

## CHAPTER 3

# The Processing and Consumption of Food and Drink

While the food habits of monastic and elite secular households are well illustrated by household accounts and other documentary sources (e.g. Woolgar 1992; 2016, 172–95), considerably less is known of non-elite diet. Our understanding of peasant diet is principally informed by records of grants of food made by landowners to their tenants, for example around harvest time. The extent to which these are representative of everyday diet is unclear (Birrell 2015; Dyer 1988; Woolgar 2016, 26–41). We can also infer diet through records of fines levied on food vendors and regulations relating to occupations such as butchers and bakers (Davis 2012, 231). Drawing on varied historical sources, Woolgar (2016, 41) summarises peasant cooking around 1200 as being dominated by boiling and stewing, with an increasing prevalence of roasting and frying by the fifteenth century. Archaeological evidence relates both to foodstuffs (in the form of animal bone and charred or waterlogged plant remains) and the material culture of cooking and dining. Archaeological science approaches, such as the analysis of organic residues extracted from ceramic cooking pots and the isotopic analysis of human remains (which demonstrate significant differences in the contribution of meat, marine fish and vegetables to diet) are increasingly addressing this issue (Charters *et al.* 1993, 220; Dunne *et al.* 2019; Evershed *et al.* 1991; Evershed 1993, 95; Evershed *et al.* 2002, 665; Mays 1997; Müldner and Richards 2005; Thomas 2007). Ceramics dominate the archaeological material culture of cooking and eating, with metal vessels surviving only in exceptional circumstances, such as the assemblage of objects lost in a house-fire in 1507 at Pottergate in Norwich (Margeson 1993, 86). The presence of such vessels is more often only indicated by finds of vessel fragments or repair patches. The combined study of escheators' and coroners' lists and archaeological data provides a rare insight into the food practices of non-elite medieval

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households, in terms of food processing, storage, cooking, eating and drinking. In this section we briefly review the evidence for foodstuffs, before discussing in greater detail the various utensils and vessels associated with their storage, preparation and cooking.

### The evidence for food

The study of medieval food is well established from both archaeological and historical perspectives (e.g. Hammond 2005; Henisch 2009; Moffett 2018; Müldner 2009; Sykes 2009; Wilmott 2018; Woolgar, Serjeantson and Waldron 2006; Woolgar 2016). Both demonstrate a strong relationship between diet and the socio-economic hierarchy of medieval society. As detailed in Chapter 2, archaeological data relating to faunal remains was not recorded for this project because there have already been a number of national and regional surveys (e.g. Albarella 1999; 2019; Holmes 2017; Sykes 2006; Thomas 2007) and due to methodological inconsistencies in the recording and presentation of animal bone data. References to foodstuffs in the lists of the escheator and the coroner were recorded and, in general terms, relate to preserved meat, including bacon, salt beef, mutton and pork, and salted fish. Foodstuffs occur in only 6% of the escheators' lists of chattels, being more prevalent in those associated with criminal (8%) than civil cases (3%).

Lists associated with criminal cases typically appear more complete than those resulting from civil suits. The occurrence of foodstuffs intersects with regional variability in inventorying practices (see Chapter 2). The Kent/Middlesex, Wiltshire and Northamptonshire/Rutland escheatries, in which inventorying practices appear particularly thorough, provide the best evidence for foodstuffs. In total, 72% of the references to foodstuffs in the escheators' lists are from Kent/Middlesex. Foodstuffs occur in only 17, typically particularly detailed coroners' lists. Only a very limited range of items are represented, principally bacon and dairy produce.

Food and drink were not routinely seized in forfeitures, presumably because they were perishable and had little resale value. Foodstuffs were normally only recorded where there were substantial quantities present. When John Meselyn's goods were appraised by the escheator of Kent and Middlesex following a civil suit in 1404, he had nine flitches (or sides) of bacon and a further five bacons, valued at a total of 11s 8d (the location of the goods is not stated but they were presumably at Meselyn's home).<sup>22</sup> The low quantities of foodstuffs present in the lists generated by the escheator and coroner are not sufficient to afford quantitative analysis, but do provide useful supplementary data for understanding the provisioning of non-elite households.

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<sup>22</sup> E8.

Records of food liveries made to peasants at harvest time and as retirement allowances suggest a substantial increase in the provision of meat between the mid-thirteenth and mid-fifteenth centuries. Dyer (1983, 216) even goes as far as to suggest that the ‘prevalent miseries of the period before 1350 gave way to a “dietary optimum” in the fifteenth century’ (see also Woolgar 2006 for an overview of meat and dairy consumption). The available meat included beef, pork, mutton and poultry. The meat on offer became more varied over time and was increasingly fresh, rather than taking the form of preserved meat such as bacon (Dyer 1988, 30). The drivers for this change were a mixture of demographic pressures (a shortage of labour) and related changes, both in the organisation of landholding and of labour. For those able to afford it, the standard of food, both in terms of nutrition and flavour, increased substantially following the Black Death (Dyer 1988, 36). Whereas this historical evidence relates principally to the foodstuffs consumed, archaeological data primarily comprises waste material from the processing of carcasses or crops (Woolgar 2010, 3–4). The evidence from excavated animal bones shows clear distinctions in the relative proportions of pig and sheep from high status sites (such as castles) and rural and urban settlements (Thomas 2007). Pig often appears as a higher status foodstuff, particularly before the fifteenth century, while sheep remains are more prevalent in urban than rural contexts (Holmes 2017, 136–8; Thomas 2007, 136–8; Woolgar 2006, 90). Both Albarella (2006, 81), through archaeological evidence, and Woolgar (2006, 92), on the basis of documentary sources, note that higher status consumers often had a particular preference for younger animals, while bones from mature pigs are common finds in non-elite contexts, suggesting that age was a key determinant in status differentiation in relation to pork consumption (Albarella 2006, 80–1). Over time, pig declines in prevalence across the archaeological dataset in relation to sheep, due to a variety of factors including a reduction in woodlands (which offered pasture for pigs) and long-term fluctuations in wool and grain prices (Albarella 2006; Thomas 2007, 143–4). Animal bone data suggests that urban populations may have consumed more meat than rural populations, perhaps due to the focussing of wealth in towns or the presence of markets (Albarella 2005). Historical evidence, such as tax assessments from Colchester, remind us that urban communities were also engaged in the rearing of animals for sale or consumption and were not solely reliant on larger, rural, producers (Woolgar 2006, 89).

Bacon is the most common meat among the escheators’ records, occurring in 24 lists with multiple pieces being present in all but three cases (Table 3.1).<sup>23</sup> This is presumably because it was both common and was preserved through smoking, meaning that it could be sold on. Usually, bacon is the only foodstuff present in the lists in which it occurs. It is the only meat to occur in the coroners’ records, appearing in four lists (Table 3.2).<sup>24</sup> Beef and pork also occur

<sup>23</sup> E1279; E1335; E1584.

<sup>24</sup> C121; C382; C446, C472.

**Table 3.1:** The occurrence of foodstuffs in the escheators' records.

List No.	Name	Meat	Fish	Cheese	Flour & Oatmeal	Spices & Salt	Honey	Apple	Drink
8	John Meselyn	9 Flitches bacon(120d) & 5 Bacons (20d)							
9	John Child	2 Flitches (12d)							
12	William Burton	5 Flitches bacon (40d)							
13	John Philpot	4 Flitches bacon							
45	John Moigne	10 Bacons (120d) & 2 Qtr Beef (36d)							
157	John de Polton	6 Bacons & 3 Qtr Salt beef							
210	William Barett		Eel						1 Pipe wine (1440d)
217	John Plumme								
244	John Stevenson	1 Salt pork (160d)						3 Qtr (24d)	
285	Thomas atte Rode								
286	Stephen Donet	4 Flitches bacon (48d)							
289	Robert Cat	2 Flitches bacon (24d)							
304	John Coupere					0.5 Bushel salt			
310	John Forster	2 Qtr Salt mutton				Salt?			
341	William Bayly	3 Flitches (36d)							
417	John Eston	4 Flitches bacon (48d)							
479	John atte Wode	4 Bacons (48d)							

(Continued)

Table 3.1: Continued.

List No.	Name	Meat	Fish	Cheese	Flour & Oatmeal	Spices & Salt	Honey	Apple	Drink
505	Richard Bothe	2 Qtr Salt beef (30d)							
515	William Boursset				3 Qtr Oatmeal (180d)				
518	John Hawkyn					1.5 lb Pepper (18d), 6lb Cumin (6d), 2lb Ginger (12d), 0.5lb Anise (1.5d), 1lb Grains of Paradise (16d), 0.8lb Crocus [saffron] (40d), 1lb mace (12d) & 4 Qtr Salt (180d)			
557	Nicholas Gulot	2 Sides bacon (36d)							1 Pipe cider (40d)
596	William at Mille								0.125 Pipe wine (48d)
664	John Spenser							2 Qtr (24d)	
675	Robert Stonforde								
677	Robert Senyng								
679	William Walton							1 Qtr (12d)	

(Continued)

Table 3.1: Continued.

List No.	Name	Meat	Fish	Cheese	Flour & Oatmeal	Spices & Salt	Honey	Apple	Drink
684	John Mounde							6 Qtr (48d)	3 Pipes cider (88d)
728	John Rennewey	4 Flitches bacon (48d)							
742	John Gunnyld	5 Bacons (120d)							
765	John Scot								1 Pipe cider (80d)
768	Thomas Isenden	2 Flitches bacon (24d)		5 Cheeses					
785	William de Brereton	4 Flitches bacon (40d), 1 Salt beef carcass (80d) & 2 Fresh pork carcasses (40d)							
786	John Fenton	2 Beef pieces & 1 Fresh pork piece							
910	John Horle				Pea? Flour				
948	John Paget								1 Pipe wine (720d)
953	Robert Neuton	6 Pork? (48d)							
1086	Humphrey Bocher			0.5 Wey Cheese		0.5 Oz Crocus	1 Gallon		
1099	John Burgh		400 Buckhorn & 1 Qtr Pike						
1102	Thomas Blofeld			1 Wey Cheese					

(Continued)

Table 3.1: Continued.

List No.	Name	Meat	Fish	Cheese	Flour & Oatmeal	Spices & Salt	Honey	Apple	Drink
1197	Richard Horeston				2 Bushels Oat flour (60d)				
1237	Baldwin of the Felde	2 Salt beef (30d) & 2 Salt pork							
1239	John Solterous	Beef & 1 Mutton carcass							
1241	Thomas Vyncent	3 Qtr Beef							
1279	John Hobelet	1 Flitch bacon (20d)							
1334	William Threle								
1335	Thomas Threle	1 Flitch bacon (6d)							
1336	Thomas Paccheherst	12 Flitches bacon (144d) & 3 Qtr Beef (42d)							
1337	Thomas Southlond	4 Flitches bacon (32d)							
1409	John Spykesworth	3 Flitches bacon (60d)							
1435	Philip Canaan			1 Cheese					
1466	John Cartere	2 Bacons (24d)							
1504	John Wynkelman								1 Pipe wine (480d)
1584	John Taillour	Half bacon (20d)							
1603	Simon Stumbil'	4 Flitches bacon (120d)							

**Table 3.2:** The occurrence of foodstuffs in the coroners' records.

List No.	Name	Bacon	Dairy	Treacle	Hops	Flour & Oatmeal	Salt	Fish	Apple	Verjuice
64	Henry Kistope			1 Barrel (3d)						
121	William Abbot	2 Flitch bacon (32d)								
194	Robert Crowne		Cheese			Oatmeal			4 Bushel (12d)	
215	John Jacson					3 Bushel Flour (60d)				
226	John Oke		Butter & Cheese							
230	John Wyvenden		6 Cheeses							
258	William Marten		4 Cheeses (12d)							
308	Edward Purkheme		40 Qtr Butter (3.25d)							
317	William Purches									6 Gallon & 2 Hog heads
382	John James	10 Bacon 'hog' (800d)			4.5 Qtr (160d)			5 Sculpin		
446	William Bacheler	2 Flitch bacon					2 Bushel			
447	Henry Cooper		89 Cheeses (976d)							
454	Edith Self		30 Cheeses (120d)							
458	John Feyrechilde		Butter & Cheese							
472	William Payne	4 Flitch bacon (120d)								



within the escheators' lists. In some cases the beef was salted; for example in 1419 the felon Richard Bothe of Bingley (Yorkshire) had salt beef to the value of 2s 6d.<sup>25</sup> Baldwin of the Felde of Worcestershire, whose goods were seized in 1397 after he murdered Simon Wheler at Kings Norton, had both salt beef and salt pork.<sup>26</sup> Pork occurs in two other lists, and in one case, that of William de Brereton of Tranby (Yorkshire), dated to 1383, is explicitly listed as being fresh and valued at 3s 4d (he also had salt beef valued at 6s 8d).<sup>27</sup> There are only two lists which include mutton. One relates to John Solterous of Long Stratton (Norfolk), whose goods, seized in 1397 after he was indicted for felonies, included a mutton carcass.<sup>28</sup> The other is that of John Forster, who had two quarters of salt mutton when he committed suicide in Thrapston (Northamptonshire) in 1419.<sup>29</sup> Salt occurs in a small number of lists. Salt was produced by evaporation in coastal areas as well as in the west midlands, with a high degree of variability in quality and value and much was imported (Bridbury 1955; Woolgar 2016, 71–2). William Bacheler of Mereworth (Kent) had two bushels of salt in 1541 and salt also occurs in the escheators' lists relating to the merchant John Hawykn (four quarters, valued at 15s), and John Coupere, probably a cooper, of Wellingborough (Northamptonshire) who was outlawed in 1416.<sup>30</sup> The occurrence of salt is low given the number of salt cellars which appear in escheators' and coroners' lists (see Chapter 4), suggesting that its presence was only recorded when occurred in significant quantities, perhaps associated with the preserving of meat.

The presence of pork (primarily in the form of bacon) as the principal meat in the escheators' lists is striking, given pork's high status associations. Pigs are relatively common, occurring in 183 escheators' and 45 coroners' lists. The key distinction in consumption is likely to be in terms of the consumption of fresh pork; indeed contemporary literary sources make a clear distinction between the consumption of salted, preserved meat by the peasantry and the consumption of fresh meat by the elite (Woolgar 2016, 28). In contrast, cows occur in 401 escheators' lists and 90 coroners' lists, yet beef occurs rarely. Archaeological evidence suggests cattle were more commonly consumed by urban than rural populations, suggesting that these animals were kept primarily for dairying or traction, often being driven to town for slaughter (Albarella 2005, 134). The consumption of bacon and pork by the peasantry in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries accords with Dyer's (1998) view that meat consumption increased in this period and provides further context to Thomas's (2007) observation that the elite turned to the consumption of wild birds as symbol of status and wealth as meat became increasingly available lower down the social order.

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<sup>25</sup> E505.

<sup>26</sup> E1237.

<sup>27</sup> E785.

<sup>28</sup> E1239

<sup>29</sup> E310.

<sup>30</sup> C446; E518; E304.

The preserving of pork allowed for it to be consumed throughout the year, possibly in association with religious feasts or major events in the rural calendar.

More direct evidence of diet is provided through the biochemical analysis of human remains through stable isotope analysis, a technique which identifies the composition of an individual's diet through analysis of the relative proportions of carbon and nitrogen isotopes in bone collagen (see Müldner 2009 for an overview). There are few studies which have examined medieval individuals, the most comprehensive of which concern cemetery populations from Yorkshire. Mays' (1997) analysis of individuals from York and the village of Wharram Percy shows that fish formed a similar proportion of the diet of both populations. Further analysis of individuals from several sites in Yorkshire including Wharram (Müldner and Richards 2005) suggests that the consumption of freshwater fish was more common than understood from historical and archaeological sources, perhaps indicating the observance of the practice of eating fish on fast days.

Archaeological evidence suggests widespread fish consumption, particularly of herring (Serjeantson and Woolgar 2006, 116), but that larger marine fish were, perhaps, less frequently consumed in rural households (Serjeantson and Woolgar 2006, 128). In southern England, Holmes (2017, 92) identifies a link between eel and freshwater fish consumption and higher status sites, in part due to the possession of fishponds. Freshwater fish may be underrepresented in archaeological fish bone assemblages due to the difficulties in recovering their bones. The relationship between fish consumption and religious observance is difficult to establish, and although historical documents suggest a declining importance of fish to elite diet in the later middle ages, and particularly following the Reformation, this does not seem to be conclusively borne out in archaeological evidence (Serjeantson and Woolgar 2006, 128). Freshwater fish occur in three lists. In 1413 the parson William Barrett of Wortham (Suffolk), who was outlawed for debt had an unstated quantity of eels.<sup>31</sup> John Burgh of Yealmpton (Devon) had 'one-quarter' of a pike, while the Wiltshire clergyman John James had five sculpin.<sup>32</sup> Archaeological evidence has greatly advanced our understanding of medieval stockfish through the application of isotopic analysis which demonstrates expansion of the North Sea, Baltic and Atlantic fisheries through the twelfth–fourteenth centuries (Barrett *et al.* 2011). Locker (2000, 107) concluded that demand for preserved fish fell from the fourteenth century, and this is perhaps borne out in the single reference to '400 buckhorn' (dried whiting) among the possessions of John Burgh. Whiting occurs commonly in archaeological contexts, although it is less well represented than herring, haddock and cod (Locker 2000, 137).

Fruits are mentioned only occasionally in the escheators' and coroners' lists, with vegetables being completely absent. Archaeological evidence makes it clear that these would have been a core component of the diet of rural households.

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<sup>31</sup> E210.

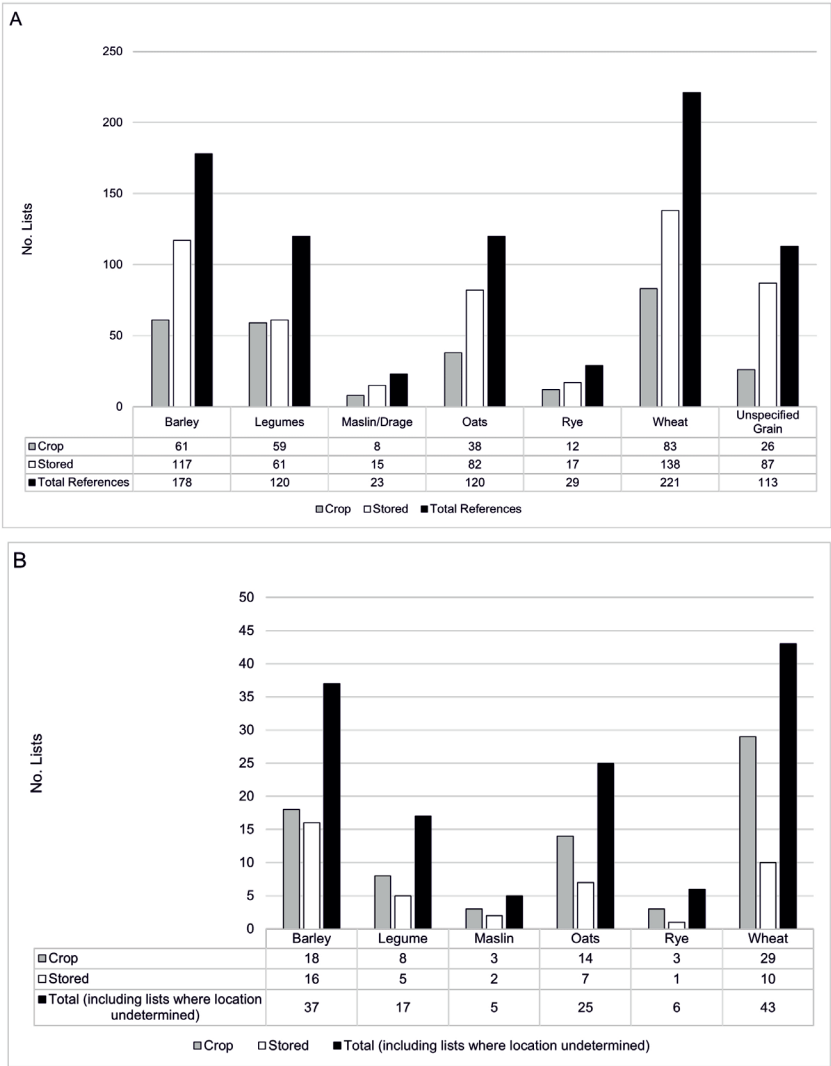
<sup>32</sup> E1099; C382.

For example, at West Cotton (Northamptonshire) evidence of cabbage was present within the assemblage of charred plant remains (Campbell and Robinson 2010), and analysis of organic residues extracted from cooking vessels demonstrates the preparation of waxy brassica vegetables (most probably cabbage, although potentially young turnips) (Evershed, Heron and Goad 1991; Evershed 1993, 95; Dunne *et al.* 2019, 66–8).

Grain formed the bulk of the peasant diet. Documents such as retirement allowances and accounts of the provision of grain to harvest workers give some indication of its importance (Dyer 1988, 33). Grain would primarily have been consumed in three forms; as pottage, ale and bread, with pottage, which was the easiest to make within the home, being widespread among the lower echelons of medieval society (Stone 2006, 14). Archaeological evidence provides additional insights into the cultivation and consumption of plant-based foodstuffs. A detailed study of plant macrofossils from the midlands shows that free-threshing wheat dominates medieval assemblages in this region, with barley and oats also being commonly occurring components, mirroring the picture provided by historical documents (Carruthers and Hunter Dowse 2019, 124). Archaeobotanical evidence is most commonly recovered from urban contexts (see Van der Veen, Hill and Livarda 2013 for a detailed discussion of preservation conditions in relation to medieval archaeobotanical assemblages), where there is a higher incidence of waterlogged deposits, although the number of rural assemblages is steadily growing. At Raunds (Northamptonshire), free-threshing wheat was the most important crop, supplemented by rye and barley, and this picture is reflected in other assemblages from the region (Carruthers and Hunter Dowse 2019, 131–6). The escheators' and coroners' records detail the presence of grain in rural homes; however, it is not always clear whether this was grain for household consumption or cultivated for the market.

By far the most common foodstuffs in both sets of lists are grains. Where listed as in the field, barn, stack or 'in sheaf' it can be assumed that these were cultivated by the household. References to 'bushels' and 'quarters' imply the storage of grain, either for household consumption or resale (considered in further detail below). In these instances, this grain could be household produce, but also might have been acquired through the market. These different states likely relate to the time in the agricultural calendar that lists were produced, though the sample is insufficient to demonstrate this assumption quantitatively. Figure 3.1a demonstrates that within the escheators' lists, wheat and barley were the most common grains both among those references which appear to relate to crops which are growing and those relating to grains apparently stored in or around the home, while rye is the least common grain. Oatmeal and oat flour each occur in single escheators' lists and they also occur in single coroners' lists.<sup>33</sup> Wheat and barley are also the most common crops among the coroners' records (Figure 3.1b). Assessing the evidence for grain consumption,

<sup>33</sup> E515; E1197; C194; C215.



**Figure 3.1:** References to grains and legumes, showing the number of lists referring to crops (i.e. grains in the field) or stored (i.e. harvested) crops. A: Escheators' records. B: Coroners' records.

Stone (2006, 25–6) suggests that prior to the Black Death the consumption of wheaten bread and barley ale were limited to the upper echelons of society, but that from the later fourteenth century people had increased access to higher quality grains as pressure on land and resources reduced. Although limited, our evidence, dating to this period, corresponds with this suggestion of increased access to wheat and barley in the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Dairy was a valuable source of protein in rural households, typically in the form of cheese, of which a number of varieties existed (see Woolgar 2016, 80–1). The evidence for dairy produce in the escheators' and coroners' lists is extremely sparse. Cheese occurs in four escheators' lists (Table 3.1) and eight coroners' lists (Table 3.2). Based on the quantities present, the coroners' lists appear to include evidence for households that produced cheese. Henry Cooper of Cowlinge (Suffolk) had 89 cheeses valued at £4 16d (an average of 11d per cheese), and the widow Edith Self of Melksham (Wiltshire) had 30 cheeses valued at 10s (average 4d each).<sup>34</sup> The valuation of cheeses found in lists varies considerably, presumably in relation to their type, size or quality. For example, the four cheeses in the list of William Marten of Hoe (Norfolk), who committed suicide in 1579, are valued at 12d (an average of just 3d each).<sup>35</sup>

A final form of foodstuff to discuss briefly are condiments. The best evidence comes in the list of John Hawykn, a merchant from Barnstaple (Devon), outlawed for treason in 1422. He had quantities of pepper, cumin, grains of paradise, mace, saffron, ginger and anise (Table 3.1). It is likely that these were merchandise rather than being for his own consumption and these were clearly valuable commodities.<sup>36</sup> A second list, that of Humphrey Bocher of Norfolk (outlawed in 1494), includes a small quantity of crocus (i.e. saffron) and some honey, neither of which are valued.<sup>37</sup> These spices are typical of the range occurring in the records of the London Grocers' company and in the accounts of elite households (Nightingale 1995, Woolgar 2016, 85). Imported condiments were valuable commodities and the general absence of these from the lists considered here is to be expected (Sear and Sneath 2020, 69; Woolgar 2016, 85–6). Archaeological evidence shows that across medieval northern Europe, summer savory and coriander were important flavouring agents, and new types such as black mustard, fennel, caraway and parsley became increasingly widespread (Livarda and Van der Veen 2008, 206–7). In non-elite rural settings, it is black mustard which dominates, and it seems that it was towns which were the main places in which new flavourings found their market (Livarda and Van der Veen 2008, 207). It was towns too which were the main places where exotics such as black pepper were consumed (Livarda 2011, 159). In contrast, finds of exotic plant species from the countryside are exceptionally rare (Livarda 2011, 160–1). Rural households would most likely have obtained flavourings locally, growing them in gardens or foraging them (Dyer 1994; 2006a; Woolgar 2016, 102–3). For example, at Raunds and West Cotton (both Northamptonshire), archaeological evidence demonstrates the use and cultivation of fennel and black mustard (Carruthers and Hunter Dowse 2019, 125, 134). A further unusual entry can be found in the coroners' list of Henry Kistope of Kirkby Kendal (Westmorland), who committed suicide in 1540 and who had a barrel of treacle (*Trekyll*) in his possession.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> C447; C454.

<sup>35</sup> C258.

<sup>36</sup> E518.

<sup>37</sup> E1086.

<sup>38</sup> C64.

Drink occurs in just 10 escheators' lists (Table 3.1). The absence of ale, the most common medieval drink, is striking and likely due to its ubiquity and short shelf-life (Woolgar 2016, 46; see below for a discussion of the evidence for brewing). Five of the six lists featuring cider originate from Kent, a county particularly associated with apple growing and cider production (Mate 2006, 46–7; Woolgar 2016, 51). Apples occur in four lists, and there is a fifth that records apples and pears; all these lists are from Kent, and constitute the only reference to fruit within the escheators' lists.<sup>39</sup> Red wine occurs in four lists. There is a considerable difference in the value of these drinks; the average value of a pipe of cider is 32.9d and that for a pipe of wine is 827d. Wine was the most prestigious and expensive drink in medieval England, with strong associations with the elite table and the liturgy (Woolgar 2016, 53). These lists suggest that despite its value, it could be accessible to non-elite households in some instances. Even so, its general absence from the lists suggests that wine was either not being consumed by non-elite households, or that it was concealed through gifting or consumption before goods were appraised. The only drink listed in the coroners' records are the barrels of verjuice belonging to William Purches of Devizes (Wiltshire), who committed suicide in 1587.<sup>40</sup>

The escheators' and coroners' records provide tantalising glimpses into the diet and food habits of non-elite households. They generally accord with current understanding in terms of the consumption of salted meat and temporal variation in grain consumption but understate the importance of cheap and perishable foodstuffs such as fruit, vegetables and fresh fish, well attested in the archaeological record. The prevalence of Kentish lists among the sample which contain foods suggests that these low value and perishable items are particularly sensitive to regional, contextual and chronological variation in seizure and inventorying practices. We might also suggest that a further reason for not seizing food was to avoid depriving a household of foodstuffs and therefore making them reliant on the charity of the community. Even so, the occurrence of fresh meat and wine in a small number of lists provide some insight into the ability of non-elite households to access these more expensive and prestigious items.

### Food storage and processing

The escheators' and coroners' records provide valuable information about how and where grain was stored. This is pertinent here because it provides some insight into the extent to which households were engaged in the market for grain. Barns offered suitable storage for grain in sheaf, but once threshed it took up considerably less space. Through an analysis of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century purveyance accounts, Claridge and Langdon (2011, 1246) identify that small quantities of threshed grain could be stored in a variety of

<sup>39</sup> E285; E675; E677; E679; E684.

<sup>40</sup> C317.

locations, including granaries, halls, inns and upper rooms. They found that small quantities of grain were most commonly stored in granaries followed by houses. A key finding is that grain storage was primarily a private concern and that the quantity of grain stored in each location decreased, on average, between the 1290s and 1340s, with flexibility being a key characteristic of food storage (Claridge and Langdon 2011, 1258). Their study contradicts earlier analyses, primarily that of McCloskey and Nash (1984), which focussed on storage through an economic lens, by emphasising that storage must enhance the value of crops in excess of interest rates to make investment in long-term storage viable. Therefore, whereas McCloskey and Nash argue that storage was prohibitively expensive in medieval England, Claridge and Langdon suggest that the adaptability of storage strategies means that they need to be understood within their specific socio-economic context, varying with a household's or community's situation within networks of production and marketing, and emphasising the need to consider storage strategies from an historical, as well as economic, perspective (see also Komlos and Landes 1991).

The location of grain is rarely indicated in the escheators' records (see Briggs *et al.* 2019 for the general lack of information on rooms and other spaces). The most commonly stated location is in the barn, and this might include grain in sheaf but also that which has been threshed, as in the case of Phillip ate Grove of Hagley (Worcestershire), outlawed in 1379.<sup>41</sup> There is one case of grain listed as being 'in the house of another'.<sup>42</sup> Some lists include both harvested crops and those still under cultivation; for example Richard Pykwell, a murderer from Horton (Northamptonshire), had three quarters of peas and an acre of wheat, although in the majority of cases the produce listed is either exclusively in the field, or harvested.<sup>43</sup> Archaeological evidence for grain storage outside of barns is extremely limited. Excavations of a house from the thirteenth or fourteenth century which burned down at Island Farm, Ottery St Mary (Devon) provides one example. Here, it is suggested that the western room of the building was used for crop storage, with archaeobotanical evidence for the presence of oats, wheat, rye, peas and beans being identified (Figure 3.2). The presence of charcoal in association with the legumes suggests that these may have been stored in wickerwork containers (Mudd, Cobain and Haines 2018). Details about the location of crops, while more prevalent than in those of the escheator, are similarly lacking in the coroners' records. Where given it is most typically in the field (either growing or in stacks) or barns, but alternative locations are listed. For example, in 1541 William Bachelor of Mereworth had a malt loft.<sup>44</sup> In other cases, grain was stored in the house. John James of West Dean (Wiltshire) had produce stored in a variety of locations, including in a granary over the kitchen, in the loft over the larder and in the chamber over the parlour, as well as in the

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<sup>41</sup> E779.

<sup>42</sup> E1599.

<sup>43</sup> E174.

<sup>44</sup> C446.

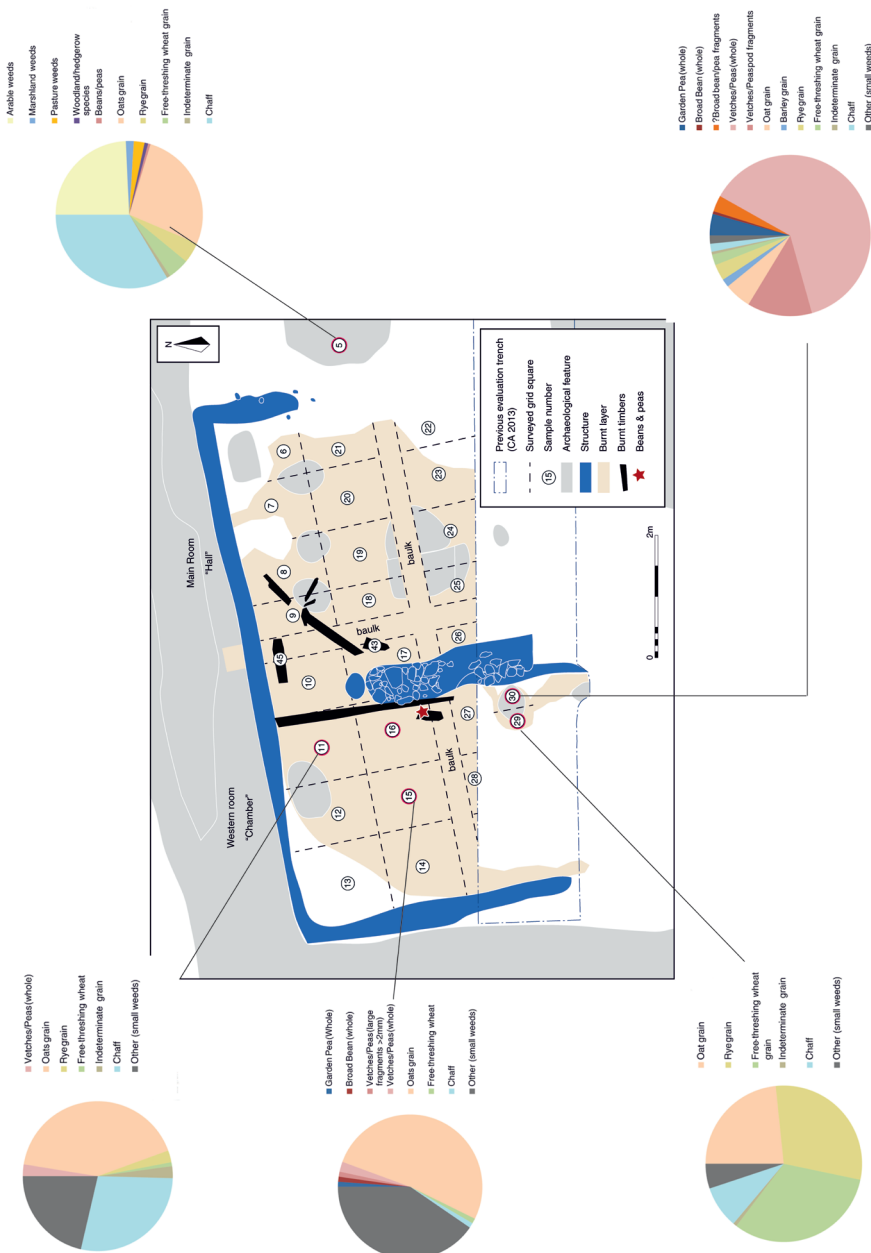


Figure 3.2: The distribution of archaeobotanical remains within the excavated house at Island Farm, Ottery St Mary, Devon. Image reproduced from Mudd, Cobain and Haines 2018 under CC by Attribution Licence.



kitchen and barn.<sup>45</sup> Within the coroners' lists the household storage of grain is suggested by the occurrence of hutches in three lists. In 1587 William Bridge of Stelling (Kent) had a bunting hutch as well as a kneading trough, and the yeoman William Payne of Chilham (Kent) had a bunting hutch within his bunting house in 1600.<sup>46</sup> John James had a bolting hutch in his larder in 1577.<sup>47</sup> These items were used for the storage of bread, or more likely grain, and are suggestive of baking, as is demonstrated by the occurrence of these items in specific spaces and in association with kneading troughs. These items demonstrate the difficulty of separating out items associated with storage and those associated with processing, as these two functions were intimately connected. Indeed, the lid of a hutch could often double as a kneading trough (see Hamling and Richardson 2017, 84–5).

Where the quantity of agricultural produce stored is stated in the escheators' records, the average is 4.9 quarters, although this is higher for barley (6.3 quarters) and legumes (5.1 quarters). Interpretation is complicated by the fact that lists were created at different times of year, and therefore may reflect variability in the cycle of cultivation and harvesting. Based on the date of seizure, it is evident that lists were produced throughout the year and therefore average figures provide an approximate basis for comparison. This suggests that small quantities of grain were kept around the home, with storage targeted primarily at domestic consumption rather than resale, with surplus presumably being sold on to grain merchants relatively quickly. In the coroners' records, quantities are stated in only 26 lists and in most only four quarters or less of any given crop are listed, suggesting limited change in domestic storage habits into the sixteenth century. The exceptions are the clergyman John James who had over 70 quarters of barley and over 38 quarters of wheat; two yeomen, William Hyke (18 quarters of barley and six of wheat) and Robert Schiperd (16 quarters of barley and seven of wheat), both of Stonegrave (Yorkshire) and dating to 1495; and a tanner, Thomas Aston of Wadworth (Yorkshire, 1543; 16 quarters malt).<sup>48</sup>

The principal items associated with food storage found in the escheators' and coroners' records are multipurpose wooden vessels such as tubs and barrels. These occur in 68 escheators' lists, of which 31 are from Kent or Middlesex (where lists are typically more detailed than elsewhere) and 16 are from Northamptonshire. This suggests that these items, which we might expect to be ubiquitous, were not recorded in a uniform manner and their presence is due to local appraisal practices. The majority of the Kent lists relate to rebels whose goods were seized in the wake of the uprising of 1381, although they also include some whose goods were seized due to civil suits. In these 1380s Kentish lists, barrels (*cadus*) are typically valued along with another item (*dolium pandoxat*), probably a brewer's cask. Barrels are absent archaeologically but are indicated by the presence of a spigot of sixteenth-century date from Newton Abbot (Devon;

<sup>45</sup> C382.

<sup>46</sup> C309; C472.

<sup>47</sup> C382.

<sup>48</sup> C9; C382; C556; C557.

Weddell 1985, 105). The value of these items is low. For example Thomas Deghere of Erith (Kent) had one *dolium* and two barrels, valued at a total of 8d.<sup>49</sup> Some individuals had particularly high numbers of barrels, for example Sampson Kyrseye of Bexley (Kent) had 10 barrels and casks altogether.<sup>50</sup>

Whereas in Kent the lists primarily contain barrels, in Northamptonshire a wider variety of items are listed. For example, William Cole of Edgecote (Northamptonshire) had two vats, one barrel, a *kemelyn* (a type of tub) and a tub seized for felony in 1390.<sup>51</sup> The tubs are likely to have been open vessels used in dairying or baking. Of the 16 Northamptonshire lists containing these items, only three relate to civil cases. In all cases the lists are either short, for example the list of Hugh Payne, outlawed by civil suit in 1383, only contains animals, cooking equipment, a ewer and basin, a tub and a vat to a total value of 43s 4d, or of low overall value, as in the case of Richard Dawe of Thrapston (outlawed by civil suit in 1379), whose list contains a wide range of objects but is only valued to a total of 30s.<sup>52</sup> This pattern is generally repeated elsewhere. For example John Stanke, a butcher of Andover (Hampshire), whose goods were seized in connection with a civil suit in 1404 had a vat and three tubs among goods worth only a total of just over 24s.<sup>53</sup> There are exceptions which suggest that these items were seized where they were present in significant quantities; William Leder of West Lavington (Wiltshire), whose goods were seized as result of civil suit in 1404, had six tubs (or *keveres*) worth 2s and four vats worth 3s.<sup>54</sup> These containers are rarely valued separately, but where they are the valuation is typically low. William Wodeward of Abbots Morton (Worcestershire), who fled after committing a felony in 1418, had two casks valued at 6d and two vats valued at 6d, for example.<sup>55</sup> It is clear that these presumably common items were not routinely seized, or at least routinely appraised, likely due to their ubiquity, low value and, perhaps, their bulk.

Despite their low value, the terminology used to describe these items demonstrates that a range of specialist barrels were produced. The most telling evidence is provided by the inventory of John Coupere of Wellingborough (Northamptonshire), whose occupation, judging by his surname and possessions, was almost certainly that of cooper.<sup>56</sup> He was outlawed for felony in 1416. His possessions (not individually valued) include barrels identified as being specifically for ale, herring and salt while specialist terms ‘tankard’ (a large open tub-like barrel for carrying water) and kinderkin (a half barrel, usually for fish) are also listed. The one-gallon *amphora* belonging to William Wodeward

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<sup>49</sup> E651.

<sup>50</sup> E662.

<sup>51</sup> C257.

<sup>52</sup> E761; E748.

<sup>53</sup> E30.

<sup>54</sup> E28.

<sup>55</sup> E348.

<sup>56</sup> E304.

may also be this kind of barrel.<sup>57</sup> Other lists name verjuice barrels as a further specific type.<sup>58</sup>

A wider range of wooden vessels are listed in the coroners' lists, used for a variety of functions. Some would clearly have been used for storage. For example, in 1565, Thomas Chylrey of Marlborough (Wiltshire) had a tub in his kitchen and a further tub and verjuice barrel in his cellar.<sup>59</sup> In other cases, specific sizes of storage vessel are mentioned. Robert Crowne of North Elham (Kent) had three tubs and a firkin in 1567 and Henry Cooper of Cowlinge had three hogsheads in 1595.<sup>60</sup> These items were kept in a variety of locations, including multipurpose spaces such as halls and specialist rooms such as malt lofts, kitchens and milkhouses (Table 3.3). These items occur in 28 coroners' lists, primarily from Wiltshire and Kent. As in the escheators' records, their value appears low, for example in 1565 Robert Davys of Wroughton (Wiltshire)

**Table 3.3:** The location of objects associated with food storage in the coroners' records.

List No.	Name	Date of List	Place of Residence	Room	Vessels
171	Thomas Chylrey	1565	Marlborough (Wiltshire)	Kitchen	Tub
					Kiver
				Cellar	Tub
					Verjuice barrel
183	Edward Burges	1566	Laverstock (Wiltshire)	Chamber	Kiver
				Not stated	Pail or tub
208	Reynold Carter	1570	Chiddingstone (Kent)	Chamber over hall	Barrel
				Buttery	Barrel
					Tubs × 8
					Keeler
289	Anthony Curlynge	1585	St Lawrence (Kent)	Kitchen	Tub
317	William Purches	1587	Devizes (Wiltshire)	Hall	Barrels × 2
				Loft over hall	Bottle
				Mill house	Kiver
					Tubs × 2

(Continued)

<sup>57</sup> E348.

<sup>58</sup> E303; E620.

<sup>59</sup> C171.

<sup>60</sup> C194; C447.

**Table 3.3:** Continued.

List No.	Name	Date of List	Place of Residence	Room	Vessels
382	John James	1577	West Dean and Newton Tony (Wiltshire)	Yooting house	Vat
					Scalding kive
				Buttery	Beer barrel × 8
					Hogshead
					Water pot
					Oatmeal tub
					Leather bottle × 3
				Entrance	Provender tub
				Kitchen	Tubs × 5
					Firkins × 2
					Cowl
				Larder	Bolting hutch
				Parlour	Barrel
					Tubs × 2
					Half-firkin
					Salt barrel
Hall (at Newton Tony)	Barrel				
Buttery (at Newton Tony)	Barrel				
Larder house (at Newton Tony)	Barrel				
Malting House (at Newton Tony)	Vat				
428	Nicholas Cussyn	1597	Calcott (Kent)	Bedchamber	Keeler
					Aqua-vita bottle
				Hall	Hamper
					Firkins × 2
					Pail
					Tubs × 2
Bottle					
446	William Bachelar	1541	Mereworth (Kent)	Malt loft	Tub
472	William Payne	1600	Chilham (Kent)	Bunting house	Bunting hutch
				Milkhouse	Tub

had two tubs valued at 4d.<sup>61</sup> The value of items likely varied in accordance with their size, as is clear in the 1577 list of John James, whose two firkins are valued at 20d and his half-firkin at 6d.<sup>62</sup> As is the case in the escheators' lists, such vessels appear to have been recorded inconsistently and it is probable that they were grouped within general classes of goods and chattels or household utensils in other cases.

While barrels were primarily used for storage (although they had a role in ageing produce and in brewing), items such as tubs were multipurpose. While they could be used for storage, they also played a role in processing. Similarly, kivers and troughs were used for a variety of processes including salting, dairying and mixing dough. In the escheators' lists, tubs commonly occur along with relatively complex ranges of cooking equipment. For example, John Lebarde of Thrapston, outlawed for felony in 1415, had a tub and a *kymelyn*, multiple pots and pans, equipment for roasting and a lead for brewing.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, Walter Fox of Brigstock (Northamptonshire), outlawed in 1420, had six tubs, a brewing lead, wooden vessels 'for brewing' and equipment for roasting meat.<sup>64</sup> In both cases it is possible that the tubs were a part of the households' equipment for brewing. In other cases these items may be associated more clearly with baking. For example Thomas Paccheherst of Kent, outlawed as a member of a corrupt jury in 1407, had five kimelins, a kneading trough, an oven and a quern.<sup>65</sup> The goods of Adam Grym of Gillingham (Norfolk), who killed John Austyn in 1402, include a coul (a tub or large vessel for water), a stand (an open tub) and a flesh trough, suggestive of the salting of meat (Buxton 2015, 102).<sup>66</sup> Others may not have had any role in food processing. For example the tub belonging to the barker (tanner) John Mogerhangre, who committed murder in 1383, could have been used for his trade, although it occurs alongside other domestic items in his list.<sup>67</sup> In order to understand the significance of these items within the household, it is clearly necessary to examine them alongside the other objects present. A focus on the processing activities undertaken by the household can also provide insights into its role as a productive economic entity. Evidence of household specialisation might be understood as suggestive of households participating in market exchange. To explore this, we can focus on the evidence associated with the processing of grain, baking, brewing and dairying.

### *Grain processing and baking*

Our period is characterised by the increasing use of wind- and watermills for the grinding of grain, and the commercialisation of grain processing

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<sup>61</sup> C172.

<sup>62</sup> C382.

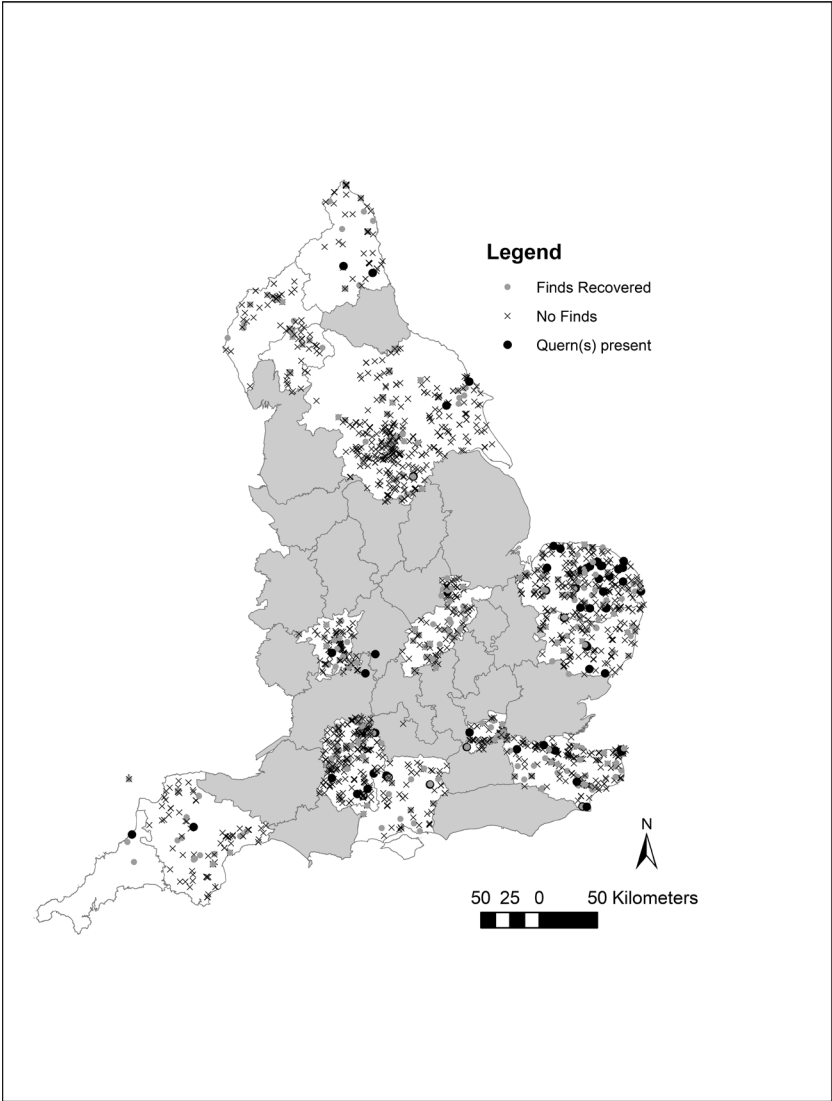
<sup>63</sup> E303.

<sup>64</sup> E311.

<sup>65</sup> E1336.

<sup>66</sup> E1419.

<sup>67</sup> E752.



**Figure 3.3:** Distribution of quernstones in the archaeological dataset.

through the leasing out of demesne mills (see Langdon with Ambler 1994; Langdon 2004, 232). However, it is clear from the presence of handmills or quernstones in our evidence that domestic scale grain processing was still taking place in the fourteenth century. These are common archaeological finds, primarily occurring in eastern England, principally in Kent and East Anglia (Figure 3.3). That these stones, most of which occur in Millstone Grit or German ‘lava,’ have a largely eastern distribution is unsurprising given their point of origin and their distribution throughout the North Sea zone

(Pohl 2011). In Kent, quernstones occur in a variety of archaeological contexts. At St Paul's Cray (Saunders 1997) they are found within the floor layers of a collapsed building of late twelfth or early thirteenth century date, and they are closely associated with house structures at Lydd Quarry on Romney Marsh (Barber and Priestly-Bell 2008, 206) and at Shorne near Gravesend (Gollop 2003), all of which appear to be 'peasant' farmsteads. These examples are highly suggestive of milling within the household even if, as is the case at Shorne, it is likely that households had access to a mechanised mill (see Jervis 2022a). Elsewhere, at Grange near Gillingham and at Margate, they are associated with larger complexes, perhaps implying their use within the context of a manorial household (Seddon 2007). Finally, on the Isle of Thanet, several finds are associated with bakehouse complexes, which went out of use at the very start of our period, and may have formed a part of the estate infrastructure of Canterbury Christ Church Priory, the major landholder in this area (Powell 2012). The archaeological evidence points to variability in the organisation of handmilling, with it being organised at the estate or manorial level, as well as within individual households (see Jervis 2022a for further discussion).

Where the escheators' lists are concerned, hand mills are almost exclusively associated with lists of individuals from Kent convicted of treason, and in many cases beheaded, following the Peasant's Revolt of 1381 (Table 3.4). It is tempting to link this association to the account of the seizure of handmills from the tenants of St Albans Abbey who had defied the authority of the abbey (Justice 1994, 136) and, indeed, the occurrence of quernstones on archaeological sites in northern England has been suggested to be an act of resistance by the peasantry (Smith 2009a, 409). Such associations do not, however, seem appropriate in Kent, where suit of mill did not apply due to the unusually free tenurial arrangements in the county (Lucas 2014, 283; see also Langdon 2004, 275–8 on the variable effect of suit of mill). Rather, their occurrence in these lists is likely to be due to three factors: the comparatively detailed process of appraisal which appears to characterise the escheators and their juries in Kent, the relatively early date of these lists, and the persistent use of handmills, as suggested by the archaeological evidence. Hand mills do not appear in comparable lists from Kent connected with Cade's rebellion and dating to the early 1450s. However, the dating of some archaeological deposits in which they occur does suggest the continued acquisition and use of lava querns into the fifteenth century (the best evidence coming from Lydd Quarry; Barber and Priestly Bell 2008, 206). The gradual phasing out of handmilling, and the regionality of this practice, is supported further by a general absence of querns from the coroners' records; they occur in six lists, of which five are from Kent. In two cases these appear linked to malting and brewing (see below).<sup>68</sup> In others they either occur without any associated objects,<sup>69</sup> or in association with baking equipment.<sup>70</sup> Both the

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<sup>68</sup> C194; C446.

<sup>69</sup> C346.

<sup>70</sup> C428; C472.

**Table 3.4:** The occurrence of hand mills in the escheators' records.

List No.	County	Place	Name	Year of List	Item	Original Term	Value of Querns (d)	Total Value of List (d)	Brewing Equipment
517	Devon	Great Torrington	Richard Swalwa	1422	mill (×2)	paru' moler'	36	1105	
215		Woodchurch	Hugh Cetur	1414	malt quern	querns pro bras'	20	5702.5	
284		Cranbrook	Thomas Cretynnden	1413	mill	mola' deb't'm	12	1130	
644		Boxley	Joh Groue jun.	1382	handmill	mole manual	18	302	
647		Bapchild	John Louel	1382	handmill	mole manual'	12	68	
651		Erith	Thomas Deghere	1382	handmill	mole manual'	24	336	X
653		Plumstead	John Theccham	1382	handmill (×2)	molarum manual' debil'	44	216	X
654		Erith	John Sampson	1382	handmill	mole manual'	18	220	
657		Dartford	William Ponchon	1381	handmill	mole manual'	20	240	X
658		Dartford	William Forster	1381	handmill	mole manual'	18	344	
664	Kent	Larkfield	John Spenser	1381	handmill	mole manual'	18	342	
666		Snodland	John Baudry	1381	handmill	mole manual'	12	42	

(Continued)



Table 3.4: Continued.

List No.	County	Place	Name	Year of List	Item	Original Term	Value of Querns (d)	Total Value of List (d)	Brewing Equipment
669		Royton	John Chydeston	1382	handmill	mole manual'	18	442	
674		Smarden	John Warner	1382	handmill	mole manual'	18	916	
677		Linton	Robert Senyng	1382	handmill	mole manual' debil'	12	1881	X
765		Unknown	John Scot	1385	iron handmill	molam manual et ferru'	60	554	
768		Sutton Valence	Thomas Isenden	1384	handmill	mola manual'	60	3200	X
612	Norfolk	Islington	Thomas Taliour	1423	quern	qwerne debil'	20	462	
1227	Suffolk	Mendlesham	Robert Prior	1396	mill (??)	malar'		3595	X
343	Worcs.	Kidderminster	Walter Pach'	1404	quern	querne	120	1020	
585		Elvington	William Clerk	1417	quern	pari de quernes		5120	X
785	Yorkshire	Tranby	William de Brereton	1383	quern	querens		4417	X

archaeological and historical evidence is therefore suggestive of household-scale milling in fourteenth-century Kent, particularly in the central belt of the county. This corresponds well with Langdon's (1994, 29–31) estimate that in the fourteenth century, around 20% of England's grain was milled at the domestic scale. Langdon (1994; 2004, 230–1) suggests that domestic-scale grinding was increasingly commercialised, with households offering this service for cash payments. If this was the case, we might imagine households to have specialised in grain processing and for this to be apparent in the range of items present in their lists. The detailed nature of Kentish lists permits such an analysis.

The list of John Spenser of Larkfield provides a good starting point.<sup>71</sup> Spenser was seemingly able to maintain a high standard of living; he had a basin and ewer and a chair, as well as a pipe of red wine, all relatively rare items in rural households. The only items associated with domestic scale food processing are handmills, valued at 18d. Although their homes were less endowed with luxury items, a similar picture is presented by the lists of others who possessed these items (Table 3.4).

There are, however, some exceptions, and in these cases it can be suggested that the handmills found a different use (Table 3.4). The most striking is the list of Robert Senyng of Linton. He clearly had a comfortable lifestyle: his list includes pewter plate and items of bedding, as well as a basin and ewer.<sup>72</sup> He had a 'worn' (*debilis*) handmill valued at 12d, but also had equipment for brewing and cider making. It is possible that the mill was used for grinding malt, but may also have been used for grain, as quantities of both occur in his list. Other lists in which handmills may have played a role in brewing are clustered in the north-west of the county, an area in which arable agriculture was less intensive (see Campbell 2015). They can be typified by the list of Thomas Deghere of Erith, whose handmill is listed with a brewing lead, suggesting perhaps that the quern was used for the processing of malt, rather than grain.<sup>73</sup> Interestingly, Deghere's handmill is valued more highly than others, at 2s.

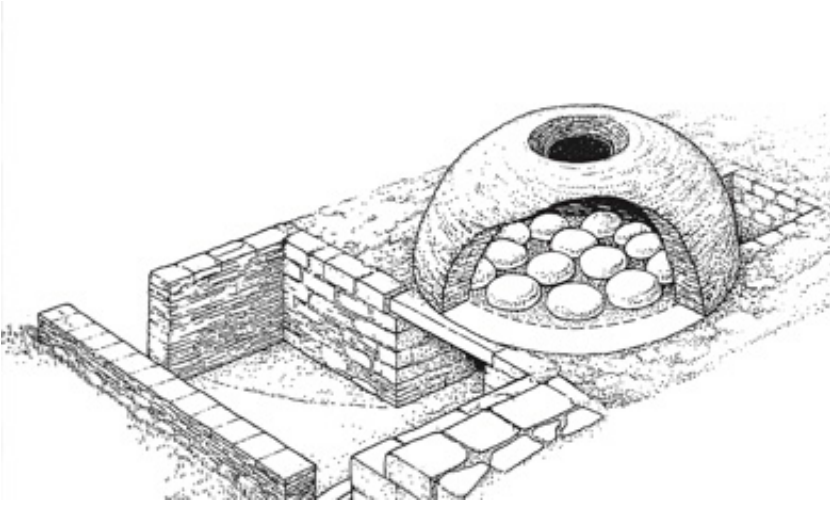
Evidence for baking is limited. Baking was primarily a commercial activity, which was highly regulated (Davis 2004). Flatbreads could also be baked in the home, however, using objects such as the iron griddle excavated at Beere, North Tawton (Devon; Jope and Threlfall 1958, 115; Woolgar 2016, 62–5). Within the archaeological dataset there are a small number of sites with evidence for baking. Bakehouses have been excavated in small towns, for example at Church View, Fordingbridge (Hampshire), likely dating to the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries (Light 1978) and at 25 High Street, Pershore (Worcestershire), probably of fourteenth- or fifteenth-century date (Napthan, Hurst and Pearson 1994; Figure 3.4). Ovens are also present within farmsteads. At Foxcotte (Hampshire), a flint-built oven was associated with a fifteenth- or sixteenth-century building,

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<sup>71</sup> E664.

<sup>72</sup> E677.

<sup>73</sup> E651.



**Figure 3.4:** Reconstruction of the bread oven excavated at High Street, Pershore. Reproduced by kind permission of Worcestershire Archaeology.

and a tile built oven was associated with another contemporary structure (Russel 1985, 177; 182). An oven dating to the fourteenth century was also identified within an isolated farmstead at Latton (Wiltshire; Mudd *et al.* 1999). Elsewhere, evidence of ovens is more ambiguous, for example at Park Place, Knaresborough (North Yorkshire), evidence of burning is interpreted as a possible hearth or oven (Stirk 2007), and similarly burnt stones excavated at a farmstead at Askerton Park (Cumbria) may be the remains of an oven (Hodgson 1939, 68). Where identified, it is not always clear what function ovens served, especially where remains are ephemeral; whilst they could be used in baking, they could also be used for drying agricultural produce – for example, a corn drying kiln was associated with the farmstead at Beere (Johe and Threlfall 1958; see also Rickett and McKerracher 2021) – or could have been used in brewing.

Baking objects recorded by the escheator and coroner are limited to those for preparing dough, being typical of the range of vessels found in documented bakehouses (Woolgar 2016, 64). While wooden tubs could have been used for the mixing of dough, they had a range of other purposes too. The strongest evidence comes from lists which contain specific items associated with baking. William Bryte, a husbandman from Erith (Kent), outlawed by civil suit in 1418, had at least one wooden kneading trough (the number present is unclear).<sup>74</sup> William Wodeward, the yeoman from Abbots Morton, also had a kneading trough, as well as a kiver (a shallow vessel) which may also have been used for baking.<sup>75</sup> Occasional references to ‘trendles’ might be interpreted as relating

<sup>74</sup> E288.

<sup>75</sup> E348.

to round vessels used in baking, an example being those of John James, which were located in his larder, kitchen and buttery.<sup>76</sup> We have already highlighted the items in the list of Thomas Paccheherst of Kent as suggestive of baking and, intriguingly, vessels associated with the preparation of dough also occur in two lists associated with the same incident.<sup>77</sup> Unfortunately, these lists do not specify the place of residence of the three forfeiting individuals, but it may conceivably have been Staplehurst, where the three were members of a corrupted jury. If this is the case, it would be suggestive of at least three households engaging in the preparation of dough within a single village, and suggests that this activity is substantially underrepresented in the escheators' lists.

There are several lists within the coroners' records which would appear to provide evidence of households engaged in baking. In 1597, Nicholas Cussyn of Calcott (Kent) had an iron peel (baker's shovel) in his hall, a quern in one of his chambers and a kneading trough in his bedchamber. The evidence for the productive activities of Cussyn's household are unusually wide: in addition to baking and dairying equipment, he had a spinning (wool) wheel, woodworking tools and a variety of animals. This would suggest a mixed household economy and it is unclear whether he would have been baking for the market or household consumption. The range of rooms in his house and the presence of plate and bedding suggest that Cussyn was a yeoman and therefore we are perhaps seeing a form of household organisation specific to the emerging 'middling sort'.<sup>78</sup> A kitchen block is noticeably absent from the rooms listed, with the house maintaining a multipurpose hall, implying, perhaps, that architectural modification had not kept pace with developments in domestic, and particularly food, practices. A contrast is provided by William Payne of Chilham.<sup>79</sup> On the basis of his possessions, Payne would appear to have been of similar status to Cussyn, though unlike Cussyn, Payne is explicitly described as a 'yeoman'. Payne's home, however, had a kitchen, milkhouse and a bunting house, which contained a bunting hutch, while he had a quern in the kitchen loft. As with Cussyn, we are seeing here a distinctive way of organising food processing emerging in this period. Rather than outsourcing processing to specialists within the community, the evidence points towards households investing in the infrastructure required for self-sufficiency (see also Buxton 2015, 100). Other baking equipment is less easily interpreted. John Cosen of Ashburton (Devon), who committed suicide in 1590, had peels ('a peare of Beales') but no other items associated with baking.<sup>80</sup> Several other Kent households had kneading troughs, one of whom (William Bridge) also had a bunting hutch and churn suggesting engagement in both baking and dairying.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>76</sup> C382; in other instances this term appears to refer to a spinning wheel (see Chapter 8).

<sup>77</sup> E1336; E1334; E1337.

<sup>78</sup> C428.

<sup>79</sup> C472.

<sup>80</sup> C357.

<sup>81</sup> C309.

By the end of the fourteenth century, evidence for the domestic processing of grain is extremely limited. It is possible in Kent to see variability in the provision of domestic-scale milling, and the evidence would suggest a degree of household specialisation in respect to this task. Archaeological evidence demonstrates that ovens could be incorporated into rural homes, but evidence for baking in domestic contexts is extremely limited across the dataset. Ovens, as elements of house structures or ancillary buildings, would not be listed by the escheator or coroner, whose records are limited to the movable tools of baking. Within the coroners' records, several lists can be associated with the emergence of a middling sort, who undertook a wider range of domestic food processing activities, and it is noteworthy that the ovens at Foxcotte date to the later part of our period and may be related to this trend.

### *Malting and brewing*

Ale was the principal drink in medieval England and a great deal of work has been undertaken on the organisation of the brewing industry, particularly at the household level. Bennett's (1996) pioneering work shows how even in the early fourteenth century, commercialised brewing was an important element of the household economy. Analysis of presentments connected to the assize of ale shows how brewing was dominated by women, who were typically married. Often women brewed where their labour could not be usefully applied to the principal craft of the household (Bennett 1996, 30). The number of households engaged in brewing within a single settlement could be high: between 20 and 25 households at Lullington and Alfriston (East Sussex) in the early fifteenth century, for example. Some brewed regularly, but others may only have done so a few times a year (Mate 1998, 59). Given the widespread nature of domestic brewing, it is surprising that objects explicitly associated with brewing are rare in the escheators' records (Table 3.5), although it should be noted that ordinary kitchen vessels, specifically pans, could have been used in brewing (Woolgar 2016, 35).<sup>82</sup>

The infrequency of brewing episodes may, in part, account for this, meaning that it was only worth investing in specialist equipment where households brewed regularly. A further reason is likely to be the contraction of domestic brewing in the mid-fifteenth century, with our records dating principally to the period of decline identified by both Bennett (1996) and Mate (1998, 61). In Devon, Postles (1992) shows a clear regional variation in the organisation of brewing in the fifteenth century across the county. In the manor of Stoke Fleming in the South Hams region of southern Devon, brewing became increasingly focussed into the hands of a small number of individuals. In contrast,

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<sup>82</sup> A similar under-representation of brewing equipment is noted by French (2021, 130) in her analysis of the goods of London households in this period.

**Table 3.5:** The occurrence of brewing and cider making equipment in the escheators' records. I = Number of items. V = value of items (d).

List No.	Name	Year	Occupation	Lead		Lead in Furnace/ Oven		Brewing or Tipping vessels		Mash Vat		Tools in Brewhouse		Malt Quern		Ale Barrel		Cider Press	
				I	V	I	V	I	V	I	V	I	V	I	V	I	V	I	V
1	William Moldessone	1372	-	1	40														
45	John Moigne	1405	-			1	240												
99	William Benet	1428	-	1	40														
119	John Larke	1447	-	1	48														
158	John Muleward le Fuattrede (alias Rigewold)	1372	-	1															
185	John de Stonton Wyuill	1379	Parson					2	240										
186	William Quellewether	1379	-	1	24			2	160			Not stated							
215	Hugh Cetur	1414	Clerk											1	20				
278	William Weton	1418	-	1	12														
303	John Lebarde	1416	-			1	48												
304	John Coupere	1416	-			1	48									1			
310	John Forster	1419	-	2															
311	Walter Fox	1420	-	4	108														
314	? Bassyngham	1438	Husbandman	1	24														
317	Robert Sprakelyng	1403	Smith					2	160										

(Continued)

Table 3.5: Continued.

List No.	Name	Year	Occupation	Lead		Lead in Furnace/ Oven		Brewing or Tippling vessels		Mash Vat	Tools in Brewhouse		Malt Quern		Ale Barrel		Cider Press	
				I	V	I	V	I	V		I	V	I	V	I	V	I	V
564	Thomas Baxster	1422	-	1	18													
566	Thomas Scorburch	1422	-	1	48													
567	John Barrys	1422	-	1	12													
585	William Clerk	1417	-	1														
586	John Rotherham	1417	-	1														
617	Philip Drapare	1422	-							1								
620	Thomas Frankeleyn	1422	-							1	6							
642	Richard Vtokestre	1382	Parson			1	48											
650	John Douere	1382	-			1	48											
651	Thomas Deghere	1392	-			1	24											
653	John Theccham	1392	-			1	40											
656	Geoffrey Potet	1392	-					2	8									
657	William Ponchon	1382	-			1	24											
663	Matthew de la Haye	1382	-			1	24											
677	Robert Senyng	1382	-			1	24									1	80	
681	Thomas Giles	1382	-			1	36											
745	Thomas Bocher	1382	-	1	60			1	64									

(Continued)





in more remote areas of western Devon, Postles identifies the persistence of smaller-scale domestic brewing into the fifteenth century. It is unfortunate that Postles' observations cannot be examined further here, as the lists from Devon lack any mention of brewing equipment. Coupled with the increasing professionalisation of brewing traced by Bennett, one cause of the decline of domestic brewing was the introduction of hopped beer through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, initially as an import and through the work of immigrant brewers, which was more labour intensive to brew and was not well suited to domestic manufacture (see Pajic 2019). This is particularly apparent when one considers that the principal item associated with brewing is the lead, normally valued at between 2s and 4s. Among the coroners' records some vessels which might be found in the kitchen, particularly pans, are recorded as being situated in the brewhouse and were presumably used for brewing.

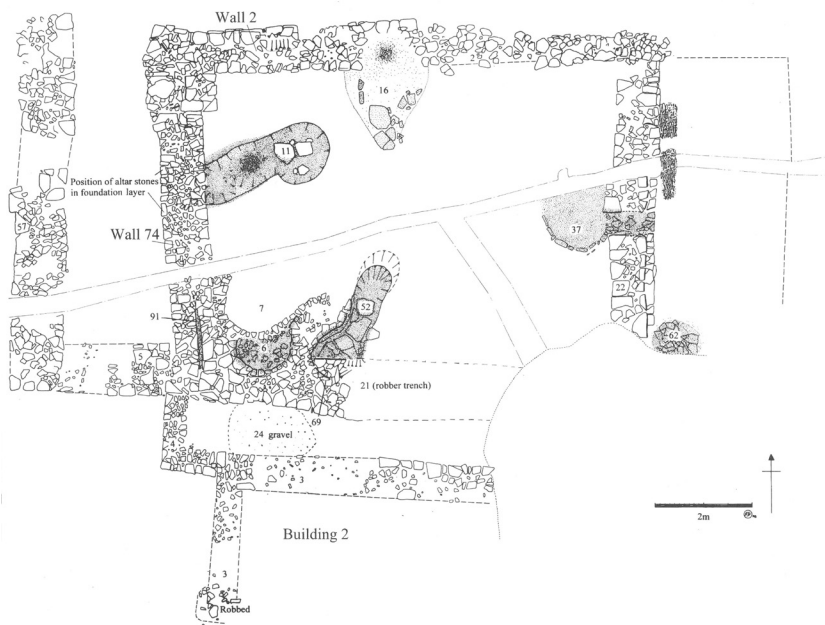
Within the escheators' records brewing equipment, like that associated with baking and grain processing, occurs primarily in lists generated by criminal cases, principally from Kent and Northamptonshire (Table 3.5). The most common item associated with brewing is the 'lead,' sometimes referred to as a 'lead in furnace' (*plumbum in fornaci*), a large open vessel used for boiling larger quantities of liquid as part of the brewing process. Leads came in various sizes and those listed as 'in furnace' are likely to be fixed items, suggesting the presence of a specialised space (a brewhouse) and therefore perhaps a larger brewing concern (see Woolgar 2016, 35–6). Evidence of furnaces might be found archaeologically in the hearth bases interpreted as vat stands at Southwick (Northamptonshire; Johnston, Bellamy and Foster 2001; Figure 3.5) and, outside of our case study region, at Hangleton (East Sussex; Jervis 2022b). Other references in the escheators' lists are to 'brewing vessels,' mash vats, whether for the storage or heating of the mash, and, in one case, wooden vessels for brewing.

The difficulty of isolating items associated with brewing is demonstrated by the list of William Moldessone of Lamport (Northamptonshire), outlawed in 1372.<sup>83</sup> He had a lead valued at 40d but his other items comprise two brass pans and wooden vessels, which may have been used for brewing, but could also have been standard household utensils. This ambiguity demonstrates how tightly bound up into domestic practice brewing was. In many cases equipment associated with the preparation of malt, such as malt querns, does not appear in lists. Malting requires the heating of grain and a large amount of space for drying. As the evidence from Kent suggests, the grinding of malt could take place in the homes where brewing was taking place. Indeed, one Kent list, that of the clerk Hugh Cetur, indicted for murder in 1414, features an object specifically described as a pair of malt querns, although, curiously, his list includes no brewing equipment.<sup>84</sup> Even so, this was not the case in all Kent households.

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<sup>83</sup> E1.

<sup>84</sup> E215.



**Figure 3.5:** Plan of the excavated brewhouse at Southwick (Northamptonshire) showing the vat emplacements (labelled 6, 7, 37 and 52). Reproduced by kind permission of Gill Johnston and the Northamptonshire Archaeological Society.

For example, Matthew de la Haye of Frindsbury (Kent), beheaded in 1381, had a lead but no handmill, and it is unlikely that this would be included within the ‘diverse utensils’ valued at 20d, given that handmills are typically valued at around this figure.<sup>85</sup> A further example of malt processing within the home is provided by the list of William de Brereton of Tranby (Yorkshire). He had two fixed leads and querns valued together at 10s, as well as five quarters of malt oats. Intriguingly he had two further ‘worn’ (*debilis*) leads valued at 16d, perhaps suggesting he had kept some older equipment for its scrap value.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, Robert Prior of Mendlesham (Suffolk), outlawed in 1391, had two leads and a mill, valued together at 160d, as well as quantities of malt oats and barley and barrels of ale.<sup>87</sup> Within our case study counties, archaeological evidence of malting can be seen in the occurrence of malting kilns or ovens such as a sequence of such structures dating from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries at Poplar High Street (Middlesex), situated in a village on the outskirts of the city of

<sup>85</sup> E663.

<sup>86</sup> E785.

<sup>87</sup> E1227; the meaning of the word ‘*malar*’ is obscure, but is taken to refer to a mill.

London (Sygrave 2004) and a possible malting oven at Elephant Yard, Kendal (Cumbria; Hair 1998). Other examples come from a Redcastle Furze, Thetford (Norfolk; Andrews 1995), and from High Street, Doncaster (Yorkshire; Buckland, Magilton and Hayfield 1989). The proximity of these kilns to markets may highlight the importance of brewing to both small and large urban centres.

In addition to leads for heating the water required to make the mash, vats or tubs were required for cooling and barrels for storage. John Moigne of Warmington (Northamptonshire), tried as a traitor in 1405, had a lead and a number of tubs likely used for this purpose.<sup>88</sup> In other cases, as in that of William Benet of Raisthrope (Yorkshire), who fled for murder in 1428, the low value wooden items may perhaps have been incorporated into a generic category of household utensils, a practice which is particularly common in Yorkshire.<sup>89</sup> Occasionally, however, these items are specifically identified as being for brewing. Thomas Bocher of Brackley (Northamptonshire), outlawed in 1382, had a lead and wooden vessels for brewing.<sup>90</sup> There are occasional indications of specialist spaces for brewing. William Quillewether of Northamptonshire, outlawed by civil suit in 1379, had brass and wooden vessels and a range of tools specifically listed as located in the brewhouse (*brasina*).<sup>91</sup> He also had a lead, the location of which is not noted and a quantity of malt, presumably for use in brewing, in his barn. Similarly, John de Stonton Wyuill, a parson from Titchmarsh (Northamptonshire) outlawed for felony in 1379, had brass and wooden vessels for brewing, situated in his brewhouse and kitchen.<sup>92</sup> In some cases, there is clear evidence of brewing taking place as a supplementary activity to the main trade. The probable cooper John Coupere of Wellingborough had a 'small' lead 'in furnace'.<sup>93</sup> However, there is no clear evidence of households engaging in brewing alongside other specialised food processing activities.

The fifteenth century was a transitional period for brewing, as ale came to be replaced by hopped beer, and brewing moved increasingly into the hands of male specialist brewers (Bennett 1996, 78). Hops occur in one coroners' list, that of John James.<sup>94</sup> Among the coroners' records there is only one reference to a lead, situated in the brewhouse of Thomas Ramsden, a shoemaker of Oundle (Northamptonshire) who committed murder in 1545.<sup>95</sup> He also possessed a tub in this area of his property, the only brewhouse noted within the coroners' lists. He also had a strike (a measure) in the brewhouse, as well as a bucket and pitchfork, which, perhaps, were stored there rather than being used in brewing

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<sup>88</sup> E45.

<sup>89</sup> E99.

<sup>90</sup> E745.

<sup>91</sup> E186.

<sup>92</sup> E185.

<sup>93</sup> E304.

<sup>94</sup> C382.

<sup>95</sup> C76.

specifically. Together the contents of his brewhouse were valued at 8s. It is difficult to assess the significance of this single mention, but we might propose that the general absence of brewing equipment from the coroners' records is indicative of the decline of domestic ale production.

There are only a small number of other coroners' lists which contain brewing equipment. Thomas Thomas of Longbridge Deverill (Wiltshire), who drowned himself in 1551, had two brewing vessels, and several barrels.<sup>96</sup> John Wyvenden, a labourer from Hawkhurst (Kent) who committed suicide in 1576, had a brewing tub, listed with some other barrels and measures.<sup>97</sup> He also had six milk bowls, suggestive of involvement in dairying. It is noticeable that he also had a small amount of plate and a silver ring suggesting a degree of affluence and perhaps the adoption of something approaching the household economy of the 'middling sort'. The most comprehensive range of brewing equipment is listed among the kitchen equipment of the prosperous Wiltshire clergyman John James.<sup>98</sup> It includes a mashing vat, malt quern and malt tub. The absence of leads may be due to the increasing occurrence of kettles in the coroners' lists, although kettles do not occur in any lists with other items of brewing equipment or within goods present in brewhouses.

Our records capture a transitional period in the history of brewing in English households, from the heavily domestic focus in the early fourteenth century to the professionalised enterprises of the end of our period. The general lack of specialist brewing equipment is, perhaps, reflective of the decline in domestic brewing, but also of the need for households to brew sufficiently regularly to warrant investment in expensive items such as leads. No forfeiting individual in the dataset carries the occupational descriptor 'brewer', which supports the idea that where brewing was occurring in the households studied, it was as a supplementary economic activity. As Postles (1992) demonstrates, there was a degree of local variation in the decline of household-scale brewing, and it is possible that the appearance of brewing equipment might highlight areas where it persisted into the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. However, the prevalence of Kent and Northamptonshire among these areas may also owe something to the detailed inventorying practices of the escheatrics concerned. The records, as well as archaeological evidence, also remind us of the role of households in the processing of malt to produce beer, a task requiring considerable investment in ovens and fuel, and likely a specialised activity. The occurrence of malting ovens in small towns and on the periphery of urban centres stresses the importance of household enterprise in supplying both urban and rural brewers.

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<sup>96</sup> C126.

<sup>97</sup> C230.

<sup>98</sup> C382.

### *Dairying*

No items associated explicitly with dairying, such as churns, are present within the escheators' lists, although many households possessed one or two cows, presumably for the provision of milk rather than meat (see Chapter 9). It is possible that some of the shallow tubs discussed previously could have been used for dairying, and ceramic bowls were frequently used for this purpose (Brears 2015, 261–2; McCarthy and Brookes 1988, 109–10). Objects for dairying are also scarce within the coroners' records, occurring in only eight lists. This is despite dairy produce being an important source of protein, consumed primarily as cheese and butter (Woolgar 2016, 76). Dairying was particularly associated with the clergy (Woolgar 2016, 81), so it is noteworthy that the clergyman John James possessed a butter churn, two cheese vats, two milk pans, two milk tankards and a milk tub.<sup>99</sup> William Mursshall, a labourer from West Greenwich (Kent) who committed murder in 1535, possessed a butter churn, and three cheese moulds with two covers.<sup>100</sup> The most common items are milk bowls and pans, which in two cases occur as multiple items: Elisha Gregory, a husbandman from Brixton (Devon) who committed suicide in 1600, had seven, and John Wyvenden, of Hawkhurst, who also had some baking equipment, had six.<sup>101</sup> It is noticeable that there is evidence of labourers undertaking dairying as a household activity. These households just discussed all possessed at least one cow, so were likely processing their own milk.

### *The grinding of herbs and spices*

Mortars were used in the preparing of herbs and spices and are present in both the escheators' records and the archaeological dataset, although they are absent from the coroners' lists, where the only item associated with grinding condiments is a mustard quern (*mola sinapia*) belonging to Henry Cooper of Cowlinge (1595).<sup>102</sup> Mortars could be of brass or stone; the material is not stated in the escheators' lists. Brass mortars were introduced to Europe from the Islamic world and it has been suggested that Hispano-Moresque examples influenced the design of some English stone examples. They do not appear to have been imported in any quantity, being exceptionally rare archaeologically and most likely being imported as gifts or souvenirs (see Lewis 1984). No brass examples feature in this dataset. Stone examples, of Purbeck, Quarr or Caen limestone, are known archaeologically, with examples from Kent, Norfolk, Yorkshire, Wiltshire and Hampshire within our dataset (Figures 3.6 and 3.7). Other examples are of local stone. A national survey of stone mortars shows a strong

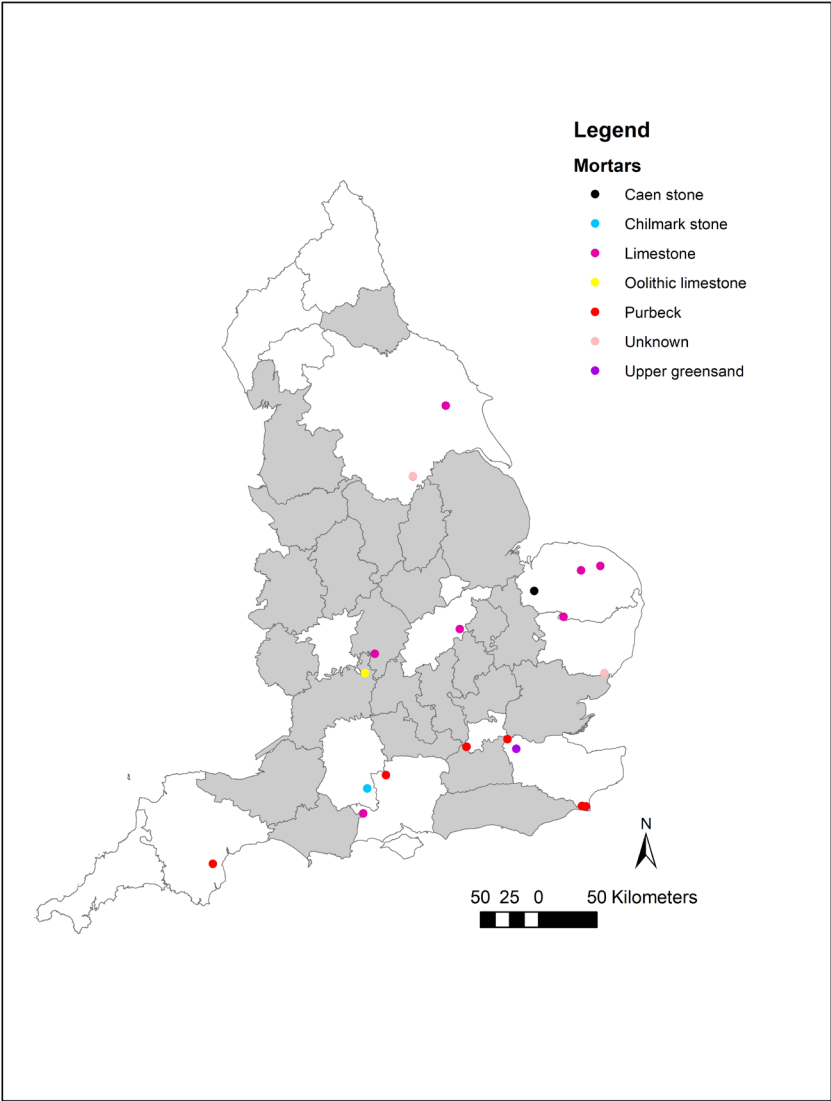
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<sup>99</sup> C382.

<sup>100</sup> C487.

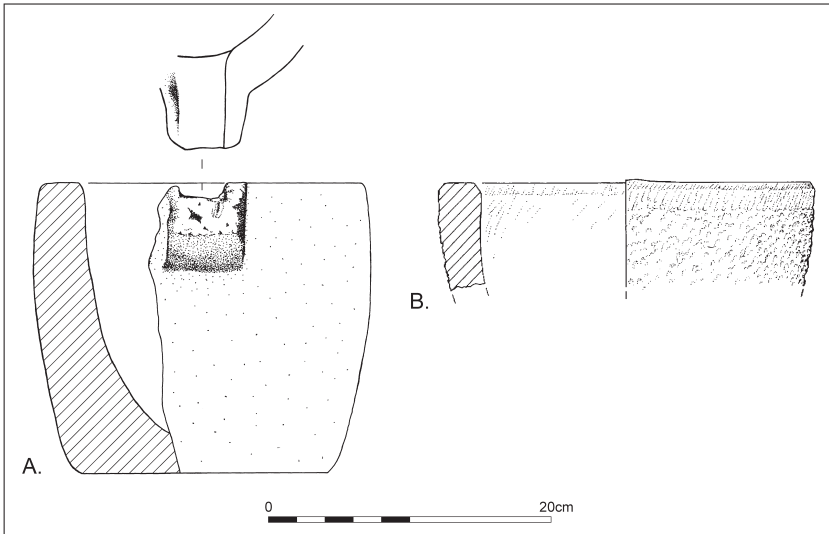
<sup>101</sup> C467; C230.

<sup>102</sup> C447.



**Figure 3.6:** Distribution of stone mortars in the archaeological dataset.

association with higher status rural sites, religious houses and larger towns (Jervis 2022d; see also Dunning 1977). In southern and eastern England mortars of Purbeck marble or limestone are by far the most common type, and in this region they do occur in non-elite rural settings, often around the coast or in the hinterland of major towns (see further discussion in Chapter 9). Where present in non-elite households, such as at the fishermen’s farmstead at Lydd (Kent), they may have been used for the processing of locally sourced herbs.



**Figure 3.7:** Examples of stone mortars from Doncaster (Yorkshire) and Fordingbridge (Hampshire). Redrawn from Chadwick (2008) and Harding and Light (2003) by Kirsty Harding.

While the distribution of imported mortars may relate to the point of importation of these items, it also mirrors the distribution of imported spices and condiments as identified through archaeological analysis, which shows that these occur most commonly in the major cities and ports of trade (Livarda 2011; see discussion above). Mortars occur in only two escheators' lists. Richard Vttockestre, the parson of Lyminge (Kent), outlawed by civil suit in 1381, had four mortars, as well as three spits, four pans, two pots, two skimmers (for skimming fat from a stew or broth), three forks and a frying pan, suggestive of a complex kitchen arrangement at the end of the fourteenth century.<sup>103</sup> The other individual to possess a mortar is Thomas Molundre, also a parson, from Great Brington (Northamptonshire), who was imprisoned for felony in 1380.<sup>104</sup>

### Summary

In summary, the evidence for items associated with the processing of foodstuffs is, perhaps, surprisingly scarce. This may be for several reasons. The period saw an increase in the acquisition of prepared foodstuffs, meaning that items for certain tasks, such as baking, may not have been required in the home (Carlin 1998). We might also consider that some items may have been considered

<sup>103</sup> E642.

<sup>104</sup> E298.

fixtures of a property, and therefore not available for confiscation. However, Buxton (2015, 99) highlights that in the early modern period, food processing was not common to every household, occurring most frequently in the gentry and yeoman households of Thame, his case study. This, he proposes, may be due to the need both for specialised spaces for processing activities (such as dairies and bakehouses), and the ability to invest in specialised equipment. Our evidence suggests that households may have specialised in certain activities such as grain processing, brewing and, to a lesser extent, baking and dairy-ing. The emergence of the ‘middling sort’ in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries led to a reorganisation of this labour, and it is perhaps this phenomenon which Buxton observes among Thame’s yeomanry. While limited in quantity, the evidence for food processing shows how some households, particularly in Kent and Northamptonshire where the evidence base is strongest, appear to have produced food and drink for the market. Furthermore, the limited evidence for households engaging in multiple processing tasks in the latter part of our period is symptomatic of a broader withdrawal of the household from the community as suggested by Johnson (1997). While items associated with food processing are considerably underrepresented within our sample, the scarcity of the evidence suggests a general level of reliance on processing specialists due to the capital constraints highlighted by Buxton.

## Cooking

Our study period straddles an important transition in domestic architecture, which sees increasing specialisation in domestic space, including the emergence of service rooms and kitchens. As noted, the escheators’ records do not typically provide details of the rooms in which items were located, and this evidence is inconsistently provided in the coroners’ records. We must therefore rely on some general conclusions drawn from studies of standing and excavated houses and other documentary sources. In the fourteenth century, at the start of our period, most cooking would have taken place over a central hearth situated in the open hall (Woolgar 2016, 29). However, references to kitchens in a small number of escheators’ and coroners’ records confirm the presence of these rooms by the sixteenth century.<sup>105</sup> The development of the kitchen can be understood in the context of the ‘modification’ of rural houses, a process which dendrochronological analysis now shows occurred at varying rates across the country (e.g. Alcock 2010; Dyer 2005, 151–5; 2006b; Gray 2002; Johnson 1993; 2010; Martin and Martin 1999; Roberts 2003). One factor which may have led to the emergence of separate kitchens is the increasing complexity of cooking practices, in part brought about by newly available foodstuffs, and their associated pieces of equipment in the later middle ages and early modern

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<sup>105</sup> E185; E768; C171; C226; C289; C382; C446; C472.



period (Hamling and Richardson 2017, 77). In the south-east, kitchens were commonly detached buildings from the late fifteenth century, with kitchens integrated into the house increasingly common through the sixteenth century, but slower to develop in the midlands (Hamling and Richardson 2017, 71; Martin and Martin 1997; Pearson 2012, 36–8). In the coroners' lists occasional reference is made to goods being stored in the buttery, but the pantry is not mentioned. The buttery is typically associated with the making and storage of drink and the pantry with foodstuffs. These service rooms, which form part of the typical medieval 'tripartite' domestic plan, can be understood to have emerged in the twelfth century, trickling down into vernacular architecture from higher status residences (Gardiner 2008). The limited evidence for rooms within our dataset does not bear out this distinction in practice. Items stored in the buttery included cooking vessels, various items of tableware, processing utensils and other household objects including a spinning wheel.<sup>106</sup> It should also be noted that 'kitchen' need not always denote a room where food was cooked; this may still have happened over a central hearth, with the kitchen being used for the preparation of foodstuffs (Hamling and Richardson 2017, 72). A similar process of modernisation, with similar levels of variability in precisely how service rooms were structured in relation to existing structures, took place from the sixteenth century in the south-west (Alcock 2015, 20). We might therefore expect to see increasing complexity in the range of cooking wares represented in the escheators' and coroners' lists over time. We begin by summarising the evidence for cooking ware, starting with pots and pans and then examining other cooking vessels and equipment, before exploring these questions further.

### *The basics of cooking: pots and pans*

At the turn of the fifteenth century, the Kent household of Thomas Paccheherst was well stocked with objects associated with cooking and food processing.<sup>107</sup> The list of Paccheherst's possessions, produced in 1407, includes two brass pots (valued at 6s 8d), five brass pans (5s), a spit (8d), three tripods (12d), two cauldrons (2s), a kneading trough (4d), a sieve (4d), five kimelins (10d) and three tuns (18d), as well as an oven (*furnays*) (5s) and quern (11d). This list, however, is exceptional. It is one of only four from our sample which includes basic pots and pans, as well as items for roasting and other kitchen equipment, along with items for the storage and processing of foods. Of the 463 escheators' lists which include items associated with cooking, the majority (326) include only pots and pans, and a further 31 include only pots, pans and items such as trivets and pot hooks, which allowed these vessels to be moved around the hearth, as the only items associated specifically with cooking (Table 3.6). The coroners'

<sup>106</sup> C171; C208; C382.

<sup>107</sup> E1336.

**Table 3.6:** The occurrence of combinations of cooking equipment in the escheators' and coroners' records. 'Pots and pans' relate to lists including only pots and/or pans. 'Other cooking equipment' includes utensils other than pots and pans, their associated pot hooks or trivets, or roasting equipment (spits and andirons).

<b>Cooking Equipment Present</b>	<b>No. Escheators' Lists</b>	<b>%ge Total Escheators' Lists</b>	<b>No. Coroners' Lists</b>	<b>%ge Total Coroners' Lists</b>
Pots & Pans	326	33.9%	26	14.8%
Pots & Pans with Associated Equipment (e.g. trivet, pot hook)	31	3.2%		
Other Cooking Equipment (vessels and utensils other than pots and pans)	17	1.8%	4	2.3%
Pots & Pans with Other Cooking Equipment	57	5.9%	16	9.1%
Pots & Pans with Roasting Equipment	8	0.8%	1	0.6%
Pots & Pans with Other Cooking Equipment and Roasting Equipment	20	2.1%	23	13.1%
Roasting and Other Cooking Equipment (no pots and pans)	1	0.1%	3	1.7%
Roasting Equipment	3	0.3%		
<b>Total Lists</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>48.1%</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>41.5%</b>

records present a different picture for the latter end of our period. Of the 73 lists containing these items, just 26 contain only pots and pans (two including additional items for storage or processing) and 47 include a range of cooking vessels and equipment including items for roasting, supporting the notion that cooking became increasingly complex over time, a phenomenon which will be explored more fully in the next section (Table 3.6).

Metal (typically copper alloy) pots and pans were ubiquitous in the medieval home across the social spectrum (see also Woolgar 2016, 30–35; French 2021, 134). However, the range of other items associated with cooking varied considerably. Analysis of appraisal and inventorying practices by the escheator, as well as differences between civil and criminal cases, shows that, other than animals, cooking equipment is least sensitive to regional and temporal variation.<sup>108</sup> This is presumably due to two factors: the ubiquity of these items, and

<sup>108</sup> A fuller study is in preparation; see Chapter 2.

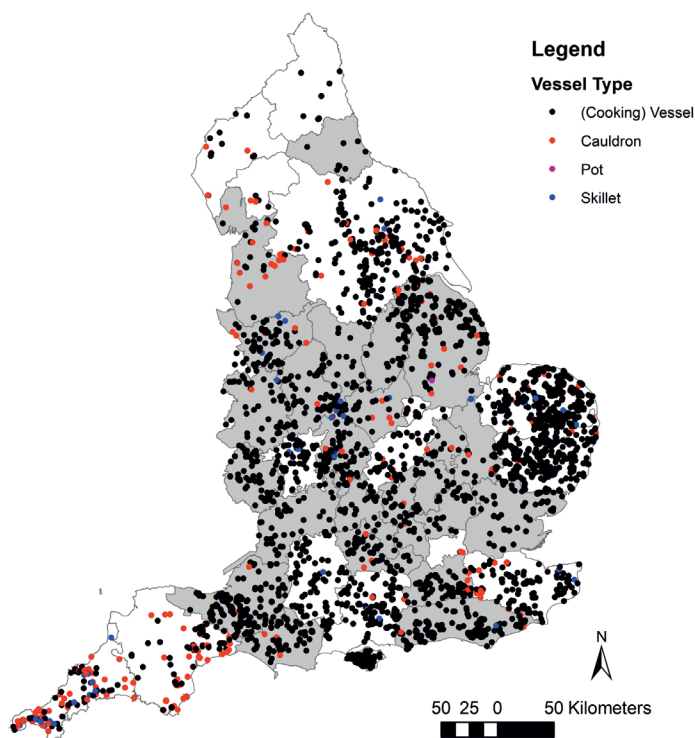
their comparatively high value: on average pots are valued at 32d and pans at 19d within the escheators' records.

Given their ubiquity, it is surprising that metal vessels are comparatively rare in the excavated archaeological record. There are only 65 occurrences of metal cooking vessels, typically in copper alloy, but with a smaller quantity in iron and lead alloy, within our archaeological dataset. Five of these come from a bronze casting workshop at Caldewgate, Carlisle and may be production waste or material collected for recycling (Giecco and Dearham 2005). In some cases, this may be due to soil conditions. For example, the housefire deposit from Dinna Clerks (Devon) may well have included metal vessels, but the acidic nature of Dartmoor's soil will have caused these to decay (Beresford 1979). Evidence of the spread of these items across the country can be found in the records of the Portable Antiquities Scheme, which show that they occur across England (Figure 3.8). Most of these finds are categorised as 'vessel' or 'cooking vessel', but some are classified as pot, skillet or cauldron and the most commonly occurring components are vessel feet and rims, the most robust elements of copper alloy vessels. Finds of metal vessels are distributed fairly evenly across the country, varying in accordance with the general distribution of finds within the PAS database (see Chapter 2). The PAS data demonstrates clearly that the absence of these items from the archaeological record is not due to regionality in use or preservation. Rather, this is likely due to recycling; indeed, a record of 'five brass pots weighing 80lbs price 2d per pound', and another of 'three old pans weighing 8lbs Troy, price 1½d. per pound' may provide evidence of vessels being valued for their scrap, rather than functional, value.<sup>109</sup> The use of scrap by bronze founders in the period is well established (Butler and Green 2003, 21). Even so, these items do appear to have been valued by their users. In many cases the vessels are clearly old or well used, described as *debilis* (worn). Evidence of the regular repair of broken vessels is plentiful in the archaeological record, where common finds relating to vessels include patches. For example, at Island Farm, Ottery St Mary (Mudd, Cobain and Haines 2018) sheets and strips of copper alloy assumed to relate to vessel repair were found on the floor of a burnt house. In addition to the patching of vessels, cauldron rims and feet could be replaced on a regular basis (Butler and Green 2003, 29).

Three types of basic cooking vessel are present: pots, pans and the larger cauldrons. Among the escheator's records the specific form of vessels is not stated in 54 cases; instead a generic term such as *vasa* is used. Perhaps because of their ubiquity, the records tell us little more about the pots and pans. Where listed, the capacity of pots, globular cooking vessels, varies from one gallon to three gallons, while the presence of pairs or sets of vessels of varying capacities is implied by a reference to 'two brass pots, great and small' in the list of the goods of the butcher John Bekelswade of Rothwell (Northamptonshire), who

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<sup>109</sup> E1538; E1601.



**Figure 3.8:** Distribution of metal vessel fragments in the PAS database and examples of PAS finds. From left to right: Cauldron from Llanengan, Gwynedd with evidence for repair (PAS Reference GAT-0FE28F); Cauldron from Skelton, Cumbria with handle replaced in antiquity (PAS Reference LVPL838); Rim and handle fragments found at Heslington, Cumbria (PAS Reference LVPL2388). Reproduced under CC-By Attribution Licence. Licence holders Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust and National Museum Liverpool.

was outlawed by civil suit in 1416.<sup>110</sup> The coroners' records are similarly vague, never listing capacity, although one pot is listed as 'small'.<sup>111</sup> Where the material is stated these are nearly always of 'brass' or 'copper', although there is a single example of a leather pot and four pewter pots, which may have had a role in the serving, rather than cooking, of food, or have had a decorative function. Pans, flatter, more open vessels, are similarly ubiquitous and like pots, also varied in size. Stated capacities range from one to nine gallons, with others listed as 'small'. Cauldrons were vessels with their own feet, sometimes used in brewing as well as cooking (Woolgar 2016, 37).

It was commonplace for households to possess multiple pots and pans, perhaps of different volumes, or used for the cooking of different foodstuffs (Table 3.7). At a conservative estimate (i.e. where it is clear that multiple vessels are listed, but the exact figure is unclear, leading to a minimum value of two being assigned), the households listed in the escheators' records that possessed pots and/or pans had on average 2.8 pots and pans (mean; mode=2); however, numbers vary from 1 to 14 vessels. Pots and pans occur together in 245 lists. Of these, 95 (39%) list a single pot and a single pan. In 28 cases (11%) pots outnumber pans, while in 89 cases (36%) pans outnumber pots. This variability suggests that these were multipurpose items which were adapted to the needs of individual households. The smaller sample of coroners' records shows a greater variability in the number of pots and pans, the average number of vessels per household being higher (3.4) and the mode being lower (1). Pots and pans co-occur in 20 of the 66 lists and cauldrons are proportionally more important (occurring in 26% of the lists with cooking vessels, compared with 10% of the escheators' lists with cooking vessels). One noticeable difference between the escheators' and coroners' lists is the vocabulary used for cooking vessels. In the coroners' records we see the introduction of the term 'crock', possibly a regional term as it occurs mostly in the western counties of Devon (8), Cornwall (1) and Wiltshire (4), with two examples from Kent.

Metalware was supplemented by ceramics in most, if not all, medieval households. Ceramics are the most common find on the majority of medieval archaeological sites and had a range of functions. In contrast, earthenware only appears in one escheators' list, and there are two examples of coroners' lists which include references to stoneware vessels, probably used for drinking.<sup>112</sup> Our period begins at a time when the range of ceramics present in the home was changing. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are characterised by the increasing prevalence of jugs, sometimes highly decorated, alongside plainer jars (occurring in a variety of shapes and sizes and used for storage and cooking) and open bowls and dishes. Ceramic drinking vessels are rare. Analysis of the occurrence of these principal forms at sites in Hampshire (Brown 1997;

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<sup>110</sup> E300.

<sup>111</sup> C511.

<sup>112</sup> E11; C547; C382.

**Table 3.7:** The co-occurrence of pots and pans in the escheators' lists.

Pans	Pots										
	No. items	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	13	No. Lists	%ge Total Lists
	0		46	16	5	2		1		70	7.3%
	1	60	95	16	2		1		1	175	18.2%
	2	17	40	26	2	1				86	8.9%
	3	6	6	20	5	1	1			39	4.0%
	4	6	8	6	3	1	1	1		26	2.7%
	5	1		1		1		1		4	0.4%
	6				1		1			2	0.2%
	7					1				1	0.1%
	8							1		1	0.1%
	9				1					1	0.1%
	No. Lists	90	195	85	19	7	4	4	1	405	42.1%
%ge Total Lists	9.3%	20.2%	8.8%	2.0%	0.7%	0.4%	0.4%	0.1%	42.1%		

Jervis 2012) demonstrates that urban assemblages are more complex than those from smaller towns and rural sites, the latter being characterised by a higher prevalence of dishes, potentially used for processes such as dairying and as measures, in relation to jugs, which are more prevalent in urban settings. Analysis of vessel capacity, coupled with organic residue analysis, of pottery from West Cotton shows how vessels were produced for particular stages in the processing, cooking and consumption of foodstuffs, with vessels seeming to cluster around known medieval dry measures for grain and flour (Blinkhorn 1999; Dunne *et al.* 2020). Equivalent studies of sites in Humberside by Hayfield (1988) and Oxfordshire by Mellor (2005) have reached similar conclusions. The picture changes considerably from the later fourteenth century. Ceramics for cooking are typically much plainer in terms of decoration, and occur in an increasing range of forms, perhaps mirroring the increasing diversity seen in metalware (Gaimster and Nenck 1997, 175). In some areas tripod cooking pots, similar to those found in the Low Countries, develop. These might be seen as imitations of metal vessels, but it should be noted that these have distinctive material properties and might be better understood as complementing metal cooking vessels, rather than competing with them (Jervis 2014, 66–9). Other

forms which become increasingly prevalent in the later middle ages are large pans for dairying. Other distinctive ceramic forms include baking dishes and bunghole pitchers used for holding ale (Brears 2015). The changing suite of ceramic vessels therefore reflects the diversification of metalware forms across the course of our period.

Medieval cooking was based around the ubiquitous metal pot and pan, supplemented by a range of ceramic vessels as well as, perhaps, equally cheap and disposable items of wood and leather. Most households had at least a pot or pan and in many cases more, suggesting the ability to produce relatively complicated dishes using multiple utensils over a simple hearth. The ability to cook in this way was assisted by the presence of various pieces of equipment associated with cooking pots. The archaeological record gives a taste of such items: for example stone pot lids from Doncaster (McComish *et al.* 2010) and Ripon (Yorkshire; Finlayson 2001a) and a chain from West Cotton (Hylton 2010) would all have been used in cooking. However, the most common items occurring in the escheators' records are trivets and tripods for suspending a vessel over a fire. Within the sample there are 70 such items of ironwork from 57 households, so some households would have made do in other ways. Woolgar (2016, 37) provides the example of a coroners' report from Stone (Buckinghamshire) from 1363, where a brass pot was resting on a stone. Woolgar (2016, 39) notes an increase in references to items of equipment for supporting pots in the fifteenth-century wills of the middling echelons of society. Brandreths (iron frames to place over a fire, on which pots might be arranged) appear from the later fourteenth century in northern England, and there is a single example in the escheators' records, belonging to Robert Coke of Kettlesmoor (Yorkshire; 1410).<sup>113</sup> It is noticeable that hooks and hangers are more common in the coroners' records than in the escheators' records, although trivets remain the principal item associated with placing pots in and around the fire (20 from 16 lists incorporating items for this function). One reason for this may be the emergence of the fireplace. Items associated with tending fires occur only occasionally: an example is the list of John Oke of Britford (Wiltshire; 1576), which includes two iron dogs, tongs, a fire shovel and bellows suggesting the presence of a fireplace rather than an open hearth. He also had iron pot hooks as well as a trivet.<sup>114</sup> His cooking items are listed as being in the kitchen, while no location is given for the items associated with the fire, suggesting this may be one example of a house where the kitchen was used for the storage and preparation of the foodstuffs, but cooking took place in the main living area. In other cases, these hooks were used over an open fire using equipment such as andirons, as is the case in the list of Thomas Bullock of Hawkhurst, Kent, convicted of murder in 1577.<sup>115</sup> It is this latter arrangement which appears most frequently, indeed

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<sup>113</sup> E1450.

<sup>114</sup> C226.

<sup>115</sup> C547.



Oke's list is exceptional for having items associated with tending a fireplace and pot hangers.

### *The diversification of cooking equipment*

Discussing the emergence of the kitchen as a specialised space for cooking and food preparation, Hamling and Richardson (2017, 77) highlight the increasing complexity of utensils to be found in the early modern home. This proliferation of equipment developed from the mid-fourteenth century, as changes in the availability of foodstuffs created new opportunities for peasant cooking (see also French 2021, 137). Woolgar (2016, 41) highlights how meats and fats were more accessible to a wider cross-section of society, and following this, that the fifteenth century saw greater investment in culinary equipment. The escheators' records provide a challenge in understanding the extent to which this diversification spread across society. In the fifteenth century, the complexity of cooking wear assemblages appears to decrease, but this is also the period in which lists become less detailed. The coroners' records provide some further insight, as a wider range of cooking items are listed in these records.

Overall, a total of 85 escheators' chattels lists include items of kitchen equipment associated with cooking along with pots and pans, while a further 21 include these items without any pots and pans. The range of items includes vessels associated with specific functions as well as a variety of other utensils. Of these, the most common vessels are pitchers (*urcioli*) (Table 3.8). Several are stated as being of brass and are presumably a metal equivalent to the ceramic jug, a multipurpose vessel for the carrying and pouring of liquids. The value of these ranges from 6d to 40d. It is possible that lower value pitchers, such as a group of three valued together at 3d, and another at 4d, are ceramic; however, that valued at 4d is identified as *debilis* and this, rather than its material, is the probable explanation for its low value.<sup>116</sup> Other cooking vessels are posnets, frying pans and skillets. Posnets and skillets are small tripod cooking vessels and the form was also produced in ceramic (typically referred to by archaeologists as a tripod cooking pot or tripod pipkin). In contrast to pots, which were most likely suspended above the hearth or placed on a trivet, these vessels were specially designed to be placed over the embers (see Butler and Green 2003, 16–17). Skillets typically have quite thick walls, meaning that they heat their contents more slowly than a saucepan or pot (Eveleigh 1993, 10). Posnets gradually reduced in popularity, while skillets and saucepans became more common through the sixteenth century (Eveleigh 1993, 11; Green 2015, 311). This is reflected in the relative abundance of posnets in the escheators' records when compared to skillets, and their presence in equal numbers in the coroners' records. In the escheators' records stated values for posnets range

<sup>116</sup> E348 (it may be significant that the term here is *idreas* rather than the usual *urcioli*); E671.



**Table 3.8:** Summary of cooking equipment other than pots and pans in the escheators' and coroners' lists.

Object	Escheators'		Coroners'	
	No. Items	No. Lists	No. Items	No. Lists
<b>Cooking Vessels</b>				
Posnet	25	20	8	6
Skillet	3	3	8	7
Frying Pan	17	16	8	8
Kettle	2	2	37	24
Chafer	2	2	2	2
Saucepan			6	6
<b>Utensils</b>				
Spoon	12	1		
Wooden Spoon	9	1	6	1
Hook	7	3		
Fork	5	3		
Skimmer	2	1	5	5
Spatula			1	1
Taster			1	1
Measure			4	3
Colander			2	2
Ladle			2	2
Tongs	2	2	10	8
Sieve	18	7	7	5
<b>Other Vessels</b>				
Pitcher	36	23		
Wooden Vessels	27	18	2	1
Leather Pot	1	1		
Basin/Bowl			11	9

from 4d to 24d and skillets from 3d to 6d; their value was therefore less than pots and pans. In the coroners' records, posnets are valued between 6d and 16d and skillets at 3d to 8d. These vessels occur in a wide range of capacities (Brears 2015, 259; Green 2015, 309).



**Figure 3.9:** Example of a copper alloy skimmer (missing handle) from Dunton, Norfolk, reported to the PAS (PAS Reference NMS-633652). Reproduced under CC-Share Alike Licence from Norfolk County Council.

The frying pan is another distinctive vessel, often stated as being of iron rather than bronze and perhaps therefore distinct from the more common brass pan. A total of 17 occur in the escheators' lists (valued between 3d and 6d) and eight in the coroners' (valued between 2d and 10d). There are two entries among the escheators' records for kettles (one being made of lead), with a further 37 among the coroners' records, several of which were said to be made of brass, though none of lead. One 1545 list features two 'bayle kettells', presumably a reference to hoop-handles.<sup>117</sup> Edward Burges of Laverstock (Wiltshire) had 'two little brass kettles' when he committed suicide in 1566.<sup>118</sup> The sole lead kettle in the escheators' lists is valued at 24d, with valuations in the coroners' records being lower, ranging from 2d to 18d, perhaps suggesting lead examples were worth more than copper alloy vessels. The presence of these specialist items suggests a diversification of metalware and the ability to acquire metal objects for specific culinary functions which, in turn, implies an increasingly varied diet. There are two occurrences of 'chaffers' in the escheators' records, and these vessels (listed variously as chafers and chafing dishes) are more common in the coroners' records (Table 3.8). This is a term covering vessels fulfilling a range of uses, including holding food over the fire, heating water or keeping food warm at the table (Brears 2015, 258–9). A single brass chafer belonging to William Mandevile of Colnbrook (Middlesex) was valued at 20d in 1419, although no examples are individually valued within the coroners' records.<sup>119</sup>

An important utensil for cooking was the skimmer, for removing fat and scum from the top of a stew (Figure 3.9). Three examples, all in copper alloy, are present in the archaeological dataset, while there are two mentioned in the

<sup>117</sup> C76.

<sup>118</sup> C183.

<sup>119</sup> E712.

escheators' lists and five in the coroners' records. A range of other utensils are present in small quantities, including wooden spoons, ladles, sieves and, in the coroners' records, colanders. These were low value items: William Wodeward of Abbots Morton had nine wooden spoons valued at 1d in 1418 and Richard Vttokestre of Lyminge (Kent) had two skimmers worth 4d in 1382, for example.<sup>120</sup> Sieves are valued between 2d and 5d.

In the escheators' records, the majority of households possessed only one item in addition to pots and/or pans, most typically a posnet or frying pan, along, perhaps with a utensil. For example, in 1381 Thomas Beterford of Middlesex possessed a brass pot and a trivet, as well as a fork and a posnet.<sup>121</sup> In the coroners' records, kettles are the most common additional item, but still, in most cases only one or two additional items are present. We can draw two possible conclusions from this section. Firstly, it is possible that the complexity of cooking arrangements, while revealed in some lists, is masked in others, as smaller items, particularly utensils, might have been bundled into the category of 'other household objects'. The low value of items such as skillets, wooden spoons and skimmers would support this suggestion. Secondly, while a wider range of cooking equipment was available, households did not necessarily have the means to acquire these items, or the associated foodstuffs. Therefore, households may have been cautious in acquiring new items, limiting their occurrence and the number of items which could be found in a specific home. This issue is considered in further detail in Chapter 9, in the context of household consumption.

### *Cooking and household status: roasting*

The increased availability of fresh meat in the fifteenth century is perhaps best illustrated by the occurrence of items associated with roasting over the hearth. Such items occur in 34 escheators' lists, with spits being the most common objects. These occasionally occur with cobbards (for supporting spits). Other items associated with roasting are brandirons and gridirons. A similar range of items, along with dripping pans for collecting fat, occur in the coroners' records, although with a wider range of terms (brandiron, broach, broil iron, cobiron, roasting iron and spit) being used to describe the principal items. A similar increase in the prevalence of roasting is seen in the London wills analysed by French (2021, 136).

Where roasting equipment is present, it typically occurs alongside a range of other kitchen items. For example, Robert Tyuerton, a 'leech' (or healer) of Woodnewton in Northamptonshire, possessed two iron spits, a chafing dish, a frying pan and a skillet, as well as six pots, a pan and a trivet when he was

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<sup>120</sup> E348; E642.

<sup>121</sup> E689.

outlawed in a civil suit in 1419.<sup>122</sup> Roasting is commonly understood as being indicative of high status cookery, due to the fact that it is high in labour costs (the meat must be watched and constantly basted for a long period of time) and also because, when compared to stewing or pot boiling, it is relatively wasteful. There is some indication that those with roasting equipment were of somewhat elevated status: where occupation is listed in the escheators' records, individuals in this group include a leech, a clerk, a parson and a butcher (who we might expect to possess a range of equipment for cooking meat). This is not the case for the coroners' records where occupations of those with roasting equipment comprise a mariner, a shoemaker, a widow and two husbandmen. As well as roasting equipment, all possess a range of specialist cooking equipment; for example Thomas Ramsden, a shoemaker of Oundle, possessed three pans, three pots, two kettles, two posnets, a chafing dish and two spits in 1545.<sup>123</sup> This feature would appear primarily to relate to the time-consuming and labour-intensive process of roasting, the expense of meat and the need for multiple items.

### *Summary: complexity in cooking*

It is useful to envisage three tiers of cooking related material culture. Most households belonged to the group which possessed only pots and pans. A smaller group possessed a small range of other culinary items and a minority possessed items associated with roasting. The small numbers of lists with more complex assemblages of goods mean that it is not possible to identify any temporal development in the use of cooking ware. This may speak to a range of factors influencing the acquisition of these wares: wealth, living arrangements, household organisation and the availability of foodstuffs. Among the escheators' lists, the households that possessed a more diverse and specialised range of metal objects might be understood as being of slightly higher status than those whose kitchenware was limited to pots and pans; they include artisans (two smiths, two tanners, a sawyer, a roper and a skinner), as well as a chaplain, a clerk, a parson, a husbandman and a yeoman. In general terms, those with the most complex cooking equipment would appear to represent the wealthiest households based on total valuations.<sup>124</sup> However, it is worth noting that, while those households with only pots and pans are primarily those with the least material wealth, the range of total valuations in this group is extremely wide. Investment in cooking equipment in relation to other goods is considered further in Chapter 9, both in relation to household wealth, and to the assessment of contrasts between town and country.

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<sup>122</sup> E307.

<sup>123</sup> C76.

<sup>124</sup> Note this discussion only includes the lists of felons (i.e. criminal forfeiture) as these are generally more 'complete'; see Chapter 2.

### *Conclusion*

Objects associated with food processing and cooking clearly demonstrate the benefit of an interdisciplinary approach which draws on both archaeological and historical evidence. Together they show that households in the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries appear to have specialised in specific processing tasks. Broader trends, such as the decline of domestic milling and the professionalisation of brewing, can also be illustrated. Most of the households in our study had a modest range of cooking vessels, but we see that over time cooking techniques became more complex and that some households, particularly the wealthier, invested in items for the performing of a wider range of food processing activities. These observations can be fitted into wider trends in architecture (the emergence of specialised spaces for food processing) and land tenure (the production of larger surpluses for household processing by those leasing or acquiring land). A middling sort can be seen to emerge in relation to cooking practices, who had the space and resources to prepare more complex dishes. An investigation into objects associated with dining and drinking brings this group further into focus.

