

## CHAPTER 6

# Dressing the Part: Evidence for Clothing

Clothing and personal adornment are among the most well-studied elements of medieval consumption, from both archaeological and historical perspectives. Within medieval and early modern society, clothing was perhaps the most obvious signifier of social status, so that dress could be used by medieval writers as a metaphor to convey information about characters (Jaster 2006, 91; Hodges 2005; Robertson 2008). Items of dress and personal adornment had symbolic meaning as well as practical importance for the peasants and artisans who are the primary subjects of this book, just as they did for the lay and clerical elites. At every social level, the expectations and intentions of the wearer worked in combination with the responses of others to produce meanings around dress choices that varied with context (Jervis 2017a; Shaw 2005; Smith 2009b). Furthermore, scholars have frequently pointed to evidence of widespread changes and improvements in dress in the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which suggest, for instance, that many lower status households were able to purchase cloth of increasing quality and in greater quantities (Dyer 2005, 149–50; Kowaleski 2006, 249–51; Sear and Sneath 2020, 106–8). The argument for such changes gains support from well-known contemporary comment which, like the preambles to the sumptuary petitions and related statutes of 1363, 1463 and 1532–3, expresses anxiety about the growing difficulty of distinguishing different status groups through their dress and personal adornment (Ormrod 2005; Record Commission 1816, 399; 1817, 430). Such commentary has also encouraged the view that non-elite groups enjoying greater disposable income not only replaced their clothing more frequently and with garments and textiles of higher quality, but that they also participated in wider changes in the style of dress, or indeed in fashion, for which the period under consideration in this book is well known (Dyer 1998, 175–7; 2005, 135).

Substantiating such arguments with direct evidence of the clothing and accessories of peasants, labourers and artisans is not straightforward. Each of

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the main documentary sources for understanding clothing – wills, inventories and manuscript illuminations – provides different kinds of information, but are all problematic for understanding non-elite dress (see Piponnier and Mane 2000, 3–13). Inventory evidence relates primarily to a small number of better off households, at least prior to the sixteenth century. Wills provide useful information on clothing and, more tellingly, on attitudes to clothing. Bequeathing clothing was a means through which the identity and memory of the deceased could be formed and curated, for example through showing charity, exploiting awareness of clothing's symbolic role, and by creating obligations through gifting (see Burkholder 2005; Crawford 2004; Jaster 2006; Sweetinburgh 2004; Salter 2004). Manuscript illuminations typically illustrate elite dress or portray the peasantry in an idealised form for an elite audience, meaning that while they may provide information on general trends, such images are a problematic source for understanding specifics (Blanc 2002, 160; Scott 2007; Smith 2009b). Prescriptive sources exist in the shape of sumptuary measures through which the crown aimed to lay down rules on the value of textiles and forms of dress permissible to different social groups. Yet we must remember that not all parliamentary petitions on the matter became statutes, that the evidence for enforcement of those statutes is virtually non-existent and that in any case, all the late medieval and Tudor petitions and statutes were as concerned with the behaviour of elites as they were with the lower orders (Phillips 2007). Thus while such petitions and statutes provide an invaluable insight into contemporary thinking about rank and display, they pose problems as a guide to practice. Given all this, analysis of our escheators', coroners' and archaeological datasets offers an opportunity to add to our understanding of non-elite dress, and to attempt to trace some of the changes highlighted above.

Our evidence on dress is perhaps less abundant and harder to interpret than it is for many other aspects of household consumption considered in this book. As the next section shows, on the archival side we have surprisingly few chattels lists that say much about clothing. The archaeological data is characterized by its capacity to illuminate specific well-preserved items such as buckles, but is less helpful on other topics, although there are rare survivals of textiles and leather, which survive only in anaerobic conditions. However, although our material is patchy overall, enough exists to allow this chapter to add to the currently available picture of the clothing, footwear and jewellery of both the non-elite laity and parish clergy. The chapter's broader objective is to assess claims about the adoption of more elaborate and costlier clothing as well as new fashions among the ordinary residents of small-town and rural England.

### **Clothing in the escheators' and coroners' records**

Clothing, footwear and other items of personal adornment such as jewellery are relatively rare in the felony forfeiture records of the escheator and coroner,

though somewhat less so in the latter than the former. There are many lists of chattels that do not feature such items at all.

To some extent this characteristic must reflect the practices of felony forfeiture. Although direct and explicit evidence is lacking, it seems that it was only in rare circumstances that a living felon's own clothing was taken from him as part of the process of forfeiture. Those living felons who had fled, or were otherwise absent from the scene of the escheator's or coroner's inquest, would naturally be wearing at least some of their clothes, rendering them unavailable for seizure. There is a small group of lists among the escheators' records which are relatively short, consisting of just a handful of items, and are also unusual in mentioning clothing. In these cases, one might suspect that what we are seeing is not the typical escheator's inquest into movables carried out at the residence of the forfeiting felon, but the capture of an individual in flight, with the forfeiture affecting only those items he had on or about his person. A good example is that of Hugh Heche of Rollesby in eastern Norfolk, who fled for numerous felonies, and had 'after his flight' just three items: a blue gown (5s), a dagger (12d) and a shirt (8d). These goods are said to be in the hands of Thomas Grey-stok at Horning, several miles to the west of Rollesby, which suggests that Hugh may have been apprehended in flight towards Norwich.<sup>239</sup> It is possible that in this forfeiture Hugh was stripped of the clothes he stood up in, but there is nothing explicit to prove this either in the details of this forfeiture or in others featuring fleeing felons who left similar short lists dominated by clothing.

When it came to deceased felons – those who had been executed, or committed suicide – one might anticipate that the escheator or coroner had greater scope for seizing clothing. In these cases the clothing worn at the point of death may have been open to seizure. This likelihood appears to have been greatest for suicides, and the fact that clothing – including women's clothing – is more frequently mentioned in the coroners' inquests is almost certainly connected to the fact that suicide is a more common reason for forfeiture in those records than in the escheators'. However, for those forfeiting felons known to have been executed by hanging, the reference to clothing in chattels lists is again largely sporadic. Presumably one important reason for this is that the execution took place in a different location to the inquest into chattels, again rendering the felon's personal clothing unavailable for appraisal.

The above does not exhaust the list of possible reasons for the exclusion of clothing from the appraisal of forfeited chattels. For instance, clothing could be received as payment, perhaps in the form of livery (Crawford 2004). In such cases, it is possible that clothing might have been understood as remaining the possession of the employer or lord, meaning that it was not eligible for confiscation (Crawford 2004). Furthermore, women's clothing may be particularly

<sup>239</sup> E411; the particulars of account entry specifically states that these three items were withheld by Thomas, leaving open the possibility that other goods were appraised and sold in the original inquest but not mentioned in this account.

lacking from the lists of male felons because it was considered inalienable paraphernalia and therefore exempt from confiscation (Beattie 2019, 32; see also Chapter 2).

The above considerations show that the chattels lists, and especially those in the escheators' records, understate the presence of clothing in households. Many of the items of dress that they do record are likely to have been spare or second examples. In the escheators' dataset everyday items such as tunics and tabards (*tunica, colobium*) are included in only two lists each (Table 6.1). This is probably because most tunics were being worn by the felon concerned and were therefore not available to the escheator for appraisal. The escheators also seem to have been particularly interested in items of dress that were unusual or especially valuable. The items of clothing most commonly listed by the escheator are outer garments such as gowns, and belts, hence our focus on these below. It is very rare for multiple items of clothing to be listed. The list with the most items of clothing (10), that of Robert Tyuerton, leech of Woodnewton (Northamptonshire, date 1419), is thus very unusual. It contains four gowns, two sleeves and four kirtles, the latter of which, interestingly, were garments typically associated with female dress. One of the gowns is valued individually at 5s, while two of the remaining three are valued together with the sleeves and kirtles at 5s; the valuation of the final gown is illegible.<sup>240</sup> In 1418 Patrick Goldsmyth of Evesham (Worcestershire) possessed a leather belt with silver adornment, valued with the dagger and sheath at 13s 4d; an old hood (2d); a second leather belt, valued with a forcer or casket (*forcet*) at 4d; a worn 'striped garment' (*indumentum strangulat*), 6d and eight buttons (10d).<sup>241</sup> These lists are unusual in mentioning more than just one or two items of clothing.

As noted, the coroners' records differ markedly from the escheators', with a higher quantity and wider range of clothing represented (Table 6.1). Changes in fashion can be identified: hoods are replaced by hats, and a trend towards tighter clothing can be seen in references to bodices (Figure 6.1). The presence of such clothing is suggestive of changes in its acquisition, with the increasing use of tailors to produce 'made to measure' clothing (see Piponnier and Mane 2000, 28–32). Undergarments (typically petticoats) and footwear also appear in the lists. In some lists, especially those of suicides, we can see something which may amount to the full range of clothing belonging to an individual. For example in 1541, the suicide Peter Lambe of Woodchurch (Kent), probably a carpenter, had two tunics, two doublets, a jerkin and hose, all valued at 13s 4d.<sup>242</sup> The list relating to Thomas Hippkyns, a shoemaker of Havant (Hampshire), dating to 1551, would seem to consist mainly of the outfit in which he committed suicide; his listed chattels comprise two coats (4s), a doublet (16d), hose (12d), a jerkin, a cap, and a pair of shoes (all valued together at 12d) and two

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<sup>240</sup> E307.

<sup>241</sup> E339.

<sup>242</sup> C14.

**Table 6.1:** Occurrence of clothing in the escheators' and coroners' records.

Object	Escheators'		Coroners'	
	No. items	No. Lists	No. Items	No. Lists
Apron	1	1	24	8
Belt	74	41	4	4
Brooch	7	1		
Cloak	11	11	25	17
Coat (coat)			22	13
Equestrian equipment (spur)	1	1	1	1
Fastening	152	2	1	1
Footwear			97	12
Frock			2	1
Glove			1	1
Gown or robe (toga), Kirtle or Gaberdine	79	49	20	9
Hand ruff			1	2
Head covering (see table 6.5)	32	23	68	29
Jacket			9	6
Jerkin			15	12
Leg covering (e.g. hose, breeches)	46	6	50	27
Misc. Clothing	2	2	45	35
Nightcap			2	2
Purse	8	3		
Ring	14	10	4	2
Ruff			2	1
Safeguard			2	1
Shirt or Doublet	8	7	91	41
Tabard	2	2	1	1
Tunic	2	2	22	16
Underwear (e.g. petticoat, bodice, partlet)			64	17
Vestment or Cassock	1	1	4	4
Waistcoat			5	3



**Figure 6.1:** Two depictions of peasant dress. A: Illustration of a Kentish peasant dating to c.1390. He is wearing a loose-fitting tunic and a belt adorned with round studs, to which is attached a dagger and purse. From the register of Archbishop William Courtenay, fo. 337v. Reproduced by permission Lambeth Palace Library. B: 16th-century German illustration of peasants brawling from ‘The Peasants’ Feast’ by Sebald Beham. Note the wearing of hats, coats and more tightly fitted clothing. Image: Metropolitan Museum of Art (in public domain) Accession number 62.662.4.

shirts (12d).<sup>243</sup> The coroners’ lists provide some insights into female attire and the care taken over appearance. For example, in 1590, Mary Wyn of Armthorpe (Yorkshire) committed suicide. She had a hat (12d), three rails (i.e. cloaks or shawls), a kerchief, two pairs of sleeves, three cross cloths (a form of headwear), two ruffs, and undergarments in the form of a petticoat, six partlets and a smock.<sup>244</sup> She also possessed two safeguards (outer garments for protecting clothing), four aprons, old hose and a pair of shoes. All of this clothing was valued together at 3s 4d. Wyn’s list therefore sheds light on the changing fashions of the period. She possesses the layered items which characterise Tudor female dress (smock, petticoat and partlets), plus ruffs and headwear.

Overall therefore, for a number of reasons the escheators’ records definitely understate the presence of clothing, the most important being that the felon was commonly absent and wearing his clothing when the inquest into chattels was taken. Equally, the general dearth of references to articles of dress casts doubt on the idea that it was typical for late medieval non-elite individuals to possess multiple garments. The processes underlying the coroners’ records were such that they perhaps give us a fuller picture of clothing than the pre-1500

<sup>243</sup> C116.

<sup>244</sup> C353.

materials. At the same time, our archival evidence from the Tudor period suggests significant changes in styles and fashions, and in the propensity to own multiple items of clothing, which are likely to represent more than simply a change in recording practices.

### The consumption of cloth

Before examining each type of clothing in turn, we look first at the presence of 'cloth' (*pannus*), which appears somewhat more commonly than specific items of clothing in the lists of forfeited chattels. In many cases this must represent material destined to be made up into garments, either by tailors or in the domestic setting. In this section we focus our attention on all references to 'cloth', naturally excluding from consideration any textiles in the form of items such as tablecloths or dossers. Of course, the cloth recorded as present in households was not all destined for clothing and some will have been used for furnishings and bedding. Yet it is useful to look at this category because it can provide some clues to trends in domestic cloth consumption in the period 1370–1460. The investigation is limited to the escheators' records since, somewhat surprisingly, references to 'cloth' not in the form of garments or furnishings are rare in the coroners' material.

Of course, the presence of cloth in a list of forfeited chattels may be viewed in different ways depending on context. The forfeiting household could be regarded as the producer, seller or consumer of the cloth, and it is often difficult to be certain which is the correct interpretation. In this chapter an effort is made to isolate those lists where the cloth appears to be an article of consumption. In Chapter 8, by contrast (Table 8.6), we focus on cases where the forfeiting household appears to have been the producer or, more commonly, the seller of the cloth. These distinctions are drawn mainly on the basis of occupational designation, and on the evidence of other objects mentioned in the list, as well as the context of the forfeiture. The quantity of cloth mentioned also plays a role, but here one must be careful not to adopt circular reasoning and assume that the presence of relatively large amounts must indicate involvement in the marketing of cloth.

There are 102 escheators' lists which feature 'cloth' which may plausibly be treated as an article of consumption. Many of these lists – some 85 – are not especially helpful, because they simply offer rather stereotyped reference to 'linen and woollen cloths' (*panni linei et lani*), a form that is especially prevalent in the records concerning Norfolk and Suffolk, and Yorkshire. It is not possible to determine what kinds of objects lay behind this phrase. Some of the *panni linei et lani* are given an overall value, but it is not possible to do much with this given that the quantity of each type is unknown.

More helpful are the remaining lists which provide a little more detail concerning the type, quantity and value of the forfeited cloth. Oldland (2014, 39–41) has posited an increase in cloth consumption per capita across the



**Table 6.2:** Values of cloth identified as a consumption item in the escheators' records. Assumes 1 ell is equal to 45 inches and 1 yard to 37 inches (after Manchester University Lexis of Cloth and Clothing).

List No.	Date	Name	Occupation	Type	Ells	Yards	Pence / yard
226	1413	John Neet	Butcher	Russet		4	6
556	1420	John Spark	Husbandman	Russet strait		4	3
596	1462	William Atte Mille	Labourer	Russet		1.5	10.6
656	1382	Geoffrey Potet	–	Sack-cloth	8		3.3
				New red medley	4		19.8
1582	1404	John Lynch	–	Russet		5	5.6
1594	1404	John Beset	–	Linen	24		5.5

period covered by our evidence, but it is difficult to evaluate change over time with the information at our disposal. We can, however, bring together some evidence concerning the quantity and quality of cloth in the possession of forfeiting households. Table 6.2 provides summary details of those lists containing cloth for consumption described in ells or yards, allowing a price per yard to be calculated. Dyer (1998, 176) suggested that 'peasant clothes were not made from the cheapest materials available', and put the cost of textiles used for tunics at 8d to 1s 3d per yard. Table 6.2 shows that in most of the escheators' examples the cloth was valued at 3d–6d per yard, with a further cloth valued at 10.6d per yard, and a piece of clearly superior 'new red medley cloth' appraised at nearly 20d (1s 8d). Those values are in general quite modest, though we must remember that, with the partial exception of the medley, which had perhaps been only recently purchased, these forfeited cloths were by definition not new. Quantities are again relatively few and difficult to interpret, but in the main these too do not seem large (a few lists which mention 'pieces' of cloth of unspecified lengths, or simply 'cloths', must be excluded, which perhaps distorts the picture somewhat). It has been suggested that 2.25 to 2.5 yards of cloth were required for a tunic, and three for a coat (Oldland 2014, 39). Thus three of the households represented in Table 6.2 possessed enough to make one full garment only, while John Lynch and Geoffrey Potet perhaps had enough for two tunics each of russet and medley, respectively.<sup>245</sup> Geoffrey Potet and John Beset also possessed more extensive quantities of cheaper sack cloth and linen, as opposed to woollen cloths.

<sup>245</sup> E1582.



Among the lists which feature ‘cloth’ as an apparent consumption item, Geoffrey Potet’s ‘new red medley’ is unusual in noting the type and colour of the cloth concerned. Two further lists mention ‘white’ (undyed) cloth. One concerns John Tydder, a chaplain of Wolverley (Worcestershire) who had two yards (value not given), while the other is the striking case of Thomas Pipe of Broadway (Worcestershire), a labourer hanged for killing his wife, who in 1451 possessed two white woollen cloths, valued at the impressive sum of £6, amongst goods worth £14 6s 8d in total.<sup>246</sup> Thomas seems to be an undisputable example of a mid-fifteenth-century labourer living in remarkable domestic comfort. Yet he stands out as unusual. It is useful to compare him to the hellier or tiler John Bethebrook, from an unspecified Hampshire or Wiltshire location, who in 1404 is recorded as owning ‘one gown and two yards of blue cloth’ valued quite modestly at 20d.<sup>247</sup> Finally we have four lists which note russet cloth (Table 6.2). While ‘russet’ cloth was undoubtedly drab in colour, the use of the word points as much to the type of coarse cloth (Sauer 2020, 94–5). The general lack of colour among the forfeited textiles speaks against a notion of vibrant display in non-elite clothing, and is in fact rather surprising given the evidence for coloured outer garments presented in the next section.

### Outerwear: gowns, cloaks and jackets

Gowns (*toge* and *goune*) are the most numerous items in the escheators’ lists, appearing in nearly 50 lists, with multiple examples occurring in 15 of these (Table 6.3), with a smaller quantity in the coroners’ lists (Table 6.4).<sup>248</sup> The ‘coat’ of the coroners’ lists may be treated as a broadly similar article. The lists do not of course, tell us in general terms what a gown (or coat) looked like – we must assume that it denoted a form of long outer garment – but they do often include a useful degree of detail, describing the colour, material or type. This is in marked contrast to other objects recorded by the escheator and coroner. Assessing a similar phenomenon among inventories of seized goods from medieval Italy, Smail (2016, 224–9) suggests this descriptive detail provided a means of keeping track of particular garments, as well as being indicative of the attention paid to the social meaning of clothing. Both of these explanations provide a useful framework for examining the clothing occurring in the escheators’ and coroners’ lists.

The gown was widely worn, primarily as male attire, but was ridiculed by some commentators as a feminising item (Horrox 1994, 131–2; Denny-Brown 2004, 236). The relative prominence of these items in lists is significant for two reasons; firstly, they may have had a novelty value as a fashionable item and

<sup>246</sup> E1124; E381.

<sup>247</sup> E1595.

<sup>248</sup> It is possible that some of the buckles in the archaeological dataset are from such items, but these are discussed along with the evidence for belts below.

**Table 6.3:** Summary of gowns and other outer garments in the escheators' records.

List No.	Date	Name	Occupation	Objects	Original Text	Total Value (d)	No. Items	Value / item (d)
8	1404	John Meselyn	–	Gowns	tog'	120	4	30
11	1404	Peter Pesemerssh	–	Gowns	tog'	48	4	12
121	1447	John Smyth	–	Gown	togam	40	1	40
127	1448	Robert Larke	–	Gowns	togarum		2	
241	1416	Nicholas Wastell	Yeoman	Gown	toge	40	1	40
348	1418	William Wodeward	Yeoman	Man's gowns	toge dicti Willelmi	144	2	72
348	1418	William Wodeward	Yeoman	Woman's gowns	toge uxoris sue	160	2	80
407	1437	John Northern	–	Gown	toge	96	1	96
500	1418	Thomas late servant of Thomas Stodeley	Servant	Gown	toga roseta	20	1	20
627	1424	Sibyl Thedeware	–	Gown	togam	9	1	9
639	1420	Thomas Cartere	–	Gown	togam	12	1	12
723	1421	Thomas Richard	Husbandman	Gown	toge rub'	40	1	40
818	1426	Agnes Boy	–	Gown	toge	20	1	20
851	1422	William Hornby	–	Gowns	togas		2	
951	1431	John Harward	–	Gown	toge	96	1	96
986	1432	Phillip Capellanus	Irishman	Gown (and hood)	togam et capucin'		1	
1129	1441	John Ham	Parson	Gowns	togarum	80	2	40
1130	1441	John Alman'	Shipman	Gown	toga	80	1	80

*(Continued)*

Table 6.3: Continued.

List No.	Date	Name	Occupation	Objects	Original Text	Total Value (d)	No. Items	Value / item (d)
1339	1407	Robert de Erhethe alias Kelme	–	Gowns	al' togis	60	2	30
1531	1433	Thomas Payn	Former vicar	Gown	toge	32	1	32
1534	1433	Thomas Crishale	Vicar	Gowns	togarum	48	2	24
1583	1404	Peter Attie Halle	–	Gown	toge	16	1	16
1595	1404	John Bethebrook	Tiler	Gown (and two yards of blue cloth)	tog' & ii virg' pann' blod' pr' xxd		1	
1596	1404	John Taunton	–	Gown (with hood)	tog' cum capit'		1	
1600	1403	John Flemyng	–	Gown	toge	16	1	16
<b>Mean Value Gowns 40</b>								
216	1414	Thomas Litleton	Parchmentmaker	Russet gown	tog' de russete		2	
307	1419	Robert Tyuerton	Leech	Russet gown	tog' de rosset		1	
723	1421	Thomas Richard	Husbandman	Russet gown	toge de russet	28	1	28
1601	1403	John Aleyn	–	Russet gown	toge de russet	12	1	12
<b>Mean Value Russet Gowns 20</b>								
109	1428	Richard Iresshe	Chaplain	Green gown	toga verid' coloris		1	
307	1419	Robert Tyuerton	Leech	Green gown	tog' de vered'		1	
1210	1440	Thomas Partrik	Carpenter	Green gown	toga virid' coloris	48	1	48
240	1416	Nicholas Cole als Peautener	Millward	Blue gown	toga de blodio colore	36	1	36
406	1437	John Bourne	Husbandman	Blue gown	toge blod'	24	1	24

(Continued)

Table 6.3: Continued.

List No.	Date	Name	Occupation	Objects	Original Text	Total Value (d)	No. Items	Value / item (d)
411	1448	Hugh Heche	–	Blue gown	toga coloris bloody	60	1	60
1143	1442	John Burgeys	–	Blue gown	toga blod'	8	1	8
Mean Value Blue Gowns								
119	1447	John Larke	–	Blue (Blewmedly) gown with fox fur lining	toge Blewmedly penulat' cum penula vulpiu'	60	1	60
1122	1458	Thomas Taylour	Yeoman	Blue gown, furred with grey	toge blodlij coloris pennulat' cum grey	240	1	240
1504	1430	John Wynkelman	–	Blue gown, furred with grey	unius toge blod' furryd cum Grey	120	1	120
Mean Value Blue Lined Gowns								
820	1426	Thomas Tylthe	–	Gown of black-a-lyre, fur-lined	toga de nigro de lyre furrat cum mart'		1	
307	1419	Robert Tyuerton	Leech	Old, red, fur-lined gown	tog' vet' coloris sangweyn furrat' cum cuniculis	60	1	60
307	1419	Robert Tyuerton	Leech	Old, red, womans gown	tog' veterem pro muliere eisdem coloris	40	1	40
1086	1494	Humphrey Bocher	–	Old, russet gown	veteris toge de russet		1	0
1374	1399	John Horseley	–	Old/worn gown	toga debil'	4	1	4
1503	1430	John Waryn	Clerk	Scarlet gown furred with grey	toge de Scralter furryd cum Grey	1680	1	1680

(Continued)

**Table 6.3:** Continued.

List No.	Date	Name	Occupation	Objects	Original Text	Total Value (d)	No. Items	Value / item (d)
Mean Value Blue Lined Gowns								
1508	1430	Philip Bent	–	Red gown	unius toge rubii coloris	140	1	140
1508	1430	Philip Bent	–	Sanguine [red] gown	unius alterius toge de Sangewayn'	100	1	100
11	1404	Peter Pesemersh	–	Fur lining (surgown)	furrur'		1	
650	1382	John Douere	–	Lamb-skin lined gown	togule \viz goune/ pellit' cum pell' agnorum	40	1	40
1339	1404	Robert de Erhethe alias Kelme	–	Furred gown	toga furr'	36	1	36
104	1428	William White	Chaplain	Multi-coloured gown (motley)	togas de motle	80	2	40
1309	1406	Simon Deryng	Parker	Old gowns of diverse colours	togis veteribus diuers coloris	200	5	40
688	1382	John Stakepoll	–	Red gown	goune rub'	42	1	42
688	1392	John Stakepoll	–	Gown covered in red and green cloth	goune paliate de rub' pannis et viridi	96	1	96
907	1393	William Harptre	–	Gown	goune		1	0
215	1414	Hugh Cetur	Clerk	Frieze cloak	mantel' de frese	40	1	40
307	1419	Robert Tyuerton	Leech	Kirtles, old	curtelis veteres		4	
1086	1494	Humphrey Bocher	–	Old, camlet jacket	veteris jaket de chamlet		1	

Table 6.4: Summary of coats, gowns and other outer garments in the coroners’ records.

List No.	Year	Name	Occupation	Object	Original Text	No. Items	Value of Items (d)
4	1544	Jane Skynnner	Spinster	Red kirtle	vnam tunicam voc’ a kertill coloris rubij	1	24
29	1541	Constance Paramore	Spinster	Gown	Toga	1	160
				Kirtle	Interior’ vest’ vocat’ a kyrtell	1	136
43	1543	Jane Battyy	Spinster/ Widow	Gowns	duas togas	2	
				Kirtles	duas tunicas vocat kirtill’	2	
46	1543	Roger Warde	Clerk	Violet tailored gown	vnam Togam talarem coloris violeti	1	
				Tawny gown, short	Togam Curtam coloris dirk Tawny	1	
				Sleeveless jacket	[illegible] voc’ sleveles Jackettz	2	
54	1545	Isabel Slader	Spinster	Gown	vna’ toga’ & alia ornamenta	1	
62	1540	Helen Robynson	–	Gold redcoat	a gold redcoott	1	12
				White coat	a whyett coott	1	4
73	1544	John Hays	Husbandman	Sleeveless jacket	truncatam tunicam manic’ voc’ a sleveles Jackett	1	
116	1551	Thomas Hippkyns	Shoemaker	Coat	ij cots	2	48 (ave 24d)
117	1551	Henry Ansley	–	Old russet coat	an ollde russett cote	1	48
126	1551	Thomas Thomas	Tanner	Jackets	ij tunice voc’ jacketts	2	
135	1520	Thomas Yong	Labourer	Garberdine	vnam togam virilem vocat’ a gaberdayn	1	
146	1528	Jane Vause/Vanse	Widow	Dudd coat	dudde cote	1	

(Continued)

Table 6.4: Continued.

List No.	Year	Name	Occupation	Object	Original Text	No. Items	Value of Items (d)
208	1570	Reynold Carter	Chandler	Old frieze coats, black	old black ffyrst Cotes	1	
256	1578	John Knolles	–	Gowns	ij Gownes	2	160 (ave 80d)
				Coats	ijj coatt'	3	
				Black jacket	a black jactett	1	12
267	179	Anne Turbutt	Spinster	Furred gown	a furred gowne	1	
				Gowns	towe gownes	2	
270	1579	Agnes Paradyce	Spinster	Old coats	thre olde cotes	3	36 (ave 12d)
279	1584	Margaret Bayly	–	Waistcoat	vnū' manullare voc' a wastcott	1	6
380	1574	Robert Wodwarde alias Smyth	–	Waistcoat	one Wastcote	1	20
445	1598	Thomas Parker	–	Russet coat	one Russet Cotte	1	48
				Coat	one Coate	1	
				Worsted gowns with fur trimmings	ij gownes of worsteed faced w'h foynes	2	912 (ave 456d)
382	1577	John James	Clergyman	Cotton-lined gown	one gowne lined w'h whit cotton	1	60
446	1541	William Bachelor	–	Puke gown	a powke gowne faced with [obscured]	1	240
				Black coat	a blacke cote	1	
				Russet coat (man's)	A man's cote colored russet	1	48
487	1535	William Mursshall alias Marsshall	Labourer	Woollen sleeveless jacket	vnam nigram tunicam laneam voc' a slefeles jakett	1	
510	1539	William Skot	Husbandman	Blue sleeveless coat	a blewe Sleeveles Cott	1	
559	1504	Robert Tonge	Yeoman	Tawny coat	vnam Togam coloris Tawny	1	



secondly, we might consider that the appraisers were passing moral judgements on the individuals, perhaps perceiving these items as extravagant, although the low number of gowns overall suggests that such judgements were highly contextual.

The colour of gowns is noted in the escheators' records, albeit inconsistently. We can suggest several hypotheses for why it was sometimes included. Practical reasons were undoubtedly significant. It was particularly important to note colour in instances where multiple items of the same type were present, so as to ensure that each item was properly accounted for, a phenomenon also identified in the description of items in wills (Burkholder 2005, 141; see also Smail 2016, 224). Similarly, such detail might also be considered 'supporting evidence' to underpin a valuation. Yet the symbolic implications of recording the colour of seized gowns should not be dismissed either. Contemporary satire emphasised the difference between dyed and undyed cloth, and the 'good' peasant might be exemplified as someone wearing russet or dull, natural colours and the 'bad' peasant as wearing bright colours that might be perceived as seeking to upset the social order through emulating the fashions of the elite (Sweetinburgh 2004). Colour was appropriate for particular occasions: blue (particularly dark or dull blue) could be worn on holy days, for example (Sweetinburgh 2004, 118). Colour was not always a prominent concern among those who expressed anxiety about the attire of the lower orders; it played a surprisingly muted role in sumptuary petitions and legislation, where the focus was much more on the value and quantity of cloth used in garments. However, it is altogether plausible that reference to colour was in part used by the appraisers as a tool to pass moral judgement on the forfeiting individual.

The inclusion of colour in descriptions of gowns in the chattels lists probably does not have a single explanation. The significance of colour may have varied with the circumstances of seizure, but also in accordance with the character of the seized goods. Discussing the ways in which clothing was described in court testimony, Richardson (2004a, 214) highlights that russet coats were unremarkable items, which appear in testimony only when they add detail to a specific event. We might assume that most of the gowns listed without any colour were russet or similarly plain. In some instances, russet seems to have been used to differentiate between multiple garments. For example, as we have seen above, in 1419 Robert Tyuerton of Woodnewton is described as possessing four gowns (*toge*). These were distinguished by value, but also by colour and other characteristics: there was one old gown of sanguine with fur, a second old gown 'for a woman' of the same colour, a russet gown and a green gown.<sup>249</sup> This list demonstrates clearly how colour and material were important factors in appraising value. Here there seems to be a clear intention to differentiate items which would otherwise appear as similar in a list. Similarly, in 1494 Humphrey Bocher had an old russet gown and an old jacket of camlet (a silken material),

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<sup>249</sup> E307.

though no value is provided.<sup>250</sup> In three other cases single gowns are listed as being of russet. In these instances, appraisers may simply have been particularly diligent. In two cases these are valued with other items and in the other no value is given. This is also the case in two coroners' chattels lists. In 1566, Edward Burges of Laverstock (Wiltshire) had a russet cloak worth 2s.<sup>251</sup> Other plain coats are represented by the 'dudd' (coarse cloth) coat belonging to Jane Vause, a widow of Beccles (Suffolk), valued with an old cloak at 3s in 1528, and the frieze (coarse woollen cloth) coat possessed by Reynold Carter, a chandler of Chiddingstone (Kent), appraised with his other clothing at 6s in 1570.<sup>252</sup>

The escheators' lists include seven blue gowns. There is a single sleeveless blue coat within the coroners' sample, belonging to the husbandman William Skot of Hougham (Kent) in 1539.<sup>253</sup> Where occupation or status is listed, the blue garments in the escheators' lists belonged to a yeoman, a husbandman and a mulleward (millward). Following Sweetinburgh (2004), we might understand these as being 'holiday wear' or 'Sunday best'. Three of these gowns, those of John Larke (valued at 5s in 1447), Thomas Taylour, a yeoman, (valued at 20s in 1458) and John Wynkelman (valued at 10s in 1430), were lined with 'grey'.<sup>254</sup> It is notable that the mean value of blue, fur-lined gowns (140d) is considerably higher than that assigned to the plainer russet equivalents (20d) (Table 6.3).

The other coloured gowns are bright, either being multicoloured (medley) or red, and these have interesting stories behind them. Two multicoloured gowns belong to chaplains. In 1428 one of these, the well-known Norfolk lollard William White had two medley gowns valued at 6s 8d.<sup>255</sup> Another clergyman, Richard Iresshe, who abjured the realm for felony in 1428, had a green gown and two silvered belts, valued together at six marks.<sup>256</sup> John Stakepoll, beheaded for treason in 1381, had a red gown valued at 3s 6d and a gown covered in red and green cloth valued at 8s.<sup>257</sup> Philip Bent, outlawed for treason, had a red gown valued at 11s 8d and another gown of sanguine valued at 8s 4d.<sup>258</sup> This evidence reveals a strong correlation between the presence of brightly coloured gowns and forfeitures connected with the crimes of treason and heresy. A case can be made here that the appraisers were deliberately emphasising the poor character of the felons, associating them with vices of extravagance, vanity and pride. However, the appraisals of these items also emphasise the simple fact that these were items of substantial value, especially when compared to plainer russet gowns. A further case from the coroners' records is more difficult to interpret. Helen Robynson of Raughton Head (Cumberland), who committed suicide in

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<sup>250</sup> E1086.

<sup>251</sup> C183.

<sup>252</sup> C146; C208.

<sup>253</sup> C510.

<sup>254</sup> E119; E1122; E1504.

<sup>255</sup> E104.

<sup>256</sup> E109.

<sup>257</sup> E688.

<sup>258</sup> E1508.

1540, had a ‘gold redcoat’ (12d) and a ‘whyett coot’ (4d).<sup>259</sup> These items sound extravagant, but were of low value. We know nothing of her status, her other goods comprising a cow, a stirk, some fowl and a brass pot.

Further colourful coats belonged to clerks. In 1419 John Waryn, likely the rector of Cardinham (Cornwall), was possibly a quite wealthy man, judging by his ownership of a scarlet gown lined with ‘grey’ appraised at £7 in 1430.<sup>260</sup> The coroners’ records reveal the case of Roger Warde, a clerk of Mattishall Burgh (Norfolk), who had a violet gown and a tawny gown, to which no value is assigned.<sup>261</sup> Another clergyman, John James of West Dean (Wiltshire), also possessed two velvet cloaks (£4), a gown of puke (a kind of woollen cloth, typically bluish black or dark brown in colour) (20s), a cotton-lined gown (5s) and two worsted gowns ‘faced with foynes’ (i.e. with fur trimmings) (56s 8d).<sup>262</sup> These items, along with his cassock (13s 4d), were situated in his bed chamber, probably hanging in his wainscot press.

A further element of the descriptions of outer garments is the occasional inclusion of the adjective ‘old’. This may imply these items were well worn, but it could also suggest they were second-hand, perhaps passed down from family members or acquired via purchase. There was a thriving second-hand market in clothing (Davis 2010; Staples 2015). The trade would have been less organised in rural areas and small provincial towns, however, with goods perhaps being bought and sold by itinerant sellers such as hucksters (Staples 2015, 301). Both studies demonstrate, though, that second-hand clothing was a critical part of the medieval material world. As Smail (2016 209–30) demonstrates, legal seizure was a further way in which second-hand clothing might circulate; the items of clothing listed in the escheators’ and coroners’ records were likely destined for this market. Far from being a case of making-do, this market offered opportunities to acquire unusual types of clothing or fabrics, which would not have been accessible to these consumers if acquired new (Staples 2015, 297). Examples may be the man’s and woman’s gowns belonging to Robert Tyuerton and the gowns belonging to Phillip Bent and Humphrey Bocher (all discussed above).<sup>263</sup> The coroners’ records also yield several references to old coats. Due to the small size of the dataset, however, it is not possible to examine in detail any implications that age or condition may have had for the value of items.

Rarer items of outerwear are cloaks (Latin *cloga*, *mantellum*, *armilause*). The Tudor dataset also features rails, which were apparently a type of cloak. When Catherine Goodale of Ludgershall (Wiltshire), committed suicide in 1569 she had three ‘rails’ identified as being of a woman’s type, worth 12d.<sup>264</sup> The records

<sup>259</sup> C62.

<sup>260</sup> E1103; E1503. Note the list of John Waryn is unusual in having a substantial period of time between the committing of the felony (1419) and appraisal (1430).

<sup>261</sup> C46.

<sup>262</sup> C382.

<sup>263</sup> E307; E1086; E1508.

<sup>264</sup> C207.

also tell us about the material of some of these garments. Such references are rare in the escheators' lists, though in 1414 Hugh Cetur had a frieze (coarse wool) cloak (3s 4d).<sup>265</sup> In the coroners' lists there are three mentions of waist-coats (one in fustian), and William Skot, a husbandman of Hougham (Kent), had a 'blewe sleeves cott' in 1539, valued with a fustian doublet at 12d.<sup>266</sup> There are three references to kirtles (a type of gown associated with female dress), all belonging to women (one of whom, Jane Batty of Wakefield (Yorkshire), had two).<sup>267</sup> The kirtle belonging to Jane Skynner of Brightstone (Isle of Wight) in 1544 was red and valued at 12d.<sup>268</sup> Additionally, jackets occur as a specific type of garment. Roger Warde, a clergyman of Burgh Mattishall (Norfolk) and John Hays, a husbandman of Wilby (Northamptonshire), both had sleeveless jackets.<sup>269</sup> John Knolles of North Stoneham (Hampshire) had a black jacket worth 12d in 1578.<sup>270</sup>

Coloured and fur-lined coats and gowns were seemingly exceptional in non-elite households. The descriptions of these items suggest that they were especially likely to be noted because they were often valuable. The records vividly demonstrate the contrasting valuations of plain russet coats and those of brighter colours, or with linings. It is noteworthy that great care was taken in describing these superior coloured or lined garments, in a way that emphasised their value, rarity and symbolic potential.

### Hats, hoods and head coverings

Hair is a particularly visible and malleable part of the body which, in the medieval period, provided a means for the communication of a range of social meanings associated with gender, age and morality (Bartlett 1994). Standley's (2013, 51–7) analysis of hair ornaments, specifically elements of wire hair nets and hooked accessories, from medieval and early modern sites only identified these objects at urban sites and high status residences. Rural examples are known from the PAS, although it is not possible to understand the status of their owners. Standley suggests that it was through elite networks that fashions related to hair and head coverings were transmitted, with simpler techniques being used in the countryside. No piece of wire in the archaeological dataset could be confirmed conclusively as relating to head coverings. Pieces of twisted copper alloy wire from excavations at Wharram Percy (Yorkshire; Harding, Marlow-Mann and Wrathmell 2010) and twisted iron wire from Bishopstone (Wiltshire; King and Bethell 2013) could potentially relate to hair ornaments.

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<sup>265</sup> E215.

<sup>266</sup> C510.

<sup>267</sup> C43.

<sup>268</sup> C4.

<sup>269</sup> C46; C73.

<sup>270</sup> C256.

**Table 6.5:** Occurrence of head coverings in the escheators' and coroners' records.

Object	Escheators'			Coroners'		
	Quantity	No. Lists	Mean Value (d)	Quantity	No. Lists	Mean Value (d)
Kerchief	1	1	12	22	10	6
Kerchief, linen				1	1	12
Kerchief, cotton	1	1	–			
Cross/head cloth				5	2	–
Hood	18	12	8	1	1	–
Hood, green	1	1	12			
Hood, worn/old	3	3	4			
Hood, red	2	2	100			
Cowl	2	1	6			
Veil	4	1	20			
Cap				3	3	8
Cap, woolen				1	1	–
Cap, woman's				2	1	–
Hat				16	15	6
Felt hat				3	3	16
Fillet (head band)				1	1	1

Hoods are the most numerous head coverings listed in the escheators' lists, occurring in 18 lists (Table 6.5). Interestingly Elena (no surname given), a servant from Morpeth (Northumberland), possessed a 'worn' hood, perhaps implying that it was old and potentially inherited from the household in which she served.<sup>271</sup> Another hood is described as green, and valued at 12d.<sup>272</sup> Red hoods appear more valuable; Thomas Tylthe of Cranbrook (Kent) had a scarlet hood worth 13s 4d.<sup>273</sup> There are two examples of kerchiefs, one said to be made of cotton but not individually valued, the other valued at 12d.<sup>274</sup> Pins are ubiquitous in the archaeological dataset and although they are rarely firmly identified as hairpins, some would have been used to hold headwear in place. Two iron examples from Spital Street, Dartford (Kent) have been identified specifically as hat pins (TVAS 2014, 51) and other smaller pins could have been used to hold veils and hoods in place. The practice of women binding their

<sup>271</sup> E1526. Elena's own goods are carefully distinguished in the record from other items, which she stole from her master.

<sup>272</sup> E1458.

<sup>273</sup> E820.

<sup>274</sup> E11; E518.

hair to symbolise their married status (loose hair being symbolic of maidenhood) was reputedly widespread (Bartlett 1994, 54). However, beyond finds of possible hairpins, our dataset does not provide any indication of the extent to which these practices were common among the non-elite, in part because the majority of lists relate to men.

Whereas in the escheators' records it is hoods which dominate the headwear category, in the coroners' records it is hats and caps (Table 6.5). In 1520, in addition to a hood Thomas Yong had a felt hat (*feltrum*), as did Reynold Carter in 1520 (neither are appraised individually).<sup>275</sup> Others, such as William Mursshall of West Greenwich (Kent) had a woollen cap.<sup>276</sup> Interestingly, William also had two woman's caps. These appear relatively cheap items, being of equivalent value to kerchiefs (Table 6.5). Other head coverings, in the form of kerchiefs, head cloths and cross-cloths occur exclusively in lists detailing the possessions of women.

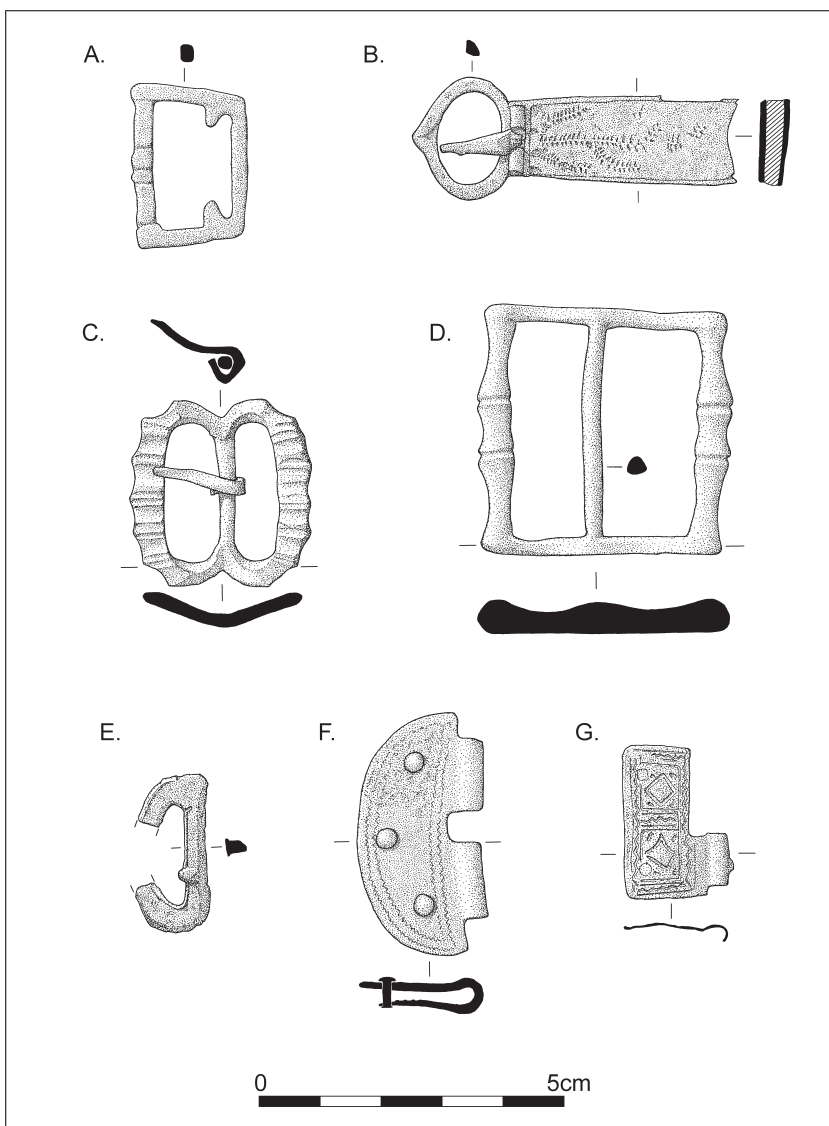
## Belts

Buckles are one of the most numerous find types in the archaeological sample. They occur principally in copper alloy (200 examples excluding shoe buckles), with smaller quantities in iron (89) and lead alloy (3). Buckles are one of the most diverse types of dress accessory, but two main types can be identified: those with a frame and a pin, and those with a plate (Egan and Pritchard 2002, 50; Figure 6.2). Those with a plate were from belts, while those with a frame could have been a part of garments such as coats or gowns, as well as belts. Smaller examples may relate to other items of clothing such as shoes or doublets, while buckles can also be found on bags and other leather straps, for example those used for equestrian purposes. The dating of these objects is typically based on the large collection from London (Egan and Pritchard 2002), which is referred to throughout this section.

The greatest variety of buckles are those in copper alloy (Table 6.6). The simplest are round or annular buckles, none of which are decorated. Where these occur in dated contexts, they generally appear to be of fourteenth- or fifteenth-century date, and this corresponds well with their occurrence in deposits in London and elsewhere (Egan and Pritchard 2002, 57; Hinton 1990a). Of comparable, or perhaps earlier, date are oval frames which, where datable, are found in fourteenth-century contexts. Few examples are decorated: two from Upton (Worcestershire; Rahtz 1969) appear to have been gilded as does an example from Yarm (Yorkshire; Evans and Heslop 1985). In London, similar examples to that from Thetford (Norfolk HER ENF13082), an oval-framed buckle with ornate outside edges, are dated to c.1200–1350 (Egan and Pritchard 2002,

<sup>275</sup> C135; C208.

<sup>276</sup> C487.



**Figure 6.2:** Examples of buckles and buckle plates. A: Trapezoidal buckle from Cedars Park (Suffolk). B: Incised buckle plate with annular buckle from Cedars Park (Suffolk). C: Double-looped buckle with traces of tinning from Capel Hall, Barton Bendish (Norfolk). D: Double framed buckle with baluster mouldings (probably 16th century) from Barton Bendish (Norfolk). E: D-shaped buckle from Popham (Hampshire). F: Riveted buckle plate from West Cotton (Northamptonshire); G: Incised buckle plate from West Cotton (Northamptonshire). Redrawn by Laura Hogg from Woolhouse (2016); Rogerson *et al.* (1997); Chapman (2010) and Fasham (1987).



**Table 6.6:** Summary of belt buckles in the archaeological dataset.

Type	Decoration	Total
Double frame	Baluster moulding	1
	Gilding	1
	Lacquered	1
	Rope pattern	1
	Silvered	1
	Tinned	1
	Zoomorphic	1
	None	28
<b>Double frame Total</b>		<b>35</b>
Oval frame	Gilding	2
	Gilt	1
	Ornate moulding	1
	None	17
<b>Oval frame Total</b>		<b>21</b>
D-shaped frame	Moulded and incised	1
	Punched scrolled	1
	Tinned	1
	None	17
<b>D-shaped frame Total</b>		<b>20</b>
Rectangular frame	Moulded	1
	None	9
<b>Rectangular frame Total</b>		<b>10</b>
Oval frame with buckle plate	Enamel inlay	1
	Incised – Geometric	1
	None	3
<b>Oval frame with buckle plate Total</b>		<b>5</b>
Trapezoidal frame	Gilded	1
	Moulded knops	1
	Tinned	1
	None	1
<b>Trapezoidal frame Total</b>		<b>4</b>
Openwork	Gilded	1
	Openwork	1
<b>Openwork Total</b>		<b>2</b>

(Continued)

**Table 6.6:** Continued.

Type	Decoration	Total
Shield-shaped	File-cut	1
	None	1
<b>Shield-shaped Total</b>		<b>2</b>
Spacer	Zigzag	1
	None	2
<b>Spacer Total</b>		<b>3</b>
Tongue	Zoomorphic?	1
	None	1
<b>Tongue Total</b>		<b>2</b>
Buckle plate	Gilded	1
	Gilded and cast geometric	1
	Gilding; Incised fleur de lys	2
	Incised	2
	Incised – Geometric	1
	Repousse	1
	Stamped – floral	1
	Zigzag	2
	None	29
<b>Buckle plate Total</b>		<b>40</b>
Annular	None	17
Square frame	None	2
Asymmetrical	None	1
Rose buckle	None	1
Pin	None	3
Unidentifiable	Decorated	2
	None	18
	Unknown	12
<b>Unidentifiable Total</b>		<b>32</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>200</b>

72–4). Five examples are attached to a buckle plate. An example from Darsham (Suffolk; Green 2016) is undecorated and paralleled by an early fourteenth-century example from London (Egan and Pritchard 2002, cat 317), while that from Cedars Park, Stowmarket (Suffolk; Woolhouse 2016) is later, dating

to the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries, and is decorated with a zigzag motif around the frame (Figure 6.2B). A particularly elaborate example is that from Staines (Middlesex; Jones 2010, 333), which is decorated with a cream enamel inlay depicting a horse or dog.

Within our sample, there are 20 examples of D-shaped frames (Figure 6.2C; D). One, from Itteringham (Norfolk; Hickling 2010) has punched, scrolled decoration, and another, from Carbrooke (Norfolk; Hutcheson and Noble 2006) carries moulded and incised decoration. A further example from Foxcotte (Hampshire) is tinned (Russel 1985). For comparison, dated examples from London appear slightly later than the oval forms, generally occurring in contexts of later fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century date (Egan and Pritchard 2002, 90), and this is reflected within our dataset. Rectangular frames are rarer (10 examples) and in all but one case (a moulded example from Blagdon Hall (Northumberland; Jenkins 2008) are undecorated. In London these date to the later fourteenth–fifteenth centuries, but within the sample presented here occur in contexts of fourteenth- to sixteenth-century date, meaning that they appear to be in use throughout the study period (although some may be residual in later deposits). A more unusual form are trapezoidal buckles (Figure 6.2A). There are only four in the sample, two of which are from Itteringham (Hickling 2010), and one of these is gilded. These fall at the later end of the London sequence, although appear in contexts of probable thirteenth- to fourteenth-century date within our dataset. More unusual types are a fifteenth- or sixteenth-century ‘Rose buckle’ decorated with black lacquer from Wath-upon-Deane (Yorkshire; Lee and Signorelli 2006); an asymmetrical buckle, possibly used to hold a scabbard from Thetford (Archaeoserv 2014); and shield-shaped buckles from Oyster Street, Portsmouth (Hampshire; Fox and Barton 1986, 239) and Cowlam (Yorkshire; Brewster and Hayfield 1988, 48). There are a further two buckles of undescribed form carrying open work decoration, one of which, from Redcastle Furze, Thetford (Norfolk), is gilded (Andrews 1995).

Double-framed buckles (Figures 6.2C; 6.2D) are the most common in the sample. London evidence suggests that these become common in the fourteenth century and continue in use into at least the fifteenth century (Egan and Pritchard 2002, 53), and similarly late introduction has been observed in Winchester (Hinton 1990a, 508) and Norwich (Margeson 1993, 28). There are 35 in our sample and, where these can be dated, they typically occur in contexts of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century date. These are among the most elaborate buckles in our dataset. An example from Lydd Quarry (Kent; Barber and Priestly-Bell 2008, 180–2) is silver plated and one from Capel Hall, Barton Bendish, (Norfolk; Rogerson *et al.* 1997) is tinned (Figure 6.2C). Two examples, one from Dereham (Norfolk; NAU 2004b) and another from Upton (Northamptonshire; Foard-Colby and Walker 2007), are decorated with black lacquer. The general forms of belt buckles thus follow those in use in the major towns and cities; however, the range of buckles present are less diverse and rarely carry decoration.

Within the archaeological dataset a fairly limited range of buckle types are represented, and parallels can commonly be drawn with examples from urban sites. This supports the suggestion made by Egan (2007) that there was a common range of buckle types in use across England in the later middle ages. Analysis of buckles reported to the PAS by Burnett and Webley (unpub) suggests greater complexity. Their analysis found significant regional variability within the bounds of this national signature, as Cassels (2013, 147–8) also demonstrated for urban assemblages. However, in contrast to Cassels (2013, 6), who argued that the types found in the larger towns were representative of buckles used across England, Burnett and Webley (unpub) found some unusual types were mainly rural and were rarely or never represented in urban assemblages. They also demonstrated that there is not a strong correlation between the types of buckles used in larger towns and in their hinterlands. This suggests different influences on urban and rural consumers and the exploitation of multiple markets, or perhaps fairs, by rural households.

Buckle plates (Figures 6B, 6F and 6G) occur throughout the study period and are more commonly decorated than the buckle frames. For example, a buckle plate found on the Bacton-King's Lynn Pipeline (Norfolk; Wilson *et al.* 2012) was stamped with a floral motif. More typically, buckle plates carry simple geometric motifs, often based around zigzag lines. Other elements of buckles, such as tongues, pins and spacers, have been found in small numbers.

Buckles also occur in other metals. The 16 rectangular iron frames are most typically associated with horse equipment (Egan and Pritchard 2002, 53). Two D-shaped buckles from Upton (Worcestershire) have non-ferrous plating and may have been dress accessories (Rahtz 1969). An example from Lydd Quarry also seems to be gilded (Barber and Priestly-Bell 2008, 180). The iron buckles in the archaeological sample (Table 6.7) match the national picture illustrated by Goodall (2011), who demonstrates that D-shaped buckles far outnumber other types. In general, iron buckles occur in similar forms to the copper alloy examples. The two lead alloy examples are both from Norfolk, one from Carbrooke (annular) and the other from Thetford (double frame) (Hutcheson and Noble 2006; Andrews 1995). Neither exhibit decoration.

As the archaeological evidence demonstrates, belts were common items, and we can expect that most people, if not everyone, would have owned one. In forthcoming work, Woolgar demonstrates that belts occur commonly in the wills of Southampton burgesses.<sup>277</sup> These belts were often of silk, rather than leather, and were typically adorned with 'silver' fittings. Within the escheators' record, there are just two belts explicitly listed as 'of silk'. One belonged to the suicide Dericus Frise, 'Fleming' (value 6s 8d), and the other to Thomas Serle of Liskeard, Cornwall.<sup>278</sup> The latter is valued with a 'small horn' (20d) and

<sup>277</sup> Discussed in a paper at the conference 'Objects and possessions: material goods in a changing world 1200–1800', University of Southampton, 2–6 April 2017.

<sup>278</sup> E963; E519.

**Table 6.7:** Iron buckles in the archaeological dataset.

Type	No. Objects
D-shaped frame	24
Rectangular frame	16
Double frame	6
Oval frame	4
Trapezoidal frame	3
Annular	2
Square frame	2
Oval frame with buckle plate	1
Spur buckle	1
Pin	3
Form not stated	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>

is followed in the list by Serle's two daggers. This list perhaps, therefore, provides evidence for the suspension of multiple items from a silk belt. In several cases the escheator listed belts with baselards (i.e. daggers), highlighting how items could be hung from the belt, also attested to by archaeological examples of suspension loops.<sup>279</sup> For example, in the list of Patrick Goldsmyth of Evesham the baselard, sheath and silver-adorned belt are valued together at 13s 4d, suggesting they were associated with each other.<sup>280</sup> This is also the case in the list of Warin Pengeley of Cullompton (Devon), whose belt and baselard are valued at 10s.<sup>281</sup> The list of William Fale of Hunworth (Norfolk) is even more strongly suggestive of the physical connection between belt and dagger, as it details 'belts arrayed with silver harness, with baselard and dagger', the whole valued together at an impressive 100s.<sup>282</sup> Association can also be suggested by the ordering of goods. In the list of the parson Richard Talmage of Occold (Suffolk) the belt and baselard are valued separately, but appear in succession as the first two items in the list.<sup>283</sup>

The archaeological evidence suggests that belts were probably much more ubiquitous than our archival datasets indicate. Within the escheators' records, there are 74 belts listed, although these include the 20 'small belts for boys

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<sup>279</sup> E1308.

<sup>280</sup> E339.

<sup>281</sup> E1230.

<sup>282</sup> E1308.

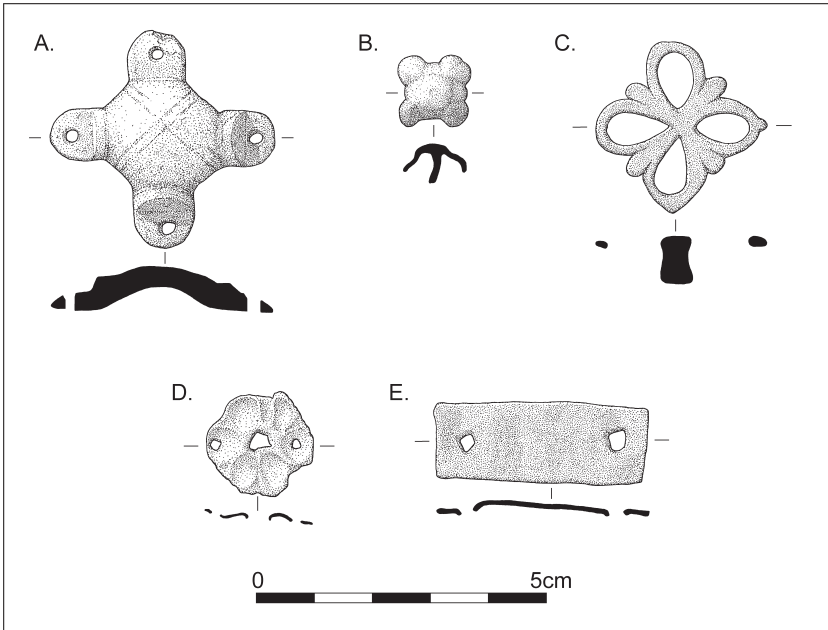
<sup>283</sup> E492.

adorned with copper and tin, the fittings presumably being similar in style to those in the archaeological dataset, held as stock by the merchant John Hawkyn.<sup>284</sup> The 20 belts are valued at 18d, an average of less than 1d each. Of the remainder, 31 belts are described in various ways as being adorned or decorated with silver. A further six examples are described as having silver gilt adornment. The value of the silver adorned belts varies from 24d to 360d/30s, with a mean of 134d, showing these were valuable items worth considerably more than John Hawkyn's copper- and tin-adorned examples. The silver gilt examples have an average value of 207d. That these were expensive items is reflected in the stated occupation of those possessing these belts, which is limited to members of the clergy, yeomen and a vestment maker. In contrast, only eight belts and girdles are listed in the coroners' records, which could perhaps be explained by changes in fashion with buckles being incorporated into tighter fitted clothing. No detail of their adornment or value is provided, although we might assume that they are less elaborate as even when valued with other items the highest assigned value is 5s for the purse, girdle and clothing of the labourer Anthony Curlynge of St Lawrence (Kent) in 1585.<sup>285</sup> The general absence of belts can likely be explained by their low value as well, or due to the fact that they were on the person of those who fled. Whether of fabric or leather, the escheators' evidence suggests that it was the material of any fittings which was important and the ubiquity of tin or copper alloy fittings in the archaeological dataset suggests that the majority wore belts adorned with these low value fittings.

In a European context, Willemsen (2012) calls attention to how, as with fabrics, the wearing of excessively adorned leatherwork might lead to the moral character of the wearer being questioned. This relates both to their elaboration and how they were worn. Willemsen's (2012, 187) analysis of iconography shows how during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, belts were worn low on the hips, while from the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries women wore shorter, broader belts above the waist. As well as being used to secure clothing, belts had a role in shaping the body and drawing attention to particular features. Elaborate mounts played a role in this latter function. Mounts could perform a number of functions. Most prosaically, they could be used to repair belts or to strengthen them (Willemsen 2012, 177), as is perhaps the case for the basic stud mounts which are the most common finds in the archaeological assemblage. It should be noted that this function relates only to leather belts. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw a change in the fashion for belts, with them becoming more elaborate items both for display and shaping the body. These items were clearly acquired as items of display to fashion 'the self', although quite what this form of selfhood was, is unclear. The adoption of heraldic imagery could be seen as a means of aping elite fashion, or representing the emergence

<sup>284</sup> E518. Robert Neuton of Oakham (Rutland) also possessed belts among his 'small merchandise' in 1431; E953.

<sup>285</sup> C289.



**Figure 6.3:** Examples of belt fittings from archaeological contexts. Popham, Hampshire (A), Thuxton, Norfolk (B) and West Cotton, Northamptonshire (C-E). Redrawn by Laura Hogg from Fasham (1987), Butler and Wade-Martins (1989) and Chapman (2010).

of a vernacular fashion, in which symbols and items of dress found new meaning (Willemsen 2012, 199–200). As Smith (2009b) proposes, the adoption of cheap but shiny belt ornaments and items of jewellery could be understood as a means of resisting the image of austerity projected onto the peasantry by elite culture, or an attempt to harness the disruptive potential of new commercial networks through freedom to acquire wealth.

The practice of adorning belts can be clearly seen in a leather girdle of fifteenth-century date from Carlisle, which has a number of piercings along its length into which mounts or studs could have been inserted (Newman 2011). There is some difficulty in differentiating studs and mounts for decorating furniture from those associated with decorating leatherwork, but generally size is a useful means of differentiation. Ninety mounts have been identified as possible belt decoration in the archaeological sample (Figure 6.3). These are mostly of copper alloy, with occasional lead alloy examples, and two silver alloy mounts: one from Saxon Place, Thetford (Norfolk HER ENF13082), which is of fleur-de-lys design, and another from Thuxton (Norfolk), of a simple circular form (Butler and Wade-Martins 1989). The mounts are typically in the form of simple domed studs, occasionally gilded or silvered, but some more elaborate examples are present. A stud from Snodland (Kent) is silvered and features



an incised Maltese cross (Dawkes 2010). Plain bar mounts are the next most common, followed by rectangular mounts which feature a range of styles of punched or incised decoration and are sometimes gilded or silvered. There are a small number of more elaborate mounts. An example from Bawtry (Yorkshire; Cumberpatch and Dunkley 1996) takes the form of a letter 'S'. Mounts taking the form of letters could have performed a variety of functions, such as spelling out religious phrases or initials, or performing a function as livery, for example (Willemssen 2012, 195–7). Others take the form of flowers or rosettes and there are examples of sexfoil and octagonal forms. An example, from Grange Farm, Gillingham (Kent), takes the form of a scallop shell and could, perhaps, be a pilgrimage souvenir from Santiago de Compostela (Seddon 2007).

The final common items of belt adornment are strap ends. Again, nearly all of the 72 examples in the dataset are of copper alloy, although there are two lead alloy examples. In London, lead alloy examples occur from the later fourteenth century and, indeed, strap ends become increasingly significant around this time (Egan and Pritchard 2002, 124–6). They are generally undecorated, but might be gilded or have embellished terminals, for example in the form of an acorn knop, a fleur-de-lys (an example from Thuxton; Butler and Wade-Martins 1989) or an animal head (as in an example from Goldicotte (Worcestershire; Palmer 2010). Others feature incised or punched motifs, with there being single gilded and silvered examples in the dataset.

Egan and Forsyth (1997, 219–20) suggest that the use of mounts declined through the fifteenth century and had effectively ceased by the sixteenth century. This is supported by the absence of adorned belts explicitly referenced in the coroners' records and also by the archaeological evidence, where the majority of examples from dated contexts come from those dated to the fourteenth century. Most examples from later contexts come from a single site (Low Fisher Gate, Doncaster (Yorkshire); McComish *et al.* 2010) while examples from Carbrooke (Hutcheson and Noble 2006), Market Quay, Fareham (Hampshire; Gifford and Partners 2003) and Bawtry (Cumberpatch and Dunkley 1996) are paralleled in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century examples from London and are likely to be residual in these deposits.

The three datasets here combine to demonstrate clearly a decline in elaborately adorned belts in the sixteenth century, a trend likely to be related to the increasing elaboration in clothing evidenced in the coroners' records, which created new opportunities for self-expression through dress. The escheators' and coroners' lists typically only illustrate those belts adorned with silver, which generally belonged to clergy or particularly wealthy individuals. In contrast, the archaeological evidence for cheaper fittings (of the type only visible in the historical sources through the itemisation of John Hawkyn's stock) demonstrates how belts were a malleable item of vernacular fashion. The general trends in buckle form show that patterns of rural and urban dress appear to have moved broadly in step with each other. The embellishment of belts through mounts, and through the acquisition of gilded or silvered buckles, served to make these objects uniquely personal expressions, standing in stark

contrast to the plain cloth used for the manufacture of tunics or the majority of gowns. The PAS data examined by Burnett and Webley (unpub) suggests further regional variability in this element of dress which remains hard to detect among the excavated sample.

### Other items of clothing

That our period saw changes in fashion, particularly the emergence of tighter fitting clothing for both men and women, is well established (see Standley 2013, 46–51 for an overview). The emergence of such shaped clothing in the mid-fourteenth century was the subject of contemporary moral commentary (Horrox 1994, 131–4; Newton 1980, 8–9). In 1365, for instance, the chronicler John of Reading wrote of ‘the empty headedness of the English, who remained wedded to a crazy range of outlandish clothing without realising the evil which would come of it. They began to wear useless little hoods, laced and buttoned so tightly at the throat that they only covered the shoulders, and which had tip-pets like cords. In addition they wore *paltoks*, extremely short garments, some of wool and others quilted, which failed to conceal their arses or their private parts’. These ‘misshapen and tight clothes’, John went on, ‘did not allow them to kneel to God or the saints, to their lords or each other, to serve or do reverence without great discomfort, and were also highly dangerous in battle’ (Horrox 1994, 133–4). This clothing was also distinctive from that which came before in that it was fitted to the individual, limiting the potential for items to circulate as they had in previous centuries (Denny-Brown 2004, 224).

Of course, the wider developments in fashion highlighted and condemned by John of Reading and others should not necessarily be taken literally as guide to contemporary clothing culture in the English villages and small towns that are the focus of this study. Nonetheless, the trend towards shorter, tighter clothing can be traced, albeit over a longer timescale than suggested by the chroniclers, when we contrast the evidence for shirts and doublets in the escheators’ and coroners’ records. Shirts and doublets (usually *dobelet*, or similar) are exceptional in the escheators’ records, and there are no references in our sample to the short garments called *paltoks* mentioned by John of Reading and other later fourteenth-century commentators. Where shirts and doublets do occur in the escheators’ lists, it is generally among those of fifteenth-century date.<sup>286</sup> In contrast, shirts and doublets are much more common items in the coroners’ lists. Where stated, the shirts listed by the coroner are of linen or canvas. There are also a small number of lists which include mentions of other plain items of dress, notably tunics and tabards. Where the material is stated, these are mostly of wool and almost exclusively occur in lists of goods belonging to those lower down the social order; labourers, a shepherd and a carpenter for example. Surviving fragments of textile are rare from archaeological contexts

<sup>286</sup> E12 (1404); E104 (1428); E127 (1448); E411 (1448); E1437 (1401); E1508 (1430).

but do provide some further insights into the materials used for clothing. Excavations at 50 Finsbury Square, Islington (Middlesex) recovered fragments of textile in tabby weave (MOLAS 1999), which was increasingly popular from the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and was the quickest and easiest weave to produce (Crowfoot, Pritchard and Staniland 1992, 43–4), although the specific context from this site cannot be closely dated. Similar woollen cloth was recovered at Micklegate, Selby (Yorkshire; Walton Rogers 1999). Woven flax from Redcastle Furze, Thetford (Crowfoot 1995) is interpreted as a shirt, probably reused as stuffing material due to the presence of accretions on the fabric. A further interesting piece is a leather pocket lining from 27–30 Finsbury Square, Islington (MOLAS 2000b). Although limited, both the historical and archaeological evidence demonstrate the importance of woollen cloth and linen in shirt manufacture, industries discussed in Chapter 8.

Doublets are listed in several materials: leather, canvas and fustian (a coarse cloth) (Figure 6.4). Doublets were clearly worn by a cross-section of society from yeomen such as Thomas Browne of Latton (Wiltshire), who had one in sack cloth valued at 4s in 1569,<sup>287</sup> to labourers such as Thomas Yong of Minster-in-Thamet (Kent), who had one, appraised with his other possessions at 4s in 1520,<sup>288</sup> and servants like Gilbert Cader of Wick (Worcestershire), who possessed an example valued at 20d in 1517.<sup>289</sup> Unfortunately material is not listed frequently enough to ascertain a link between material and social status, but we might infer from the variation in value that these were produced to varying levels of quality or in different materials. These fashions are also represented by the appearance of jerkins among the possessions of men such as Robert Duke, a labourer of Wilsford (Wiltshire), who in 1549 had a leather jerkin as well as a fustian doublet, and David Poynter, a labourer of Uffcott (Wiltshire), who had a russet jerkin valued at 2s in 1575.<sup>290</sup> In 1576 John May of North Luffenham (Rutland) had several jerkins: two of russet (one valued at 16d and one at 20d) and one of kersey (8d). John Frelande of Upper Clatford (Hampshire) had two jerkins, one in russet (11d) and one of leather (20d). These examples clearly demonstrate how the material was a key factor in appraising the value of clothing.<sup>291</sup> While fitted clothing might be linked to martial culture (Blanc 2002), by the sixteenth century it had clearly permeated vernacular dress.

Archaeologically, the shift to fitted clothing is commonly argued to be seen in the proliferation of lace ends, typically of copper alloy (Egan and Forsyth 1997, 224–6) (Table 6.8; Figure 6.5). In Winchester and London, they occur from the end of the fourteenth century (Hinton and Biddle 1990, 583; Egan and Pritchard 2002, 281) and in Norwich from at least the fifteenth century (Margeson 1993, 22). These items are referred to specifically in the list of the goods of the merchant John Hawkyn of Barnstaple (Devon), dating to 1422, who had a

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<sup>287</sup> C206.

<sup>288</sup> C135.

<sup>289</sup> C532.

<sup>290</sup> C99; C219.

<sup>291</sup> C228; C281.



**Figure 6.4:** Leather doublet of 16th-century date. The doublet features slashing, which was fashionable at the time. Image: Metropolitan Museum of Art (in public domain). Accession number 29.158.481a, b.

‘gross of points’ valued at 6d.<sup>292</sup> The term ‘points’ can relate to coloured leather lace ends, but may also refer to metal examples (Egan and Pritchard 2002, 285). Individual items could have up to 12 pairs of lace ends and therefore it is unsurprising that they are found in large quantities (Margeson 1993, 22). Lace ends (or chapes) typically take the form of copper alloy cylinders and this is the case for the majority of those in the sample, an exception being a silver example from

<sup>292</sup> E518.

**Table 6.8:** Summary of lace ends in the archaeological dataset.

County	Site	Context Date	No. Objects
Cumbria	Elephant Yard, Kendal	–	3
	Yard 110, Stricklandgate, Kendal	–	1
Hampshire	Foxcotte	13th–14th century	1
	Hospital of St John and St Nicholas, Portsmouth	–	2
	Market Quay, Fareham	–	1
	Site of former Greyhound Hotel, Fordingbridge	1200–1400	1
		1500–1800	7
	The Priory, Wherwell	–	3
Kent	28 Spital Street, Dartford	1450–1500	2
		1450–1550	5
		1500–1600	1
	Ospringe	–	2
	Water Lane, Thurnham	–	1
Middlesex	27–30 Finsbury square, Islington	1480–1550	1
	High Street, Uxbridge	–	2
	Prudential, Staines	–	1
Norfolk	Creake Road, Burnham Market	–	1
	Church Close, Shipdham	–	1
	Blakeney Freshes, Blakeney	–	1
Northamptonshire	Grafham Resilience Flow works (Irchester)	–	1
Northumberland	Marygate, Berwick-upon-Tweed	1300–1600	1
	West Whelpington	–	1
Suffolk	The Street, Erwarnon	–	3
	Late medieval to early post medieval dyeing workshop at The Swan Hotel, Lavenham	16th century	1
	81 Bury Street, Stowmarket	16th century	2

*(Continued)*

**Table 6.8:** Continued.

County	Site	Context Date	No. Objects
Wiltshire	Orchard, Glebe Place, Highworth	–	1
	Broad Blunsdon	1300–1400	1
Worcestershire	Cotswold House, High Street, Evesham	–	1
	Upton, Blockley	–	1
	Land at Corner of Avon/Brick Kiln Street, Evesham	–	1
Yorkshire	8–9 Market Place, ‘The Arcade’, Ripon	1375–1425	1
	16–20 Church Street, Bawtry	–	2
	Church Walk (a.k.a. Askews Print Shop), Doncaster	1100–1299	1
	Sherburn	1200–1300	1
	Wharram Percy	–	7
		1250–1450	1
		1400–1500	1

West Whelpington (Northumberland; Evans and Jarrett 1987; MF M1/F1). A particularly interesting example is from 27–30 Finsbury Square, Islington, from a context dating to 1480–1550 where a lace with the chapes intact was excavated (MOLAS 2002). Where items could be dated, examples are typically from contexts of fifteenth- to sixteenth-century date, although examples occur in potential earlier contexts. At Church Walk, Doncaster, a lace tag is dated to the thirteenth century on stratigraphic grounds; it was recovered from a tanning pit and its presence here could potentially relate to the production of leather laces. It is unusual in that it features ribbing, rather than being made of plain sheet (Cool 2008, 138). At Sherburn (Yorkshire) a plainer copper alloy chape was recovered from a thirteenth-century yard surface deposit within a moated site (Brewster and Hayfield 1994), perhaps suggesting that the early date relates to the elevated socio-economic status of this household. Chapes occur in both urban and rural contexts, although it is noticeable that they are most prevalent in towns with rural sites clustering around London (in Kent and Middlesex), with additional instances in Norfolk and Yorkshire (home to the major towns of Norwich and York), perhaps suggesting that these styles were more prevalent in towns, being adopted more slowly in the countryside.

Pins were an important element of dress for holding fabrics in place. A range of pins are present in the archaeological sample, principally of copper alloy, but with some iron and bone examples. The majority of copper alloy pins





**Figure 6.5:** Examples of a lace end from Reepham, Norfolk (PAS Reference NMS-20D868). CC Share Alike Licence. Image: Norfolk County Council.

from medieval archaeological contexts are wound wire head pins, introduced from the fourteenth century and used throughout the middle ages (Caple 1991; Biddle and Barclay 1990; Margeson 1993; Egan and Pritchard 2002, 297–342). Pins were produced in large quantities (see Chapter 8) and occur across our period; however, large quantities of cheap pins were imported from the continent, particularly from the Netherlands and through the hands of Venetian merchants in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, despite the introduction of protectionist legislation (Caple 1991; Egan and Forsyth 1997, 222). Caple (1991) observes a decline in the length of pins between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, possibly due to changes in the fineness of cloth and styles of clothing. In London, it is argued that there was a marked increase in the use of pins across the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and at this time they became plainer and generally smaller, primarily being used to secure garments such as veils rather than cloaks or gowns (Egan and Pritchard 2002, 297). There are some more elaborate examples. Two pins from Market Street, Alton (Hampshire; Millet 1983) have a blue glass head (probably of sixteenth-century date on contextual grounds, although parallels are considerably earlier; Egan and Pritchard 2002, 299; Biddle and Barclay 1990), and an iron pin from Bawtry may have had a non-ferrous plating (Cumberpatch and Dunkley 1996).

A variety of other fastenings are also present in the archaeological sample (Table 6.9). Copper alloy hooks could be quite elaborate, for example a hooked tag (which would have been used to fasten straps or ribbons; see Hinton 1990b, 548–9) from Itteringham (Hickling 2010) was decorated with a ring-dot motif. A hooked tag from a sixteenth-century context at Aylsham, Norfolk (NAU 2004a) is decorated with openwork, as was an example from Bawtry (Cumberpatch and Dunkley 1996). A final example worth noting is a silver clothing hook from Saxon Place, Thetford (Norfolk HER ENF13082). The purpose of such hooks is unclear, but they were likely used to hold up a train or skirt, often of lighter fabrics. As such, they can be understood as items associated with



**Table 6.9:** Summary of dress fastenings in the archaeological dataset.

Object	Material	No. Objects	No. Sites
Button	Bone	1	1
	Copper alloy	17	6
	Glass	1	1
	Silver alloy	2	1
<b>Button Total</b>		<b>21</b>	<b>9</b>
Clasp	Copper alloy	3	3
Dress fastener/hook	Antler	1	1
	Copper alloy	8	8
	Iron	1	1
	Silver alloy	1	1
<b>Dress fastener/hook Total</b>		<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>
Hooked tag	Copper alloy	8	8
Tag	Copper alloy	1	1
Toggle	Bone	1	1

affluence and fashionable dress (see Gaimster *et al.* 2002). We can see therefore that embellished fittings were also an arena for displaying taste and identity, alongside the exercise of choice in the colour and type of textiles used for clothing (Margeson 1993, 4). Other fastenings include buttons and toggles, buttons having replaced brooches as the preferred means of fastening clothing by the fifteenth century (Egan and Forsyth 1997, 220–2). Three copper alloy buttons were recovered at Old Buckenham (Norfolk; NPS Archaeology 2015) and other groups, also of copper alloy, come from Wharram Percy (Harding, Marlow-Mann and Wrathmell 2010) and Brandon Lane, Weeting with Broomhill (Norfolk; NAU 2002a). Two silver alloy buttons were excavated at Thuxton (Butler and Wade-Martins 1989, 36). Bone could also be used for buttons, as demonstrated by a single example from Castle Street, Kendal (Cumbria; Elsworth, Whitehead and Dawson 2011) and production waste from Alton (Hampshire; Millet 1978). A final unusual example is a glass button, paralleled from a fifteenth-century context in Winchester, from High Street Skipton (Yorkshire). Bone toggles were also recovered, from Berwick-upon-Tweed (Northumberland; Hunter and Moorhouse 1982) and Cedars Park, Stowmarket (Woolhouse 2016), and a jet or shale example comes from Carlisle (Newman 2011). Buttons seem to appear in the thirteenth century and are depicted in iconography of the time (Biddle and Cook 1990, 572). Their occurrence, like that of the lace

ends discussed above, might be associated with the increasing taste for tighter and fitted clothing in the later middle ages (Biddle and Cook 1990, 572).<sup>293</sup>

As we have seen, chroniclers were also exercised by the ways in which contemporary trends in clothing drew attention to the lower portion of the male body, as well as its upper parts. Information about coverings for the legs is sparser in our evidence than that relating to the upper body. Breeches only occur in one escheator's list, but six contain hose, typically multiple pairs (although the 20 belonging to Robert Neuton of Oakham, Rutland, are explicitly grouped with other items as 'small merchandise').<sup>294</sup> Similar legwear features in the coroners' lists, with hose being the most frequently occurring item. Little additional detail is provided for these items, though in 1577 John James, the clergyman of West Dean in Wiltshire had a pair of 'puke hose' worth 16d, puke being a superior kind of woollen cloth.<sup>295</sup> John Greene, a labourer of East Overton, also in Wiltshire, had a more extensive if somewhat shabby set of garments: 'old torn knit hose', 'old russet drawers' and a 'pair of old breeches', valued with 'two old torn shirts of canvas' at 16d in 1576.<sup>296</sup> David Poynter of Uffcott, also a labourer, had a pair of over-breeches (12d) and a pair of knit hose (6d).<sup>297</sup>

The coroners' records also document the introduction of further types of clothing, including underwear. These items include petticoats, generally, but not exclusively, listed among the possessions of women. In 1585 Mary Carter of Hullavington (Wiltshire), had two bodices, one of linen (6d) and one of camlet (2d), a linen partlet (12d), a linen kercher (12d), a petticoat (5s), a linen apron (8d) and, curiously, a frieze cassock (6s).<sup>298</sup>

Taken together, the archaeological and historical data supports the notion that the changes in costume which are widely recognized to have taken place in the later middle ages occurred nationally and across the social spectrum. The contrast between the escheators' and coroners' datasets are especially striking where clothing is concerned, suggesting that at the social level under consideration here, the changes in fashion were a relatively drawn-out process. Importantly, the artefactual evidence shows how the design of fastenings, as well as the textiles used, could become a medium for display and the expression of style. This transition appears as a clear material horizon in the archaeological record, characterised by the demise of brooches and the increasing prevalence of lace ends, hooks and pins.

<sup>293</sup> The interpretation of bone items as toggles is disputed (Brown and Lawson 1990, 589), with a possible alternative interpretation being that these were 'buzz bones', a form of musical instrument formed by suspending the bone and spinning it quickly to produce a buzzing sound.

<sup>294</sup> E953.

<sup>295</sup> C382.

<sup>296</sup> C224.

<sup>297</sup> C219.

<sup>298</sup> C278.

## Footwear

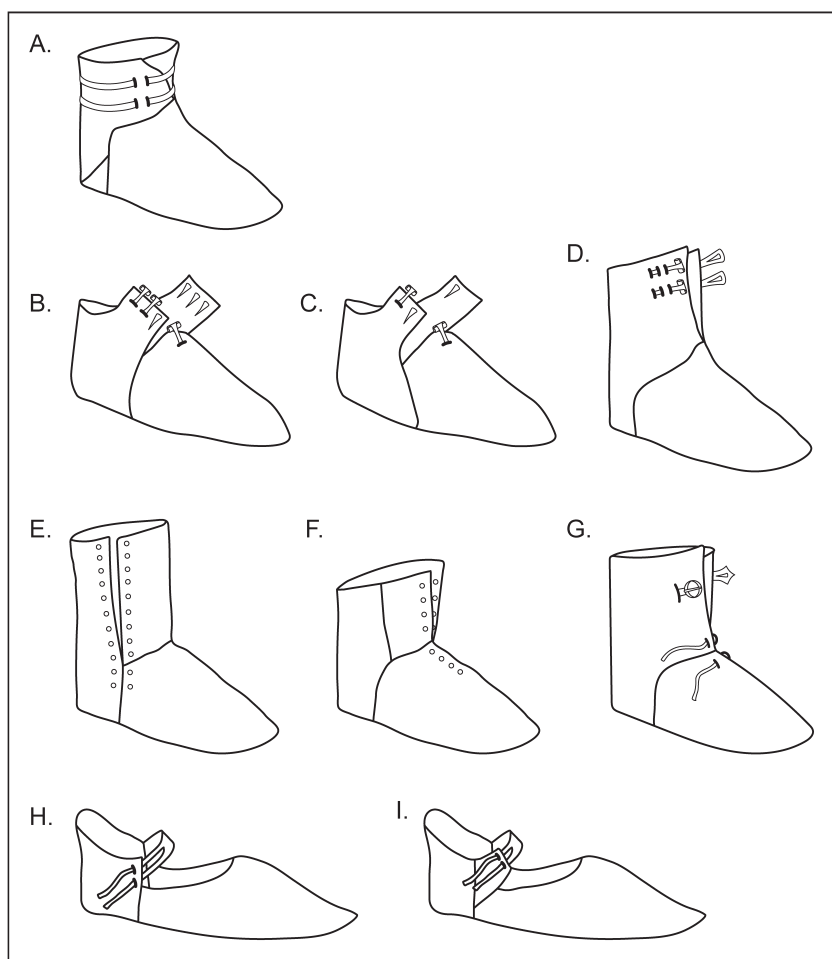
No footwear is listed in the escheators' records and those examples occurring in the coroners' records include no information other than that items were made of leather. Archaeological evidence provides further insight into the acquisition and use of shoes; however, leather only survives in anaerobic conditions and therefore the sample of excavated shoes is not large. Our understanding of the development of medieval footwear is dominated by the large collection of leather shoes from deposits along the London waterfront (Grew and de Neergaard 1988). The general development of shoes seen in London is mirrored in other large towns such as York (Mould, Carlisle and Cameron 2003, 3313), Exeter (Friendship-Taylor 1984), Gloucester (Pritchard 2020) and Norwich (Friendship-Taylor 1993) where shoes have been excavated.

The archaeological evidence presented here offers an opportunity to consider whether these urban fashions, best exemplified by the London evidence, were similarly adopted in smaller towns in England. Leather footwear has been recorded at only one rural site in our sample, Lydd Quarry (Barber and Priestly-Bell 2008, 198), with the remainder being from waterlogged deposits in smaller towns, principally in Yorkshire. A particularly good sequence comes from Micklegate, Selby (Table 6.10; Clarke 1999). Here the earliest type of shoe identified is an ankle boot fastened by a draw string, dated by associated ceramics to the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries. In London, similar shoes are in use during this period, and it is boots or ankle shoes which dominate the assemblage (Figure 6.6; Grew and de Neergaard 1988, 15–16).

Five examples of boots with toggle fastenings from Selby are unique within our sample. The Selby examples are difficult to date as the associated

**Table 6.10:** Occurrence of shoe types in the assemblage from Selby. Shading denotes date range of these types in London.

Shoe type	13th Century	14th Century	15th Century	16th Century
Ankle boot, fastening at front with divided lace and small metal buckle			2	4
Boot with pointed toe			1	1
Drawstring fastening ankle boot	1			
Front lacing boot	1	1	2	
Low-cut latchet fastening shoe	2		2	1
Side lacing boot		1	1	2
Toggle-fastening shoe/boot				1



**Figure 6.6:** Examples of medieval shoe types. A: Ankle boot with drawstring fastening. B and C: Shoes with toggle fastening. D: Ankle boot with toggle fastening. E: Boot with side lacing. F: Boot with front lacing. G: Ankle boot with front lacing and buckle fastening. H and I: Low cut shoes with latchet fastening. Redrawn by Kirsty Harding from Clarke 1999.

ceramics are of mixed date. Two examples occur in contexts with pottery of fourteenth-century or earlier date, whereas others are associated with post-medieval deposits. In London, toggles were in use on boots and ankle-shoes in the earlier thirteenth century, but become particularly popular at the turn of the fourteenth century (Grew and de Neergaard 1988, 23). It is, therefore, conceivable that the adoption of toggled boots in Selby broadly corresponds with their adoption in the larger towns.

The fourteenth century sees low shoes become more prevalent. Shoes cut below the ankle dominate the London assemblage in the later fourteenth century. Earlier examples typically have rounded toes and examples are present in the assemblage from Marygate, Berwick-upon-Tweed in contexts of thirteenth- to fourteenth-century date (Heawood and Howard-Davis 2004). By the later fourteenth century in London, shoes are often noticeably, sometimes excessively, pointed in form and were typically fastened with buckles or a latchet, although shoes were commonly laced (Grew and de Neergaard 1988, 28–31). Examples of similar, although less excessively pointed, examples come from Gloucester (Pritchard 2020, 150) and Exeter (Friendship-Taylor 1984, 329). There are a small number of lower shoes in the Selby assemblage. One, with a pointed toe, is dated on ceramic grounds to the fifteenth century, perhaps corresponding with the latter end of this style's currency in London. A further pointed shoe comes from a fourteenth- to fifteenth-century deposit at Portholme Road, Selby (Pre-Construct Archaeology 2007). Other low-cut shoes, three of which feature asymmetrical cutting, come from contexts of thirteenth- to sixteenth-century date, corresponding in general terms with the peak of this type's use in London. Similar pointed shoes have been recovered from a number of other sites within our sample. At Oakham (Rutland), three fragments of pointed shoes were recovered from the castle moat, one associated with pottery of fourteenth-century date (Gathercole 1958). One of the shoes features buckle holes. A further boot fragment features punched decoration of a type which was popular in London in the fourteenth century (Grew and de Neergaard 1988, 83). The Oakham evidence therefore points to the adoption of similar styles of footwear to those seen in London, although the dating of the context from which these shoes was recovered is imprecise. A pointed shoe from Forster Square, Bradford (Yorkshire; WYAS 2006) was recovered from a context dated to 1575–1625 and is perhaps residual, while two examples of turnshoes (a shoe that was made inside out and then 'turned' so that the seams are on the inside) with pointed soles have been recovered from probable fourteenth- to fifteenth-century contexts at Bawtry (Cumberpatch and Dunkley 1996). A further example of a pointed shoe with a buckle comes from a fifteenth- to sixteenth-century context at Wakefield (Birmingham Archaeology 2009), while a latchet was recovered from a context identified only as later medieval at Eastern Lane, Berwick-upon-Tweed (The Archaeological Practice 1998).

Small buckles which likely functioned as shoe buckles provide further evidence of the adoption of new styles in the countryside. The examples cannot be closely dated but comprise small iron annular buckles from Huish (Wiltshire; Thompson 1972), Martins Hill (Wiltshire), Foxcotte (Russel 1985) and Uxbridge (Middlesex; MOLAS 2000a). There is a copper alloy example from Weeting (Norfolk; NAU 2002a) and a lead alloy example from Ashford (Kent; Boyer and Payne 2011).

Boots continued to be worn and also developed stylistically. At Selby, two boots with pointed toes are dated to the fifteenth–sixteenth century based on associated ceramics, and boots with side lacing appear in contexts dated on ceramic grounds to the fifteenth–seventeenth centuries. Such boots occur in larger towns such as Exeter, London and Gloucester in the later fourteenth to fifteenth centuries, and the evidence from Selby might point to a slightly later adoption of the type here. Front-lacing boots occur in contexts of similar date. These peak in London in the fourteenth century, and here the evidence may point to the longevity of this type away from larger urban centres. Ankle boots with a fastening at the front, with a lace and buckle fastening, occur in contexts dated on ceramic grounds to the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, again perhaps lagging slightly behind the introduction of the type in London.

The fifteenth century saw technological developments in shoe manufacture with the introduction of welted soles (Grew and de Neergaard 1988, 43). Examples of such soles come from a context dated 1575–1625 at Forster Square, Bradford and fifteenth- to sixteenth-century deposits at Low Fisher Gate, Doncaster (McComish *et al.* 2010). Fifteenth-century examples from Lydd Quarry are interesting as they are turnshoes, rather than welted shoes (Barber and Priestly Bell 2007). These shoes exhibit evidence of repair and perhaps point to a greater longevity of this type in rural areas. The latest group of shoes in the dataset are from High Street, Barnstaple, dating to the sixteenth century and paralleled in Exeter (Lovatt 1990). Unsurprisingly, later fifteenth- to sixteenth-century examples from Finsbury Square, Islington (MOLAS 1999; MOLAS 2000b) and Creedy's Yard, Greenwich (Cooke and Philpotts 2002), correspond with examples from London, having rounded toes and welted soles. A sole from Creedy's Yard is welted.

Further evidence of footwear comes in the form of pattens, or overshoes. There are only two examples in our dataset. These consist of a wooden heel from Carlisle (Newman 2011) and an iron patten from Kingsborough Manor (Kent; Brady 2003). A further heel iron (a strip of iron attached to a shoe to protect the heel) was recovered from the excavations at West Whelpington (Jarrett and Stevens 1962, 221). These items were necessary as shoes otherwise only had thin leather soles and would have been uncomfortable and easily worn.

Shoes were clearly valued items. In addition to the repaired examples from Lydd, evidence of repair can also be seen on several other examples, such as those from Forster Square, Bradford (WYAS 2006). The evidence suggests that similar styles to those popular in London and other large urban centres found their way to small towns, although these cannot be tightly dated.

## Jewellery

Archaeological excavations have recovered a range of jewellery items, typically of copper alloy and therefore likely to have been fairly cheap (Table 6.11). Of these, brooches are the most common item (31 examples). There is a single lead

**Table 6.11:** Summary of jewellery in the archaeological dataset.

Object	Material	No. Objects
Brooch	Copper alloy	26
	Lead alloy	1
	Silver alloy	4
<b>Brooch Total</b>		<b>31</b>
Ring	Copper alloy	9
	Lead alloy	1
	Silver alloy	1
<b>Ring Total</b>		<b>11</b>
Pendant	Copper alloy	2
	Silver alloy	1
	Shell	1
<b>Pendant Total</b>		<b>4</b>
Bracelet	Copper alloy	3
Chain	Copper alloy	3
Dress jewellery (?)	Copper alloy	1
Earring	Copper alloy	2

alloy example from Redcastle Furze, Thetford (Andrews 1995) and silver examples from Old Buckenham (NPS Archaeology 2015), Shipdham (Norfolk (2); NAU 2008) and Clare (Suffolk; Brooks 2014b). This contrasts with the picture in London, where the majority of brooches, and particularly those dating to the period after 1400, are of lead alloy (Egan and Pritchard 2002, 269), although many of these are likely to be religious trinkets or ‘badges’. These brooches typically have simple decoration. Brooches were worn to fasten clothing but could also be ‘badges’, for example worn as livery (Egan and Pritchard 2002, 247). For example, a brooch from Parsonage Farm, Westwell (Kent), from a context dated c.1250–1350, carries a zoomorphic motif (MOLA 2009). Others, such as a copper alloy brooch dated c.1200–1400 from Lydd Quarry carries an incised geometric motif (Barber and Priestly Bell 2008). Typically, brooches were cast and have moulded decoration, such as the brooch from Throckmorton Airfield (Worcestershire) which features cast roundels (Griffin, Griffin and Jackson 2005). This brooch features white enamelled decoration and is interpreted as an imitation of more expensive gold gem-set brooches. Another brooch which may be illustrative of this phenomenon is a gilded brooch from Snetterton (Norfolk; NAU 2002b), which may have been set with glass pellets. Such

imitation was common and, while this may be understood as a form of ‘fake’, glass-set brooches may also have been understood as having similar apotropaic qualities to those items decorated with gems (Standley 2013, Chapter 6).

The silver example from Shipdham carries the letters ‘MVR’ and features a cross, suggesting a possible religious motif. The number of brooches present in the archaeological sample is low, however, and each item appears unique, although it is likely that cast brooches were replicated. Only one escheators’ list includes brooches: Thomas Howet of Rothbury (Northumberland) had seven (valued with ‘diverse silver rings’ at 2s 6d), and, like John Hawkyn’s belts, it is presumably the quantity that led to them being noted.<sup>299</sup> However, there is nothing in his list to suggest these were held as stock. The coincidence of the brooches and rings, and the fact that Howet was hanged for felonies at Newcastle, suggests that these items may have been stolen. The low number of brooches in the data may be due to the fashion for annular brooches to secure clothing declining in the fifteenth century (Egan and Forsyth 1997, 220); indeed, fifteenth-century brooches are exceptionally rare in Winchester (Biddle and Hinton 1990, 640), and the majority of brooches published from Norwich also pre-date 1450 (Margeson 1993, 15–16). An example from Staines is paralleled by a fifteenth-century example from Winchester, and may be among the latest in the sample (Jones 2010). Few of the brooches in the sample are from securely dated contexts, but in all but one case those which are pre-date 1400 (the exception is an example from Lydd Quarry which comes from a context dated 1400–1600, but likely dates 1350–1450 on the basis of parallels from London; Barber and Priestly Bell 2008, 182). The low number of brooches present therefore appears to reveal a decline in brooch use from the fifteenth century as fashions changed, with new fastenings being introduced and the increasing use of laces to tighten clothing. Combined with the evidence for lace ends and fastenings, as well as references to clothing in the escheators’ and coroners’ records, this data suggests that the movement towards tighter clothing occurred across the social spectrum, in both town and country.

Jewellery is exceptionally rare in the escheators’ lists. Other than the objects in the list of Thomas Howet, only silver and gold rings are listed. In 1447 John Maister a merchant of Havant (Hampshire) had a gold signet ring valued at 12s, presumably a tool of his trade.<sup>300</sup> The same interpretation might be advanced for the gold ring decorated with a diamond valued at 10 marks, which belonged to Richard Horeston, a rector of Northfield (Worcestershire).<sup>301</sup> Thomas Taylour, a yeoman of Chippenham (Wiltshire), also had a gold ring appraised at 10s.<sup>302</sup> Where material is listed, the other rings are of silver, one belonging to Margaret Burdon, a widow of Semley (Wiltshire; valued at 20d in 1444) and

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<sup>299</sup> E212.

<sup>300</sup> E122.

<sup>301</sup> E1197.

<sup>302</sup> E1122.



another to Dericus Frise, a Fleming, valued at 4d in 1432.<sup>303</sup> There are 11 rings in the archaeological sample, all but two of copper alloy (the exceptions being one of lead alloy from Cricklade (Wiltshire; Brett 2003) and of silver from Skipton (Greenlane Archaeology nd)) rather than precious metal. Rings were common items given as marriage tokens, although a range of other items could be given as gifts in this context (Rushton 1986, 26–7; McSheffrey 2006, 62–3; Standley 2013, 32–3). Rings could be gifted to the male partner in courtship, but it may also have been difficult to prove that rings were the possession of a woman, in both cases leading to their confiscation as the possession of the male felon. It is likely that those rings belonging to women are wedding rings, but rings could also fulfil other functions, including as protective or apotropaic items (Cherry 2001). In this regard the cross motif on the silver example from Skipton may be pertinent.

Other items of jewellery are rare occurrences in the archaeological dataset. There are two copper alloy bracelets. One, from Barbury Castle Farm, Chiseldon (Wiltshire; Pattison 1983) is made of twisted copper alloy wire and a second, from Spital Street, Dartford (TVAS 2014) takes the form of a chain. There are two further copper alloy chains, one from Melksham (Wiltshire; Davenport and Schuster 2012) and another from Carbrooke (Hutcheson and Noble 2006), which may be items of neckwear. In London, chains appear to be introduced from the later fourteenth–fifteenth centuries, and may be a part of a general trend towards elaborate neckwear; the dating of the Carbrooke example to 1400–1550 would correspond with this observation (Egan and Pritchard 2002, 318). Other items of jewellery include five pendants and two earrings. The pendants take various forms. A copper alloy openwork example from Great Cressingham (Norfolk) comes from a context dating to 1500–1700. Another copper alloy pendant comes from the excavations of the deserted medieval village at Shotton (Northumberland; Muncaster and McKelvey 2013). The other three examples are more unusual. From Old Buckenham comes a silver alloy pendant with white glass settings, incised with a cross on the rear (NPS Archaeology 2015). A copper alloy disc from Barbury Castle Farm, Chiseldon may be a reused Roman coin (Pattison 1983). Finally, a pierced oyster shell from Cley-Next-the-Sea (Norfolk; Birks 2003) has been interpreted as a pendant, perhaps intended to imitate the scallop shell pilgrimage souvenirs from Santiago de Compostella (see Hall 2011, 91). As with the chains, these are likely to come from the latter part of our period as artwork supports an increased concern with neck jewellery in the fifteenth century (Egan and Pritchard 2002, 321; Egan and Forsyth 1997, 230). However, the Shotton example is likely to be earlier, coming from a context dated 1150–1350. Other jewellery includes two earrings, one from West Cotton (Northamptonshire; Hylton 2010), from a fourteenth-century context, and another from Wharram Percy, from a context dated 1250–1450. A final intriguing piece is a copper alloy piece of dress

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<sup>303</sup> E1182; E963.

jewellery in the shape of a snake from Throckmorton Airfield in Worcestershire (Griffin, Griffin and Jackson 2005).

The low quantity of jewellery across all three datasets means it is not possible to draw conclusions about chronological change, regionality or the ability of rural households to acquire jewellery, beyond the clear decline in the use of brooches. The data does, however, provide some insights into the range of jewellery which could be acquired by rural households which were generally of lower value materials. It is this low value and, therefore the likelihood that jewellery was overlooked by the escheator and coroner, which may account for its general absence from these records.

## Conclusion

Our material does not permit a comprehensive overview of clothing and personal adornment in non-elite rural communities, but it is still a rich resource for interdisciplinary analysis of these possessions, and allows us to draw several conclusions. Firstly, the evidence we do have does not easily support the notion of a step-change in the clothing of non-elites across the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Contrasts between the late medieval period and the sixteenth century are if anything more noticeable. Most escheators' lists do not feature clothing, and while there are several factors contributing to this, it supports the idea that in the later middle ages most lower status people did not own many clothes, and that those they did have were of low value. Cloth which may have been for garments was present in a more significant number of lists, but the quantities were generally quite small, the range of colours restricted and the values low. At the same time, we should not overlook the fact that a few people who fit our criteria of 'non-elite' did own elaborate or more expensive items, such as lined garments. Also, the diversity apparent in belt fittings and jewellery demonstrates a capacity to portray a sense of personal style or identity through the acquisition and display of apparently cheap and widely accessible objects.

Secondly, the noting of detail such as the colour of clothing provides an insight into systems of value, both allowing us to understand the comparative monetary worth of items, but also to draw inferences about attitudes to clothing. In the context of the escheators' records, the relationship between detailed descriptions of coloured gowns and serious crime possibly provides evidence of seizure as a process of moral judgement as well as legal practice. Thirdly, both the archaeological and historical datasets provide clear evidence for the adoption of new styles of clothing, most obvious in the evidence for fitted garments which is common in the coroners' records, but also in the archaeological evidence of chapes or lace ends, as well as in the changes observed in relation to headwear. Finally, in relation to belt buckles and shoes, we can see evidence for a general level of similarity between urban and rural fashions, although certain fashions may have been adopted more slowly away from the larger towns.

The evidence of jewellery, belt fittings and coloured garments shows that clothing was an important means of fashioning identity in the medieval countryside, just as it was in the larger towns. Although dress was fairly standardised at the general level, the variety of cheap metal fittings recovered from archaeological contexts shows how clothing could be an outlet for creativity and the expression of individuality within general bounds. Clothing then was an important outlet of consumption, closely associated with the performance of the self, shaped by legal, moral and commercial contexts, but personal in its expressive capacity.