study one deske with sev'all books £4.0.0" when they appraised his estate in 1668;⁴² Jeffery Rishton, vicar of Brayton, had a library containing eight pounds worth of books when he died in 1720.⁴³ Men such as these were evidently in a position to build up substantial collections and the use of a library, study or closet, containing a writing desk, books, maps and pictures must have been important in marking them off culturally from their poorer neighbours.

Exactly how the inhabitants of our four parishes obtained their reading material is largely a matter of conjecture. Many of the cheaper works such as ballads, almanacs and chapbooks which were increasingly available in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century provincial England (but which were probably omitted from the

inventories because of their small value and ephemeral nature) could, of course, be purchased from chapmen or at markets and fairs.⁴⁴ More expensive volumes could be bought from the growing number of York booksellers, but whether booksellers operated in market towns at this time is a subject which has yet to be fully researched. No booksellers have been found in the occupational data for Selby and Cawood, but the inventories reveal that the varied merchandise of Selby grocers sometimes included a selection of books. As early as 1663 John Huby had a stock of books which included:

"Bibells nr 4:	0. 9. 0
6 Gramers and 5 psalters	0. 5. 0
3 practises and pietys	0. 2. 6
1 doss gilt and 2 dos of plane	
horne books	0. 1. 6
1 doss primers at 18d	0. 2. 3" ⁴⁵

Some twenty five years later Robert Watson's shelves contained a selection which, though slightly larger, was similar in content:

"2 doz of primm[er]s at 20d	
p. dozen	0. 3. 4
16 single testem[en]ts att	
6d p. peice	0. 8. 0
6 psalters att 6d p. peice	0. 2. 6
2 dozen A:b:ce's att	0. 1. 0
5 construing books att	0. 1. 0
2 doz hornebooks	0. 2. 0
6 testaments att 6d p. p.	0. 3. 0" ⁴⁶

These two inventories suggest that the inhabitants of Selby and its surrounding parishes were well supplied with cheap devotional literature and basic aids to reading during the latter half of the seventeenth century. They reinforce our impression, gleaned from the tantalizing references to bookownership and the evidence of literacy rates, that the four riverside communities contained many people who were able to participate in the literate culture of late seventeenth and early eighteenth century England. Yet our sources leave many of the most interesting questions about the mental horizons of these men and women only partially answered. What was the true extent of their

reading and writing skills? How did they use these skills in their everyday lives? What subjects were of particular interest to them in the books they read? We can go some way to answering these questions, albeit for only one man, thanks to the survival of one remarkable piece of evidence: the Book of Remarks written by William Storr of Wistow.

William Storr was born on 22 November 1658 in the parish of Hutton Buscel near Scarborough. When William was three years old the family moved to Flaxton-on-Moor where they lived for the next sixteen years. In 1678 they uprooted once again, this time moving further south to settle on a leased farm at Scalm Park on the edge of the Bishop's Wood in the parish of Wistow. The family had lived at Scalm Park for ten years when William, at the age of thirty, married one Elizabeth Haigh of Selby. It was in Elizabeth's home town that the couple settled for the first seven years of their married life and it was there that they started a family of their own. In 1695, at the death of his father, William moved to Scalm Park to take over the farm and during the next eleven years the couple produced a further seven children. From 1695 until his death in 1731 William Storr established himself as one of the largest and most successful of Wistow's farmers, undertaking considerable improvements to the buildings at Scalm Park during the early years of his occupancy and purchasing the lease of the 300 acre farm in 1717. He also played an active role in local affairs, acting as manorial juror, appraiser of inventories, witness to wills and trustee for the election of the Wistow schoolmaster. Little wonder that by the time of his death he felt sufficiently confident of his status in the local community to accord himself the title of "gentleman" when he drew up his will.⁴⁷

William Storr's farming interests and his involvement in local administration must have taken up a good deal of his time, yet the survival of a rare manuscript suggests that he spent at least some of his leisure hours reading, reflecting on the books he read and putting down his thoughts on paper. The document is entitled "Willi Storr Book of Remarks ... Brief Rememberance of sevrall small things known or Redd and noted for a Memorandum"; its contents allow us to enquire into the reading habits of a Yorkshire farmer at the beginning of the eighteenth century and to perceive something of his intellectual world. The folio volume contains some 458 pages the majority of which are blank; however; by the time of his death William had covered some ninety-two pages with his own observations and with copied extracts or notes from some ten different identifiable books and from a variety of other sources. Under the category "small things known" we find details of his family, the farm at Wistow, local topography and unusual weather conditions. These jottings, however, accounted for a relatively small part of the work; the bulk of his writings consisted of extracts and notes from his reading and it is these which are of particular interest here.

Much of Storr's reading seems to have been undertaken for its utilitarian value. His manorial office-holding obviously necessitated a detailed understanding of local customary law and is not surprising therefore to find extracts from an Elizabethan Wistow Customal included in the memorandum book. Similarly, as a witness to wills and appraiser of inventories, he would have needed a knowledge of probate law; the foremost authority on testamentary law at the time was Henry Swinburne and some four pages of Storr's memorandum book comprise extracts from Swinburne's work. As well as transcripts from local manuscripts and legal works, Storr's volume also included some basic

pharmacology. He provided no references for his list of cures for various animal disorders and it may have been that his knowledge of these was gained from friends and neighbours or through experience. However, Storr also listed a number of cures for common human complaints and for his remedy for a cough or cold he acknowledged John Hancock whose Febrifuqum Magnum or Common Water the Best Cure for Fevers and Probably for the Plaque had been published in 1724.⁴⁸ It is interesting too that Storr also extracted pharmacological information from a newspaper advertisement; discussing a cure for the bite of a mad dog he wrote:

"In the newspaper in august 1728 one Mr Figg att the Rainbow in the Bowling alley Westminster, adverises that he hath been bitten six times with mad dogs and cats and allways curred himself by taking one pound of salt in one quart of water when first bit and then wash, squeeze and bathe the place for an hour with salt and water and then bind a little salt on the affected place for 12 hours."⁴⁹

Examples such as this reveal the way in which access to a literate culture could have very practical benefits. Yet the uses of literacy were not only practical and utilitarian, for reading could also liberate the mind and stretch the intellectual horizons. There is ample evidence from Storr's memoranda that he read a wide variety of history, geography, mathematics and astronomy; and that his reading was motivated by his intellectual curiosity and enjoyment of these subjects. Indeed, it is the rarefied nature of Storr's reading, together with his interest in knowledge for its own sake, which are the most salient features of his work. Despite the assertion in Storr's title to his work that his concern was with "small things" a close study of his writing reveals that what most captured his imagination was the rare, the unusual and the wonderful.

Unfortunately Storr provided only a few references for the works he consulted and even in these cases an abbreviation was used which sometimes makes them difficult to identify. In terms of his historical reading, a chance reference in the memorandum book that Thomas More was "A man of great larning as I have Redd in sume Authers"⁵⁰ suggests that he consulted a number of works; but the only volume specifically named was described as "Cronacle" and it has proved impossible to trace the title to which he referred. However, the notes which he made from this book provide an interesting insight into his intellectual curiosity. Much of Storr's historical memoranda were a catalogue of the deeds of medieval and early modern monarchs or politicians and his enjoyment of this type of material is plainly revealed in a note that

"Sir Nicholas Throckmortons Tryall was at guildhall before a Survey of gentlemen wherein his arguments in his own vindecation was such as is worth reading. See Cro 1104."⁵¹

Storr's interest in history, though, ranged wider than high politics; his writing clearly shows him to have been also fascinated by unusual and fantastic phenomena. On page forty-two of his memorandum book he noted:

"In the year 1574 was A great fish taken at the Ile of Thanitt in the parish of St.Peter, the lenth was 22 yards one of his Eyes was Above a cart load, A man might stand in the hole from wherre the Eye was taken, his taile was 14 foot broad, betwixt his eyes was 4 yards, his toong was 5 yards long, his liver 2 cart load, A man might creep in at his nostrills. See Cronacle 1259."⁵²

That it was inexplicable and wonderful events which captured Storr's interest and imagination is, at one point, explicitly stated in the memorandum book:

"In queen Elizabeth Rean there Appeared A star to the northward which was not seen before and so continued near a year and a half and then disappeared (which being a thing not Common makes me note it) see Cro: 1257."⁵³

Storr's interest in the unusual is also evident from his notes on foreign travels. Here his main source was "Lithgow" (probably William Lithgow, The Rare Adventures of Painful Perignations of Long Nineteen Years from Scotland to the Most Famous Kingdoms in Europe, Asia and Africa, 1632).⁵⁴ Lithgow's work provided Storr with a plethora of material for his memorandum book including accounts of foreign cities, chicken breeding in Africa, slaves, monsters, desert caravans and pyramids. He appears to have been particularly interested in different attitudes towards women noting that

"In an Island called Sio is very faire women but is Common to all men, for their husbands will offer them to strangers and for a small trifle will lett them lye with them all night. Lithgow 103."⁵⁵

It is unfortunate that William Storr was satisfied to record such information without commenting upon it, for it would be fascinating to learn something of the views of an early eighteenth century Yorkshire farmer towards such sexual practices. Yet to depict Storr as merely a recorder of unusual information would be to do him an injustice for his memorandum book reveals him to have been an original and inventive thinker whose imagination and powers of reasoning were sparked off by the books he read. Thus, on page 457 of his work he noted that the river Nile was at its highest in summer and stated that "severall men hath given contrary reasons why it should flow at that time of the year but most differ in their opinions concerning it but I shall give my reasons which differeth from the rest".⁵⁶ Similarly, his detailed thesis "To prove the earth noe planitt by severall rasons", reveals the same independent, if misguided, spirit of enquiry.⁵⁷

This survey of the reading habits of one of the inhabitants of Wistow during the early part of the eighteenth century has helped to place the rather fragmentary evidence of literacy and bookownership, as

revealed in the probate records in a broader context. Though wills and inventories are useful sources for the study of popular literacy they can provide only a minimal guide to the extent of bookownership in early modern communities; it is only by the fortunate survival of such documents as Storr's memorandum book that a truer meaning of literacy for an individual can be established. Overall, the evidence suggests that literacy in the four river-side communities was much more common in 1760 than it had been a hundred years earlier. The problematic nature of the probate inventories makes it difficult to gauge the effect which this had on the ownership of books, but though bookownership was socially restricted and more common in the market towns than in the villages, there is little to suggest that the inhabitants of Wistow, Riccall, Selby and Cawood were isolated from a literate culture. It is impossible to determine whether such literate and cultivated men as William Storr were considered unusual by their neighbours, but Storr's writings reveal the way in which, at least for some people, access to books could not only have functional value, but could also broaden the intellectual horizons and could stimulate both reflection and original thought.

CHAPTER 3 : REFERENCES

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3. B.Harrison and B.Hutton, Vernacular Houses in North Yorkshire and Cleveland (Edinburgh, 1984), pp.205-9.
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9. Riccall Peculiar Court, January 1715 (Date of inventory).
10. Riccall Peculiar Court, June 1685.
11. Riccall Peculiar Court, October 1676.
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17. Inventory of John Day, Selby Peculiar Court, May 1753.
18. Weatherill, "Consumer behaviour and social status", p.194.
19. Inventory of Samuel Sugden, Selby Peculiar Court, April 1703. Samuel Sugden was described as a clockmaker when acting as a bondsman for Thomas Ibbotson, Selby Peculiar Court, March 1700.
20. Those designated dealing trades include mariners, shopkeepers, merchants, tanners and innkeepers. The inventories suggest that these occupations demanded higher levels of investment than the craft trades and that their practitioners tended to be wealthy individuals. It should be noted, however, that the same designation was often applied to men of very different means and that the division of tradesmen into 'dealing' and 'craft' trades is, to an extent, an artificial one. There is little contemporary evidence about perceptions of the status of tradesmen, but a useful study which attempts to categorize tradesmen using the criteria of choice of apprenticeship and marriage partners is V.Brodsky Elliot, "Mobility and Marriage in Pre-Industrial England" (University of Cambridge, D.Phil.thesis, 1978), pp.1-149. See also Weatherill, Consumer Behaviour, Appendix 2, pp.208-214.
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23. See for example P.Clark, "The ownership of books in England: the example of some Kentish townfolk" in L.Stone (ed.), Schooling and Society, Studies in the History of Education (Baltimore, 1976), pp.95-111; J.A.Johnston "Books in wills", The Local Historian, 15 (1983), pp.478-482; J.A.Johnston, "Worcestershire probate inventories 1699-1716", Midland History, 4 (1978), p.207; Houston, Scottish Literacy, pp.165-171; Spufford, Contrasting Communities, pp.206-212. For a discussion of the content of printed material bought by non-elites in early modern England see M.Spufford, Small Books and Pleasant Histories : Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth Century England (Cambridge, 1981) and B.Capp, Astrology and the Popular Press : England Almanacs 1500-1800 (London, 1979).
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28. Wistow Prebendal Court, February 1666.
29. Selby Peculiar Court, June 1702.
30. Wistow Prebendal Court, May 1670.
31. Wistow Prebendal Court, April 1765.
32. Selby Peculiar Court, February 1692.
33. Cressy, Literacy and the Social Order, pp.50-51.
34. Wistow Prebendal Court (Cawood), January 1703.
35. Ibid.
36. Selby Peculiar Court, July 1740.
37. Selby Peculiar Court, August 1667, (Date of Will).

38. Michael Tomyson, Selby Peculiar Court, November 1665, (Date of Inventory); Solomon Reame, Selby Peculiar Court, September 1666 (Date of Inventory); John Leadall, Prerogative Court, February 1692.
39. Prerogative Court, July 1663, (Date of Will).
40. Riccall Peculiar Court, November 1746.
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42. Selby Peculiar Court, October 1668 (Date of Will).
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PART 2 PROPERTY DISTRIBUTION AND
FAMILY ATTITUDES

CHAPTER 4

KINSHIP

In 1713 William Storr committed to paper what he knew of his ancestors and living relations. In a section of his Book of Remarks entitled "Of Kindred and Relations" he wrote:

"My father left me William Storr and two sisters, Margaret and Elizabeth. Margaret married Mathew Stoneburne but he died and left one sonn and four daughters that is Frances the son and Mary, Martha, and Margaret daughters. Elizabeth married Hall Stephenson at Farlington and by him had two daughters that is liveing but she and he is both dead."¹

William was able to trace back his paternal line to his grandfather, John Storr, who he tells us was the second of three brothers: the oldest brother (great uncle and godfather to William) had a son who raised a family in Hutton Buscel (near Scarborough) and a daughter who was "...married to a towne on the Wolds", but William did not know whether or not the latter had any children; the youngest brother, James, had married one Elizabeth Rains, but of their children William knew only that a daughter, Ann, had married one Joseph Poole at Flaxton (just north of York) and had left two sons. Of his paternal aunts and uncles William added:

"My father was the eldest and had one brother called Ralph Storr at Strenchall and he is dead and left one son and is there now - for sisters he had three that is Mary, Jane and Elizabeth, Mary married to Henry Myles, Jane married to William Riby and Elizabeth married to Joseph Webster and they have all left some children but is squandred."²

Turning to his mother's family he recorded that his maternal grandparents were Thomas and Margaret Ward and that he himself had been born in a house on their farm at Cockerway Foot near Hackness. He knew that Grace, the youngest of his mother's four surviving

sisters was settled on this farm and that the remaining three, Helen, Mary and Elizabeth, had married and were living near Hackness, at Flaxton and at Bargh (near Malton) respectively. Of his cousins on his mother's side he could only add:

"There is both sons and doughters of these four sisters liveing but soe squandred that I cannot give any trew account where they are or how many."³

William Storr's jottings on the subject of his family are typical of the efforts made by the propertied classes, during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, to maintain a knowledge of their kindred. After all, such a record could be important in an era when disputes often arose over succession to property and when Canon Law placed strict limitations on the choice of marriage partners.⁴ However, the most important point about William's knowledge of his family is that it was far from complete. We see here a man whose kin were scattered over a wide geographical area in the East and North Ridings of Yorkshire. William's own mobility during the earlier part of his life, combined with the movement of his relatives, evidently led to a loosening or severing of family ties. It was perhaps to strengthen some of these links, or at least to preserve his knowledge of them, that William entered his family's history and genealogy in his memorandum book. By the time he did so, however, his knowledge of his kindred had become rather circumscribed: he traced his ancestry back through only two generations, was unable to provide details of his first cousins and wrote only of consanguineal kin - of his wife's family we hear nothing.

How typical as William Storr's limited knowledge of his family? How important was kinship in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries? What factors were important in determining the strength

and direction of kinship ties? Over the last twenty years such questions have gradually moved up the agenda of social historians, as they have come to realize how little we know of the role which kinship played in the lives of early modern men and women. Most of the research on this subject has tended to suggest that, below the level of the gentry, kinship was of little importance in the patterning of social relationships. The myth of the extended family living under one roof has long since been dispelled by the evidence of household listings which show that the most common domestic group in early modern England was the nuclear family.⁵ In one of the earliest studies of kinship, Alan Macfarlane, in his analysis of Ralph Josselin's kinship network, found little evidence in the Puritan minister's diary that he had close contacts with his wider relatives,⁶ and Keith Wrightson has argued that the evidence of other diaries points in the same direction.⁷ In their analysis of kinship links between households at Terling, Keith Wrightson and David Levine found little evidence of dense kinship networks.⁸ The view that contacts with wider kin were limited in early modern England is fast becoming a new orthodoxy, yet a number of studies warn us against adopting a premature consensus. Miranda Chaytor claims to have found much evidence of kinship interaction in the late sixteenth-century parish of Ryton,⁹ while David Hey argued that ties of kinship were important among long-established farming families in the seventeenth-century parish of Myddle.¹⁰ Moreover, David Cressy has shown that diaries and letters do sometimes demonstrate the importance of kinship and suggests that the English kinship system could be "valuable, versatile and wide-ranging".¹¹

Some of the most useful sources for charting links with kin are wills. It would be false to claim that wills can do anything other than

indicate those family members which people recognized when close to death and considering the distribution of their property. However, their wide availability makes them a much less socially selective source than diaries and they contain much more information about the strength and direction of family ties than it is possible to obtain from listings and parish registers. Only a few historians have used wills as evidence of kinship interaction, but the handful of studies which have been made tend to support the view that kinship links were narrow and shallow.¹² However, a sufficient degree of variation has been found to make further research vital. In his study of the market town of Banbury, for example, Richard Vann found that a much broader range of kin were recognized than in the wills analysed by Cicely Howell for Kibworth Harcourt or by Keith Wrightson and David Levine for Terling. Vann's study and J.A. Johnston's work on labourers' wills both point to changes in the recognition of kin over time,¹³ while some studies have pointed to social status as a possible determinant of kinship recognition.¹⁴ Clearly, there is room for more work and our own sample of 684 wills permits an analysis which will provide useful comparative material and will hopefully allow us to delineate some of the factors which influenced ties of kinship in our four communities.

Such a study, however, is not without methodological problems. Wills are, and were, formal documents which only infrequently provide glimpses of attitudes and feelings. Moreover, wills reflect only part of the kinship context in which people lived their daily lives. A comparison between William Storr's knowledge of his kin in his memorandum book and the recognition of wider family in his will (where he mentioned only one sister) illustrates that these documents provide a limited picture of kinship recognition.¹⁵ A third problem is that

in attempting to group people mentioned in wills into various categories, according to their relationship with the testator, we are immediately confronted with the difficulty that in a number of cases the relationship was not explicitly stated in the will; as far as legatees are concerned, for example, nearly a third (thirty percent) of the wills contained bequests to people without stating how or if they were related. Of the 795 legatees which fell into this category only thirteen percent possessed the same surname as the testator, or as an identified relative of the testator, and are therefore likely to have been relatives, but the relationship between the will-maker and the remaining 703 unidentified legatees remains a mystery. Even when a relationship was specifically stated we cannot always be certain of its true nature for in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the words used to describe relatives were employed in a very imprecise way. The words "cousin" and "kinsman" were sometimes used when, in reality, the legatee was a nephew or niece, while in-laws were occasionally described as affinal relations and step-relations described as in-laws.¹⁶ Sometimes the distinctive use of the term can be discerned from the internal evidence of the will: when, for example, Edward Wormley, a Riccall gentleman, made his "...cousin Edward Wormley, son of my nephew" executor of his estate,¹⁷ or when Ann Hewley, a Cawood widow, left a gift of land to her brother James Beverly, stating that after his death the land was to pass to James's son, John, whom she describes as her "cousin".¹⁸ On other occasions different usage can be clarified by referring to another will: in 1684 John Maderay, of Cawood, made a bequest to his "son-in-law" John Richardson,¹⁹ but when his wife, Patience, died nine years later she referred to John as her "son".²⁰ For the most part however, the true relationship cannot be discovered and we can only say that some of those listed as "cousins" or "kinsman" may have been closer kin while

other relatives described as in-laws may have been step-relations and some of those described as consanguineal relatives may have been in-laws. These problems must be borne in mind when discussing the recognition of kin found in the documents; however, because the majority of people can be positively identified and were accurately described, an analysis at least allows us to discern the strength and direction of family sentiment and permits us to explore some of the forces which may have influenced its nature.

The Involvement of Kin in Testamentary Procedure

One way in which testators revealed their attitudes towards relatives was in their willingness to appoint them as executors to their wills. For those testators survived by a wife or by adult children the decision as to who should administer their estates must have been an easy one to make, for in almost every case the widow, a son, a daughter or a combination of these was chosen. More interesting from our point of view were those testators who chose not to appoint their wives or children or who were unable to do so because they were unmarried or had under-age children. These people, amounting to some twenty percent of all testators, turned to a broad range of consanguineal relatives, with brothers and sisters or nephews and nieces being the most common choice. Very often the appointment was coupled with a term of endearment and a special attachment was sometimes hinted at: in 1730, for example, James Tuke, a Riccall yeoman made his "dearly beloved" sister executrix of his will,²¹ while Margaret Grainger, a widow of the same village, nominated her "two loving nephews"²² and John Bell of Cawood appointed his nephew "for his good will and service".²³ Relatives, however, were not always the natural choice as executor and, of those will-makers appointing

someone other than a wife or child, some forty percent preferred to appoint friends and neighbours. These appointments too, were frequently couched in affectionate terms with friends being described as "loving", or more frequently "trusty and well-beloved", and it is clear in cases where relatives were mentioned as legatees in the will that testators sometimes preferred to appoint trusted friends rather than distant kin.²⁴

This tendency was even more pronounced when supervisors and trustees were appointed.²⁵ Both appointments were designed to help the executor or executrix and, although the words were sometimes used interchangeably, most testators differentiated between the supervisor, who was responsible for generally overseeing the administration of the estate, and trustees who were usually given more specific tasks such as selling property for the widow or investing money until children came of age. A total of forty-nine testators appointed 104 people as supervisors and/or trustees and of these only twenty-one percent can definitely be identified as relatives of the testator. Some twenty percent of supervisors and trustees were named as friends of the testator and, once again, these people were nearly always described as "loving" or "trusty and well beloved". We cannot be certain of the relationship between testator and appointee in the remaining fifty-nine percent of cases, but very few of these people shared the same surname as the testator, and it therefore seems likely that the bulk of these were friends and neighbours rather than relatives of the deceased. Moreover, it is clear that many testators displayed a great deal of faith in the capacity of their close friends and neighbours to act on their behalf. In 1675, for example, Thomas Newsome of Riccall, left the bulk of his property to his brother, William Newsome, and to one John Richardson of Riccall, but added the proviso:

"...yt they shall not act or doe anything touching ye premises but according to ye order and direction of my trusty and well beloved friend Isaac Swinbanke, clerke, now minister of ye parish church of Riccall aforesaid and alsoe to give account to him of all such goods as shall be sold for ye use of my three daughters to be disposed of as he shall consider to thinke fitt".²⁶

A similar reliance upon neighbours is found in the will of Ann Husbands, a Riccall widow, who, in 1670, left her three daughters all her household goods: "...to be equally devided at the discretion of three or fower suffetient neighbours",²⁷ and in that of Susannah Kirkbie, of the same village, made some five years later, who stated that her personal property was to be divided between her two sons: "to the judgement of what neighbours they shall thinke best fitt".²⁸

This reliance upon friends and neighbours to perform certain functions in connection with testamentary procedure is nowhere more evident than in their use as witnesses to wills. Unfortunately it is usually extremely difficult to determine the identity of the witnesses and a statistical analysis of their names has not therefore been attempted. However, few of the signatories could be identified as relatives from the text of the will and only a small number actually bore the same name as the testator. The signatures of prestigious neighbours occur over and over again, while in many cases the first signature is in the same hand as the text of the will indicating that it was customary for the scribe to be the first signatory. Without doubt, many, if not most of the witnesses were friends and neighbours rather than kin.

If there was little obligation on testators to call upon relatives to assist their wives and children in administering family property or to witness their wills, there also appears to have been little inclination to enlist their help in finding a suitable burial place.²⁹

If testators made a specific request concerning their burials it was usually that they should be interred in the same grave as spouse or child, or occasionally in the same burial place as a parent or sibling. In order to see this performed they invariably entrusted the task to close relatives and friends. Thus, in 1660, Ellin Wright, a Riccall widow, stated simply that her body should be buried in Riccall churchyard: "...where my friends shall think most fitting."³⁰ In a more careful request of 1739, the Selby widow, Elizabeth Bathersby wrote:

"first I will that my executrix hereafter named her sister cause my body to be carryed in hearse to Selby and bury the same in the grave besides my late husband Thomas Bathersby in Selby church and in her absence I desire and request my friend Mr. Thomas Foreman to see the same performed."³¹

On the whole, testators seem to have displayed more trust in their friends and neighbours than in their wider kin to carry out their burial requests.

Bequests to Different Kin

The decisions which testators made regarding the administration of their property and the disposal of their bodies are useful guides to the question of kinship recognition, but a more comprehensive and sensitive indicator of the attitudes of will-makers towards their relatives is the way in which they disposed of their property. In Table 4:1 the 684 wills from our four parishes have been analysed, according to period and parish, for the information which they yield on the concentration and direction of bequests.

TABLE 4:1 The Distribution of Bequests Beyond the Nuclear Family :
Differences Between Parishes and Over Time

	1660-1709					1710-1759				
	Wistow	Riccall	Cawood	Selby	Total	Wistow	Riccall	Cawood	Selby	Total
No. of Wills	43	69	75	175	362	53	53	62	154	322
% containing extended bequests	55.8	60.9	58.7	68.0	63.3	56.7	49.0	51.6	56.5	54.3
% containing bequests to:										
Unspecified	46.5	37.7	32.0	39.4	38.4	20.8	24.5	24.5	22.0	20.8
Friends	0.0	0.0	1.3	1.1	0.8	1.9	0.0	0.0	3.2	1.9
Godchildren	2.3	4.3	1.3	1.7	2.2	1.9	3.8	1.9	0.6	1.6
Servants/Masters	0.0	2.9	5.3	5.1	4.1	3.8	1.9	1.9	5.8	4.0
Cousins/Kinsmen	4.7	10.1	12.0	14.3	11.9	9.4	7.5	1.9	6.5	6.2
Uncles/Aunts	0.0	1.4	2.7	3.4	2.5	0.0	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.3
Nephews/Nieces	18.6	24.6	26.7	29.7	26.8	26.4	28.3	41.9	34.4	33.5
Siblings	20.9	24.6	41.3	32.0	31.2	26.4	15.0	43.5	31.9	30.4
Grandchildren	9.3	14.5	12.0	26.3	19.0	7.5	15.0	11.3	14.3	12.4
Mean No. of legatees outside the nuclear family	4.1	4.3	5.8	5.5	5.2	4.0	3.8	3.8	4.7	4.5

Overall perhaps the most striking feature of the Table is the heavy concentration of bequests on the nuclear family of the testator with some forty-one percent of all wills containing no extended bequests beyond those to wives, children and parents. This concentration on the immediate family is further magnified when we consider that, in terms of value, the legacies to nuclear family members far outweighed those to wider family and non-kin. Moreover, it can be seen from Table 4:1 that a high percentage of testators left bequests to grandchildren; in many of these cases grandchildren were the only beneficiaries outside the immediate family and if these wills are added to those containing no extended bequests the figure of forty-one percent rises to fifty-one percent.

The most sensitive figures in the Table are the mean number of legatees outside the nuclear family. We can see here a tendency towards a greater concentration on the nuclear family over time with the total mean number of legatees falling from 5.2 in the seventeenth century to 4.5 in the eighteenth; a fall which is also paralleled by a drop in the percentage of wills containing extended bequests. Such a change could, of course, be explained by fluctuations in the composition of the sample of wills in terms of changes in the family situation or wealth of testators, but there is little evidence to suggest that there is any change in these variables over the period and we must therefore assume that there was an increasing tendency to concentrate bequests on the nuclear family.³² In addition to chronological changes the figures for the mean number of legatees also suggests that, taking the period as a whole, testators in the market towns of Selby and Cawood were likely to nominate a larger number of legatees in their will than those in the villages; a result probably due to the greater wealth of the urban parishes.

Turning from the overall distribution of bequests between the nuclear family and others to the specific distribution of extended bequests, it can be seen that in a disappointingly large number of cases, the relationship between the legatee and the testator cannot be identified and these cases have therefore been included in the category "unspecified". However, it should be noted that only thirteen percent of these people shared a common surname with the testator; many must have been friends or neighbours. Only occasionally were friends described as such in the wills, but that some will-makers displayed a high regard for their friends when disposing of their property there can be little doubt. In a number of cases friends were involved in the exchange of help and services. In her will of 1658, for example, Ann Richardson of Wistow left Ann Watterton, another Wistow widow, a cow: "...for her care and paines taken about me in my sickness",³³ while in 1694 Mathew Newsome, a Riccall tailor, left Jane Kettlestrings: "...three shillings in respects of her diligence and care she hath taken with mee and hath been ready to doe earants an run for mee here and there".³⁴ On other occasions it is evident that mutual friendship could be a strong motivation behind bequests, and the affectionate wording which we occasionally find, signifies that friendships could be both deep and real. In 1662 Agnes Nettleton, a Cawood widow, left her "dear friend" Mrs. Needham, ten shillings: "...to buy her a ring to weare for my sake",³⁵ while similar bequests are found in the will of Robert Bustard, a Selby innkeeper who, in 1743, left his: "...good friend Robert Pockley of Brayton Esq one guinea, to buy him a mourning ring,"³⁶ and in that of Samuel Seadon, a gentleman of the same town, who left: "...Mr. Thomas Weld of the City of London, my very good friend, my silver watch lead and one plaine mourning ring".³⁷

A distinctive feature of the pattern of bequests was the relative infrequency with which godchildren were found amongst the legatees; only thirteen testators made bequests to godchildren. There is little evidence that the attachment between spiritual kin was particularly strong and few godchildren could expect to receive substantial gifts at the death of their godparents. One testator, Robert Towrye, a gentleman of Riccall, left his godson Charles Redmayne twenty pounds,³⁸ while Agnes Watson, a Selby widow, left her goddaughter, Mary Tomlinson, a small cash bequest "...as a token of my love";³⁹ but the bulk of bequests to godchildren consisted of only a few shillings and were not accompanied by terms of endearment. Moreover, it does not appear that spiritual kinship was used to strengthen existing kinship ties, as only two godchildren (one niece and one nephew) can be definitely identified as relatives of their sponsors; rather, the men and women of our parishes seem to have turned to wealthy neighbours (possibly with an eye to their future potential as employers or patrons) to act as witnesses at the baptism of their children.⁴⁰

If testators were reluctant to recognize their godchildren in their wills, they were equally unwilling to leave property to their servants. Given that service was a pervasive feature of early modern society many of our testators must have been employers of domestic and farm servants,⁴¹ yet only three percent of men and women gave their servants a thought when making their wills. Bequests ranged from a few shillings, items of clothing, furniture and livestock to occasional gifts of real property or the residue of the estate, but the beneficiaries of these legacies were mostly female domestic servants and it was this group who were most likely to remember their employers when making their wills. Moreover, there is little evidence that kinship links were important in the recruitment of servants.

Robert Shaw, a Wistow gentleman, who left ten pounds each to his two apprentices who were also his cousins⁴² and Mary Marshall who left two shillings and sixpence to her second cousin described as "laite my servante", were the only testators whose servants appear to have been relatives.⁴³

Turning to bequests to family members, the pattern suggests that William Storr may not have been particularly unusual in his limited recognition of cousins and kinsmen. Only about twelve percent of testators made bequests to these two groups in the period 1660-1709; a figure which fell to just above six percent during the following fifty years. For the most part the few bequests to cousins and kinsmen consisted of small cash amounts, clothes, household goods or livestock, and it is evident that personal preference rather than familial obligation governed the direction of these bequests. Thus, in 1699, Roger Robinson, a Selby bachelor, left his second cousin of Staithforth, ten pounds together with a bible box and bible, while his two first cousins were bequeathed only two shillings and sixpence each.⁴⁴ There is little direct evidence in the wills of affection between cousins and kinsmen: only John Cooke, a Selby schoolmaster, who described his cousins as "loving" attached a term of endearment to his bequest.⁴⁵ Moreover, few gifts appear to have been made in recompense for personal help or service. In 1705 Catherine Richardson, a Cawood spinster, nominated as executor of her will her cousin, Mr. George Mathews of Yarm, and left him the reversion of half an enclosure for her funeral charges; in addition he was to receive five pounds together with "consideration" for money borrowed from him together with a guinea for a mourning ring,⁴⁶ but this was the only example in the wills of cousins or kinsmen being involved in debt and credit relationships. Some testators, like Ann Hewley, a wealthy Cawood widow,

who left legacies to nine cousins in her will totalling some ninety pounds in cash and including gold rings and clothes, do appear to have recognized a wide cousinage, although it is interesting that in this case one of the people she described as her "cousin" was, in fact, her nephew.⁴⁷ On the whole, men and women with closer relatives alive at the time of writing their wills ignored their cousins and kinsmen. No doubt many, like William Storr, must have been hardly aware of their whereabouts.

It is not surprising, given the time of life at which most wills must have been made, that uncles and aunts were only infrequently mentioned by testators. Occasionally, we find a person who was young enough to have living aunts and uncles, but rarely do we find evidence of generous gifts. Bequests to uncles and aunts were invariably token amounts. Thus, in 1657, Thomas Scaife, a Selby gentleman, left his uncle, William Scaife of Camelforth, five shillings,⁴⁸ while Henry Waller, a mariner of the same town, left his uncle, Thomas Waude, only his "old grey coat".⁴⁹ In 1661, when Cuthbert Hesketh, one of the wealthiest of Riccall testators dictated his nuncupative will, his scribe noted that:

"...in regard Mr.Cuthert Hesketh his unckle had disposed something to him when his said unckle was sicke, he desired therefore that his said mother would be pleased to give his said unckle something and he said five pounds would be enough."⁵⁰

Such bequests are rather surprising given the generosity of uncles and aunts towards their nephews and nieces. As Table 4:1 indicates, more testators made bequests to their siblings' children than to any other group outside the nuclear family. Moreover, while the percentage of wills making bequests to other groups shows a fall from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, those leaving property to nephews

and nieces actually rises by around seven percent. Some wills hint at a particularly close bond between aunts and uncles and their nephews and nieces: Mary Hotham, of Wistow, nominated: "...my nephew William Meggett who now lives with me" as executor and residuary legatee of her estate,⁵¹ while John Bell of Cawood, also made his nephew, Thomas Bell of Wheldrake, executor and left him twenty shillings "...for his goodwill and service,⁵² and Christopher Edwards, of Selby, left George Edwards, his brother's son, a message and five pounds; "...as a token of my love to him."⁵³ More explicit in his affection and concern was George Cooke of Selby, who wrote in 1681:

"I desire my loveing wife to be very kind unto my three poorest relacons whome I am unckle to (viz George Selby junior, Ann Selby and Sarah Selby his sisters) wherefore not doubting her kindness att and after my death to them I forebear to limit her therin."⁵⁴

In the absence of testators' own children nephews and nieces could sometimes inherit considerable amounts of property as their uncles' principal beneficiaries. James Lowde, a childless yeoman of Cawood, left his nephew, John Lowde, a yeoman of Shortcliffe in Derbyshire, all his copyhold and freehold lands and all his personal property, nominating him as executor of his estate.⁵⁵ In 1675 Adam Tominson of Selby, another childless testator, stated that his wife was to inherit his house and orchard but that on her death the property was to pass to William Tominson, the son of Michael Tominson, his brother.⁵⁶ Sometimes, even when a testator had children of his own, he could be responsible for providing the wherewithal to set up a nephew in business. Thus, in 1748, James Smith, a Cawood gentleman, stated:

"I give and bequeath unto my nephew James Smith the sum of ten pounds to put him out to some trade when he is fit and the further sum of ten pounds to set him up in business when he shall have faithfully served his apprenticeship and not otherwise and in the meantime I order that the interest of the two several sons shall be applied towards finding him apparel until they respectively become due aforesaid."⁵⁷

Of course, such bequests are relatively scarce, and the majority of nephews and nieces received smaller amounts of property and money, small cash sums being commonplace. However, it was relatively uncommon for testators to make bequests to only one nephew and niece; rather will-makers appear to have been anxious to remember all their siblings' children. In 1749, for example, Elizabeth Box, a Selby widow, left the residue of her estate: "...to such of my relations to whom I am full or own aunt",⁵⁸ while in 1737, Mary Higings, of Selby, left her three nephews and two nieces: "1 pound apes if it be thear for you... but if not tak what there is with quiatness and content".⁵⁹ This desire to remember all their siblings' children and the generosity of some testators (particularly towards nephews) coupled with the terms of endearment in which some bequests were couched and the fact that many bequests were made to nephews and nieces living at considerable distances from their aunts and uncles, suggests that the bonds between these relatives could be strong.⁶⁰

Given the frequency with which testators recognized their nephews and nieces it is not surprising that a high proportion also remembered their brothers and sisters and their siblings' spouses when disposing of their property. Almost a third of all will-makers left a legacy to a brother, sister, brother-in-law or sister-in-law and many of these made bequests to more than one sibling. Some gifts, especially those made to in-laws, were of relatively little value in monetary terms - small cash sums, items of clothing, plate and table linen - but many of these bequests were evidently given as tokens of affection. Typical of these was John Palmer, a Selby grocer, who left his "loveing brother" William Palmer, his "best suite of wearing apparrell and one pair of splitt boots, one cane, my saddle and bridle" while a second "loveing brother" received "...all the rest of my apparrell and two

pair of boots".⁶¹ Gifts of clothes, money for mourning rings or gloves and keepsakes were common, yet some brothers and sisters could expect to receive a much larger share of property. In some cases they were left an interest in real estate or inherited large amounts of personal property as residuary legatees. Frequently brothers, sisters and affinal siblings were remembered despite the fact that they did not live in the testator's home town or village. Many will-makers made bequests to siblings who resided in York or in market towns and villages throughout the southern Vale of York, and occasionally we find references to brothers and sisters in other counties or even abroad.

If siblings were closer at hand, the testamentary evidence suggests that the exchange of personal help and services may have been common, for legacies were sometimes accompanied with words of appreciation for services rendered. Thus, Richard Rossendale, a wheelwright of Wistow, made the following bequest to his brother in 1668:

"To John Rossendale, brother, in respect of his faithful service performed on my behalf, all my edge tools on or belonging to my aforesaid trade (and all my yokes and ash timber now lyeing att Selby)".⁶²

A number of testators were anxious that money borrowed from siblings should be repaid out of their estate, or that brothers and sisters should not be expected to repay outstanding debts to the executors, and it seems likely that siblings were considered to be a useful source of credit. Although there is little indication that brothers farmed land as joint tenants (indeed, bequests of land frequently stated that it was to be owned in severalty and not jointly), that siblings could sometimes be business partners is evidenced in the inventory of the Cawood nail-maker Mathew Featherston, whose

appraisers stated: "Be it remembered that his brother Wm. Featherston being all along partners with him. So that half belongs to the sd Wm. Featherston"⁶³ and in that of Thomas Ambler, the Wistow carpenter, where the appraisers listed: "The deceds part of a debt to him and his brothers".⁶⁴

Differences in the Recognition of Kin

This analysis of the recognition of kin, both in terms of the willingness of testators to appoint relatives to handle their property and in terms of the distribution of their property at death, has revealed that, in general, kinship was of limited significance to will-makers in our four communities. The quantitative analysis of the distribution of bequests has shown that the mean number of legatees outside the nuclear family was low and that the proclivity to leave wider bequests declined from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. The number of gifts to unidentified legatees makes an analysis of the direction of bequests difficult, but the figures suggest, and the qualitative evidence from the wills confirms, that while ties with siblings, nephews and nieces were of importance to some men and women, links with cousins and kinsmen were of limited significance. Moreover, bonds with kin do not appear to have been strengthened by spiritual kinship or by the recruitment of kin as servants. Even a cursory study of the documents however, reveals an enormous variation in kinship recognition and we must now ask why some testators chose to leave their property to a broad spectrum of friends and relatives, while others looked no further than their wives and children.

In order to examine the influence of occupation or social status on kinship recognition the male testators from our four parishes have

been placed into five groups according to the occupation or social designations in their wills (Table 4:2). Unfortunately a total of eighty will-makers left no indication of their status; however, the remaining sample of 429 is sufficiently large to allow a valuable analysis of the differences in the distribution of bequests. Although the Table does not reveal any significant variation in the percentage of testators from different groups who made extended bequests, it can be seen that there was considerable variation in the mean number of wider bequests made, and also a difference of emphasis in the direction of these bequests. A careful study of the texts of the wills also points to differences in the types of property bequeathed and the distances over which links were maintained.

Gentlemen's wills contained a relatively high mean number of legatees (6.1) and were distinctive in the large number of bequests made to nephews and nieces, cousins and kinsmen, friends, servants and unspecified beneficiaries. -Sizeable gifts were a notable feature of gentry wills and the evidence suggests that gentlemen recognized family and friends from a wide geographical area. A good example of such recognition is found in the will of Thomas Thropp, a gentleman of Selby. Having no children to provide for, Thomas's first concern in writing his will in 1753 was to make adequate provision for his wife, and this he did by leaving her all his real estate in Selby, Barlby and Brayton or elsewhere for the duration of her life. After her death the property was to pass to his nephew Elias (son of his brother Ellis Thropp of Plymouth) who was to pay an annuity of eight pounds to his aunt, Margaret Aldridge, sister to the testator. Thomas Thropp stated that his niece, sister to Elias, should have two hundred pounds, while two further nephews, John and Robert Hurst of Scarborough were given twenty pounds each at his wife's death. These close relatives then

TABLE 4:2 The Distribution of Bequests Beyond the Nuclear Family : Social Differences

	Gentlemen	Professionals Dealing Tradesmen	Yeomen	Husbandmen and Labourers	Craftsmen	Unspecified
No. of Wills	69	101	112	45	102	80
% containing extended bequests	58.0	52.4	56.3	53.3	54.9	50.0
% containing bequests to:						
Unspecified	42.0	17.8	30.4	33.3	29.4	26.3
Friends	5.8	1.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Godchildren	2.9	0.0	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Servants	18.8	4.0	4.5	0.0	2.0	0.0
Cousins/Kinsmen	17.4	8.9	4.5	2.2	2.0	6.3
Uncles/Aunts	1.4	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nephews/Nieces	40.6	26.8	31.3	31.1	17.6	23.4
Siblings	39.1	31.7	41.1	17.8	31.4	26.3
Grandchildren	7.2	10.9	16.1	8.9	11.8	13.8
Mean No. of legatees outside the nuclear family	6.1	6.9	5.0	4.1	2.8	3.3

were forced to wait for their legacies, but other legatees were to be provided with gifts almost immediately after Thomas Thropp's death. His brother Ellis was bequeathed a sizeable legacy of two hundred pounds; Margaret Aldridge, his sister, was given twenty-two pounds in addition to her annuity; John Dale, his servant, received one pound and an old black galloway; a china punchbowl and ten pounds were to go to Mr Joseph Taylor, a hatter of Ossett and his two sons, Robert and John; Richard Barlo, a Selby peruke-maker, was given a guinea together with the testator's coat, waistcoat and britches; finally, John Wood of Brayton, was forgiven what he owed the testator for rent and the poor of Selby were given five pounds to be distributed by house-row. Thomas Thropp concluded his will by nominating his two friends and neighbours, Mr. John Herbert, apothecary of Selby, and Mr. William Watson, of Brackenholme in the nearby parish of Hemmingborough, as trustees of his estate, giving the latter his silver spurs as a token of his gratitude.⁶⁵ One sees here a gentleman of considerable means, anxious to provide for his wife and, at the same time, in the absence of children, desirous that his lands should devolve upon a nephew. We also witness a gentleman who was of sufficient wealth to make generous bequests to other members of *his family living at a considerable distance from Selby* and at the same time leave legacies to his servant and a number of friends living the market town and surrounding parishes. Had he included a few cousins and kinsmen among his legatees, Thomas Thropp would have been the perfect gentleman testator.

Turning to professional men and dealing tradesmen, Table 4:2 illustrates that fewer of these testators made extended bequests in their wills and that nearly every group of legatees was recognized less frequently than in gentry wills. The high mean number of legatees, however, reveals that those testators from this group who

did remember their wider family and others, were extremely diffuse in their bequests. In 1693, for example, when William Moxon, a Selby tanner, made his will, he stated: "I give my own and well-beloved brothers and sisters and their children one shilling apiece",⁶⁶ and a year later, Thomas Westoby, a butcher of the same town, remembered some forty legatees, including a brother, nephew, cousin and four people who shared his surname.⁶⁷ Such wide distributions of largesse were untypical, but the evidence suggests that those wealthy tradesmen and professional men who did recognize their kin and friends, spread their property widely if rather thinly.

The yeomen were less wealthy than the gentry, professional men and wealthy tradesmen and this is reflected in the smaller number of legatees reflected in their wills. Cousins, kinsmen, friends and servants were rarely found among legatees and few men from this group recognized a wide-ranging kinship network, or enlisted the help of friends as trustees. When distributing their property, yeomen tended to concentrate on their closer relatives, a high proportion of them leaving property only to grandchildren, siblings, nephews and nieces. A typical testator in this respect was William Nelstropp of Wistow, who, when he made his will in 1745, was survived by a wife and two step-sons but no children of his own. He therefore stated that his cottage should pass to one Richard Nelstropp and Richard's son (both York bricklayers and possibly brother and nephew to William) after the death of his wife. In addition, William left his brothers, John and Thomas Nelstropp, and his sister Ann Watson of Cawood, five pounds each, while everyone of their children received forty shillings. Like the gentleman Thomas Thropp, William made provision for his real estate to stay within his family on the death of his wife and at the same time made bequests to siblings, nephews and nieces; however,

these gifts were considerably smaller in the yeoman's case and the long list of additional bequests found in the will of Thomas Thropp is notably absent from that of William Nelstropp.⁶⁸

The occupational groups whose wills contained fewest bequests outside the nuclear family were husbandman, labourers and poorer craftsmen. More craftsmen recognized grandchildren and siblings than did husbandmen and labourers, while fewer made bequests to nephews and nieces; however, both groups of testators were remarkably similar in the low mean number of legatees mentioned, in the few bequests to cousins and kinsmen and in the absence of uncles, aunts, godchildren, friends and servants from the list of beneficiaries. It was not only the narrow range of bequests which marked out these testators from their wealthier neighbours but also the smaller value of their gifts and the more restricted geographical area from which legatees were drawn. Once adequate provision had been made for a widow and children, few poorer craftsmen, husbandmen or labourers could afford to make generous bequests to brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces. A handful of these men, notably prosperous husbandmen and weavers made diffuse and generous bequests, but more typical were men like Joseph Bentley, the Selby serge-weaver, whose only bequest other than to his wife and child, was to one Manby Morrit, also of Selby, to whom he left his bed and his horse,⁶⁹ and Nicholas Burton, a husbandman of Riccall who, after making his wife executrix and residuary legatee of his estate left John and Robert, his two brothers a shilling each.⁷⁰ This concentration on providing for the wife and children and the relatively unimportant position of wider relatives in the disposal of property is nowhere better illustrated than in the will of Robert Gooday, a husbandman of Selby, who, in 1736, left all his personal estate to his wife stipulating that at her death half his personal

estate should devolve upon:

"...one or more of my own relatives whom she shall think most deserving. And further my mind and will is that if any of my relations shall breed any disturbance or molestation to my said wife in her quiet possession of my said personal estate or quarrel with any bequest herein mentioned, than I leave to her to dispose of all her said personal estate to whom she will at her own discretion."⁷¹

It is evident that wealth and rank played an important part in determining the extent and type of testamentary provision found in the wills; those testators with fewer resources showed a more limited recognition of wider kin and friends both in terms of the range of legatees and the geographical distribution of bequests.⁷² The case of William Swann, a poor Cawood labourer, reveals, however, that rank and wealth alone cannot entirely account for the differences between testators. In 1665 the Swann household fell victim to plague, and in October of that year William dictated his will making only two bequests: the first to an unspecified legatee, Mary Rippon, who was given twenty shillings and the second to his daughter, Mary, whom he named as the residuary legatee of his meagre estate. However, in a codicil to his will he added that: "...in case the said Mary Swann his daughter should die of the sickness wherewith himselfe and his house was then infected" his pig and one of his cows were to go to Mary Rippon while a remaining cow, the hay in his close and several sums of money owing to him were to be divided between a further six legatees.⁷³ This example demonstrates that the presence of children could be an important determinant of the distribution of bequests and in order to explore some of the differences between will-makers at various stages in the life-cycle, the wills have been divided according to the family situation of testators (Table 4:3).

TABLE 4:3 The Distribution of Bequests Beyond the Nuclear Family : Life-Cycle and Sex Differences

	Men with no wife and no children	Men with wife but no children	Men with all young children	Men with some or all adult offspring	Spinsters	Widows
No. of Wills	69	88	79	273	24	151
% containing extended bequests	100.0	80.7	32.9	40.2	100.0	55.6
% containing bequests to:						
Unspecified	74.0	4.2	19.0	17.6	66.7	39.0
Friends	2.9	1.1	1.3	0.4	0.0	2.0
Godchildren	-2.9	3.4	0.0	0.4	4.2	4.0
Servants/Masters	13.0	5.7	5.6	1.1	16.7	2.6
Cousins/Kinsmen	20.3	6.8	10.1	2.6	50.0	12.6
Uncles/Aunts	4.3	1.1	0.0	0.0	16.7	1.3
Nephews/Nieces	89.9	46.6	13.9	10.6	58.3	33.1
Siblings	84.0	56.8	27.9	10.3	66.7	25.8
Grandchildren	8.7	3.4	0.0	19.4	0.0	15.2
Mean No. of legatees outside the nuclear family	6.0	4.3	4.2	3.1	8.5	6.5

Most diffuse in their bequests were those men with no wife or children to provide for. Nearly nine percent of these wills contained bequests to grandchildren indicating that some of these men were elderly widowers; however, the majority appear to have been young unmarried testators describing themselves as "bachelors" in their wills and leaving legacies to masters, uncles and aunts. It was these men more than any others, who recognized cousins and kinsmen and whose wills contained the highest proportion of bequests to unspecified individuals. Yet even among this group there was a heavy concentration on close relatives, with brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces being far and away the most frequently found beneficiaries. Some wealthy testators such as Edward Wormley Esq., of Riccall, who, in 1662, made bequests to five nephews, eight nieces and a number of great nephews and nieces, displayed an extremely wide kinship recognition;⁷⁴ but more typical were men like David Jackson, a farmer of Wistow, who, like Wormley, was single and childless, but who restricted his legatees to his three sisters, one brother, servant and nephew.⁷⁵

It can be seen from Table 4:3 that the wills of some eighty-eight testators contained a bequest to a wife but made no mention of children, either because the testator's children had already been established or because he was childless. It would appear that provision for a wife considerably restricted the distribution of bequests; the mean number of legatees falling to 4.3. Just over nineteen percent of these men chose to make no bequests other than to their wives, and nearly all categories of potential legatees (especially cousins and kinsmen) received fewer legacies.

The final two categories of male testators constitute those whose

wills list offspring among the beneficiaries. It is impossible, in most cases, to determine from the texts of the wills themselves, the exact ages of the children, and for the purposes of this analysis, it has therefore been assumed that if the father stated the age at which the children were to receive their legacies (usually at twenty-one or on marriage), or if he nominated tutors or guardians to care for the children, then the offspring were, in fact, young children. However, it is clear both from the internal evidence of some wills and by cross-checking with parish registers, that occasionally young children were mentioned without reference as to when they should receive legacies and it is likely that the number of wills containing all young children is under-represented, while the figure for those with some or all adult children is probably inflated. Despite this problem, the figures reveal that the provision for children of different ages had a marked effect on the recognition of kin and others by testators. Those men whose children were all young were the more diffuse in their bequests; brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces, cousins and kinsmen all figured quit prominently in their wills, and men at this earlier stage in the life-cycle recognized a wider range of kin than those with some or all adult offspring.

In addition to allowing a comparison between men at different stages in the life-cycle, the figures in Table 4:3 also permit us to examine differences in kinship recognition between male and female testators. Of all will-makers spinsters were the most generous in their bequests, their wills containing a mean of 8.5 legatees. Overall few spinsters left testamentary records and the analysis is therefore based on a small sample; however, it would appear that the relative prosperity of these women, together with their lack of family responsibility, enabled them to spread their largesse far and wide. An apposite

example of a young spinster anxious to remember a broad spectrum of relatives and friends in her will is provided by Ann Mansfield of Riccall. Describing herself as a "singlewoman" when she dictated her will in 1727, she divided her assortment of clothes, brass and pewter between her cousin, two aunts and various female friends.⁷⁶ Ann Mansfield's will was typical of many belonging to young unmarried women both in terms of the types of property devised and in the emphasis on bequests to aunts, cousins and female legatees. It was these features which, alongside the diversity of their bequests, made spinsters distinctive in terms of their kinship recognition.

Turning to widows' wills we find that a much lower percentage of these contained extended bequests. No doubt the fact that many widows had under-age children to provide for militated against gifts to wider kin. However, the mean number of legatees contained in widows' wills (6.5) was much higher than in any of the male categories suggesting that those widows who did make extended bequests distributed their property widely. Because female testators varied a great deal both in terms of wealth and family situation, the extent to which sex alone played a role in patterning the distribution of bequests is difficult to quantify; it may have been the case, for example, the average female will-maker was richer and had fewer immediate family responsibilities than the average male testator. However, a comparison between the wills of husband and wife made within a relatively short period, suggests that women differed markedly from men in the distribution of their bequest and in their recognition of kin. The evidence from the wills of John and Mary Baynes of Wistow is particularly revealing in this respect. As an apparently childless and fairly prosperous testator, we may have expected John to distribute his property widely; instead, when he made his will on 12th

January 1741 he named his wife, Mary, as executrix and residuary legatee of his estate stating that the only other beneficiary was to be his nephew, John Baynes, who was to have a shilling if he demanded it. When his wife made her own will little more than a month later she remembered a number of relatives leaving all her husband's clothes to her brother William Ellis of West Huddlesan, bequeathing two pounds and ten shillings each to her nephew, Thomas Toutill, of Birkin, and to her nephew by marriage William Bew, of Hambleton, giving five pounds together with a trunk and its contents to one Elizabeth Stephenson who she had brought up, and nominating William Turner, a yeoman of Wistow, as her executor.⁷⁷ In nearly all the cases where a widow's will can be compared with that of her husband, the woman remembered a greater variety of kin and friends than did the man. Many of the legacies in women's wills consisted of small keepsakes - money for mourning rings, items of clothing, treasured household objects - items which, though of little value, must have been important in strengthening ties with kin and friends. Such gifts would not have been expensive to make but are found only infrequently in the wills of their husbands.⁷⁸

The recognition of kin in the wills thus varied, not only according to the rank and wealth of the testator, but also with sex and family situation; indeed, the latter seems to have been an extremely important factor in determining the strength and direction of interconnections amongst kin. Overall, however, the kinship recognition displayed by testators in our found parishes was limited. The acknowledgement of a wide kinship network in terms of both the administration and the disposal of family property could occur, but was a relatively rare phenomenon. The evidence suggests that ties with close relatives, especially with siblings and their children

could be strong, but beyond that it would appear that there was little obligation on will-makers to recognize a wide-ranging cousinage. We are forced to conclude that ties of kinship were of limited importance in the overall patterning of social relationships within our four communities. The results of a system of inheritance largely concentrated on the nuclear family, and a high rate of geographical mobility, can be witnessed both in the memorandum book of William Storr and in the wills of our parishioners.

CHAPTER 4 : REFERENCES

1. The Book of Remarks of William Storr, p.24.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. R.Houlbrooke, The English Family, 1450-1700 (London, 1984), p.39.
5. Laslett, World We Have Lost, pp.90-98.
6. A.Macfarlane, The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, a Seventeenth Century Clergyman : An Essay in Historical Anthropology (Cambridge, 1970), pp.127-139, 143-158.
7. Wrightson, English Society, p.47.
8. Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, pp.82-103. See also K.Wrightson "Kinship in an Essex village : Terling Essex, 1500-1700", in R.M.Smith (ed.), Land Kinship and Life-Cycle (Cambridge, 1985), pp.313-332.
9. Chaytor "Household and Kinship", pp.25-60. This should be read in conjunction with two critiques of Miranda Chaytor's study: K.Wrightson, "Household and Kinship in Sixteenth Century England", History Workshop Journal, 12 (1981), pp.151-158; R.Houston and R.Smith, "A New Approach to Family History?", History Workshop Journal, 14 (1982), pp.120-131.
10. Hey, Myddle, pp.209-10, 216.
11. Cressy, "Kinship in Early Modern England", pp.44-51, 53.
12. See for example: Howell, "Peasant Inheritance Customs", p.141; Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, pp. 91-94; Vann, "Wills and the family ", pp.346-367; Johnson, "Probate inventories and wills of a Worcestershire parish", pp.31-2; Johnson, "Family and Kin", pp.47-52; Cressy, "Kinship in Early Modern England", pp.53-65.
13. Vann, "Wills and the family", pp.363-367; Johnson, "Family and Kin", passim.
14. Vann, "Wills and the family", p.366; Johnson, "Family and Kin", passim; Wrightson and Levin, Poverty and Piety, p.93; Johnson, "Probate inventories and wills of a Worcestershire parish", pp.31-32.
15. Wistow Prebendal Court, October 1732. The same discrepancy is also found in a comparison between Ralph Josselin's will and his diary, Macfarlane, Family Life of Ralph Josselin, pp.64-67, 126-160.
16. For a discussion of the imprecision of English kinship terminology in our period see Houlbrooke, English Family, p.40 and Cressy, "Kinship in Early Modern England", pp.65-66.
17. Prerogative Court, October 1662 (date of will).
18. Wistow Prebendal Court (Cawood), June 1679.
19. Wistow Prebendal Court (Cawood), May 1686.

20. Wistow Prebendal Court (Cawood), October 1695.
21. Riccall Prebendal Court, September 1736.
22. Riccall Prebendal Court, July 1745.
23. Wistow Prebendal Court (Cawood), April 1752.
24. That the term 'friends' could also include relatives has been pointed out by Lawrence Stone in The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800 (London 1977), p.97. However, none of the 'friends' from our sample of wills can be positively identified as relatives.
25. That the use of overseers is an accurate guide to the willingness of testators to allow friends some involvement in the administration of family property is suggested by Vann, "Wills and the family", pp. 365-366. The percentage figures for the involvement of kin as overseers and supervisors in our four parishes is lower than found for Terling by Wrightson and Levine (Poverty and Piety, p. 100), but the fact that a family reconstitution had been undertaken for Terling allowed more relatives to be identified may account for some of this difference.
26. Riccall Prebendal Court, May 1675.
27. Riccall Prebendal Court, April 1671.
28. Riccall Prebendal Court, May 1674.
29. For a general discussion of the participation of kin in funerals in early modern England see Houlbrooke, English Family, pp. 203-207.
30. Riccall Prebendal Court, February 1660.
31. Prerogative Court, December 1739.
32. This tendency towards an increasing concentration on the nuclear family has also been found by Vann, "Wills and the family", pp. 363-366 and by Johnson "Family and Kin", pp. 48-49.
33. Wistow Prebendal Court, October 1660.
34. Riccall Prebendal Court, May 1694.
35. Wistow Prebendal Court, October 1664.
36. Selby Peculiar Court, June 1745.
37. Prerogative Court, August 1733.
38. Prerogative Court, July 1663 (date of will).
39. Selby Peculiar Court, May 1663 (date of will).
40. These findings concur with those of Macfarlane, Family Life of Ralph Josselin, pp. 144-5 and Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, p.39, who both found spiritual kinship to be of little significance in influencing social relationships in the seventeenth century. For a discussion of the significance of spiritual kinship in early modern England see Houlbrooke, English Family, p.131. See also Howell,

"Peasant Inheritance Customs", pp. 140-141.

41. The best study of rural servants in early modern England is A.Kusmaul, Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England (Cambridge, 1981).
42. Wistow Prebendal Court, January 1719.
43. Selby Peculiar Court, August 1659 (date of will).
44. Selby Peculiar Court, May 1700.
45. Selby Peculiar Court, June 1745.
46. Wistow Prebendal Court (Cawood), March 1705.
47. Wistow Prebendal Court (Cawood), June 1679.
48. Selby Peculiar Court, May 1662.
49. Selby Peculiar Court, February 1681 (date of Will).
50. Prerogative Court, January 1661 (date of Will).
51. Wistow Prebendal Court, July 1755.
52. Wistow Prebendal Court (Cawood), April 1752.
53. Prerogative Court, May 1694.
54. Selby Peculiar Court, February 1682.
55. Wistow Prebendal Court (Cawood), January 1746.
56. Selby Peculiar Court, July 1669 (date of Will).
57. Prerogative Court, March 1756.
58. Prerogative Court, March 1756.
59. Selby Peculiar Court, February 1739.
60. The importance of relationships with uncles has also been found by Wrightson and Levine in Poverty and Piety, p.92 and by Macfarlane in Family Life of Ralph Josselin, pp.133-137.
61. Prerogative Court, March 1702.
62. Wistow Prebendal Court, October 1660.
63. Wistow Prebendal Court (Cawood), July 1754.
64. Prerogative Court, February 1731.
65. Prerogative Court, May 1755.
66. Selby Peculiar Court, December 1693.
67. Prerogative Court, August 1694.

68. Wistow Prebendal Court, 1747.
69. Prerogative Court, January 1705.
70. Riccall Prebendal Court, November 1688.
71. Selby Peculiar Court, May 1737.
72. Although social position was not thought to be an important factor in determining kinship recognition in Terling (Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, p.93), in his analysis of Banbury wills Vann found that "prestigious" testators were much more likely to make extended bequests ("Wills and the family", pp.363-365).
73. Wistow Prebendal Court (Cawood), July 1666.
74. Prerogative Court, October 1662 (date of Will).
75. Wistow Prebendal Court, March 1758.
76. Chancery Court, July 1727.
77. Prerogative Court, October 1662 (date of Will).
78. The evidence from our four parishes contrasts with that from Terling where Wrightson and Levine found little evidence that women varied from men in their recognition of kin (Poverty and Piety, p.903).

CHAPTER 5

PROPERTY AND PARENTAL AUTHORITY

The marriage of William Storr and his wife, Elizabeth, produced a total of ten children. During the first seven years of their married life, while living at Selby, Elizabeth gave birth to three sons. John, the eldest, attended a school in the neighbouring parish of Sherburn-in-Elmet, but died from smallpox there at the age of ten. The couple also lost their third son, William, who died when still a baby, and was buried at Selby in 1694. When they moved to Scalm Park, Wistow, in 1695, their only surviving son was the second-born, Robert, who was then four years old. During the next eleven years the couple produced a further seven children. Two of these, Ann and Thomas, were put out to wet-nurses in Selby and died while in their care. Three children, John, Mary and Elizabeth, survived the hazards of early childhood, but were spared only until the ages of fourteen, seventeen and twenty-six respectively. Thus, when William, the father, made his will in 1731, only three sons were then alive: Robert, aged forty; William, aged thirty-two; and Samuel, aged twenty-eight.¹ The survival rate among William and Elizabeth Storr's children serves as an apposite reminder of the shockingly high incidence of infant and child mortality during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Indeed, it has been estimated that, during this period, one child in five died during its first year and that, among the labouring population, almost a third of all children died before their fifth birthday.²

If the demographic context of early modern childhood is relatively easy to establish, the implications of high infant and child mortality for the quality of parent-child relationships are much more difficult

to determine. During the 1960s and 1970s, a number of historians suggested that the frequent loss of a child meant that early modern parents distanced themselves emotionally from their children; a high infant mortality rate, they argued, militated against children being the focus of parental affection and led to a lack of sentimental attachment. Basing their research largely on the evidence of domestic conduct books and the diaries of the gentry and aristocracy, these historians painted a pessimistic picture of early modern childhood which, they claimed, was based on patriarchalism, distance and harsh discipline.³ Scholarly research during the last fifteen years has done much to modify this bleak view. Close examination of a wider range of diaries and autobiographies has revealed considerable evidence of parental affection and care, while a more balanced reading of conduct books has stressed the emphasis which moralists placed on the obligations of parents towards their children.⁴ Wills too have occasionally been cited to provide evidence of parental concern and care, but though these documents have been well used to study the economic and social effects of different inheritance practices, there has been little systematic research on testamentary evidence in order to study parent-child relationships.⁵

It should be stated at the outset that many dimensions of the relationship between generations which have been of interest to historians have left no trace in wills. Testamentary evidence is silent on subjects such as attitudes towards childbirth, child-rearing practices, child labour and the psychological development of children. However, wills do contain a substantial amount of evidence on the ways in which parents used their property to bring up their young children and to bestow them when they came of age. Moreover, testators occasionally expressed their personal viewpoints when making

bequests and this evidence, though tantalizing and impressionistic, is an invaluable indication of parental attitudes among the middling sort. In this chapter we shall study three aspects of parental attitudes: firstly, we shall examine what the wills reveal of sentiments between parents and children; secondly, we shall consider the provision made for children's moral and material support during the time of their minority; thirdly, we shall examine the different methods of providing for children when they came of age, asking in particular, what the transfer of property from one generation to the next reveals of the nature of parental authority in our four parishes.

Sentiments

Joshua Wood, a haberdasher from Selby, died in 1717. At his death he was survived by his wife, Jane, three married daughters and two sons, Mathew and Isaac. Joshua Wood was a relatively prosperous tradesman; his inventory listed a large stock of haberdashery including stockings, hats and cloth,⁶ and his will indicated that, in addition to the shop and house attached to it, he also owned a further two houses in the town. In making his will the haberdasher outlined a standard type of provision for his two daughters and one of his sons, Isaac: each of these children had probably received a suitable portion when they had come of age or at their marriages and Joshua therefore gave them a guinea each as a legacy, a typical pattern of bequests for an elderly man. However, because of the information which it yields about the provision made for the second son, Mathew, Joshua's will is a rare and remarkable document. In it the father wrote:

"First I give to my sone Mathu but twell pence hee hath bin soe mene to mee and his mother upone all accountes pray God for give him...and for the lese of spinke close and hose whereas I have maid a riting that Mathu shuld have the lese of spinke hose and

close he hath been so mene in receve my detes that was due to mee and other things which I shall not speke off pray God for give him I leve it to the mentenance of my wife..."⁷

The phraseology may have been rather naive, but the meaning is clear and the intention definite. It is impossible to determine, however, whether Joshua Wood's action regarding his son was within the law. Swinburne, the eighteenth century authority on will-making wrote that the disinheritance of a child by a father was illegal and that if this occurred the child was entitled to bring suit to recover the inheritance under common law.⁸ However, in this case Mathew may have already received his right share of family property and his father may merely have been excluding him from any additional legacy. Whatever the case, this example reveals that relationships between parents and children in our four communities could be, to say the least, rather strained, and that money and property could sometimes lie at the root of the discord.

Of course the will of Joshua Wood is exceptional. Most fathers were not so explicit in expressing their innermost feelings in what were, after all, legal documents. However, a handful of testators did hint at the possibility of conflict between the older and younger generations, though a noticeable feature of these cases was that the disputes were between in-laws. In 1721, for example, James Burringham, a yeoman of Selby, left a house to his daughter, Hannah Watson, for the term of seven years, but stated:

"...in case the said Hannah alone or together with Nicholas Watson her husband should assigne over any part of the said terme to any person whatsoever in order to defray the debts of the said Nicholas Watson then the said devise of seaven years to be utterly void."⁹

Similarly, in 1742, the Wistow gentleman, Richard Wynne, left his daughter, Sarah, an annuity of fifteen pounds, but stated that "ye same shall not be paid to her said husband... for or to ye payment or satisfaction of any of his debts or other occasions whatsoever."¹⁰ Mothers-in-law too could have their grievances: when Jane Dinnis, a Selby widow, made her will in 1702 she left her son-in-law five shillings "he haveing been very undutyfull towards me and dissoblidgeing to my daughter."¹¹

Just as testators could be aggrieved over a son-in-law's debts or bad behaviour, as in these cases, so it was possible for sons-in-law to have their own cause for complaint. Thus, when William Marton, a young gentleman of Selby, wrote his will in 1665, he made three of his friends executors of his estate and left them two closes which he said were to cover any charges which might arise as a result of legal proceedings against Roger Ryley, his father-in-law, for the three thousand pound dowry which had been promised on his marriage to Ryley's daughter, but which had not yet been paid.¹²

Possible discord between mothers and their offspring is also sometimes suggested in the wills, for occasionally the probate evidence reveals that fathers were concerned about the future relationships of their widow and their children. Thomas Cock, a Selby mercer, who made provision for his widow and his son to share his house after he died stated that:

"...if he and his mother Hannah Cock cannot agree to live together then my mind is that he at their parting pay her five pounds per year dureing her continuance in my name."¹³

A similar if somewhat meaner provision was made by William Longfellow of Riccall in 1753 who stated that:

"...if my wife and son cannot agree to live together so that they part that my son John pay unto my wife ten shillings in the year so long as she continues my widow."¹⁴

Richard Hare, a husbandman of the same village, also hinted at possible domestic discord between his wife and his son stating that:

"...my will is, if in my wife Sarah Hare and John Hare my son do happen to disagree betwixt themselves to divide my substance both moveable and immoveable equally betwixt themselves at the discretion of two sufficient men to divide the same."¹⁵

Dissent between parents and children, was, it would seem, a possibility which some people contemplated in their wills, yet it would be a mistake to dwell too long on these cases for, overall, the probate evidence reveals a situation in which parent-child relationships were relatively harmonious. Indeed, in some cases, the affection which mothers and fathers felt for their offspring was actually expressed in their testamentary records. Wills, of course, were usually made by older people and therefore, only infrequently provide an insight into children's feelings for their parents. Occasionally, however, they reveal something of the sentiments of adult offspring. Men and women whose mothers or fathers were alive when they drew up their wills, frequently referred to them in affectionate terms. Witness, for example, the will of Frances Richardson, a Cawood spinster, who made her "dear mother" sole executrix of her will in 1699,¹⁶ or that of her brother John, who also appointed his "dear and affectionate mother" as executrix and residuary legatee.¹⁷ Such sentiments were also expressed in the will of Richard Dealtry, a Selby grocer, who appointed his "deare and loving father" as executor in 1707¹⁸ and in that of Richard Reame, the

Selby butcher, who, in 1701, left his "honoured and careful mother" three furnished rooms in his dwelling-house.¹⁹ Terms of endearment such as these were also commonly used when testators made bequests to children. References to "beloved", "well-beloved", "dear", "dutiful" and "loving" children, are scattered throughout the probate records. The will of Robert Storr of Wistow, whose legatees included his "dear daughter Elizabeth", his "dear daughter Margaret" and his "dear son William"²⁰, or that of James Wilkinson of Cawood, who made bequests to his "well-beloved daughter" and his "well-beloved son", are typical examples.²¹

Phrases such as these may, of course, be dismissed as scribal convention. A notable feature of their use is that they are largely (though not exclusively) restricted to the wills of the gentry or prosperous tradesmen, whose testaments were generally more wordy and elaborate. However, such forms would hardly have arisen in the absence of parental fondness and affection. That some of these descriptions were sincere and heartfelt is beyond doubt, for occasionally parents and children would also display their affection by requesting to be buried next to each other. William Marton who, as we have seen, was at loggerheads with his father-in-law, described his mother as "dear and loving" and stated that his body should be buried "...as near unto the grave of my father as may be".²² At the opposite end of the social spectrum, William Spinke, a Selby labourer, wanted to be buried "...in a Christian decent manner nigh unto my two children in the green churchyard at Selby".²³ Burial requests and statements of endearment are the only explicit references to family sentiments which we find in the wills. More frequently, however, parental concern is implicit in the careful concern which testators displayed when providing for their children.

The Care of Young Children

The loss of a parent in childhood and youth was a common phenomenon in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England, and many children in our four communities must have experienced parental deprivation.²⁴ Unfortunately, without a full family reconstitution for each parish, it is impossible to say exactly how frequent this problem was. The wills do not usually indicate the ages of children, but it is possible to gain a rough estimate of the proportion of children who were minors when their fathers drew up their wills, for it was usual to indicate an under-age child by stating that a bequest should take effect when the child married or reached a certain age, usually twenty-one.²⁵ In just over a third of the wills there were bequests to children who were unmarried or under twenty-one. Clearly, the problem of supporting orphaned children and of bringing them safely to maturity was one with which a large number of families were confronted. What tactics did they employ?

The Canon Law of the Province of York gave the father power to nominate in his will a guardian for his children until they were of sufficient age to choose one for themselves; in the case of boys this was deemed to be fourteen, and in the case of girls twelve. Technically the guardian was called a "tutor" when appointed by the father and a "curator" when chosen by the child. Although by Civil Law a woman other than the mother and grandmother of the child could not be chosen as tutrix, this was not the case within the Province of York, where any woman could be nominated.²⁶ Despite the fact that the law gave fathers these powers, few testators from our communities who had under-age children when they wrote their wills chose to appoint a guardian, and most were content merely to provide them with portions

when they came of age. No doubt most fathers, if they considered the matter at all, were content for their next of kin (in most cases their wife and the mother of the children) to assume responsibility for their care as the law provided. However, a total of some forty-three male testators did nominate guardians and their wills allow us to perceive something of the attitudes of fathers towards their young children.

Of these forty-three testators, twenty-nine were survived by their wives and twenty-three of these named her as guardian of their children. It was, of course, superfluous to nominate the next of kin in the will in this way and it is difficult to know why some men chose to do so. Possibly they may have been submitting to pressure from a clerk or lawyer desirous of earning more fees or they may have been particularly prudent fathers. Whatever the case, it would appear that the wife of the testator was, in most cases, the natural choice as guardian. It is clear from the phraseology of the wills that fathers had a great deal of faith in their wife's capacity to bring up their children. When he made his will in 1666 Alexander Richardson of Cawood had two sons and three daughters to provide for; after making his wife executrix of the will he stated with evident satisfaction, "I dye possessed of one tutor to the children".²⁷ Bartholemew Ibbitson, a Selby butcher, declared in 1729 that he would leave his loving wife Sarah, the residue of his estate, "...not doubting of her kindness and care to and of my younger children."²⁸ In 1676 when Henry Scales, a Cawood yeoman, dictated his nuncupative will, he declared that he would leave his wife "...all that I have and leave my child to her disposing for I question not that she will wrong her."²⁹ The most clear statement of a father's belief in the capability of his wife to raise his children after his death is found in the will of Nicholas

Smith of Selby, who, in typical gentlemanly fashion, elaborated:

"And if my said son should not be minded or chuse to be put out or go into business I earnestly recommend it to him to continue to live with his mother well knowing her great tenderness and regard for him. And that it will be for his own good and future welfare to follow her council and advice which I hope he'll ever pay due regard to".³⁰

The responsibility of the wife to care for the children was described by testators in a variety of ways. Most men simply granted tuition to their wife or stated that the child or children should be brought up and have maintenance from their mother, but some felt it necessary to elaborate on their wishes and were more specific in their expectations. Thomas Smith, a Selby labourer, for example, directed in 1707, that his wife, Hannah, should provide his son, John, with "necessary wearing apparell" during his apprenticeship.³¹ Occasionally, wealthy fathers stated that *their children were to be* educated as well as maintained. Robert Wormley, esquire, of Riccall, wrote in 1712 that his wife was to, "...bring up maintaine and educate my three children",³² while John Waite, a wealthy Selby yeoman, gave his wife his dwelling house, his land and all his personal estate for the "...educating and bringing up" of his children.³³ Some fathers hinted at their concern for the future welfare of their children. Thomas Watson, a Cawood husbandman, implored his wife in 1709 to, "...bring up my children with care",³⁴ while in 1661 Ralph Carter, a gentleman of Selby, hoped that his wife would have, "...a good and godly care" of his children.³⁵ One testator, Richard Mountain, a yeoman of Cawood, felt it necessary to add a protective clause in his will stating that his children should not be expected to pay for the maintenance and education they had received once they were of age: in 1716 he stated that his wife should, "...educate and take what care possable she can of Susan Mountain our daughter until she accomplish the age of one and twenty, not stoping or accounting anything for the

same"; he stressed that his daughter was not be "...any wayes accountable to Mary Mountain my wife for her table washing and apparell for and during that said term of years."³⁶ Another testator, Robert Cock, a gentleman of Wistow, was evidently anxious as to what would become of his children should his wife re-marry after his death and therefore stipulated that if his wife should find a new husband, the tuition of his two sons was to devolve upon four of his friends.³⁷

Such anxiety about the future welfare of children, even when the wife was alive, was perhaps most evident when the wife of the testator was the step-mother of his children. It may have been such a situation which lead John Hawcroft, a Selby yeoman, to choose his brother in preference to his wife to be guardian to his under-age children,³⁸ and which prompted William Clarkson the Cawood millwright to nominate George Halliley his, "...trusty and well beloved friend and kinsman" as tutor and guardian to his son when his wife, Susannah, was alive.³⁹ Unfortunately step-parents are not usually indicated as such by testators; however, by combining the probate evidence from the will of one Henry Ambler of Wistow⁴⁰ with the demographic evidence from the parish register,⁴¹ it has been possible to examine in detail the strategy of a man survived by a second wife and children from a former marriage. Henry Ambler was baptized in Wistow in 1706 and, in 1731, he married one May Foster, also of Wistow. During the following four years after the birth of her last child the mother died. There is no trace of Henry's subsequent marriage in the Wistow parish register, but we can be certain that he did marry again for when he made his will, in 1747, he stated that he would leave his, "...dear and loveing wife Frances" six pounds and all the household goods that she had brought with her at their marriage. Of particular interest is the fact that Henry did not leave the care of his children by his former

marriage (now ages fourteen, thirteen and eleven respectively) to their step-mother, but instead appointed the two brothers of his first wife, John and William Foster, as trustees for his children to be responsible, "...for the clothing and education of them".

Of course, it is impossible to understand the motivation and attitudes behind such action. It may have been that some testators were anxious not to encumber their new wives, after their death, with children from a former marriage. Equally, it may be true that testators appreciated that a step-relationship could be a difficult one and were anxious to avoid possible tension. Some testators did appoint step-mothers as guardians, but as the will of Richard Seaner, a yeoman of Selby, indicates, they took special care that their children were adequately protected. Seaner was left with two children of a former marriage when he made his will in 1682 and urged that his, "...now wife" Elizabeth was:

"...to take aspesshell care of my ...children dewreinge the tyme of thare minoratey that they be well educated and brought up with sewtable learning and education."

He went on to nominate his uncle and brother as supervisors of his will and trustees of his estate desiring them:

"...to take upon them the care and trouble of this my trust reposed in them for the good of my children."⁴²

The will reveals a father who, while prepared to leave his children to the care of their step-mother, is evidently anxious that she should fulfil the duties reposed in her.

In total there were only five testators who nominated family and others to care for children in place of the widow and it would appear that, wherever possible, fathers tried to keep their children together under the guidance of their mother. Those men whose wives were

already dead when they drew up their wills had no choice but to turn to their kin and friends. It is interesting, however, that although the law, as we have seen, gave testators power to chose a female as tutor to their children, none of them did so. A handful of men, such as William Blanshard, of Riccall, who directed that his eldest son should, "...give his brother meat and drink and lodging till he be out of his apprenticeship",⁴³ left the care of younger children to an older brother, but no testator gave custody to a sister. Moreover, whilst some men left their children in the care of grandfathers or uncles, none entrusted them to grandmothers or aunts. Equally, when friends and neighbours were chosen as guardians, these were always men. Thus, Christopher Wormley, a gentleman of Riccall, desired that his two chidden should be, "...virtuously brought uppe and educated" by four men whom he called his, "...trustie and well beloved friends",⁴⁴ while William Swann, a labourer of Cawood, gave the tuition and education of his daughter to Mr. William Smith and Mr. Partridge Ashton, gentlemen of Cawood.⁴⁵ When widows provided for the care of their children after their death, they too preferred to appoint men, although they were not as inflexible on this point as their husbands. Rebecca Greene of Cawood, who made her will in 1669, outlined detailed provision for her daughter's education, entrusting her care to her daughter-in-law, providing the means by which this could be fulfilled and ensuring that her daughter-in-law was not financially burdened by her charge:

"Elizabeth Greene to take my daughter Mary Greene to her tuission to keep and bring up til she be at lawful years haveing all the said house and goods in possession for the use of my said daughter Mary Greene and what expenses and charges Elizabeth Greene my daughter-in-law shall be at that Mary Greene my daughter shall be accountable to satisfie her for it when she comes to lawful years of age."⁴⁶

When the daughter-in-law and guardian made her own will four years

later, she too made careful provision for Mary during her minority, but was more conventional in her choice of guardians calling upon the services of Tobias Burdsall, a gentleman of Biggin, and Theophilus Brogden of Church Fenton.⁴⁷

The care of the orphaned children by a widow, relatives or friends, especially if this involved providing the children with education, was obviously a deed which necessitated a good deal of time and expense and this was explicitly recognized by some testators. When Christopher Wormley, who we have already seen, left the curation of his children to his four friends, he described this as a "trouble" and a "burthen".⁴⁸ Similarly, in 1743 when a Wistow gentleman, Thomas Lodge, appointed James Ward, a tanner of the same village, as tutor to his two daughters, he stated, "...I do hereby order my said children to be grateful to the said James Ward for the trust I have reposed in him" and added that:

"...the said James Ward shall not be answerable for any sum or sums of money that he shall place out at interest and shall be lost during the infancy of my said two daughters respectively".⁴⁹

Indeed, it would have been unlikely that James Ward would have found himself out of pocket, for the two girls had been left all their father's freehold lands, his copyhold lands and tenements in Wistow (worth fifteen pounds a year) and all his personal estate (worth three hundred and fifty pounds).⁵⁰ Thomas Lodge was a gentleman, and therefore able to make generous provision for his daughters' maintenance, yet the wills show that men of all social ranks were as generous in their financial provision as their funds would allow. One man, Thomas Richardson, a Cawood blacksmith, left the tuition of his son William and his daughter Patience, to his wife and gave them three pounds each, which he said was to be, "...put forth for theyre use

till they come of age or put them to trades",⁵¹ but this was the only example of a specific amount of cash being left in this way. Most testators chose one of three methods of providing the wherewithal to maintain their children; some men allocated their children's portions when they came of age and stated that in the meantime, the profits were to be used for their maintenance; a second group left their entire estate, or the residue of their property, to the guardians, stipulating that this was to be set aside for their children's use; thirdly, some testators left a specific piece of real estate which was to provide the maintenance for their children.

There is insufficient data to attempt a socially-specific analysis of the types of provision made, but perhaps two examples from extremes of the social spectrum illustrate the range of possibilities. William Pallister was a poor husbandman from Riccall. In 1726 the appraisers of his inventory listed *the meagre contents of his two-roomed house* and added that his livestock consisted of only two old cows, a heffer, and three poor small calves; they calculated that the total value of these goods was eight pounds, twelve shillings and eight pence.⁵² Unable to make specific provision for *his two younger sons and provide* adequately for his wife, Pallister could only leave his cottage and barn, together with his furniture and stock and his rights of common pasture in Riccall to his wife upon condition he said:

"...that my said wife Anne take care of my two younger sons until they be capable of takeing care of themselves."⁵³

Four years previously William Mauleverer the younger, a wealthy Selby gentleman, had made very different provision for his under age children. Mauleverer was not survived by a wife; his considerable real estate was therefore divided between his two sons and his daughter. The children were left in the care of their grandfather, their

father's cousin and two other gentlemen, who were instructed to sell as many goods and chattels as were necessary to provide for the education and maintenance of the children.⁵⁴ The means by which gentlemen like Mauleverer and husbandmen like Pallister, were able to support their children during their minorities differed considerably, yet the aim was the same: to bring their children to adulthood under the care of trusted guardians and with the financial help that their resources would allow. Such provision reinforces the view gleaned from the scattered indications of affection that parents, of all social ranks, invested a great deal of concern and anxiety in their children's upbringing.

The "Putting Forth" of Children

Our knowledge of the care for under-age children is restricted to the minority of cases where fathers dealt with this problem in their testaments. The wills, however, provide a much more substantial corpus of evidence on the provision which fathers made for their children when they achieved what was frequently called "lawful age". How did fathers view the competing interests of their heir and the younger sons? Did provision made for daughters differ from that made for sons? How did provision differ from one social group to another? To what extent was property used to enforce parental power? These are issues which were of crucial importance to the parents and children of our four communities, but they are not easy questions to answer, even where an abundance of probate evidence has survived.

A major problem in using wills as a guide to the ways in which children were bestowed is that the transmission of property from parents to their children was a continual process which could last

over a number of years. In many cases people settled inheritances long before death and testators merely bequeathed a residual element of property in their wills.⁵⁵ In one sense the fact that, in some cases, only small amounts of property were devised by will is, in itself, an indication of parental attitudes towards their children, for it is clear that parents must have been prepared to transfer a great deal of their wealth to their children before their death. The willingness of fathers to devise property before they died is sometimes explicitly expressed in the document. In 1710, for example, when James Wilkinson, a gentleman of Cawood, wrote his will, he made bequests with the words, "And as to the settling of the temporall estate as it hath pleased God to bestow on me (and not by me to my dear children otherwise already disposed)...".⁵⁶ Simon Spofferth, a Selby gentleman, bequeathed to his eldest son, Samuel, his dwelling house and one guinea which he said, "...with twenty-eight pounds he formerly received from me is in full of his chyld part and porcon".⁵⁷ Similarly, John Bacon, a Selby timber-merchant, left his son William, one guinea, "...over and above what I have formerly given him",⁵⁸ and in 1737, a husbandman of Cawood, Christopher Clapham, left his married daughter, Anne Nicholson, "...as much money with what I have already given her as shall amount to the sum of twenty pounds".⁵⁹

Retrospective references such as these were rare, and that they were recorded at all was the result of the personal whim of the testator, but that pre-mortem transfers of all types of property were frequent there can be little doubt. There are two main indications in the wills that children usually received their legacies before the death of their parents. Firstly, it has been found, by comparing the wills of male testators with those of their widows, that grown children, having received their portions, are sometimes omitted from their

father's wills. Compare, for example, the will of John Ryles, a gentleman of Cawood, which mentioned only one daughter, Ann Ryles⁶⁰, with that of his widow, Bridgett, which lists a further daughter and two sons with the Ryles surname,⁶¹ or the will of John Ward, a tailor of Riccall, whose only bequests in 1726 were to his two sons⁶² with that of his widow, Eleanor Ward, made three years later, where, in addition to the two sons, a married daughter and a "youngest daughter" were left bequests.⁶³ Secondly, in many wills there is a sizeable disparity in bequests to different children. Indeed, in some cases legacies took the form of a token amount, usually of one shilling, but sometimes of five shillings, a pound, a guinea, or, in the case of very wealthy testators, five pounds. These bequests do not suggest that children had incurred the disfavour of their parents and were being written out of their wills, but rather that they were children who had been "put forth" previously and were being recognized as having received, "...in full of what he can claim" or "...in full of his child's portion"; Henry Bullock, for example, a Wistow yeoman, left his eldest son Robert Bullock, twelve pence, "...in full of his child's portion", while two younger sons and a daughter were left five pounds each.⁶⁴

The available evidence from our four parishes does not permit us to fully examine when, and in what manner, family property was transmitted to those children who were already established when their fathers made their wills. However, the information relating to William Storr confirms that wills can provide a misleading picture of the ways in which children were bestowed. When William drew up his will in 1731, he made no reference to his eldest son Robert, though he gave his second son, William, two leasehold houses in Selby and made him executor of the will, while the youngest son, Samuel, was

bequeathed a further house in Selby.⁶⁵ Only by referring to Storr's Book of Remarks and the Wistow manorial court papers do we learn that Robert was already established on a large estate in Wistow, that William purchased the family house at Scalm Park and that Samuel was established on a small farm in Wistow.⁶⁶ This example reminds us that wills often record only the final point in the transmission of property from parents to children. Men like William Storr, whose children were grown up, provide only a partial picture in their wills of the way in which their offspring were "put forth". However, not all parents lived to see their children married and settled, and the wills of younger testators can be of great value in understanding how parents attempted to provide for their under-age children. Let us first consider the provision these parents made for their sons, examining, in particular, the types of property bequeathed and the ways in which this varied according to the social status of the testator and between different communities.

Only a minority of fathers itemized the personal property which they passed on to their sons; however, these cases do reveal some interesting differences between the property which was bequeathed in different parishes. In Wistow and Riccall the inheritance of a farm or land was undoubtedly crucial to the future prosperity of sons, but in the market towns of Cawood and Selby the succession to business properties, shares in ships, trade goods, tools or money with which to purchase apprenticeship indentures must have been a matter of great concern to many. It is not difficult to find evidence of succession to these types of property in the market town wills. Five Selby mariners left their sons an interest in their business, three of them bequeathing a share in the vessel, one an entire boat and one his kiln and coal yards. Two shopkeepers bequeathed their shops, seven

tradesmen and craftsmen left the tools of their trade and a further two men left sums of money with which to bind their sons apprentices. In the smaller market town of Cawood, we find fewer examples of provision of this kind. Nevertheless, even here, two blacksmiths and a cordwainer bequeathed their working tools while a linen-weaver left his son, "...three loomes with slayes, geares and furniture which are in my shop in full satisfaction of his child's portion".⁶⁷ A further three men (one of whom stated that his son was to be a ship-carpenter) left quantities of money for their sons apprenticeships. Such bequests were conspicuous by their absence in the two villages. At Wistow, one testator mentioned that his son was an apprentice, and at Riccall two men left looms to their sons, but these were the only fathers who hinted that their sons were to follow a trade.

One may have assumed that in the smaller and more rural settlements a larger number of fathers would have made bequests of agricultural equipment and livestock, but this does not appear to have been the case. Only four yeoman or husbandmen from each village bequeathed livestock to their sons and the only man to itemize agricultural implements was John Morfit, a Riccall husbandman who, in 1721, left his son, John, a waggon, a plough and a harrow.⁶⁸ Although slightly more examples of specific bequests of livestock and agricultural equipment can be found in the larger samples from market towns, it is significant that nearly all of these were made by poorer yeomen or husbandmen. No doubt most inventoried farmers in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries would have considered such bequests rather demeaning. Such a view may also have applied to bequests of individual items of furniture or domestic artefacts, for while a number of gentlemen or wealthy tradesmen and yeomen left personal mementos in the form of silver, books, and expensive items of

clothing, few testators overall bequeathed items of furniture or household objects. Such practice can be found, however, in the wills of poorer men, especially in the 1660s and 1670s. It was, moreover, much more common for sons in the poorer parish of Riccall to receive such portions, and while these bequests largely died out in the other three parishes during the eighteenth century, poor husbandmen and craftsmen at Riccall continued to leave beds, chairs, tables and other domestic objects to their sons until the end of our period.

Most testators did not itemize their personal estate, but left it en bloc usually in the form of a residual legacy. The most frequent bequests made to sons were either of residual property of this kind or took the form of cash or real estate (or, most frequently, a mixture of the two). It is therefore on these legacies that we should concentrate if we are to fully appreciate the ways in which children were "put forth". That oldest sons were favoured above their siblings is beyond doubt. If a father left a wife and children he usually made his wife executrix of his will and residuary legatee, but, in a number of cases, the oldest son was sometimes chosen as joint executor with his mother. Moreover, of fathers whose wives had pre-deceased them and who therefore nominated one of their offspring as executor and residuary legatee, the vast majority chose the oldest son. Although it is difficult to determine the exact nature of residual property in terms of real estate, as far as personal property was concerned, we can be sure that in most cases the residual element constituted the bulk of the testators goods. Oldest sons could also expect to receive their parents' dwelling house and, if their fathers were land owners, the greater part of the patrimonial land. In Wistow, Riccall and Cawood, where the bulk of real estate was held under copyhold tenure, few testators mentioned how their dwelling house and land would

devolve upon their death. At Selby, where many houses were held under leasehold tenure and were therefore devisable by will, fathers with more than one son invariably left their house to the oldest. Yet despite this bias towards primogeniture among all social groups, testators showed an overwhelming desire to provide for younger sons and many of the wills are primarily concerned with providing the means to give them a start in life.⁶⁹

That the inheritance pattern of one family did not conform to a rigid system of primogeniture, but rather depended on individual circumstances is cogently expressed in the will of Thomas Romans, a yeoman of Wistow, who explicitly stated in 1669 that he would give his son John two parts of his personal estate, "...because he had settled present estate in lands upon his younger children and that his wife had all other his lands for her life."⁷⁰ No other father mentioned that he had advantaged his younger offspring in this way, yet the desire to establish younger sons and provide for their needs is a pervasive feature of the wills. The testamentary evidence reveals some interesting differences in the way in which different social groups made this provision.

Gentlemen, or Selby merchants, with only two or three sons, were sometimes of sufficient means to be able to establish each of their sons with houses and tenements. We have already seen that William Storr was able to adopt this strategy in 1731.⁷¹ In 1666 Alexander Richardson, a Cawood gentleman, followed a similar policy by giving his oldest son his dwelling house and several closes and at the same time leaving a house and crofts at the lower end of Wistowgate in Cawood, together with five acres of copyhold land and a close, to his younger son.⁷² In 1680 Charles Boseville, a prosperous Selby merchant

could even afford to leave his dwelling house and other real estate to his oldest son, William, while at the same time providing his younger son, Charles, with a house in Selby and a further property in the neighbouring parish of Bubwith.⁷³

Such generous provision was evidently beyond the means of most fathers, but some middling yeomen and craftsmen were able to leave their younger sons small pieces of real estate. Typical of these was William Ellis of Wistow. The Ellises were an established yeomen family, having lived in Wistow since at least the late sixteenth century.⁷⁴ Before he died, in 1728, William Ellis transferred his copyhold land in Wistow manor to the use of his will and bequeathed it to his daughter and three sons. The oldest son, William, then aged twenty-nine, was to receive a cottage and orchard together with shares in two further properties. The second son, Roger, who was twenty-six when his father made his will, was given a three-acre close, while the youngest son, John, then twenty-one years old, was given only two acres of penny land.⁷⁵ Nevertheless the manorial court papers, probate records and parish registers reveal that both these younger sons were able to establish themselves as relatively prosperous farmers in the area. When Roger, the second son, died in 1742 at the age of forty-one, he was described by his appraisers as a "butcher" and in the parish register as a "yeoman".⁷⁶ His younger brother was even more successful, for although he described himself as a "yeoman" when he wrote his will in 1748, both his brother and the clerk to the Wistow Manorial Court referred to him as "gentleman of Kelfield", a neighbouring village.⁷⁷ Clearly it was possible for younger sons of relatively prosperous yeomen to be established with land in the locality and to do very well for themselves. A more common strategy, however, among yeomen and craftsmen and even among some gentlemen, was

to leave their house and land intact to the oldest son (usually after the death of their wife) with the proviso that he was to give his younger brothers cash portions when they came of age. In 1696, for example, Thomas Champley, a Selby joiner, wrote:

"...I give my ... house and premises unto my beloved son Thomas Champley and to his heires for ever, provided it is my will that my said son Thomas shall pay for the same to my son John ten pounds when he shall attaine the age of two and twenty years and also further pay to my son Joseph ten pounds when he shall attaine the age of twenty two years."⁷⁸

Although the evidence is rather scanty at lower social levels, it would appear that poorer craftsmen and yeomen, husbandmen and labourers, were unable to provide younger sons with land and could not afford to burden the oldest son with cash payment. Yet despite this, the wills reveal that even quite poor testators made efforts to advance younger sons by providing them with a mixture of small cash sums, household goods and livestock. When Thomas Thompson, a Riccall husbandman, made his will in 1754, he nominated his youngest son as executor and residuary legatee and left his second son (a York house-carpenter) and his oldest son a cow each.⁷⁹ Five years later another husbandman of the same village, Robert Herbert, was more generous in his bequests, nominating his oldest son as executor and residuary legatee, leaving his second son five shillings and an assortment of furniture and providing his youngest son (a York joiner) with a foal, some pewter, a feather bed, sheets and five shillings.⁸⁰ Such bequests, of course, differed greatly from those made to sons of gentlemen or wealthy yeomen and tradesmen. No doubt many younger sons of small husbandmen and craftsmen, unlike their wealthier counterparts, were forced to leave their village and, as in these two cases, seek employment in the city. However, despite these differences in practice the aims of fathers were broadly similar: to

advance all their sons as well as their resources would allow. In most cases the oldest son appears to have been favoured with a substantial part of his parents property, but within this system of primogeniture there was room for a great deal of manoeuvre, and family circumstances were perhaps more important than rigid adherence to customary practice in determining inheritance strategies.

If testators were anxious to make adequate provision for younger sons, their wills reveal that they were equally determined to establish their daughters with suitable marriage portions. This desire was evident among all social groups and is perhaps best illustrated by examining three wills from different levels within the social hierarchy. In 1719 George Pickering, a Selby gentleman, bequeathed to his son-in-law, Mr. Thomas Mosley of Selby, and his daughter, Sarah, five pounds each, which he said, was, "in full of her porcon". Pickering left his wife Mary his dwelling house in Ousegate for the rest of her life and evidently felt rather guilty about this as it was only a small part of his original real estate. The rest, he explained, had been given to Thomas Mosley, "...as part of a porcon with his said wife my daughter." This generous portion was made he stated, "...for advanceing the fortune and promotion of my only daughter Sarah in marriage with Thomas Mosley of Selby... gentleman."⁸¹ The will illustrates the lengths to which at least one gentleman father was prepared to go to advance his daughter in marriage. The second example is provided by a relatively prosperous Selby cordwainer, one Richard Robinson, whose will was written in 1699. Unable to advance his daughter's marriage potential with large amounts of real estate, Robinson left his dwelling house to his son Joshua and added, "I will may said son Joshua shall pay to my daughter Ruth...the sum of thirty pounds when he shall accomplish the age of

six and twenty years in consideracon of his haveing the said messuage."⁸² Daughters of craftsmen and yeomen, like Ruth Robinson, could usually expect to receive a sum of money (ranging from ten to one hundred pounds) as their portions and the obligation to provide these sums frequently fell on their brothers. That the provision of dowries was an important consideration even among poor families is illustrated by the third will, that of Richard Cleving, a Wistow labourer who, in 1670, left his daughter Ann:

"...as a child's portion one stand bed in the parlour in the house where I now live with all the furniture belonging, one long table in the said parlour, one kimlin, one stand bed in the chamber, two turned chairs, one cupboard in the house, a brass pott, a spenged quey three years old and one great kettle and in moneys one pound ten shillings..."⁸³

Care was taken by testators of all social ranks to provide adequately for their daughters and although the means may have differed, the intentions were similar. Moreover, a detailed study of the different bequests made to younger sons and daughters has revealed that the latter did not, on the whole, receive less property than their brothers. The evidence suggests that some testators *did* regard suitable provision for their daughters as being slightly below that which was thought appropriate for sons. A clear statement of such bias is found in the will of Mary Sykes, widow of the wealthy merchant Sam Sykes of Cawood, who included the following provision for her unborn child:

"...if the child I am with prove a son I do give him...all my personal estate whatsoever...but if the child I am with prove a daughter then my will and mind is that all my personal estate...be truly and equally divided amongst my four daughters."⁸⁴

This type of discrimination was most in evidence when the property involved was real estate, for some fathers attempted to ensure that their houses and the lands descended through the male line. In 1693,

for example, Thomas Atkinson, a fellmonger of Selby, left his dwelling house to two of his daughters but stipulated that they should convey the house to their brother when the latter reached twenty-one.⁸⁵ A more blatant example of this discrimination with regard to real estate is found in the will of John Ward, a gentleman of Selby who, in 1721, left the residue of his house to, "...the child which my wife is now entient with provided it happens to be a boy."⁸⁶ It would be wrong, however, to dwell on these examples of discrimination for they can be easily countered with cases where daughters were favoured above younger sons, sometimes receiving real estate, cash, or personal property far in excess of that given to their brothers. Overall the most powerful impression is the care which was taken over daughters' legacies and the fairness with which both sons and daughters were treated.⁸⁷

I have argued in this chapter that the material care of young children and the advancement of sons and daughters followed certain patterns and conventions which did not vary a great deal from one social group to another within our four communities, but that within this framework the means by which children could be looked after and "put forth" was modified according to the wealth of their parents and the types of property which they owned. What this meant in terms of the qualitative relationship between parents and children is difficult to gauge. However, the probate evidence does provide some clues as to the nature of this more nebulous dimension of family life. Usually bequests to children were made without any stipulations; provisos and onerous restrictions or obligations were rarely included in the wills. However, some male testators did exhibit a patriarchal attitude towards their children and it is interesting that in almost every case these fathers were substantial property owners. As far as young children were con-

cerned this sometimes took the form of a general statement that they were to be respectful to their mothers. James Smith, a Cawood gentleman, for example, urged his four daughters, "...to be dutifull and obedient to their mother and to take her advice and counsell."⁸⁸ A more forceful attempt to elicit filial obedience from under-aged children was made in 1695 by James Stotherd, a prosperous Selby cordwainer, who gave each of his seven children a portion of twenty pounds when they attained the age of twenty-one, stating that:

"...the mean profits thereof arising I will to my wife for their bringing up and educating and if any of my said children shall willfully or obstinately leave and forsake my said wife ere they shall attaine their said age of twenty-one yet it is my will my wife shall have the said mean profits for her sole use."⁸⁹

One way in which parents could impose their will on older children was by stipulating that they should only marry with the consent of their parents and the wills reveal that some fathers were prepared to use their control over family property for this purpose. In 1726, John Alderson, a Selby gentleman, gave his youngest daughter, Catherine, a portion of three hundred pounds, but added that the bequest was only to hold good "...provided she pleases her mother in her marriage."⁹⁰ Similarly, Edward Rowden, a gentleman of Cawood, left his daughter fifty pounds which was to be invested for her by her mother and brother until she reached twenty-one or married, but added that this was only to be paid:

"...if she the said Anne shall match, marry or dispose of herself with the good will, approbation content and good likeing of ...Margaret her mother and not otherwise."⁹¹

Martha Davie, of Riccall, had already defied her father by marrying without his permission and therefore, though her three sisters were to receive two hundred pounds each as their portions, Martha herself was given only ten pounds.⁹²

Those fathers who attempted to control their daughters' marriage usually came from the higher echelons of village and small town society and, not surprisingly, it was these men who expressed patriarchal attitudes towards their sons. As far as boys were concerned, however, such restrictions never revolved around gaining parental consent and approval in the selection of marriage partners. Rather, parental influence over sons nearly always involved directions as to their vocation. As we have already seen, the wills contain several examples of sons being left money specifically so that they could be apprenticed. Although there is little indication that fathers forced sons into specific vocations, some testators did occasionally use their control over property to direct sons' choices. Sydrack Sherburne, the Cawood curate, not only stated that his two daughters should receive ten pounds each instead of the previously allotted one hundred and fifty pounds, if they married without their mother's consent, but also made a bequest to his son John, contingent upon him completing his studies; in his will of 1718 we witness a father experiencing the perennial problem of an overspending student son:

"...having before the sealing hereof given my son John as much monies to Cambridge to pay his arrears there and also his further maintenance there till he takes his Batchelour of Arts degree I do moreover give to him my books and silver watch and also the silver tankerd after the decease of Ann my beloved wife who shall have the use of it till her death eight pounds when he returns from Cambridge before he takes his deacons orders to buy him a canonical habit."⁹³

Perhaps, in this case, it may be argued, that in encouraging his son to take his degree, the father was doing no more than providing a gentle financial nudge, but in the case of Edward Hemmingway, a Selby farmer, the paternal influence was more of a concerted pull, for in his will of 1758, he stated that his youngest son, John, should receive sixty pounds on his twenty-first birthday:

"Upon this condition nevertheless that if my said son John Hemmingway shall and will go and put himself to the seas to be a sailor and marriner before he shall attain the age of twenty-one years then my will and pleasure is that the said sixty pounds go to and be equally divided between his brother Richard Hemmingway and his sister Elizabeth Hemmingway..."⁹⁴

Property could, on occasions, be used by parents to influence the behaviour of their offspring, yet in the vast bulk of wills, provision for the care of children in their minorities and for their "putting forth" when they came of age, was made without any indication that they were expected to maintain a proper sort of obedience. The parents in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Wistow, Riccall, Cawood and Selby, do not appear to have been particularly patriarchal and, as this study of parent-child relationships has attempted to show, although the context of childhood in these communities was very different from today, the aims and aspirations of parents were remarkably similar.

CHAPTER 5 : REFERENCES

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CHAPTER 6

HUSBANDS AND WIVES

On the afternoon of 14 April 1690 William Barwick was walking with his pregnant wife towards Cawood. As the couple approached the town and Cawood castle came into sight, they stopped by a pond. It was then that William Barwick grabbed his wife, dragged her into the water and, beating her about the head, forced her under until she drowned. This done he concealed his wife's body - the baby still kicking in her womb - among some bushes at the side of the pond. That night, using a hay-spade from a nearby rick, he dug a hole by the pond and buried the corpse. Barwick then went to the house of his brother-in law, Thomas Lofthouse of Rufforth, and told him that he had taken his wife to stay with his uncle, Richard Harrison, in Selby. On the following Tuesday Thomas Lofthouse was watering a hedge near his house and, while filling his pail, saw an apparition of his wife's sister by the pond. The ghost vanished and he thought no more of it, but that night at family prayer the apparition once again came to his mind. When he told his wife of this she immediately inferred that her sister was drowned and persuaded her husband that he should visit Richard Harrison the following day. This he did and, finding Barwick's story false, obtained a warrant for the arrest of his brother-in-law. William Barwick's motives for murdering his wife did not come to light at his trial before the Assizes in York the following September, but it appears from the evidence that he had "got her with child", had been forced to marry her and then "grew weary of her".¹

This case presents a disturbing picture of married life in Cawood at the end of the seventeenth century. Research has shown, however, that cases of wife-murder in early modern England were rare and, when they

did occur, were considered to be "unnatural aberrations", worthy of the harshest penalty the law could enforce.² Despite these findings, for some historians, such behaviour represents only the extreme of a relationship which was often brutal and, at best, uncaring. One of the leading protagonists of this view, Lawrence Stone, has argued that early modern marriages were made for economic rather than emotional reasons, were based on the patriarchal domination of the husband and were characterized by a lack of love and affection. It was not until the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, he feels, that the concept of the companionate 'modern' marriage emerged, and even then it was restricted to the elite.³

This whiggish model of the development of marriage has been much criticized, and a number of scholars, citing evidence from domestic conduct books, popular literature and diaries, have demonstrated beyond doubt that, throughout the early modern period, the marriages of the common people were often based on romantic love and mutual respect between man and wife.⁴ Some of the sources which often provide evidence of companionate marriages among the middling sort are their wills. At Terling, for example, Keith Wrightson and David Levine found that villagers' wills frequently contained explicit terms of endearment,⁵ while Margaret Spufford found similar expressions in Cambridgeshire probate records.⁶ We shall begin this chapter by examining the wills from our parishes in which conjugal concern was directly expressed in this way. However, the major part of our analysis will focus on the particular types of material provision which husbands made for their wives.

Sentiments

Wills were, of course, formal legal documents and, as such, were not the most obvious place to verbalize marital affection, yet many testators from our four parishes used terminology which suggests that marital relationships were based on trust and affection. Among male testators, phrases invoking feelings of endearment such as "my dear wife", "my loving wife" and "my dearly beloved wife" occur frequently and are often found on more than one occasion in the same will. Terms of endearment are more often attached to wives than to children and it is interesting that they occur more frequently in nuncupative wills where the actual words of the testator are recorded. That some of these descriptions were sincere and heartfelt is beyond doubt, for occasionally husbands would display deep affection for their wives which went far beyond the addition of a loving word of endearment. One way in which these feelings manifested themselves was in a request to be buried next to a deceased spouse. In 1665, for example, John Clark, of Cawood, requested to be buried in the village church, "...under the chancell windows as near as conveniently may be unto the place which my father William Clark and my late wife Emmatt were buried."⁷ Three years previously, John Titlow, a Selby tanner, stipulated that his body should be buried, "...as near to my former wife as can possibly be done."⁸ More peremptory in his burial request was William Miller of Selby, who directed, "...my body to be interred in ye church yard of St Jarman of Selby as nye my deare wife as can by and for a stone to be set over us both."⁹ Moreover, it was not uncommon for widows to express a desire to be buried near their deceased husbands. Margaret Nutt, a Selby widow, simply stated in her will of 1666 that she was to be buried, "...neare unto the place where my husband lyeth."¹⁰ In 1662 Alice Halley, also of Selby, directed

that she was to be interred, "...as neare my late husband as my friends and kinsfolk think convenient",¹¹ while in the same year, Agnes Nettleton, a Cawood widow, committed her body to the earth, "...to be buried in Fentain church in that grave that my child is in beside my dear husband."¹²

Other than terms of endearment and scattered burial requests, explicit statements of tenderness and love are rarely found among the legal phraseology of the wills, but occasionally testators exhibited a level of concern for their widow's future welfare which could only reflect deep devotion. In 1736, for example, Robert Goodday, a husbandman of Selby, left all his personal estate to his wife with the instruction that she was to leave it to one or more of his relations at her death, but added:

"...my mind and will is that if any of my relations shall breed any disturbance or molestation to my said wife in her quiet possession of my said personal estate or quarrel with any bequest herein mentioned then I leave her to dispose of all her said personal estate to whom she will at her own discretion."¹³

Some men actually articulated the high esteem which must have been behind such statements. In 1681 George Cooke of Selby directed that his body should be buried, "...in the church of Selby where my loving wife shall think most fitting and convenient." and further stated:

"I desire my loveing wife to be very kind unto my three poorest relacons whom I am unkle to...wherefore not doubting of hir kindness att & after my death to them I forbear to limit her therein".¹⁴

George Pickering of Selby was another man who exhibited a considerable regard for his spouse. In his will of 1716 he left her all his estate, "...as a further recompense for the great love care and tenderness she has always shewn for me and mine."¹⁵ Other wills provide nuggets of heartfelt affection. Witness, for example, the nuncupative will of the Cawood yeoman, Henry Scales, who, in 1676,

left his wife Mary:

"...all that I have...and being further asked if he made his wife executrix he replied yes I make her my executor: all that I have is too little for her and I wish it were more or words to that effect".¹⁶

Such expressions of thoughtful care, respect and love were obviously rare in widows' wills, but it is interesting that in one of the three married women's wills in our sample, the testatrix made a similar statement. Joan Brice, a married woman, of Riccall, had received a legacy of cash and lands from one Raiph Sopaby of Bishop Wilton and, on the advice of the vicar of Riccall, made provision for the disposal of the legacy at her death. In her nuncupative will, Joan declared that:

"...she would give all she had at her disposing to John Brice her husband...and did at the same time *declare and* say that all she had to dispose of she gave to her husband freely and that *all was too little* for him for that he had been a kynd husband to her in all her sickness and distress."¹⁷

The terminology and choice of words used by testators to describe wives and husbands, and the explicit statements of respect and affection, argue for a deep emotional bond between husband and wife. There is little to suggest in the tone of the wills that husbands were anxious to assert the subordination of their wives or that marriages were based on the patriarchal dominance of the husband. Perhaps the most striking example of the significance of the companionate element in marriage is found in the will of Emmanuel Marshall of Selby, who stated that his children should bury his wife in the church of Selby, "...nigh unto me if she be minded to be buried there."¹⁸ Scattered though such references are, they do add further weight to the work of those scholars who have argued for companionate and loving marriages among the ordinary people of early modern England.

Providing for Widows Within the Law

The majority of men and women did not, of course, leave us direct statements of feelings towards their spouses. Instead, we must look at a more indirect, but nevertheless important, indicator of conjugal concern: the ways in which testators attempted to provide for the material well-being of their widows.¹⁹ To a large extent husbands were legally constrained in the provision which they could make for their widows. As far as real estate was concerned, under Common Law, the wife was entitled to at least one third of the lands held by the husband during their marriage.²⁰ That dower right was carefully respected by testators from our four parishes is evidenced in the wills of six testators who chose to leave their wives a bequest in lieu of their right to a third of the real estate. The will of George Pickering, a Selby gentleman, provides a clue as to one possible reason behind such a bequest. George's daughter, Sarah, had married one of the wealthiest Selby inhabitants, Thomas Mosely, and in order to provide a suitable dowry for such a prestigious match, her father had been forced to settle all his additional real estate upon his son-in-law, thus barring his wife's claim to, "...all dower title and claim of dower of ... the said housing lands tenements and hereditaments". George went on to state:

"...in recompense for her soe doing and for her better subsistence after my decease I give devise and bequeath unto Mary my said dear wife all that messuage or tenement in Ousegate in Selby aforesaid wherein I now dwell...during the term of her natural life."²¹

This was the only example of a widow being provided with the dwelling-house in lieu of her dower right to a third of the real estate. Usually it was stated that she was to be compensated by the payment of cash sums or annuities. Occasionally, where the amount of land was

negligible, the cash sum was correspondingly small. George Dealtry of Selby, for example, simply left his widow five pounds in cash, "...in full recompense of her dowery and title of dower".²² In other cases widows received considerable amounts of cash or annuities. Nicholas Smith left all his lands and tenements in Selby, Wistow, Cawood and Barleby and all his securities, to his son Nicholas, instructing him to pay his mother, Martha, fifty pounds on his father's decease and an annuity of thirty-two pounds for life which the testator stated, "...shall be ... in full barr and satisfaction of all dower or thirds or any customary or other right which my said wife hath...of my estate."²³ Occasionally a testator made bequests in addition to the annuity or cash sum. Richard Seaner, a yeoman, who was succeeded by two children of a former marriage, appointed his brother and uncle as supervisors and trustees, instructing them to provide his widow with fifteen pounds per annum for life, a legacy which, along with his "sadle mare" was to be paid to his widow "...in full satisfaction of all her thirds and dowery."²⁴ Extremely careful provision was made in 1748 by Bethell Staggs, a courier, who bequeathed his real estate to his three teenage sons, Bethell, John and William, and left three hundred pounds to his daughter Hannah, which she was to receive at the age of twenty-one. The administration of the will, along with the residuary legacy of the personal estate was passed to three trustees who were also entitled to his *real property should any of his sons not prove "conformable"*. As far as his widow was concerned, she was given an annuity of twenty pounds a year for the duration of her widowhood, "...in full satisfaction of her thirds out of my several estates to be paid her equally by my said three sons by two half yearly payments". His wife's interest in the overall supervision of the property was to be maintained however, for the testator added that, "I order and direct that my said trustees shall yearly...give...a true and perfect

account to my said dear wife of all the receipts and disbursements and consent with her for the good and interest of my children".²⁵

It is unfortunate that little can be learned of the circumstances surrounding these cases in which a widow was left a bequest in lieu of her dower rights. It would appear however, from these examples, that such a legacy may possibly have been more common when the testator was survived by teenage children or where the widow was a second or subsequent wife. Clearly, testators were aware that bequests of cash sums or annuities were unusual and felt it necessary to explicitly explain their departure from convention by stating that these were in lieu of the widow's legal entitlement to the real estate.

In addition to being constrained by Common Law, testators wishing to bequeath their real estate also had to observe local customs with regard to copyhold property. In the majority of English manors a widow's interest in the customary estate was protected by "freebench", whereby a widow obtained rights over her husband's copyhold property, either for life or during the period of her widowhood.²⁶ At Wistow, no freebench custom protected the widow's right, and the 1708 manorial custom clearly stated that copyhold tenements "doe descend according as freehold lands"; in other words, the widow was entitled to a third of her husband's lands.²⁷ In practice, however, we often find cases among the manorial court papers of Wistow husbands surrendering their copyhold houses and land to the joint ownership of themselves and their wives, thus ensuring a life interest in the property for the widow.²⁸ It is impossible to say how widespread this practice was, but the evidence suggests that, at least in Wistow, husbands were often willing to do much more than custom strictly required in order to provide a secure future for their widows.

During our period an alternative to Common Law dower and manorial custom in governing property transmission to widows was the marriage settlement or 'jointure', negotiated at the betrothal of the couple. Such a practice involved settling land on a husband and wife jointly or on the wife for her life and had the effect of barring the widow from her Common Law dower.²⁹ These settlements were favoured by the wealthier classes when considerable amounts of property were at stake. Of the entire sample of 342 testators who made provision for their wives, only four men mentioned jointures in their wills and none of these gives a great deal of information on the nature of these settlements or their importance in the overall provision made for the widow. The most perfunctory of the four was the will of Philip Ely, a Wistow gentleman, who, in 1730, merely stated that his unborn child should receive all his freehold land in Lincolnshire, "...not settled on my wife in jointure".³⁰ The other three testators who made provision for their wives in accordance with negotiated settlements were all Selby inhabitants and, like Philip Ely, were all prosperous men. In 1747, Robert Headley, a wealthy tailor, made provision for his widow in accordance with a pre-negotiated settlement stating:

"Whereas upon marriage with Ann my now wife I agreed and gave her a bond to leave all her that my messuage or tenement scituate lying and being in Selby...in Ousegate...during such time as she should remain my widow...Now my will and mind is and I doe hereby in pursuance of the said bond and agreement give and devise the said messuage or tenement with the appurtenances unto my said wife during such times as she shall remain my widow and no longer".³¹

In 1695 Robert Sugden, a prosperous yeoman, also stipulated that his wife's jointure included his messuage but clarified that her interest in the property was to last only until his son reached the age of twenty-one and went on to make careful provision in the event of his son's death:

"Whereas my messuage or tenement is settled as a joynture for my deare wife Ann Sugden my mind and will is that if my son Robert Sugden shall happen to depart this life before he attained the age of one & twenty yeares then I give and bequeath the s[ai]d messuage or tenement with th'appurtenances after the death of my s[ai]d deare wife amongst such brothers & sisters as shall be liveing & such chyld or chyldren of such brothers or sisters as shal be deceased".³²

In the only other will referring to jointure, Thomas Roote, a merchant, stated that:

"...upon marriage with Mary my wife I charge two freehold messuages...in Micklegate with the clear annuity or rent charge of twelve pounds a year to my said wife for and during her natural wife".

In addition his wife was to receive:

"...all the goods and chattels mentioned in a schedule upon the backside of our marriage settlement and also the furniture in my best chamber".³³

It would appear from these examples that testators who mentioned negotiated settlements in their wills usually did so in order to ensure their children's interest in the property after the re-marriage or death of the widow, and it is significant that no reference to jointures were found among testators with no children to provide for. It is impossible to determine the percentage of wives from our four communities who would have been protected by pre-nuptial agreements of this kind, but our assumption must be that such settlements were only made by wealthy couples when substantial amounts of real estate were at stake.

If the widow's rights to real property were fairly secure, her legal claim to personal property was much less certain. At the beginning of our period, the ecclesiastical laws governing the disposal of personal property within the province of York stated that only a man with no wife and children was entitled to give away all his moveable property. If a man left a wife but no child, or a child but no wife, his goods

were to be divided into two halves, half passing to the widow or child and half being left to his own disposal. Should a man be survived by a wife *and* children, at his decease there was to be a tripartite division of his goods; a third going to the widow, a third to the children and a third to the disposal of the testator.³⁴ However, in 1692 the law was changed by an Act which enabled testators in the Northern Province to bequeath all their goods away from their wives and children.³⁵ That this change in the law was well known at a local level is evidenced in William Storr's Book of Remarks in which he notes:

"A man by his will may give all he hath from his wife and children now but formerly he could not until an Act of parlmt in the rean of king William 3d which entitled a man to give his goods to whome he will for before that Act a man's powr only was to give away a 3rd part if he had a wife & children & so it was called the death part because the dying man hath power to give it away, but if he had but a wife & noe children then he might give half away or if he had children and no wife he might also give half away, these custams was caled the custam of the Province of York".³⁶

Though the law gave women no rights to the personal property which they and their husbands had accumulated during the years of their marriage, most men ensured that the widow controlled the bulk of their moveable wealth by making them executors and residuary legatees of their wills. Only seven of our testators made a small bequest of personal estate (usually the goods which the wife had brought on marriage) and in nearly all these cases the bequest of "her own household goods" constituted only a part of the total provision made for the widow. In some wills the testator added personal property of his own. In 1737 for example, Christopher Blanshard, a Riccall husbandman left his wife Elenor, "All the household goods she brought to me and a spinning wheel and the best cow I have to her and her heirs for ever besides a met of wheat and a met of rie".³⁷ On other occasions, as in the will made by Thomas Thompson, a husbandman of Riccall, victuals

and a small annuity were added to the wife's household goods:

"I give and bequeath to Elizabeth Thompson my wife all the household goods and furniture she brought to me before marriage, that the same be delivered to her again. I likewise give and bequeath unto my wife one flitch of bacon and one flitch of beef which are in my house at present. I likewise give unto my wife Elizabeth Thompson the sum of three pounds of lawful money to be paid by my executor William Thompson, that is, to pay her twenty shillings a year for three years after my decease".³⁸

In providing additional support, these two examples are typical of the cases in which a testator left his wife those household furnishings which had constituted part of her dowry, and they confirm our impression that testators making specific provision for their widows, whether in accordance with a jointure, or in lieu of her dower rights, were anxious to provide their wives with adequate material support. It is largely impossible to discern anything of the particular family situations of these testators, but it is notable that in each case the decedent was survived by an adult son to whom the residue of the property was to pass. In such circumstances it may have been implicitly understood that the widow would continue to live with her son. Such arrangements however, can only be discerned in those wills which mention the dwelling house and it is to the particular arrangements which were made for the widow's future accommodation that we shall now turn our attention.

The Widow's Inheritance of the Dwelling House

Of immediate concern to the widow was the provision made for her future accommodation. Whether she succeeded to the tenure of the dwelling house or whether alternative arrangements were made for her lodging was obviously a matter of utmost importance which may have

affected, not only her economic position, but also the relationship between the mother and her children and her chances of re-marriage; a widow who was merely provided with a furnished room in the house of her son would not, after all, represent a very alluring catch to a potential suitor. It is unfortunate that, given the importance of the future living arrangements made for the widow, few testators actually referred to their dwelling houses when making their wills. In all, only eighty-three of our 342 married men specifically mentioned their dwelling house when devising their property. The majority of testators may have tacitly assumed that the residuary legatee would inherit the family house along with the other real property and personal estate, while other men were no doubt prepared to leave the inheritance of the house to the workings of the law. Whether a widow succeeded to the property in these cases is difficult to determine, although this must have often happened. However, when a testator did make an explicit statement as to the inheritance of his house it is immediately apparent that whether or not the widow was granted the house depended on the age of the widow concerned and on the ages of the children. In order to analyse this more closely the wills were divided into three groups, according to whether the testator was childless, had only young children or had at least some children over the age of twenty-one.

It can be seen from Table 6:1 that of the nineteen childless men who left specific instructions as to the disposal of their house only two failed to leave it outright to their wives. William Rogers, a Riccall blacksmith, who, in 1708, made provision for his wife and mother to share his house, was the only testator to grant his widow joint ownership.³⁹ The only other man to leave his house to someone other than the widow was William Spinke, a Selby labourer who, in 1681, left

TABLE 6:1 Beneficiaries of the Dwelling House
According to Family Situation

	<u>Wistow</u>	<u>Riccall</u>	<u>Cawood</u>	<u>Selby</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>No Children</u>					
No. of wills mentioning dwelling house	3	2	2	12	19
Dwelling house given to wife	3	1	2	11	17
Wife given a share of dwelling house	-	1	-	-	1
Dwelling house given to another	-	-	-	1	1
Wife given "house-room"	-	-	-	-	-
 <u>All Children Minors</u>					
No. of wills mentioning dwelling house	-	2	5	6	13
Dwelling house given to wife	1	2	4	5	12
Wife given share of dwelling house	-	-	-	-	-
Dwelling house given to another	-	-	-	1	1
Wife given "house-room"	-	-	1	-	1
 <u>Some or All Children of Age</u>					
No. of wills mentioning dwelling house	3	5	6	37	51
Dwelling house given to wife	2	3	5	26	36
Wife given share of dwelling house	-	-	-	1	1
Dwelling house given to another	1	2	1	10	14
Wife given "house-room"	2	-	-	4	6

his cottage to two trustees instructing that the property should pass to his niece and nephew after the death of his widow and stating that, in the meantime, the trustees should administer the cottage, "...for the use and behoofe of Issable my wife for and during her natural life".⁴⁰

No other testator appointed trustees in order to ensure that the family house passed to their own relatives at the death of the widow, but it is noteworthy that even when the house was left to the widow, few husbands gave their wives the power to dispose of the property as

they wished or left it to the widow "and her heirs and assigns for ever". A handful of testators granted the widow limited powers of disposal. In 1731, for example, Jonah Benson, a Selby yeoman, left his wife Ann, his two houses in Wistow and Selby for life, with the right, "to dispose of amongst her brothers children as she shall think meet and convenient".⁴¹ The majority of testators, however, stipulated with great care the names of those who were to inherit their messuages at the death of the widow and, predictably, in the absence of children it was brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces who were the most frequent beneficiaries. Some men went even further in their efforts to ensure that the dwelling house remained in the family. In 1715 William Barker of Selby, having no children, and desirous that his nephew should inherit his house, left the property to his wife with the reversion at her death to the nephew on the understanding that *she would sell the dwelling house and use the money for her maintenance*, "...only if she shall find pressing need to do so."⁴² Men were obviously anxious that their houses should not pass out of their family at the death of the widow even when they had no children, and for this reason chose to limit the duration of inheritance to the widow's lifetime. This however, was the only limitation placed on the widow's inheritance and no testator from this first group of men limited his widow's interest in the property to the duration of her widowhood.

Of the thirteen men with under-age children who indicated who was to inherit their house, twelve left it to the widow alone. Only Bethell Staggs (who, as we have seen, made careful provision for his wife in lieu of her dower), bequeathed his dwelling house to his oldest son, thus departing from this pattern.⁴³ Like childless testators, it was highly unusual to find a man who granted his widow free disposal of

the property. In fact, the only testator who followed this course was the Riccall husbandman William Pallister, who left his wife in 1723, "...one cottage and barne wherein I dwell...with all the rights of common pasture to her and to her heirs for ever."⁴⁴ Most men did not leave their dwelling houses to the widow in perpetuity, but instead regulated her interest in the property. It is interesting that even when testators had the interests of young children to consider, only two of the twelve men who left their house to the widow limited her tenure to the period of her widowhood. Once again the most frequently stipulated duration of inheritance was that the widow should hold the property as most wills termed "...for the term of her natural life", with the house passing to the children at the death of the mother. The most significant difference between the provision made for widows of childless men and those with young children was that in the latter group her interest in the dwelling house was sometimes to last only until the children came of age. Such a stipulation was included in four of the thirteen wills. In one of these the testator, William Clarkson, made special arrangements for his widow's future accommodation after his son came of age, stating that she was to receive a cash payment of twenty pounds from her son and was to be provided with:

"...ye kitchene adjoyning ye stable for to live in & egress & regress through ye garth to ye water & half of the fruit of ye orchard dureing her natural life provided she do not remarry."⁴⁵

This is the only example among testators with young children of the widow being provided with house-room when the children came of age. Presumably the possibility of domestic problems resulting from the inheritance of the family house, if an important consideration at all, lay too far in the future for most testators in this group to

consider.

When we examine those wills which contained adult offspring we find that once again the most frequent beneficiary of the dwelling house was the widow. It can be seen from Table 6:1 that she was left the house in thirty-six of these wills. As older children had already been provided for there were no cases when the widow's stake in the property was deemed to last until the children came of age and in no case was the widow granted rights of ownership in perpetuity. It was more common, however, for a man to impose re-marriage restrictions on his widow's tenure of the house although, even in this group, only six of the thirty-six testators limited their wives' ownership by stipulating that it was to last, "...as long as she keepeth my wife,"⁴⁶ or, "...for life provided she remains my widow".⁴⁷ One of these testators, Mark Blythe, a Selby labourer, took the unusual precaution of stating that his wife's interest in the dwelling house should be maintained only if she remained a widow or remarried the man of her husband's choice!:

"First I give unto Elizabeth Blythe my wife that pte of my house next ye garth being ye pte wherein we live and half of ye garth belonging to ye said house wth thapptences for & dureing all ye time she shall continue unmarried againe after my death except she marry with John Browne's son of Biggin linen webster & then ye said ptes of ye said house & garth to remaine to ye onely proper use and behoofe of ye said John Brown's sonne his heires and assignes for ever".⁴⁸

Apart from this handful of cases in which the dwelling house was left to the widow only until she remarried all the widows in this group were to enjoy the property until they died with the house then passing to named children.

It is apparent from Table 6:1 that a striking difference between this third group of testators and the two groups previously considered was

that some men (a total of fourteen) with adult offspring chose to leave their house to someone other than the widow. In each of these cases a child (usually the eldest son) was named as the beneficiary. When this occurred what provision was made for the widow's accommodation? In some cases the testator provided his wife with an additional house elsewhere, while on other occasions it may have been taken for granted that the son and his mother would share the family house. It can be seen from the Table however, that in a total of six wills specific provision was made for the widow in the form of house-room. Such provision was found in the will of William Storr who stated that his wife, Elizabeth, should:

"...live in the little room wherein she and myselfe now lodges in and also to make use of the fore kitchen and the fire there whenever she has occasion for the same with free liberty for her and her servants and visitors of ingress, egress and regress..."⁴⁹

The only other example of the provision of house-room among Wistow testators was found in the will of Thomas Cussons, a yeoman, who was survived by three adult sons and a daughter when he died in 1717. Thomas's oldest son John, was made executor and residuary legatee and inherited the family house. Thomas stated however, that John was, "...to permitt & suffer the sd Mary my wife (dureing her natural life) to dwell & abide with him in the sd messuage or tenement without paying any rent for the same". In addition, he left his wife "...my best bed & other sufficient furniture for one room" and stated that the son was to pay his mother three pounds a year in quarterly intervals. A crucial clause was retained until the end of the document, for, if these arrangements did not work out, Thomas directed that his wife was "...to be paid thirty pounds...within one month of my death."⁵⁰

Clearly, testators were well aware that domestic tension could arise when a widow and her son shared the same house. Even at Selby, where a greater proportion of testators made specific bequests of their dwelling house, such arrangements were viewed with suspicion and only four men provided their wives with house-room. In the market town the most careful arrangements were made by Thomas Waide, a clothier, in 1679:

"First I give to my wife Jan the fare paler and the citching the bed and beding belonging it half of the white cloth half benefet of the frute in my orchard and one pound yearely after my death by Henerie Waide my sonne and this is to be paid so long as she keeps my widow and no longer".⁵¹

Thomas's will provides the only example from Selby of a testator who made his son responsible for the economic support of his mother. In the will of John Whittill, cordwainer, made four years earlier, such support was provided by rents from additional property, for as well as giving his wife, "...one parler with two littell roumes ajoynen to the same...as long as she keepeth herslef in my name", he also left her a further house and land in the neighbouring parish of Drax.⁵²

In the remaining two cases where the widow was provided with house-room, neither testator gave any direction as to how the widow was to be supported beyond the provision of a room. In 1699 Richard Robinson, a cordwainer merely stated that his son should inherit the messuage and that, "...my wife shall have the kitching and chamber over it and ye parlour adjoyning soe long as she keeps in my name",⁵³ while Robert Leatham, a tanner, directed in 1713 that his wife Deborah should have, "...one chamber in my sd house that has a firestead in it during her life if she marry not again."⁵⁴ A common feature of these wills was that in each case the testator was careful to limit the provision to the duration of widowhood. Widows who re-married could

expect their new husbands to provide for them and such a proviso (which, as we have seen, was rarely included when the house was left directly to the widow) no doubt indicated a desire on the part of testators that their sons should not be further encumbered once the widow had re-married.

The analysis of bequests of dwelling houses in the wills of married men suggests that whether a widow was given the house outright, or whether she was provided with house-room, depended, to a certain extent, on the age of the decedent and his wife and their particular family circumstances. The most notable feature of the wills however, is that so few men, whatever their family situation, chose to leave the widow allotted rooms. As we should expect, testators with no children to provide for almost invariably left their dwelling house to the widow for the course of her natural life. However, decedents with young children *also* followed this pattern; only a handful of these men left the property to the widow until the oldest child reached twenty-one and of these only one reserved a specific part of the house for his widow when his son came of age. Even among men with adult offspring (who, as we have seen, were more likely to leave their dwelling house to their eldest son) relatively few testators made careful provision for their wives by providing her with a room or rooms in the son's house. Overall the infrequency with which testators stated that the widow was to be provided with house-room and the lack of detailed provision for her future accommodation and material needs are the most notable features of the wills. No doubt many decedents who left their dwelling houses to children relied on the filial affection and loyalty of their sons to provide for their widow's needs. In the majority of cases however, such a reliance was unnecessary as the widow was made the legal owner of the dwelling house during her lifetime.⁵⁵

The Widow's Inheritance of Other Real Estate

While relatively few married decedents specifically concerned themselves in their wills with the inheritance of the dwelling house, a higher proportion mentioned other types of real estate. These wills have been analysed in order to discover whether legacies of such property followed similar patterns to bequests of dwelling houses; the results can be seen in Table 6:2.⁵⁶

TABLE 6:2 Beneficiaries of Unspecified or Additional Real Estate According to Family Situation

	<u>Wistow</u>	<u>Riccall</u>	<u>Cawood</u>	<u>Selby</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>No Children</u>					
No of wills mentioning real estate	2	3	5	15	25
Real estate given to wife	1	3	5	14	23
Wife given a share of real estate	-	-	-	1	1
Another given real estate	1	-	-	-	1
<u>All Children Minors</u>					
No of wills mentioning real estate	6	4	5	18	33
Real estate given to wife	2	2	5	5	14
Wife given a share of real estate	1	-	-	2	3
Another given real estate	3	2	1	10	16
<u>Some or All Children of Age</u>					
No of wills mentioning real estate	10	9	12	25	56
Real estate given to wife	7	5	12	22	46
Wife given a share of real estate	2	2	-	-	4
Another given real estate	1	2	-	3	6

Let us first consider those testators who had no children when making their wills. As Table 6:2 shows, twenty-five of these decedents made bequests of land or houses which were not specifically described as the dwelling house and in only two wills was the property not bequeathed to the wife alone. In 1729 Thomas Skelton of Wistow left a half oxgang of land to his executor Philip Ely⁵⁷ and in 1720 Thomas Broomley of Selby stated that all his real estate in Selby should be

shared between his wife and niece.⁵⁸ Of the remaining twenty-three men who left the property to the widow alone, some eighteen indicated the length of time during which the widow was to have tenure of the property. Two testators granted free disposal of the property to the widow although in one of these the husband, who left his wife, Anne, a house and orchard in Wistow "...to her and her heirs for ever" was careful to stipulate that, "...if I leave issue by her then to the use of Anne for life only and after her decease to the heirs of our two bodies for ever".⁵⁹ The only childless testator to limit his wife's interest in real estate to the duration of her widowhood was John Wilkinson of Cawood who, in 1726, left his widow all his copyhold, lands and tenements in Cawood, "...for & dureing her natural life in case she keep herselfe sole & unmarried".⁶⁰ *Most men in this group* (a total of fifteen) left their tenements to the widow "...for the term of her natural life", stating the names of those who were to inherit the property at her death. As with the dwelling house the most commonly found beneficiaries at the death of the widow were siblings or nephews and nieces. It would appear that, even when children were not available to inherit property, testators exhibited a strong desire to keep additional real estate, as well as dwelling houses, in the family name, but at the same time were careful to ensure a life-long interest for the widow.

Turning to the group of testators who had young children to provide for, we find that thirty-three men made bequests of additional or unspecified real estate when drawing up their wills. It is immediately apparent from Table 6:2 that a high proportion chose to bequeath their real property to someone other than the widow. A close examination of these wills reveals that when such a bequest was made the legatees were invariably the decedent's under age children. In

the bulk of these cases it was stipulated that the children were to inherit the property only when they came of age and occasionally the husband added that his widow was to enjoy the property in the meantime. Witness, for example, the will of John Titlow the younger, of Selby, who, in 1660, left real estate to his under age son in the following manner:

"I give...unto John Titlow my eldest sonne the house and buildings and garth and orchard in ... Myddlethorpe...to him the said John Titlow and to his heirs for ever when he shall come to the full age of one and twenty yeares provided alwayes that Elizabeth Titlow my wife during the mynoritie of the aforesaid John Titlow my sonne shall have the proffitt of the aforesaid house and appurtenances."⁶¹

Such explicit statements that the widow should enjoy rents from property until children came of age were rarely made, although in the majority of cases, where the widow was nominated to act as executrix, this must have been implicitly understood. When testators with young children left real estate to the widow they frequently attempted to establish the childrens' rights, either by stating the names of offspring who were to inherit the property on the widow's death or by limiting her ownership until the children came of age. No testator granted his wife free disposal of the property, but it is interesting that only one man attempted to protect the interests of his children by limiting the widow's tenure of the real estate to the duration of her widowhood.

When we consider those testators who had at least some children over twenty-one when they made their will, we find that the widow was overwhelmingly the most frequently found beneficiary. Real estate was bequeathed away from her in only six cases and in each of these the father's interest passed to his children. Moreover, in the four cases where the property was shared it was also the offspring who were the

joint legatees. It would appear that the tendency of testators to leave their dwelling to widows rather than the adult children was even more pronounced when bequests of additional lands and tenements were made. The typical husband in our four parishes left his real property to his widow, despite the fact that some or all of his children had reached lawful age.

In their regulation of the length of time during which the widow would retain property rights, men with adult children showed a high degree of uniformity. Of the forty-six men who bequeathed real estate to their widows, thirty-eight indicated her length of tenure and in thirty-one cases they stated that this was to be for her lifetime with the property invariably passing to the child or children at the death of the mother. Once again testators were anxious that real estate should pass to children when the mother died and it is interesting that in the only will in which the husband granted his widow free disposal at her death her freedom was curtailed, for the testator, who left his wife a house in London, stated paradoxically that the property was, "...to her use & behoofe...during her natural life & to her disposal at her death, but it is my will that she shall dispose of it to no other person whatsoever but only to my three children".⁶² Three testators limited their wife's interest to the duration of her widowhood by including re-marriage clauses in their wills. John Todd, a Selby potter, left his wife Elizabeth his dwelling house and another cottage in Ousegate, but stipulated that should she "either marry or miscarry" both properties were to pass to his sons Thomas and John.⁶³ In 1750 Nicholas Cooper, a Selby yeoman, left all his real estate at West Cottingwith, his enclosures in Wheldrake, together with his freehold house, orchard and croft land in Selby to his wife Elizabeth, "...dureing her natural life upon condition shee remain my widdow and

keep unmarried to ann other man, but in case she doth marry then my mind and will is she shall only continue her thirds of my real estate for life as the law directs."⁶⁴ When William Nelstropp, a Wistow yeoman, made his will in 1745, he left his wife Sarah to cottages and an acre of penny land in Wistow, "...for & during the term of her natural life or until she re-marries."⁶⁵ It would appear from these three examples that re-marriage clauses were occasionally made when substantial amounts of real property were involved. In general however, few men from this group limited the widow's tenure to the duration of her widowhood.

The Widow as Executrix and Residuary Legatee

We have seen that relatively few testators from our communities made specific provision for their widows when drawing up their wills. The bulk of testators, after making token bequests to wider kin or friends, and putting forth their children, simply nominated their wives as executrices and residuary legatees.⁶⁶ The naming of an executor was an essential requirement of a will and the obligations of the appointment were clearly spelled out by the legal writers of the period: he or she was to be responsible for proving the will in the church court and was to discharge the debts and legacies of the deceased, ensuring also that debts owing to the estate were paid. The appointment therefore pre-supposed a knowledge of the financial affairs of the decedent and a familiarity with the administration of the probate court.⁶⁷

In Table 6:3 the testator's choice of executor has been analysed for each of the three categories of will-makers, according to whether the widow was named as sole executrix, was made joint executrix with one

TABLE 6:3 Executorship of Wills According to Family Situation

	<u>Wistow</u>	<u>Riccall</u>	<u>Cawood</u>	<u>Selby</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>No Children</u>						
No of wills naming executor	11	11	16	44	82	100%
Wife made sole executrix	9	11	14	39	73	89%
Wife made joint executrix	1	-	1	4	6	7%
Another made executor	1	-	1	1	3	4%
<u>All Children Minors</u>						
No of wills naming executor	10	6	16	34	66	100%
Wife made sole executrix	5	5	13	21	44	67%
Wife made joint executrix	4	1	2	5	12	18%
Another made executor	1	-	1	8	10	15%
<u>Some or All Children of Age</u>						
No of wills naming executor	31	28	42	74	175	100%
Wife made sole executrix	16	13	30	39	98	56%
Wife made joint executrix	13	10	9	20	52	30%
Another made executor	2	5	3	15	25	14%

or more people or was not named as executrix at all. It can be seen that of the eighty-two childless testators who nominated executors in their wills, some eighty-nine percent chose the widow to act as sole executrix. On only six occasions did a testator make his wife joint executrix (usually with his parents or siblings) and in only three wills was another appointed in preference to the widow. When testators were survived by a wife and under age children, the chances of being named as sole executrix were reduced: some sixty-seven percent of testators choosing to appoint their wives alone, eighteen percent making her joint executrix and fifteen percent nominating another person. A close analysis of these wills revealed that those sharing the administration or being named in preference to the widow were invariably the teenage children of the decedent. As we should expect it was even more common among the third group of will-makers,

those with some children of age, for the widow not be appointed as sole executrix, and in forty-four percent of cases, she was either named as part executrix or another person was appointed. In nearly every case those nominated alongside or in preference to the widow were the sons and daughters of the deceased.

It is apparent that the widow's chances of being named executrix of her husband's estate varied according to the presence and ages of children in the family. Perhaps the most important finding, however, is that despite the fact that adult offspring were available, some fifty-six percent of testators nevertheless appointed their widow as sole executrix. It is clear that the majority of testators considered their wives the most appropriate person to administer *their estates at their death*. Moreover, few of these men felt the need to appoint friends or kinsmen as supervisors in order to oversee the administration of the estate, and it would appear that testators expressed complete faith in their wives' ability to fulfil the financial and administrative responsibilities of executorship. Of course, the fact that a widow was appointed as executrix did not necessarily mean that she fulfilled these obligations. There are few examples, however, among the probate records of widows nominated as executrices but renouncing the administration in favour of children or trustees. That this could occur is evidenced in the case of Ann Edwards, widow of Christopher Edwards of Selby, who signed a renunciation bond in 1693, handing over administration to her friend and trustee, Henry Redhead, for it was explained in the bond that she as incapable of acting as an executrix because, "being a lame woman" she was, "...not able to ryde goe or travel to Yorke".⁶⁸ On other occasions religious beliefs could act as an impediment: in 1673 for example, John Hobson, a Selby clothier nominated his "deare and

loveing wife Elizabeth" executrix of his estate, but a note at the end of his will stated:

"Elizabeth Hobson the executrix named in this will refuseing to take execution thereof (by reason she would not swear) administration with the will annexed was granted to Jennet Conier, Widdow and mother to Elizabeth the executrix she consenting thereto."⁶⁹

It would appear that in exceptional circumstances widows declined to administer the estate of their deceased husbands. In the majority of cases, however, the evidence suggests that widows of all ages fulfilled the obligations imposed upon them with regard to the executorship of their husbands' wills and were active both in paying debts and legacies, and in proving the will in the ecclesiastical court.

In nearly all wills the executor was given the residual element of the estate. It is difficult, of course, to determine what a bequest of residual property meant in terms of the widow's future prosperity. The actual goods which a woman inherited as residuary legatee would obviously depend not only on the prosperity of her husband, but also on the amount of property he chose to leave in legacies to his children, relatives and friends, and on the amount of money which he owed his creditors. It is not difficult to find among the probate records cases where the testators property did not cover his total debts. In 1669 for example, when Gervaise Ashley of Wistow died, he left £12.19.10 according to his inventory, yet his debts and funeral expenses totalled some £24.6.6. A note at the foot of the accounts indicated that his wife, Elizabeth, had been responsible for the payment of his debts: "E.A. paid from her own goods & estate £11.7.1."⁷⁰ Only if legacies had been paid first was the executrix legally obliged to pay the creditors out of her own purse, yet clearly at least one widow felt morally obliged to discharge her husband's debt out of her own estate. Despite these reservations it would seem

likely that in most cases the residuary legacy constituted the bulk of the personal estate. A comparison of the wills and probate inventories suggests that few items of personal property were bequeathed to children, relatives or friends if the widow was still alive, and although no allowance can be made for pre-mortem transfers of goods and chattels, our assumption must be that, as residuary legatee, the widow inherited considerable amounts of personal property. While the inventories reveal little of the "unmoveable" property, which in many cases formed part of the residual goods, we can only assume that she must also have received substantial amount of real estate.

The patterns of economic support provided for widows and the strategies employed for her future welfare depended on the individual circumstances of particular families. Our analysis of the provision which husbands made has revealed, however, that the stage of the life-cycle which a family had reached, was an important factor in determining the configuration of bequests. We have seen that men with no children to provide for most commonly left their widow either the entire estate or the greater part of their property, and, where real estate was specifically mentioned, usually gave her a life interest in their houses and lands. Testators who had a wife and young children to provide for were obviously forced to make very different provision from those who were survived by a wife alone. When under-age children were named in the will it would appear that the widow was rarely given the entire estate, for the family's resources had also to be used for the maintenance of children and for the provision of portions when they came of age. Moreover, although the majority of women were given a life interest in houses and lands, some testators with young children insisted that the widow should relinquish her rights to real

estate when the children reached twenty-one or were married. In those wills containing some or all adult children, where widows were usually of an older age group, we have seen that her interest in the property of her husband was sometimes curtailed, testators occasionally preferring to nominate children as executors and residuary legatees. Even within this group however, property usually devolved upon the widow.

Examples of testators who formally reserved a specific part of the house to the use of the widow are rare, and the independence of the widow was invariably maintained by giving her a life interest in the family dwelling house and other real estate. Although the wills indicate that a high proportion of testators had adult children they also reveal that these children rarely bore the responsibility of providing for their elderly mothers. Overall, few testators, whatever their family situation, left their dwelling houses and real estate to their widow only for the duration of her widowhood. The fact that the few examples of men making bequests to their wives conditional upon them not re-marrying are found only when children were present, suggests that such restrictions did not imply a hard-hearted desire to keep their widows faithful to the grave, but rather represented the view that widow who re-married could be expected to be adequately provided for by her new spouse, thus enabling her first husband's property to be more profitably used for the benefit of the children. The consistency of practice whereby widows were granted a life-long interest in their husbands' estate, were given responsibility for the care of young children and were trusted with the administration of family property, are the most salient features of the wills. When added to the expressions of loving endearment also found in the documents, they argue for a strong companionate element in the marriages of the middling sort during the period 1660 to 1760.

CHAPTER 6 : REFERENCES

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5. Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, p.94.
6. Spufford, Contrasting Communities, p.89.
7. Wistow Prebendal Court (Cawood), September 1665 (date of will).
8. Selby Peculiar Court, May 1664.
9. Selby Peculiar Court, June 1683.
10. Selby Peculiar Court, June 1683.
11. Selby Peculiar Court, May 1666.
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13. Selby Peculiar Court, May 1737.
14. Selby Peculiar Court, February 1682.
15. Selby Peculiar Court, January 1716.
16. Wistow Prebendal Court (Cawood), June 1676.
17. Riccall Prebendal Court, undated (filed in 1692).
18. Selby Peculiar Court, July 1740.
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32. Selby Peculiar Court, October 1695.
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34. Pollock and Maitland, History of English Law, p.348.
35. Ibid. p.355.
36. The Book of Remarks of William Storr, p.18.
37. Riccall Prebendal Court, May 1738.
38. Riccall Prebendal Court, August 1754.
39. Riccall Prebendal Court, June 1708 (date of will).
40. Selby Peculiar Court, June 1683.
41. Selby Peculiar Court, July 1749.
42. Selby Peculiar Court, September 1717.
43. Prerogative Court, April 1749.
44. Riccall Prebendal Court, January 1726.
45. Wistow Prebendal Court (Cawood), February 1719.
46. Thomas Judd, Selby Peculiar Court, April 1657 (date of will).
47. Jefferey Bean, Selby Peculiar Court, April 1750.
48. Selby Peculiar Court, February 1667 (date of will).
49. Wistow Prebendal Court, October 1732.

50. Wistow Prebendal Court, October 1732.
51. Selby Peculiar Court, December 1683.
52. Selby Peculiar Court, May 1676.
53. Selby Peculiar Court, May 1700.
54. Selby Peculiar Court, October 1714.
55. The provision of house-room and material support from the inheriting son was the typical form of bequest to widows in some early modern communities. (See for example, Spufford, Contrasting Communities, pp.111-118). However, most communities so far studied have shown a similar pattern to that found in Wistow, Riccall, Cawood and Selby (Todd, "Widowhood in a Market Town", pp.252-260; Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, pp.97-98; Spufford, Contrasting Communities, pp.88-90, 161-164; Wright, "Family Life and Society", pp.252-262).
56. Bequests of real estate which have been classified as "unspecified or additional" could vary from general legacies of "all my lands and tenements" to individual houses or odd acres of land. In some cases, when a testator made a bequest of a "cottage", "house", "messuage" or "tenement", or simply bequeathed "all my real estate" it is likely that such property constituted or included the family house, but unless this was explicitly stated in the will this assumption has not been made and these bequests have been included under the heading of "unspecified or additional real estate".
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58. Selby Peculiar Court, June 1721.
59. Thomas Ambler, Prerogative Court, February 1731.
60. Prerogative Court, January 1727.
61. Selby Peculiar Court, May 1664.
62. James Wood, Wistow Prebendal Court (Cawood), October 1728.
63. Selby Peculiar Court, June 1720.
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CONCLUSION

This thesis has been concerned with three of the most fundamental aspects of life in pre-industrial England: the way in which people earned a living, the nature of their domestic environment and the quality of their family life. It has demonstrated that important questions about these subjects can be addressed by using the surviving probate evidence from a small group of parishes. At the same time, however, it has revealed the limitations of this type of evidence as a source for the economic and social history of early modern English communities. Even when supplementary evidence is used, there are important aspects of our chosen themes which remain obscure. Attention has been drawn to deficiencies in the documents throughout the thesis, but it is worth reiterating here that the most fundamental drawback of such evidence is its failure to cover all social groups within the community. By the latter part of the seventeenth century nearly half the entire working male population in English rural society were labourers.¹ In this study these men are represented in only fifteen inventories and eleven wills from our four communities. The findings, then, relate largely to the middling and upper ranks of village and market town society. However, as we have seen, probate inventories and wills do offer a unique insight into the lives of these people. This conclusion will attempt to draw together the most important of our findings and to relate them to wider studies of economic and family life in early modern England.

Like the majority of people in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England, the inhabitants of Wistow, Cawood, Riccall and Selby were heavily dependent on agriculture as a source of income. Compared to many parts of the country, however, the farmers from our four com-

munities were highly favoured. These low-lying settlements on the banks of the Ouse offered rich pasture land together with the possibility of arable production. Moreover, easy access to river and road transport ensured swift transportation of agricultural produce to local markets and meant that farmers could choose from a variety of outlets. There is abundant evidence in the probate and other local records to suggest that farmers, especially the larger yeomen, capitalized on these advantages. Manorial documents and wills show that many of these men were able to build up sizeable holdings in their own and neighbouring parishes. Hearth tax returns and inventories reveal that yeoman families occupied large houses and enjoyed a lifestyle of some comfort and luxury. Two important features of the more prosperous yeomen were the diversity of their economic interests and the highly commercial nature of their farming. In general, such men followed a mixed pattern of husbandry, cultivating a range of cereals, growing quantities of hemp and investing in various types of livestock. However, the records leave us in little doubt that the main commercial interest of these men were their dairy herds.

Probate records provide only tantalizing references to the involvement of farmers in the market economy, but the size of many of their dairy herds, together with the large stocks of cheeses and butter found in many dairies, and the occasional references to money owed for the sale of agricultural produce, all suggest an agrarian economy much less dominated by subsistence than by commercial farming. William Storr's memorandum book certainly provides clear testimony of his commercial outlook. His jottings on the dates of local fairs, the details of his land purchases, his tables for calculating the worth of a lease, all depict Storr as a market-oriented agrarian capitalist. Evidence from other parts of England would suggest that Storr and the other yeomen

from our parishes were by no means unusual. In his examination of diaries and account books of seventeenth century farmers, for example, Alan Macfarlane found a "sophisticated and rational approach" to the market economy.² Similarly, Keith Wrightson noted a "market-oriented specialization" in the diaries and autobiographies of middling farmers.³ In their examination of individual communities these two scholars, and others, have noted that yeomen farmers were heavily involved in an active land market and commercially-oriented agriculture throughout the seventeenth century.⁴

Vital to the development of the market economy in the seventeenth century was the role of towns. That the century after 1650, in particular, witnessed considerable urban growth is now well-established; indeed, Peter Borsay has argued that the development of English towns during the later-Stuart and Hanoverian period constituted an "English urban renaissance".⁵ A salient feature of urban growth at this time was the tendency for towns to develop an economic specialization. In Yorkshire for example, York became very much a social centre for the gentry, Leeds developed a specialism in cloth-finishing, Halifax and Bradford in weaving worsteds, Huddersfield in producing kerseys, Sheffield in the metal-trades.⁶ Compared to the work on growing industrial centres and established county towns, there has been little research on the smaller inland market towns, yet there is some evidence to suggest that these places, too, developed specialist functions in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Robert Unwin's work has shown that the Vale of York's nineteen market towns could be divided into three types: road towns, whose fortunes were based on their proximity to the main north-south routes; towns which acted as inland ports; and town on the edge of the Vale, whose economies were largely dependent on their role as markets for

surrounding rural communities. Unwin found that transport improvements of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reinforced the distinction between the Vale's market towns, with road and river towns developing most rapidly as commercial centres. During this period the growth of specialized urban economies led to the demise of many smaller market centres such as Sherburn, Aberford and Cawood.⁷ An examination of probate evidence can provide little insight into the changing fortunes of different towns, but our study has revealed the variation which could exist between the economies of neighbouring urban centres. Clearly, the smaller market town of Cawood had much more in common with its rural neighbours than with Selby. Though the inventoried population of Cawood included a number of different tradesmen and craftsmen, agricultural property was by far the most important element in most inventories; the majority of Cawood's inhabitants retained strong links with the land. At Selby, however, yeomen rarely featured in the probate papers and many craftsmen and tradesmen were divorced from the land. Instead, the town's economy centred on river-trade and the production of leather.

The economic activities of market town tradesmen and craftsmen is a subject which has attracted relatively little scholarly attention, but our study of the probate evidence from Selby shows that analysis of the commercial assets of these people, as recorded in their inventories, is a useful tool with which to reconstruct this aspect of urban life. As has already been stressed, many of the poorer trades, and almost all of the labouring population, remained outside the scope of probate, but at least the inventories allow us to discern something of the trading interests of middling urban masters. Our examination of the property of Selby's craftsmen and tradesmen during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries reveals a complex and

sophisticated urban economy. Though incomes, at all levels, continued to be drawn from a variety of sources, there is little evidence to suggest that the dual economy was an important feature of the market town economy. Rather, the bulk of Selby's inventoried population were dependant upon manufacturing and trade for their livelihood. Though most of the town's craftsmen were involved in the production of basic goods, the inventories suggest that some tradesmen and craftsmen catered for more fashionable taste. At the apex of market town society were a group of shopkeepers, mariners, merchants and tanners who owned considerable businesses and whose wealth equalled and sometimes surpassed that of the gentry. Occasional references in their probate records to land owned in various parts of the *north of* England, or to debts owed by London tradesmen, remind us that such men formed part of an integrated national economy at the end of the early modern period.

By the end of the seventeenth century many English men and women not only worked in a sophisticated and advanced economy, they also enjoyed a high level of material culture. Historians, searching for the preconditions of industrial take-off in the eighteenth century have identified the period 1660-1760 as one of rapidly growing domestic demand for goods of all types. Indeed, it has been argued that this period saw the birth of the first true 'consumer society'.⁸ Until recently, however, historians have been more concerned with consumerism among polite society than with consumption patterns at lower social levels, and scant attention has been paid to the social and cultural context of domestic consumption in ordinary households. Over the last few years, a handful of scholars have begun to open up this aspect of early modern social history by using probate evidence.⁹ Perhaps the most important of these has been Lorna Weatherill's

analysis of almost 3,000 inventories from eight contrasting parts of England.¹⁰ Her work has clearly shown the latter part of the seventeenth century and the early years of the eighteenth century as a period of growing household consumption among middling people. However, she found considerable variation in the ownership of goods between different parts of the country; the North-West and Cumbria, for example, being relatively 'backward' compared to the South and North-East. The picture, Weatherill argued, was much more complex than a simple contrast in terms of north and south or agricultural and non-agricultural; a number of factors such as the economic development of different areas, patterns of trade, regional differences in attitudes and the influence of towns, all affected consumption patterns.¹¹

Unfortunately Lorna Weatherill's sample did not include inventories from Yorkshire and we are therefore precluded from placing our four parishes in a regional context. However, while confirming the general picture of rising living standards in the period 1660-1760, the evidence from Wistow, Cawood, Riccall and Selby does suggest that the variations which could be found at a regional level were also present within a relatively small local area. The domestic property of the inhabitants of the villages and market towns has revealed a generally high level of comfort in the houses of middling people. The large houses found in Wistow, Cawood and Selby permitted a specialization in room-use which meant that cooking, eating, sleeping and work were confined to different parts of the house. Many dwellings, especially in Selby, were remarkably well-furnished: decorative items such as silver and looking glasses were widely-owned, even in the 1660s, while goods such as clocks and pictures became more common in the eighteenth century. If middling people were becoming more ostentatious they were

also becoming more literate: by the 1750s three quarters of all testators were able to sign their wills and books were becoming so common by the early decades of the eighteenth century that appraisers often failed to itemize them individually when drawing up the inventories. In bookownership, as well as in the ownership of luxury items, Selby outstripped its rural neighbours. It would appear that literacy, like the ownership of decorative goods and specialization in room-use was a socially restricted phenomenon. Even our socially-skewed sample shows that nearly half the husbandmen of Riccall were living in a house with only two rooms in the eighteenth century. Items such as clocks, pictures, feather beds and napkins were not part of their material culture, nor would they have had much use for books.

This diversity of experience within an overall context which in many ways, was recognizably 'modern' is also a theme which emerges very strongly from the analysis of family attitudes in the second part of this thesis. Over the last few years the work of scholars such as Stone, Shorter, Aries and Flandrin, which argued for fundamental changes in the nature of family life between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries has been brought into question.¹² Historical demographers have demonstrated that many of the modern structural characteristics of the English family can be traced back to well before the eighteenth century. Analysis of parish listings and registers has shown that English men and women married late and a high proportion of them did not marry at all; on the whole they lived in households which only contained nuclear families and servants; families tended to be highly mobile, and thus geographically distanced from their kin.¹³ Previously held assumptions about the superior emotional climate of the modern family have also begun to be debunked and we now have an emerging consensus about the nature of affective

relationships within pre-industrial families. Contrary to the once-held belief that early modern marriages were distant, unloving relationships based on economic foundations, conjugal relationships were, it would seem, companionate and loving. Similarly, it has been shown that most parents did not as once thought treat their children in a formal, authoritarian and patriarchal manner; rather, relationships between parents and their children were loving and caring.¹⁴

Much of the evidence for these important continuities in family sentiments has come from diaries and autobiographies. In one of the earliest studies of an early modern diary Alan Macfarlane used the exceptionally detailed writings of Ralph Josselin to reveal the mental world of this seventeenth-century Essex clergyman. Macfarlane found evidence of deep emotional bonds within Josselin's nuclear family while, in contrast, the minister showed relatively little interest in his wider kin.¹⁵ Since Macfarlane's study a number of other scholars have used diaries and autobiographies to gauge family attitudes. Such studies have invariably shown that, while diarists displayed considerable individuality, attitudes and behaviour were remarkably consistent: companionate marriages, understanding parents, lack of concern with kin beyond the nuclear family were the salient features of most families.¹⁶ The idea that such behaviour was the product of more enlightened attitudes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been successfully challenged. Diaries and autobiographies provide the most readily accessible evidence of the family life of early modern men and women, yet such direct personal testimony is available for only a tiny minority of the population. Generally speaking diary-writing stopped at the level of yeoman or well-to-do tradesman and vital questions about the extent to which the attitudes of diarists

can be extended to those lower down in the social hierarchy have barely begun to be answered.

Discovering the attitudes of more ordinary early modern men and women towards their spouses, children and distant relatives is a difficult task. Then, as now, few people committed to paper such intimate details of their lives; instead their attitudes and feelings must be measured using more indirect evidence. The second part of this thesis has revealed both the limitations and the prospects of testamentary evidence in illuminating family life. Wills relate to a propertied minority and they provide only a partial insight into the attitude and behaviour of even this small group of people. However, the decisions which people made on their deathbeds are an important tool with which to analyse their feelings. Property played a key role in determining family relationships, and the choices which testators made as to who should assume responsibility for seeing their estates through probate, or who should inherit their real and personal wealth, tell us a good deal about the strength and direction of family sentiment. Moreover, the language which testators used when writing their wills and the statements and provisos which they attached to their bequests, frequently help us to determine the feelings and attitudes which lay behind the distribution of property at death.

A large sample of probate evidence provides a bewildering and often confusing amount of detail on the decisions made by testators. However, our study has shown that on close scrutiny, consistent patterns of behaviour begin to emerge. The evidence clearly reveals that testators preferred to use neighbours rather than distant kin in assisting with probate, and that they displayed a limited recognition of their wider relatives when bequeathing their property. In

contrast, very careful provision was made for dependents, whether under-age children or widows. The wills reveal that some fathers provided for the upbringing of their young children with great care. In addition, they suggest that testators were anxious to advance *all* their children to the best of their ability, and that they rarely used property to assert their patriarchal authority. When considering the future well-being of their wives, husbands attempted to provide a widowhood free from material worries. Wives were the most considerable beneficiaries of their husbands' estates and testators often expressed trust and confidence in their abilities. These, then, are the most pervasive features of family attitudes as expressed in the testamentary evidence from our four communities.

Because there have been relatively few studies of wills which have focused on the issue of family sentiments it is difficult to know whether our testators were typical of early modern English will-makers in their expressed attitudes towards kin, children and wives. However, the handful of studies which have been made do suggest a fairly consistent range of behaviour and attitudes. On the issue of kinship, for example, Howell, Wrightson and Levine, Vann, Cressy and Johnson all found that wide kin were relatively unimportant in determining the pattern of bequests.¹⁷ The provision made for widows is a less well-researched area, but several scholars have noted that throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries many husbands couched their bequests in fond language and terms of endearment.¹⁸ Moreover, as Keith Wrightson has pointed out, naming the wife as executrix and granting her full control of the family property could be regarded as normal practice among early modern testators.¹⁹ As far as the relationship between parents and children is concerned, the weight of testamentary evidence thus far examined would suggest that

to make careful provision for the upbringing of young children, to attempt to provide adequately for all children and to express feelings of love and affection for offspring were widespread practices among middling people.²⁰

It would appear that investigations of the attitudes of ordinary people using their diaries and wills have shown many of the previous conceptions of the history of the English family to be false. However, recent emphasis on the importance of continuity in family life over the centuries should not blind us to the fact that family sentiments and behaviour in early modern England were far from homogeneous. In many respects we are only just beginning to reconstruct the diversity of co-existing attitudes and practices in pre-industrial family life. As this study has shown, the point in the life-cycle which testators had reached was an important determinant in decisions over the distribution of family property at death. *Bequests* to wider kin and provision for the widow were highly dependent on the presence of under-age children in the family. Wealth and rank also played a vital role in the patterning of behaviour. Gentlemen and wealthy Selby merchants remembered a wide-range of kin in their wills and were able to make generous provision for all their children in the form of land, houses and large cash sums. For men such as these the possession of substantial amounts of property offered the potential of greater parental control over marriages and vocations. In contrast, poor husbandmen, craftsmen and labourers lacked the wherewithal to leave legacies to their kinsfolk while children were likely to receive small cash sums, household goods and livestock, thus weakening parental control. We are only just beginning to appreciate the ways in which family attitudes varied among the different social groups of early modern England and a great deal of work needs to be done before

we have a thorough understanding of the complexity and diversity of family life in the past. Only by careful reconstruction of the behaviour and attitudes of ordinary people in different parts of England can we fully appreciate regional and social variations, and begin to understand changes in family life over time.

Probate evidence, as this thesis has shown, offers tremendous potential for uncovering not only the material environment, but also the mental world, of early modern men and women. Though historians have long made use of these records to examine such subjects as agricultural practice, levels of wealth and inheritance practices, we have seen that they can also be exploited to address some of the more intractable problems of early modern social history such as the nature of the domestic economy, the growth of a consumer society, popular literacy and family attitudes. Our context here has been a small part of England at the end of the early modern period, but by concentrating on a relatively neglected era in English social history and by focusing on a group of northern parishes, perhaps we have gone some way to redress an imbalance in recent scholarship. In many ways the study of four, fairly sizeable parishes, is an ideal geographical context for a detailed examination of property ownership as reflected in probate records. Such a focus is broad enough to produce quantifiable evidence from a range of occupations, yet, at the same time, allows the possibility of exploring a range of supporting evidence. Our study represents a microcosm of English life during the century before the industrial revolution, but only through intensive local research can we provide a soundly based analysis of the experiences of ordinary people in early modern England.

CONCLUSION : REFERENCES

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15. Macfarlane, Family Life of Ralph Josselin, pp.105-60.
16. It is unfortunate that, since Macfarlane's study, further detailed analyses of single diaries and autobiographies have not been forthcoming. Systematic study of diary evidence as it relates to parent-child relationships can be found in Pollock, Forgotten Children, passim. Studies which employ diaries for illustrative purposes are: Wrightson, English Society, pp.89-118; Sharpe, Early Modern England, pp.62-76; Houlbrooke, English Family, passim.

17. Howell, "Peasant Inheritance Customs", p.141; Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, p.92; Vann, "Wills and the family", pp.363-365; Johnson, "The Family and Kin of the Lincolnshire Labourer", pp.47-48; Cressy, "Kinship in Early Modern England", pp.53-59.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 : Percentage of Male Decedents Leaving Inventories
by Parish and Decade

	WISTOW		RICCALL		SELBY		CAWOOD	
	Burials	Invs. %	Burials	Invs. %	Burials	Invs. %	Burials	Invs. %
1660-9	44	23 52	-	(33) -	-	(49) -	92	19 21
1670-9	60	18 30	46	19 41	109	31 28	78	18 23
1680-9	49	11 22	52	13 25	-	(33) -	78	24 31
1690-9	30	11 37	47	21 45	111	39 35	50	18 36
1700-9	24	5 21	34	4 12	-	(30) -	45	12 27
1710-9	40	11 28	29	13 45	100	29 29	48	16 33
1720-9	48	7 15	58	22 38	158	24 15	74	14 19
1730-9	25	9 36	26	13 50	99	15 15	31	6 19
1740-9	31	7 23	36	10 28	-	(31) -	55	4 7
1750-9	31	9 29	27	10 37	99	22 22	40	8 20
TOTAL	382	111 29	355	125 35	676	160 24	591	139 23

APPENDIX 2 : Percentage of Male Decedents Leaving Wills
by Parish and Decade

	WISTOW		RICCALL		SELBY		CAWOOD	
	Burials	Wills %	Burials	Wills %	Burials	Wills %	Burials	Wills %
1660-9	44	12 27	-	(12) -	-	(33) -	92	15 16
1670-9	60	6 10	46	11 24	109	16 15	78	9 11
1680-9	49	10 20	52	4 8	-	(26) -	78	14 18
1690-9	30	4 13	47	12 25	111	31 28	50	9 18
1700-9	24	4 17	34	8 23	-	(18) -	45	9 20
1710-9	40	10 25	29	7 24	100	18 18	48	15 31
1720-9	48	10 21	58	9 15	158	32 20	74	13 18
1730-9	25	8 32	26	10 38	99	18 18	31	5 16
1740-9	31	8 26	36	8 22	-	(30) -	55	6 11
1750-9	31	10 32	27	4 15	99	20 20	40	10 25
TOTAL	382	82 21	355	73 21	676	135 20	591	105 18

The figures in Appendices 1 and 2 refer to adult males only, as the burial registers do not always record the marital status of women, and do not, therefore, allow the potential female testators to be identified. The burial figures have been extracted from the parish registers and, where these are deficient, from the parish register transcripts. At Riccall the records are incomplete for 1660-9, and at Selby for 1660-9, 1680-9, 1700-9 and 1740-9. Using burial registers to calculate the annual figures of male decedents in a parish does not present an entirely accurate picture due to the effect of such factors as inefficient record-keeping, non-conformity and men being buried outside their home parishes. The figures should therefore be seen as a rough estimate of will and inventory coverage.

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Riccall parish registers, vol. 1	PR RIC
Selby parish registers, vols. 2-8	PR SEL
Wistow parish registers, vols. 1-3	PR WIS
Parish Register Transcripts:	
Cawood	PRT CAW
Riccall	PRT RIC
Selby	PRT SEL
Wistow	PRT WIS

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Custumal, 1708	CC.Ab.12(4)
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The Book of Remarks of William Storr of Scalm Park	MD/112
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	Riccall	P.R.O. E179 205/504
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	Riccall	P.R.O. E179 261/10

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