

Bicester in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries¹

By G. H. DANNATT

THE original Bicester wills and inventories up to 1857 are nearly all to be found in the Bodleian Library. Those for the Commonwealth Period are, however, still at Somerset House because at that time all wills were registered centrally by the Prerogative Court of the Archbishop of Canterbury. This article is based on a study of all available original wills and the inventories filed with them² made by Bicester people from 1600 to 1732 (a total of 221 wills and 115 inventories) and a small sample of the wills made between 1733 and 1800. Except for those of the Commonwealth Period, only wills registered in the diocesan and archdeaconry courts have been studied, the object being to find out as much as possible about the ordinary Bicester townfolk of the 17th and 18th centuries. This study must exclude, for example, the Coker family, the chief landowners in the manor of King's End from the time of Elizabeth I, because their wills were registered in the archiepiscopal court as they had possessions in more than one diocese. The clergy, who were often absentees, are represented only by John Prinsep³ who was Vicar when the enclosure of the manor of Market End was undertaken in 1758, and by the first Nonconformist pastors of the town, Henry Cornish⁴ (d. 1698) and John Troughton⁵ the younger (d. 1740). The great majority of the testators are yeomen or husbandmen, small traders or their widows. The rights of a married woman to hold property were limited in common law, although she might make a will disposing of property she held as executor in the right of another.

These Bicestrians were by no means of one mind about the name of the

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² With one exception (v. note 27 below) inventories filed with administration bonds have not been used, neither have the registers of wills.

³ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 146/2/15.

⁴ *Ib.* 121/2/5.

⁵ *Ib.* 67/4/41.

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town they lived in; the spelling 'Bister' was common and gives a clear indication of its pronunciation, but forty-five variants are to be found in the wills.⁶ Domesday Book had called it 'Bernecestre', and the Market End Enclosure Act of 1757⁷ speaks of 'Burchester, otherwise Burcester, otherwise Bissiter'. By 1793, when King's End came to be enclosed, 'Burcester otherwise Bicester' was considered sufficient delineation.⁸ The present spelling finally became established as the standard one in the 19th century. Bicester never became a borough, perhaps because in matters of local government it had never been a single entity. There had been two manors in the town at least from the time of Domesday Book. By 1600 they had long been distinguished as Market End and King's End, the latter being much the smaller. They had always shared the parish church; the line of division between the manors can still be seen in a house near the church on the north side of the road, where the front door bears two numbers, 28 Church Street and 2 King's End. In 1596 the Earl of Derby, then lord of the manor of Market End, leased that part of the town to thirty-one of his tenants. Not long afterwards he conveyed the manor in fee simple to Thomas Wykins and Thomas Clements for one payment of £750 and a rent of a penny a year payable at Michaelmas for a term of nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine years. Wykins and Clements were to hold it in trust for the thirty-one tenant purchasers; they soon subdivided it by further leases. From 1596 the town thus became a bailiwick; an outright sale of this kind to the inhabitants was not uncommon at that time.⁹ Bicester townsmen set a proper value by their very long leases, which amounted for most intents and purposes to an absolute freehold except that the holders were not entitled to exercise the parliamentary franchise. 'Derbyhold land' was the local name for this property. It was not until the 20th century that the bailiwick was extinguished by the passing of these

⁶ i.e. Bissiter (77 times mentioned).

Bissiter (54 " ").

Burcester (46 " ").

Burcester als Bissiter (44 times).

Bister (35 times).

Bisceter (10 times).

bister (9 times).

Bisciter, Bister als Burcester, Burcester als Bissiter (6 times each).

Bisiter, Bisster (4 times each).

Biseter, Burcester alias Bisceter (3 times each).

Biciter (twice).

bisetr, Byssiter, Burcester als Bisciter, bisetar or bister, Bister alias Bussciter, Biceter, Bissister, Burcester als Byseter (or Bysseter), Bisceter, Burcester Alias Biceter, Burssester, bister, Burcest^r als Bist^r, Bircester, Bissto, Bysseter als bister, Bistar, Buscester, Bistor, Burcester als Bissetor, Bicister Als Bister, Burcesester, Bisciter, Burchester als Bissiter, Bisceter, and Burcester otherwise Bisceter (once each).

⁷ 30 Geo. II, c. 7 (priv.).

⁸ 33 Geo. III, c. 45 (priv.).

⁹ Inf.: kindly supplied by Dr. W. G. Hoskins.

tenures into the control of the Urban District Council.¹⁰ The ecclesiastical courts allowed the value of these long leases to be included in the inventories that the Bicester appraisers submitted for their approval. This is contrary to the usual custom by which only moveable 'goods, chattles and cattles' were listed, as for example in the mid-Essex inventories edited by F. W. Steer, so that a true overall comparison of conditions in Bicester with those elsewhere is not always practicable. Many property holders of the 17th and 18th centuries took pride in having a share of the bailiwick or royalty of Bicester and were careful to bequeath it wisely. The fullest reference to Derbyhold property comes in an inventory¹¹ made in 1643 for the executor of Edward Jakeman, a yeoman. The house Jakeman lived in and the land belonging to it were valued at £100 on 'the remainder of A lease of nyne thousand nyne hundred fflowrescore and Tenn yeares'; he had recently bought several other properties, a cottage from George Sumner valued at £20, a 'little backside' worth £10 from William Bly and two little cottages and a barn from Francis Parsons appraised at £4 3s. 0d. All these were on Derbyhold leases; together they account for £154 3s. 0d., or just over 50 per cent of an inventory whose total value was £304 2s. 0d. It is clear from Richard Ewin's will¹² of 1699 that these leases were bought and sold just as though they had been freehold; Gabriel Ford's bequest¹³ to his three daughters in 1704 of seven acres and one land for 9,900 years shows that land in the common fields of Market End was included in such tenancies. Given time and access to the deeds it is possible to show exactly where some of the testators lived. A collarmaker called John Cooper, for example, died in 1661-2 possessed of the lease of one cottage which was on the site of the present 83 and 85 Sheep Street.¹⁴ Within three years of his death his widow Joane and their son William and his wife Anne were jointly leasing another cottage, the present 100 Sheep Street¹⁵ (on the opposite side of the road, next door to the 'Angel'), to Joseph Broome. A generation later this was in the hands of Benjamin Lock¹⁶ who bequeathed it to his daughter Sarah. Lock was a butcher. Lock's Piece is clearly marked on Williams' map of 1754¹⁷ in the fields north-east of Sheep Street, but as he had several cottages it is not possible to identify this particular one with the land that bears his name. Both John Cooper's and Benjamin Lock's cottages are described in the deeds as 'in Crockwell'.

¹⁰ Bailiwick documents and deeds of The Garth, penes Bicester U.D.C.

¹¹ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 136/4/6.

¹² *Ib.*: 20/5/16.

¹³ *Ib.*: 127/4/10.

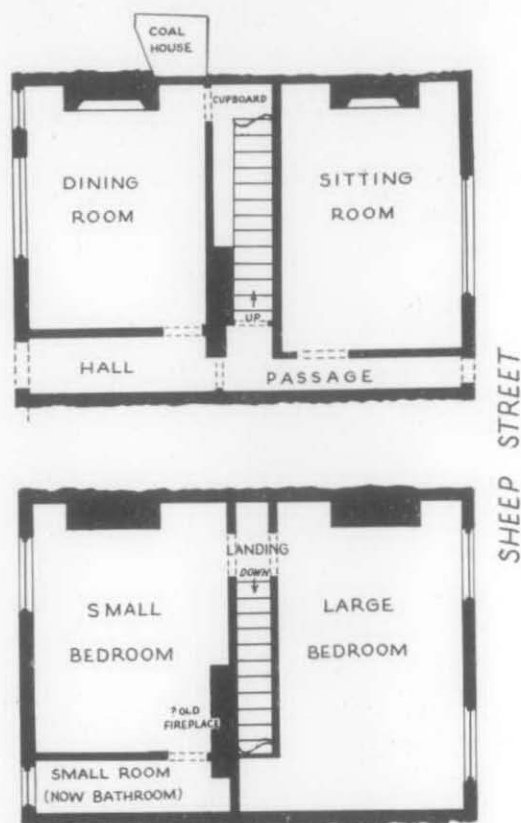
¹⁴ Deeds penes Mr. Eric Trinder.

¹⁵ Deeds penes Mr. A. J. Blackman. For plan of house v.p. 247, fig. 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ V.p. 253, fig. 2. Reproduced by permission of Bicester U.D.C.

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THE PREMISES OF 100, SHEEP STREET,
BICESTER, AS REMEMBERED IN 1901

FIG. 1

Bicester wills of the two centuries under investigation and more particularly the inventories that accompany them provide a very interesting record of the distribution of trades and occupations. This can be most clearly shown in tabulated form. Table A¹⁸ gives the trades and occupations in alphabetical order distributed by decades; dates in plain type are those of existing wills or inventories, while those in italics refer to people whose occupations are mentioned only incidentally. Where more than one document relating to a particular trade survives from any one year, the number precedes the date.

¹⁸ V.pp. 248-51.

TABLE A

ANALYSIS OF BICESTER TRADES AND

	1600 -09	1610 -19	1620 -29	1630 -39	1640 -49	1650 -59	1660 -69	1670 -79	1680 -89
Attorney-at-law									
Baker			1621	1631		1657	1662		
Blacksmith		1615		1637					
Brazier									1680
Butcher			1625 +1				1660		1681
Carpenter					2:1643				
Carrier									
Chapman			1623	1638					
Churchwarden				1631					
Clergyman (C. of E.) ..	2:1600			John Bird 1631	1643				
Clergyman (Nonconf.) ..									
Clerk (or Scriptor) ..	1600 1602		1623	1639					
Clockmaker									
Clothworker (v. also fuller)	1607	to . . .	1622						
Collarmaker (and Saddler)							1661		
Cooper			1623						
Cordwainer (Cordwinder, Shoemaker, Showmaker)				1639			1667	1677	
Currier									1680 1684
Dairyman (v. sub Farmer)									
Draper						1656			
Haberdasher				1634					
Linendraper									1688-9 1682-3
Mercer			1621			1656			
Woollendraper									
Farmer									
Dairyman									
Grazier									
Husbandman	1608-9	2:1615	1621	1631 1634 1635 1636		1658			
Labourer			1622 1629						1680 1687
Shepherd				1631		1659 +1	1669		
Yeoman		2: 1610-1	1621 1622	1635 1637 +1	1641-2 1643		2:1666 1667		1681
Fellmonger							1665 1667		
Fuller (v. Clothworker) ..									
Gardener									
Gentleman				1632 1637		2:1659			
Glazier							1662		
Grazier (v. sub Farmer) ..									
Glover	1608-9		1623-4	1635				1674-5	1686

OCCUPATIONS, DISTRIBUTED BY DECADES

1690 -99	1700 -09	1710 -19	1720 -29	1730 -39	1740 -49	1750 -59	1760 -69	1770 -79	1780 -89	1790 -99	Totals
	1704		1727-8	1732			1768 1766			1792	1 9 2 1 16 3 1 3 1
1692 1693	2:1705		1720 1726 1722			6:1757					16 3 1 3 1
1699		1714									3 1
		1718					1768				8 { 6 2
1698			John Troughton II (passim) d. 1740				1769				5 1 1 2 2
					1745					1792	2 2
1695	1701 1702 1703 1705 1707	1710 1715	1722 1723 1724	1730	1741			1770			16
						1759					3
	1702 1708 1708 1708		1729		1745						5 2 2 5 1
1698	1707			1730 1732 1730			1768	1770			15 { 3 1 1 9 4 } 43
			1720								4
1694 1696 1698-9	1700	1718		1730	1747	1757					21
	1702 1705	1714									5 1
		1716	1725 2:1727 1728			1759					9 1
1690	1705 1708-9	2: 1714-5									10

	1600 -09	1610 -19	1620 -29	1630 -39	1640 -49	1650 -59	1660 -69	1670 -79	1680 -89
Grocer (v. also Victualler)									
Gunsmith								1676	
Haberdasher (v. sub Draper)									
Handicraftsman									
Hemp-dresser									
Husbandman (v. sub Farmer)									
Innkeeper			1625			<i>2:1658</i>		1677	
Maltster				1630	1643 1649	1655		1671	1684
Ironmonger									
Jersey-comber									
Jersey-weaver									
Labourer (v. sub Farmer) ..									
Linendraper (v. sub Draper)									
Maltster (v. sub Innkeeper)									
Mason	1606								
Mercer (v. sub Draper) ..									
Miller							1664		
Minister (v. Clergyman) ..									
Periwig-maker									
Saddler		1616-7							
Salesman									
Servant	<i>2:1602</i> <i>3:1603</i>		1623 1628	1632		<i>5:1657</i> <i>5:1658-9</i> <i>1659</i>	1669	1671	
Shepherd (v. sub Farmer)									
Surgeon									
Slater									
Soldier ('soulderer') ..						1656	1667		
Solicitor (v. Attorney-at-law)									
Spinstress									
Stonecutter (v. Mason) ..									
Tailor		1616				1655	1669	1676	
Tallow-chandler									
Tanner							1669		
Tobacconist									
Vicar (v. Clergyman) ..									
Victualler (v. also Grocer)									
Weaver (v. also Jersey-weaver)				1631				1677	
Wheelwright					1643				
Woollendraper (v. sub Draper)									
Yeoman (v. sub Farmer) ..									

NOTES:

1. Tradesmen are denoted by the date of will or incidental mention.
2. A number preceding the date shows how many there were in one year.
3. Dates or numbers shown in italics indicate tradesmen mentioned only incidentally, e.g. as legatees, overseers, executors.

1690 -99	1700 -09	1710 -19	1720 -29	1730 -39	1740 -49	1750 -59	1760 -69	1770 -79	1780 -89	1790 -99	Totals
	1702				1745 +1			1778			2
		1712									3
	1702	1715								1792 +1	1
											4
1698	1707		1724 1727 1729		1745	1758	1761	1776	1783		12
	5:1700 -09 +1 1707							1776		1792	16
							1762				2
		1715	1723								1
											1
		2:1717		1732 1735	1740 1741	1759	1764				9
											1
	1707										1
	1705										1
1698		2:1717 1715									1
											25
			1723 (Ship's) 1726					1776			2
											2
											1
	1700 1702										2
		1715	1720 1722 1729 1729	2:1733			1764				10
											1
				1734							2
											1
		1715							2:1783		3
			1729								2
											2
Total											267

The term used to describe a man's occupation or trade is whenever possible that used by the testator himself in the will. If he omitted to give one his valuers sometimes supplied it at the head of the inventory. In one case only has a correction been made, that of William White whose own description of 'soulderer' has been altered to 'soldier', a change justified by the whole content of his will.¹⁹ The 'salesman' was probably a professional seller of cattle in the market.²⁰ Some of the inventories are tantalising in the brevity of their reference to a man's trade, although others are delightfully explicit. A cordwainer called Alley²¹ illustrates the brevity; he left 'The Goods of his Traid—£00: 05: 00'; that was in 1705. Rowland Pearte,²² a glover of 1635, is rather more enlightening. He bequeathed 'The Shopbord and all the Tooles belonging to the trade wth one Beame at the water-side' to his brother, and his inventory specifies £3 worth of leather and pelts in the pits, £25 of wool in the lofts and some 'Course wooll' in a bedroom. The shop and the room next to it contained, besides the counter and his working tools, 'a Buckett with some Lyme', a cowl and a kiver, all worth 13s. 4d. A kiver was a shallow tub and a cowl was probably a larger one needing two men to carry it. Pearte's 'Beames Skales and weights' were worth 10s.

Several of the inventories are outstanding for their detail and for the light they throw on conditions in a particular trade. The casual impression most of us have of a chapman as a pedlar with a pack on his back cannot survive the reading of Ellis Edwards' inventory,²³ drawn up in 1714. His shop was bursting with a wonderful variety of goods, valued at £12 all told: there were 'two groce of Corks, oyle seven pounds, thred, fillatings, tape and oth^r thred, starch, 1 Ladder, wosteds, bobins, pins, Laces, neals (needles?), Candles, otmell, ploms, curants, sope, Iron mortar and pestell, five pare of brass scalls, thirteen brass waits, Salt & palk (or pack) box'. In the chamber over the kitchen he had 'two wier sives, twenty-six pound Ginger bread, nine pound & halfe of thred, two packetts pins, an old Chest, Ladis thred & tape, blues (?), neals (? needles), fore Rems of pap^r, riteing pap^r'. The room over the back kitchen, however, contained an even more miscellaneous collection: 'five hundred & halfe Cheese, two doz: of beehives, three fitches bacon, seven forks, five bins, three bushells otmell, old Iron 94¹¹ pound, Iron wedges 46¹¹ & 14¹ old brass', together worth £10 3s. 2d., with 'five dozen of pewter spoons, 27¹¹ of old pewter, 1 pare scalls & beame, on Iron

¹⁹ P.C.C. Berkeley 4; fol. 169.

²⁰ In Dublin cattle-market to-day the business is managed by a salesmaster. Those who work under him are still called salesmen. Inf. fr: Mr. J. R. Wortley of Barley Hill Farm, Nr. Athy., Co. Kildare.

²¹ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 114/1/12.

²² *Ib.*: 51/3/8.

²³ *Ib.*: 21/1/10.

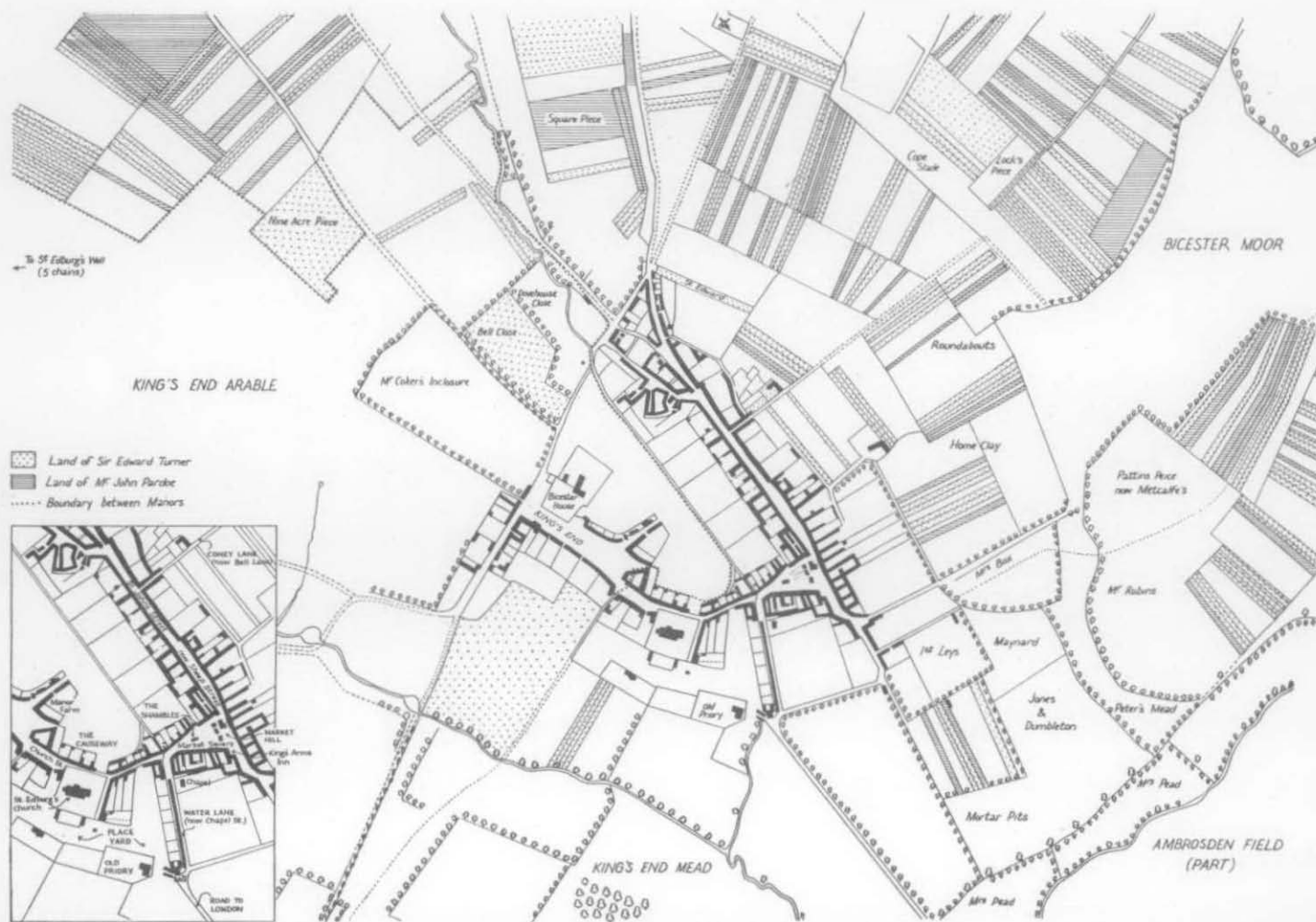


FIG. 2

Bicester in 1754, from a map made by Thomas Williams. (Reproduced by permission of the Urban District Council.)

hanger, 5 Iron waits 214¹¹, twelve Leaden waits 218 pound', appraised at £2 18s. 6d. In the room over the woodhouse there were, among other things, thirteen dozen 'burch brooms', 'a pasell square stuffe', five handbaskets, sixty-six reams of paper, a dozen 'flag bromes', eight pounds of hops and a little vinegar. Two hogsheads of salt there, with another in the woodhouse itself, were worth £8. Some of his stock-in-trade had so overflowed the bounds of his own premises that Edwards had been obliged to hire or borrow accommodation elsewhere. South-east of the parish church lies a house now called Old Palace Yard, known formerly as Place Yard; Bicester Priory once stood there and many of the existing out-houses are centuries old. It was in the yard, 'the place yard', and the walk that Edwards kept his store of wood, £37 15s. 0d. worth of it comprising '200 of Ashen bords, a pasell Chips, about five tunn of billet wood, furse & wood fagetts'. He also had a huge pile of 'Linin Raggs & wolen rags' worth £13 10s. 0d. Book debts 'as is hoped will be good' amounted to £12 6s. 7d., but were offset by bad debts reaching £14 or £15. The total value of his worldly goods was estimated at £136 5s. 1d. Thus did one man play his many parts of wood-merchant, rag and bone man, scrap metal dealer, supplier of dainty trimmings for the use of ladies, and general merchant, all concealed under the word 'chapman'. As this was at a period when the chapmen of Petworth in Sussex were becoming indistinguishable from drapers,²⁴ it would be interesting to know what other small towns could supply the counterpart of Ellis Edwards. That his family had been established in Bicester for about a century is clear from the will of another Ellis Edwards,²⁵ also a chapman, proved in 1638; this man had six sons, one named after him, and three daughters; he had built a new house and the inventory of his goods amounted to £31 18s. 4d. How much of his prosperity the Edwards of 1714 owed to the efforts of the intervening generation and how much to his own hard work it is impossible to say.

Besides Rowland, Pearte and Alley, mentioned above, others who traded in leather have left useful details. In Charles II's reign two men called Walter Baylies, probably father and son, were fellmongers in Bicester and there was also a currier called William Bly. The elder Baylies,²⁶ dying in 1667, left:

	li	s	d
12 dossen halfe of washed Calves leather	07	10	00
9 dossen of Ruffe calves leather	04	01	00
a parcell of blacke wooll	01	10	00

²⁴ *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, vol. 96, p. 67. Lady de Villiers called my attention to this article.

²⁵ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 20/3/14.

²⁶ *Ib.*: 6/3/19.

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12 toods of lambe wooll & baye wooll	}	13	00	00
2 tood of middle wooll & course wooll				
2 payre schales 34 ¹¹ of leaden waights & 2 ladders		00	07	00
4 white leather skinneres		0	8	0
in the lime pits	}	02	00	00
a hundred of pelts				

The younger Baylies died intestate in 1666.²⁷ His administrators recorded in their accounts the payment of 16s. 8d. to Nicholas White of Deddington for skins and of £1 2s. 6d. for 'Chimny mony and other taxes'. The Hearth Tax returns of 1665 include 'Walter Bayley, jun.', probably the same man, with two chimneys to his house.²⁸ There is also a Walter Bayley in Market End assessed on one hearth, but discharged by poverty; as the elder Baylies' goods came to £69 14s. 4d. and the younger one's inventory adds up to £94 13s. 0d., this entry may refer to another family altogether, though it is of course possible that somebody cheated effectively. Walter Baylies the younger left six packs of wool worth £45 7s. 0d.; all the leather in his house was valued at £12 2s. 6d., the 'Courser sorts of Wooll Squibb & glue stuffe' amounted to £5 10s. 0d., there were £2 10s. 0d. worth of gloves and his beam, weights and scales and other working gear were worth £1 4s. 6d. The inventory of William Stiles, a cordwainer, dated 1724,²⁹ mentions a pair of steelyards, a cutting board, one cutting knife and two seats, valued at 7s. 6d. These were his own possessions; in partnership with his brother, however, he shared £30 worth of 'Leather, Shooes, Lasts, Boot trees, Seats and heels'. The currier William Bly³⁰ who died in 1684, left ten hides, 'som drest and som an drest', worth £5; his horse, packs and mangers were valued at £3; £30 was owing to him upon bond and £20 'uppon the book'. The tanyard which men such as these used was probably the one which still existed in the 1890's on the site of the present No. 18 London Road. The flesh was removed from the hides with a curved two-handled knife used over a curved metal shield. The hides were preserved in salt, soaked in lime to remove the hair and steeped in tan made of shredded oak bark, where they were constantly moved; the bark came from Kirtlington Park; the by-products were used in the manufacture of glue.³¹

Those who worked and traded in metal have told us little about their possessions except for one blacksmith and an ironmonger. The blacksmith

²⁷ *Ib.*: 76/4/18: inventory filed with administration bond.

²⁸ *Oxfordshire Hearth Tax Returns*. Oxfordshire Record Society, 1940.

²⁹ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 63/3/18.

³⁰ *Ib.*: 7/3/19.

³¹ General account of tanning supplied by Miss M. E. Philbrick of Carnon Downs, Nr. Truro, Cornwall. Mr. W. Paragreen supplied local information from his own memories of the tanyard in its last years.

Thomas Mathew³² (d. 1615) bequeathed 'on Smyths vise of Iron' to the son called after him. His inventory contains several interesting items, including 'on Iron Beckhorne & a vise—v^s', as well as a pair of smith's bellows at 13s. 4d., an anvil worth half that amount, two iron sledges and four hammers at 6s. 8d., other small tools assessed at 13s. 3d., a scale and weights worth 3s. and 'Smyths Coles Xij^d'. A beckhorn was an anvil with two horns at its ends, used for shaping iron to a curve, known later as a 'beak-iron'.³³ Contemporary with Mathew was a cooper called John Waring³⁴ (d. 1623) who left 'ware & tooles hoopes & divers other Implements' worth 50s. in his shop and 'ware in the churchowse at Bister' worth 10s., an item which suggests that the vicar, John Bird, who lived at Wendlebury³⁵ may have been glad to let Bicester Vicarage to supplement his meagre stipend of about £40. Waring's 'one little old sorry mare vi^s viij^d' remains in the reader's mind. Though John Ducke³⁶ who died in 1616 was a tailor, the bar of iron and the lathing hammer which he left to his grandson Thomas, together with a pair of brass balances, a leaden pound 'stoane' and a brass half-pound one, may fittingly be included here. Nearly a century later than Mathew, Waring and Ducke, died the ironmonger John May³⁷ (1707); his appraisers left a full list of his possessions. £20 1s. 3d. worth of goods in the cellar consisted of 'two barrels bar Iron two barrels of pitch & Whitting 5 hund^s of lath foare Iron plates'. The goods in his shop amounted to £40 1s. 9d. and included 'Nayls of severall sorts, Corks of severall sorts, plow sheares, Axes broad & narrow, belows, hinges, Cury Combs, buttons, spads, shovles, fire shovles & tongs, Chisels, files, horse shows (shoes), fringes, buckles, syths, read and White Lead, Smouthing Irons, Pattens & Clogs, traices, cuting knives, hand Irons, links, boults, spokks, latches & Catches, wth Severall other Small Sorts of goods as knives etc forks etc', while the shelves, counters, nail-boxes, tools of his trade, scales and weights were valued at £2 5s. 6d. Good and bad debts together amounted to £45 6s. 9d. It is a vivid specification. Those who bought axes at May's shop would choose a broad one for felling trees and a narrow one for lopping branches.

Brewing, as might be expected, clearly prevailed in Bicester throughout the period under survey. The town must always have been a centre for a wide rural area and on market-days and fair-days in particular there would have been plenty of scope for ale-sellers. The medieval custom of announcing

³² Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 43/4/20.

³³ *Sussex Arch. Coll.*, vol. 96, p. 75.

³⁴ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 70/2/18.

³⁵ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, vi, p. 143.

³⁶ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 17/3/46.

³⁷ *Ib.*: 141/3/16.

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a fresh supply of home-brewed ale by hanging out a bunch of green twigs survived in a modified form in King's End until within living memory. Certain houses there, known as bough-houses, were privileged to sell ale on fair-days; they could be distinguished by a special iron bracket on the front door which held the green bough that denoted the occupant's payment of a shilling for a one-day licence. There were three bough-houses as long as the August sheep-fair continued to be held in King's End, that is, until 1910.³⁸ The distinctive iron bracket was removed from the door of Lisseter's antique shop (No. 3 King's End) only a few years ago. In the 19th century Shillingford's brewery situated in Market End behind the present County Library was an important source of employment; it closed down in 1926.

In the 17th century individual householders sometimes brewed beer for their own consumption; even Henry Cornish,³⁹ Bicester's first regular Non-conformist pastor (d. 1698), had a still and six barrels in his cellar. There were many maltsters in the town. William Lyne⁴⁰ and John Chillingworth⁴¹ were two who had well equipped malthouses. In 1643/4 Lyne's contained a stone cistern, an old vat, a malt mill, two cowls (or coolers), four shallow tubs known as kivers, bushel-, peck-, and half-peck measures, a 'winow Cloth' which was probably used when the barley was threshed, and a hair-cloth used in the kiln to spread the sprouted grain on before the invention in the 18th century of a wire mesh. Lyne's two shovels were probably wooden malt-shovels. Chillingworth's malthouse (1643) was similarly equipped; he, however, had also a malt-chamber containing a copper, a bushel, two sieves, a meal sieve and six old sacks. His malt—twelve quarters—was assessed at £12. In the buttery he had four barrels, a 'drinke stell', a tub, a 'Mashfate' which was used when the water in the copper boiled, a 'Jug pott a Cup bole A lanthorne a Tunnell bole & Two leather Bottles', valued with a few oddments at £1. 'Tunnel' was another word for 'funnel'.⁴² In 1625 Henry Potter's⁴³ brewhouse and courtyard had in them a malt-mill, a water cart a 'fate' and other brewing vessels appraised at £3; in his cellar there were 'xviij hogs heads full of beere five emptie ones wth potts Cans and other lumber' worth £20; a hogshead contained fifty-four gallons. There were also 'iiij Barrells wth drink in them' in the milkhouse. John Hinton (1622) had in his buttery two 'runletts' for storing small quantities of beer, and three

³⁸ Inf.: the late Mr. George Goble.

³⁹ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 121/2/5.

⁴⁰ *Ib.*: 139/2/30.

⁴¹ *Ib.*: 120/2/20.

⁴² *N.E.D.*

⁴³ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 144/1/38.

more 'upstars'.⁴⁴ Richard Harris's inventory,⁴⁵ made in 1702, includes a steel malt-mill and a malt screen.

Only two carpenters, a father and son both called John George (both d. 1643/4), left inventories.⁴⁶ There is little direct information in them about their trade. We may, however, reasonably infer that they had made the wooden furniture included in their own possessions. The older man left two coffers, a table and frame, three joined stools, a form and a chair, valued together with a linen sheet at xvi^s, and a bedstead and two cupboards worth ij¹¹. His son left a table and frame, three joined stools, two forms, two joined chairs, one cupboard, a joined cradle, two low stools and a 'wainscott shutt', all valued at xx^s; one bedstead, two chests, a little coffer, four boxes, three trunks and one joined form, worth xvi^s, are further evidence of his skill. Although no more can be learned of this trade from the wills and inventories, there is an interesting reference in the Purefoy Letters to chair-making on a fairly large scale in 1736. Elizabeth Purefoy wrote to a Mr. King of 'Bircester' ordering about 20 chairs, mentioning those 'of wallnut tree frames with 4 legs without any Barrs', which he had made for Mr. Vaux of Caversfield. Three months later she was writing to speed their delivery.⁴⁷

Many inventories mention an 'old wheele'. As these are sometimes associated with either wool or yarn or hemp, they are probably indicative of the extent to which spinning was still an everyday household activity. Only those who describe themselves as weavers by trade, however, seem to have owned looms, which of course take up far more room than spinning-wheels. The earliest weaver's inventory in this collection is Humphrey Alexander's⁴⁸ (1631). His 'ij lombes with the ffurnitures thereunto belonging' stood in his shop and were valued at £3. The chamber over the shop contained 'ij wheeles, woollin yearne'—(one can hear the broad Oxfordshire pronunciation in the spelling)—and hemp and 'corse wooll'; another useful item is 'v yeard of woollin cloth and webnoll xv^s'. Seven pairs of hempen sheets are listed among his personal possessions, as well as two 'handwypers', and there was a 'paynted cloth' in the hall: he had probably woven them all. Painted cloths first appear in the inventory of William Linney⁴⁹ in 1622: 'Item all the painted Cloathes in the chamber over the parlour praised att iiij^s'. Made of canvas stretched on a wooden frame and then painted or stained with pictures, they were a cheap and cheerful substitute for tapestry.

⁴⁴ *Ib.*: 30/4/4.

⁴⁵ *Ib.*: 35/1/16.

⁴⁶ *Ib.*: 26/3/15; 26/3/14.

⁴⁷ *Purefoy Letters 1735-53*; ed. G. Eland (1931), vol. 1, p. 102.

⁴⁸ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 1/5/45.

⁴⁹ *Ib.*: 41/3/14.

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Linney was a fuller; among the £14 worth of household linen in the chamber over his parlour were 'fyne', 'fflexon', 'Course' and 'hallon' (holland) sheets, diaper tablecloths and a towel and two 'Cambrick face Cloathes'. He also had nineteen skeins of linen yarn, with hemp and other lumber 'praised att wth a quisschon (cushion) x^s'. Ten pounds of wool and ten pounds of raw hemp were valued at 8s. Such detailed references to raw materials are rare. Earlier still, in 1600 Humphrey Hunt's will⁵⁰ makes six bequests of 'Reffice woole'; one tod of this was left to William Linney himself. The 'worke howes' of Thomas Hughes⁵¹ in 1677 contained '2 wevares loomes with Geares', worth £1; an unusual item is 'a peece of new wolyn cloth with 3 Carpettes', £1 10s. od. It seems reasonable to suppose that some at least of his 'napkines 10 dosones six and twenty pares of sheetes with other linen and eyght shurtes'—worth £3 10s. od. all told—were intended for sale. The latest weaver's inventory is that of Richard Bass,⁵² the only jersey weaver on our list. Dated 1715, it gives some interesting technical details: besides four looms, the shop contained a warping-mill, a twisting-mill and 'giers and sleas', worth altogether £8. 'Sleas' may perhaps be a corruption of 'sleave', a trade term for floss-silk; the reader will recall Macbeth's 'ravell'd sleave of care'. The jersey comber Thomas Timms,⁵³ who died in 1723, was the latest of all our clothworkers, but he left no inventory.

A brief reference to the stock-in-trade of a mason is made in the will of Robert Thomas⁵⁴ in 1732. He left all his stones at Blackthorn Pits to his son Joseph 'as paving pitching stadle stones and waling and lime stone etc.'. Staddle-stones can still be seen in the neighbourhood; they were the mushroom-shaped stones on which granaries were raised to keep away rats. There is a particularly good example of such a building at Manor Farm, Bucknell. Ricks were often built on a foundation of staddle-stones, too. In 1703 Anne Bellow left '2 wheat Rickes and stattles', worth £33.⁵⁵

Details of the baker's equipment are rather scattered. The earliest references to it are in John Hinton's inventory⁵⁶ of 1621. He had £15 worth of wheat and other corn in the garners; the bakehouse contained a furnace, a pan, a brake, two moulding boards and two troughs; over the oven there was a hair cloth. It is startling to read of 'an old witch' in his shop, but the term was used to mean a chest or coffer; the shop also contained an old

⁵⁰ *Ib.*: 29/3/52.

⁵¹ *Ib.*: 132/2/18.

⁵² *Ib.*: 116/3/37.

⁵³ *Ib.*: 67/4/23.

⁵⁴ *Ib.*: 67/4/34.

⁵⁵ *Ib.*: 8/3/23.

⁵⁶ *Ib.*: 30/4/4.

cupboard, old iron, one 'boord' (or table) and shelves with the bread; its whole contents were worth 13s. 4d. Richard Clarke,⁵⁷ though he was a mercer, left his 'Cake Printe the greate Peele and the bread weights' to a friend. The peel was the baker's long-handled shovel used for putting the loaves in the oven and taking them out. Gabriel Ford⁵⁸ in 1704 left his 'Bolting Mill Dowtrofe Molding bords and oven' to be equally divided between his three daughters. The bolting-mill was used for sifting flour; Ford kept his in the room over the bakehouse; together with a bedstead, bed and linen it was valued at £8. The moulding boards, print, 'a peelis' and other lumber in the bakehouse itself were reckoned at £1. He kept his bread in the buttery. Jonathan Jagger,⁵⁹ who died in 1766, owned a windmill as well as a bakehouse.

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries the principal industry in and round Bicester was agriculture. Of the thirty-nine people whose wills show them to have been entirely engaged in it, three are designated as farmers, there is one dairyman, one grazier, nine husbandmen, four labourers, three shepherds and eighteen yeomen; three more yeomen and a shepherd are mentioned incidentally in other people's wills.⁶⁰ Before the parliamentary enclosures took place, the arable land of Bicester lay either in the Home Field, Middle Field and Further Field of Market End Manor, or in Big Common and Little Common at King's End. The distribution of both arable and pasture is clearly delineated on a map of 1754 now in the possession of the Urban District Council. Thomas Williams, on whose survey of 1753 it is based, was concerned chiefly to show the ownership of land in the Market End fields before the Enclosure Act, which was passed in 1757.⁶¹ The division into furlongs is clear and there is a full key to the ownership of the strips into which they were divided; the King's End fields are, however, shown in outline only, for they remained open until almost the end of the century.⁶² Evidence from the 14th and 16th centuries shows that the size of the yardland in Market End and the adjacent manor of Wretchwick varied from twenty-six acres to thirty.⁶³ The wills make many references to the ownership of land in the common fields. Gabriel Ford,⁶⁴ dying in 1704, left seven acres and one 'land' to his three daughters. Four of these acres, described as shooting on the

⁵⁷ P.C.C. Berkeley 4; fol. 169.

⁵⁸ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 127/4/10.

⁵⁹ *Ib.*: 137/3/38.

⁶⁰ V. Table A, pp. 248-51 above for dates of their wills.

⁶¹ V.p. 253 above for map based on it.

⁶² 33 Geo. III, c. 45 (priv.).

⁶³ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, vi, p. 25 (n. 38).

⁶⁴ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 127/4/10.

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stone-pits and also near Deddington highway, must have been in Further Field; the other three were next to Stratton Audley footway and shooting into Bicester Moor, part of the Home Field. Traces of the former Deddington Road exist today in the way leading from Queen's Avenue past the schools to Highfield, while Moor Pond in Launton Road indicates where Bicester Moor used to be. A field with the delightful name of Swansnest is mentioned in the wills of Mary Lileate⁶⁵ (1647/8) and Richard Dumbleton⁶⁶ (1734). Dumbleton also had a Lammas close. Today the Garth estate occupies some of the old lammas-land while the railway line from Oxford to Bletchley runs through another part of it; Swansnest is part of the sewage-farm. Two of the wills made after the enclosure of Market End are of interest for their references to land. Elizabeth Shillingford⁶⁷ left her 'Now Inclosed Ground' in the Moor in trust for the maintenance of her grand-daughter in 1768. Richard Bull,⁶⁸ who is mentioned in the Enclosure Act as one of the two tythingmen, left his nephew 'All that Lott and Plott of Ground lying in Bicester Market End . . . which was allotted to Me in lieu of the Commons' belonging to his freehold messuage. This land was chargeable with the payment of a shilling each to his brother and sister whenever they should demand it.

Inventories of those who worked the land are often interesting for the details they give of crops, stock and implements. The earliest is that of the husbandman Roger Sumner⁶⁹ (1608/9): his two kine and a heifer were worth £7; he owned nineteen sheep valued at £4, two store hogs worth 10s., another hog also worth 10s., four hens and a cock assessed at 2s. and £5 worth of corn and hay. The value of sheep rose in the next twenty years, for the ten left by Simon Porter,⁷⁰ a King's End shepherd, were reckoned at £3 6s. 8d., but his cow and calf were jointly worth only £2 10s. 0d. A rise in the price of animals, however, was general in the rest of the century. The Kirdford inventories, for instance, show a rise in the value of a cow from 45s. in the 17th century to 60s. in the 1740's.⁷¹ John Smith,⁷² a Bicester yeoman, left four cows worth £9 3s. 0d. in 1694. Henry Tanner's inventory,⁷³ drawn up in 1695, not only throws light on values but is also amusing for its peculiar spelling:

⁶⁵ *Ib.*: 139/2/33.

⁶⁶ *Ib.*: 19/3/3.

⁶⁷ *Ib.*: 64/1/2.

⁶⁸ *Ib.*: 118/4/32.

⁶⁹ *Ib.*: 58/4/30.

⁷⁰ *Ib.*: 144/2/6.

⁷¹ *Sussex Arch. Coll.*, vol. 93, p. 106.

⁷² Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 62/4/15.

⁷³ *Ib.*: 67/3/4.

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Six Hores (horses) and there gerres be long in too them	16	00	00
Nine bees (beehives) valled at	26	00	00
Six score sheep and teges valled at	32	00	00
too Reckes of whete som in the barren (barn)	40	00	00
the barrley valled at	90	00	00
the pese and otes and dilles	15	10	00
ffive Cockes of Hay	20	00	00
the wagin, fore Carrates (carts) too plows			
And hrrowes and other Emplimentes	09	10	00
flore Hoges and a Sowe and hur piges	07	00	00

All this amounted to £256.

The appraisers who drew up an inventory of David Beamsley⁷⁴ the grazier's possessions in 1720 were careful men who quoted the value of single animals as well as working out the total; the historian is duly grateful. They valued a cow at £3 15s. 0d., a mare at £2 10s. 0d. and a calf at 10s., as well as giving particulars of the different kinds of sheep. A wether was worth a guinea, a teg⁷⁵ 9s. 6d., a ewe with her lamb 13s., a barren ewe 11s. Beamsley's cart was worth £2 while his sheep pen and two gates were reckoned at 7s. 6d. It is an illuminating and unusual glimpse into the husbandry of the period. A decade later the inventory of Richard Wiggs,⁷⁶ the only dairyman on the list, is also useful. He made cheese on a fairly large scale, judging by the eighteen cheese vats, the two cheese tubs and one cheese press in his dairy which also contained two churns, six milk-buckets and one 'dou civer' (a tub for bread-making). His stock comprised fourteen cows, one bull and one calf. 'Cow clatts' are mentioned twice, once in the cowhouse and again, coupled with wood, in the overhouse. This implies the use of dung to eke out other fuel. Beamsley also kept a good flock of sheep, consisting of ten sheep (type unspecified), twenty ewes and twenty-five lambs, twenty-three tegs, ten wethers and one ram. Most of them were pastured 'in the hill-ground'. His wool and cheese chambers were well stocked with the appropriate produce. John Smith's inventory⁷⁷ of 1694 mentions the wooden cow-ties used to put across the animals' shoulders while they were wintering in the cow-house, and the standards to which the ties were attached. Ralph Clements had six 'cart geldings and mares wth their harnesse' in his stable in 1624, an unusually early reference to cart-horses;⁷⁸ another of his possessions was a 'bearelep saddle', that is, a pack-saddle with panniers. Only three pack-saddles are mentioned in this collection, the first being in John Hinton's⁷⁹

⁷⁴ *Ib.*: 8/5/2.

⁷⁵ Wether: a male sheep, esp. a castrated ram. Teg: a sheep in its 2nd year; formerly restricted to female (both *N.E.D.*).

⁷⁶ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 157/4/7.

⁷⁷ *Ib.*: 62/4/15.

⁷⁸ *Ib.*: 120/1/29; cf. *Sussex Arch. Coll.*, vol. 93, p. 107.

⁷⁹ *Ib.*: 30/4/4.

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inventory of 1621. Evidence of oxen having been used for transport is conspicuously lacking.

Bequests of crops or beasts were sometimes specified in the 17th century wills examined, but no such examples were found in the 18th century ones. Wylliam Wykyns,⁸⁰ a yeoman belonging to a family that had been prominent in Bicester during the Tudor period, in 1622 left a married daughter six bushels of maslin⁸¹ and two of malt, to be delivered to her 'as she shall use it'. A rather similar bequest was made by John Triplett⁸² in 1637 to Jone, his second wife. She was to have one quarter of wheat and one quarter of malt, which he reckoned would serve her for bread corn and drink corn for six months. The husbandman Christopher Hall⁸³ (1615) left his daughter Mary his brown cow; another daughter, Alice, was to have the 'pide heyfar' and his son-in-law was left the black heifer in place of the 40s. Hall had promised him at the time of his marriage. The calf of his 'stard cove' was to go to his grandson Edmund Hall, whose turn it was to have a calf weaned for him. Other wills of 1607⁸⁴ and 1621⁸⁵ give further examples. The latest comes from the will of John Box⁸⁶ in 1700, who left his son-in-law his cow and all his sheep at pasture in the common fields, and bequeathed all his bees and bee-hives to his daughter Anne Swift and his son Joseph.

In spite of its obvious limitations the information given in both the wills and the inventories makes it possible to visualize clearly both the versatility of individual tradesmen and the conditions prevailing in particular trades. Take, for instance, Edward Hemins' will⁸⁷ (1745) which describes him as a clockmaker and a gunsmith, referring to the 'Workhouse or Shop called or known by the Name of the ffoundering shop'. He was, however, also the last of his family to make bells in Bicester; their foundry gave its name to Bell Lane. Edward Hemins whose Church bells are to be found all over the county ran it from 1728 to 1743.⁸⁸ As late as 1792 a baker called Gabriel

⁸⁰ *Ib.*: 70/2/4.

⁸¹ Maslin: a mixed grain, esp. rye mixed with wheat (*N.E.D.*).

⁸² Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 66/2/23.

⁸³ *Ib.*: 30/2/29.

⁸⁴ *Ib.*: 58/4/14.

⁸⁵ *Ib.*: 70/2/5.

⁸⁶ *Ib.*: 116/1/5.

⁸⁷ *Ib.*: 134/4/53.

⁸⁸ F. Sharpe: 'The Bicester Bell Foundry', article in *The Bicester Advertiser*, 11th May 1951. *The Reading Mercury* of 4th June 1744 contained this advertisement: 'Whereas the ingenious Edward Hemmins, Clock maker in Bicester, Oxon, is lately deceas'd, and has left Several very curious Pieces of Work, Some of which are unfinish'd: This is therefore to acquaint any Person that is a very good Hand, and can come well recommended, that he may meet with good Encouragement by applying to his Executors, John Walker, Richard Walls, and Joseph Hemmins, who live in the same town. N.B. They will be secure from being press'd during their being employ'd by the above Persons.' I am grateful to Dr. C. Beeson of Adderbury both for supplying this reference and for calling my attention to the fine lantern clock in the Painted Room at Oxford, inscribed "Edward Hemmins, Bister".

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Maynard⁸⁹ also had a hemp-shop in Bicester, cultivated part of the Garden-ground near Crockwell, farmed two copyholds in Launton and owned the mills at Weston-on-the-Green which his son occupied. In the previous century, John Hinton,⁹⁰ for example, was a baker; his will, proved in 1621, mentions land in Bicester fields; his inventory specifies three 'lands' of barley and one of pease, worth 20s.; he owned 40s. worth of wood at Farn-don, one mare, two nags and four sheep valued at £4 and other sheep worth 30s.; he evidently brewed his own beer and spun his own woollen yarn. He also owned the only wheel-plough mentioned in these inventories. More than fifty years later Thomas Hughes was a weaver⁹¹ according to his will, yet his appraisers described him as an innholder. They listed, 'In the worke howes 2 wevares loomes with the Geares—£01:0:00. In the brewin kittchin furnis, the bords over head, with the wrestt of the brewin vessill and other Lumbar 02:0:00'. He also had 'Cheeseis in the cheese Chamber with cheese bordes oatmeall and other Lumbar 02:0:00'. Thomas King,⁹² the glover who died in 1686 was clearly also an innholder on a large scale. His inventory lists the contents of 'the Crown Chamber', 'ye Dulfen Chamber', 'ye nagg heade Chamber', 'the Sargants head Chamber'; even 'the woole Chamber' and the garrets contained beds. His twenty pairs of sheets and a dozen towels are further evidence of his hospitality. Yet he was something of a farmer too. He had three acres of arable in Crockwell fields. The use to which he put that and his homestall can be judged from these items:

two Cows	£05	00	00
one mare	02	10	00
one oatte Ricke	04	00	00
one Pease Ricke	03	10	00
two Haye Ricks	07	00	00
Corne in the Barne	11	00	00
Haye on the Scuffells	01	00	00
Dung in the Yard	01	00	00
two hogs four store pigs	03	00	00
Corn: in the fields	02	00	00

Animals and crops thus provided £40 of his whole wealth of just over £363. Not a single item in his inventory relates to the glove trade!

Some of the most interesting particulars about agriculture are thus seen to come from documents left by tradesmen of many different kinds to whom

⁸⁹ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 142/4/30.

⁹⁰ *Ib.*: 30/4/4.

⁹¹ *Ib.*: 132/2/18.

⁹² *Ib.*: 138/2/25.

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farming was an important sideline. Table B⁹³ classifies these people by occupations and also gives the available details of their land, the crops and produce they derived from it and the animals and poultry they owned. The five butchers specified there have their counterpart in Bicester today. John Jeffes'⁹⁴ 'halfe a Bull' shows that some at least of the stock-breeding must have been on a communal basis not unlike that used by Scottish crofters today. The importance of wood is emphasized by the £120 that was owing to the linendraper James Clarke⁹⁵ for 'wood debts' when he died in 1688-9. Christopher Hanwell,⁹⁶ a maltster who died in 1630, did not use his land purely to produce malt and barley for his trade. He left four acres of winter corn on the ground, six bushels of pease threshed and three tods of wool, besides hay, straw and a little stack of winter corn and pease. His animals included pigs, two bullocks and a weaner and forty-eight sheep, besides seven shillingsworth of poultry. His family was evidently left well-provided. The blacksmith Matthew Leaper⁹⁷ who died in 1637 left £23 worth of corn and grain, some in the barns, some on ricks and the rest in the fields. His share of hay in the houses was reckoned at £5 and £3 covered his share of the crop in the neighbouring manor of Caversfield; he had five tods of wool worth £5. He kept animals, six milch cows, one bull, one little calf, two colts and about six score of small sheep. His 'part in the (plough) team' gives further evidence of communal farming. Together with carts, ploughs and harrows it was valued at £6. He also had swine and poultry worth 30s. Such a man must surely have spent more time in the open air than in labouring at his anvil.

Table C⁹⁸ shows how the 267 people considered in Table A are distributed in the various trades on a percentage basis. 227 of them, or 84.99 per cent of the whole, are to be found in twenty trades or professions, while twenty-nine minor occupations account for 14.98 per cent. The largest group, 16.1 per cent of the total, worked on the land in one capacity or another; next in individual importance were the innkeepers and maltsters, who form 10.48 per cent, with the twenty-five servants who account for 9.36 per cent. A middle group consisting of those who supplied meat, shoes, clothing of various kinds and bread, together make up 28.47 per cent. At the other end of the scale are eleven occupations with two representatives each and eighteen with only one. Those who head the list, farmers, innkeepers,

⁹³ V. below, pp. 266-7.

⁹⁴ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 38/1/17.

⁹⁵ *Ib.*: 14/4/24.

⁹⁶ *Ib.*: 31/3/1.

⁹⁷ *Ib.*: 139/2/16.

⁹⁸ V. below, p. 268.

TABLE B

TO ILLUSTRATE LACK OF SPECIALIZATION

Trade and Name	Date	Land held	Crops and derivations	Animals and Poultry
BAKERS				
Bayles, H.	1657	Lease of certain land in Blackthorn	Pease, barley, wood, furzes £4 os. od.	Horse with pack saddle and panniers £2
Ford, G.	1704	7 acres and 1 land in Bicester fields £20	Wood £3 10s. od.; timber in field and backside £2 os. od.	
Hinton, J. (also brewed and spun)	1621	Land in Bicester fields	3 lands barley and 1 pease 20s. Wood at Farndon 40s.	Swine and poultry 30s. 1 mare, 2 nags, 1 sheep £4
Jagger, J.	1766	Windmill and windmill ground		
Maynard, G. (hempdresser too)	1792	2 copyholds in Launton Garden ground near Crockwell Mills at Weston-on-the-Green		
Wall, G.	1732	Launton land Land in Bicester field		
BUTCHERS				
Bowler, H.	1720	'Baulcings Mead' at Ambrosden		2 beasts £6 6s. od.
Jakeman, R.	1625			1 mare and hay 33s. 4d.
Jeffs, J.	1681	'In the fiede'		1 hog 10s. 1 horse £2 10s. od. '3 Cows and halfe a Bull' £8 10s. od. 22 Sheep £9 (Dung 3s.)
Lock, B.	1692	Share in bailiwick land 1 acre 'shooting one Thomas Sheirmans hadland'	Cock of hay £5 Pease and barley £7 10s. od. Wood and furze £3 8s. od.	
Lock, E.	1705	7 acres in Caversfield		
CORDWAINERS				
Parsons, R.	1639	4 lands	with wheat and masling £1 10s. od.	1 mare and hay
Smith, E.	1701			1 cow £2 15s. od.
DRAPERS				
Clarke, J. (linendraper)	1688-9	110 acres of wood in U. Arncott and a home-close there Nursery Close and arable land in Common fields at Feltham, Mdx.	A rick of hay and wood with ('Wood debts: £120')	1 mare £6 os. od.
Paxton, T. (haberdasher)	1634			1 mare £3 os. od. 1 sow and pigs
FELLMONGERS				
Guise, F.	1714	Share of 9 ridges of arable in Burcester field, 2 cow commons and 1 horse common		
Guyes, T.	1702	9 ridges of arable in common fields of Burcester Market End and 2 commons (Will) 4 acres of land and one 'Yerd' and a small piece nr. the freehold £20 (Inv.)	Hay, wheat, malt, beans and corn on the ground £7 os. od. Wool £30 os. od.	Horse £2 os. od.
GLOVERS				
Deely, M.	1674-5		A parcel of hay (and other lumber) £3 8s. 6d.	1 cow; 1 little horse

Trade and Name	Date	Land held	Crops and derivations	Animals and Poultry
King, T. (also an inn-keeper)	1686	3 acres of arable in Crockwell fields (Will) Reversion of lease of land in fields £50 (Inv.)	1 oat-rick £4 os. od.; 2 hay ricks £7 1 pease rick £3 10s. od. Corn in the barn £11 os. od. Hay on the 'scuffells' £1 os. od. Wood and timber £10 os. od. Corn in the fields £2 os. od.	2 cows £5 os. od. 1 mare £2 10s. od. 2 hogs, 4 store pigs £3 os. od.
Nottingham, T. INNKEEPERS	1690	Commons (no further detail)		
Goodwin, S.	1724		Corn, hay, straw, wood	Hogs
Hughes, T. (Will: weaver and Inv.: innholder)	1677		Wood, hay, furze, coal, cheeses	2 cows, 3 hogs
Potter, H.	1625		Hay £20	2 boars, rest of swine and poultry—all £7 os. od.
MALTSTERS Allen, R. Chillingworth, J.	1720 1649	In Bissiter fields; also at Caversfield	12 qtrs. malt £12 os. od. Wood £9 13s. 4d. Straw, hay (and boards) £2 os. od. Oats and hay £2 os. od. Malt, barley (and malting implements) all £70 os. od. Hay and straw £5 6s. od. Wood and furze £3 10s. od. Straw and a little stack of winter corn and pease £4 os. od. 4 acres winter corn on ground £3 Wood (and hovels) £7 10s. od. 2 cocks hay and straw £4 os. od. 18 qtrs. malt £19 os. od. 6 bushels pease threshed 20s. 6 bushels wheat and masling 20s. 3 tods wool £3 6s. od. 7½ qtrs. barley £7 10s. od. Malt in the garners £130 Wood and straw £3 5s. od. 20 qtrs. malt and barley £14 os. od. Hay, straw, small parcel of beans £1 os. od. Wood £2 os. od. Corn on ground and in barn £2 os. od. Wool and hemp yarn (and 2 spinning wheels) £1 10s. od. Malt, corn, grain	1 cow £2 os. od. 1 beehive
Dodd, J.	1671	Reversion of lease of house and lands £150		
Gomm, R.	1684			1 horse, 1 pig £3 10s. od.
Hanwell, C.	1630	(At least) 4 acres		2 hogs and 2 stores £3 os. od. 3 beasts, 2 bullocks and a weaner £7 os. od. 48 sheep £10 os. od. Poultry 7s.
Harris, R.	1702			
Lyne, W.	1643-4			2 heifers, 1 pig, 5 hens and a cock £3 os. od.
Stallion, F.	1707	In fields of Burcester; also in Leighton Buzzard and Launton		

NOTE:

Of the 227 listed in first part of Table C, 85 were either farmers, servants, gentlemen or clergy and are therefore omitted here. That leaves 142 tradesmen of various kinds, 89 of whom left wills and/or inventories, belonging to the 20 major occupations. Of these 89, 31 mention land and/or crops and animals, i.e. 34·83%.

TABLE C

Percentage of people engaged in certain trades or occupations

Total number considered = 267

Number of Workers	Trade or occupation	Percentage of whole
43	agriculture	16.10
28	innkeepers and maltsters	10.49
25	servants	9.36
16	butchers	5.99
16	cordwainers	5.99
15	drapers	5.62
10	glovers	3.75
10	tailors	3.75
9	bakers	3.37
9	gentlemen	3.37
9	masons	3.37
8	clergymen	3.00
5	clerks	1.87
5	fellmongers	1.87
4	hemdressers	1.50
3	gunsmiths	1.12
3	carpenters	1.12
3	chapmen	1.12
3	curriers	1.12
3	victuallers	1.12
227 in 20 leading trades		85.00%
22	2 each { blacksmiths collarmakers coopers grocers ironmongers surgeons slaters spinstresses tanners weavers wheelwrights	14.98%
	1 each { attorney-at-law brazier carrier churchwarden clockmaker clothworker (fuller) gardener glazier handicraftsman jersey-comber jersey-weaver miller periwig-maker saddler salesman soldier tallow-chandler tobacconist	
18		
40 people in 29 minor trades		
		99.98% total correct to 2 decimal places

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servants and suppliers of food and other necessities, are what one might expect in a small country town; it is a pattern that remained characteristic of Bicester until well into the 20th century. Home Farm in King's End continued the traditional way of life until 1955 when its land was lost for building a housing estate. There were still in 1960 sixteen public houses.

Of all the people mentioned as practising trades in Bicester during our period, eighty-nine left wills, many of which are accompanied by inventories. Thirty-one of these refer to land or crops and animals, or to both; thus 34.83 per cent of the tradesmen were also farmers, often to a considerable degree. Although in so small a sample it would be dangerous to rely too much on exact figures, it is clear that agriculture and trade were not mutually exclusive occupations in this town. Sometimes more than one trade was combined with farming; it would appear from such cases as those of Richard Bull⁹⁹ and Gabriel Maynard¹⁰⁰ that parliamentary enclosure had done little to increase specialization by 1800. Edward Hemins' combination of several crafts, mentioned earlier, is further evidence of a mixed economy. Whereas the contemporary tradesmen of Petworth had only a trifling stake in the land,¹⁰¹ it is clear that Bicestrians often preferred to have their eggs in more than one basket. The variety of their interests must surely have helped them to lead full and satisfying lives.

Yet wills and inventories cannot be used to paint the whole picture: in real life, for example, there must have been more than one miller in two centuries while thatchers are not represented in our list at all. Both the making of wills and their survival are largely matters of chance and only an approximation of the truth can be gleaned from them. Shortly after the Bicester inventories cease, some valuable additional information about the town's trades is to be found in the Purefoy Letters.¹⁰² Mrs. Elizabeth Purefoy was a widow who lived with her son Henry at Shalstone, a village lying between Buckingham and Brackley. While their luxury shopping was done in London, they made use of all the market towns within easy reach; Brackley supplied their builders and carpenters, together with the materials they needed for maintenance, horses came from Banbury fair, blankets from Witney, and Bicester they found useful for sundries and to supply them with servants. The walnut chairs, mentioned above, which the widow ordered in 1736, may have been for the servants' hall, for it was at a time when mahogany was fashionable in great houses. Her second letter to the chair-maker asks for

⁹⁹ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 118/4/32.

¹⁰⁰ *Ib.*: 142/4/30.

¹⁰¹ *Sussex Arch. Coll.*, vol. 96, p. 87.

¹⁰² I am grateful to Lady de Villiers for calling my attention to their numerous letters relating to Bicester.

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his reply to be sent by 'one of your Town cutlers that keep Brackley market'.¹⁰³ A similar instruction two years later names Mr. Kester Clerke,¹⁰⁴ 'the Bister cutler', again at Brackley market; several of the letters say 'Carriage paid 2d.'. In 1740 the family dealt with Mr. Woodfield,¹⁰⁵ a mercer of 'Bicester'; Mrs. Purefoy ordered eight yards of cloth from a pattern he had sent. Her letter continues: 'I hope 4s. a yard will do for it, and send twelve yards of the yellow Padua serge and brass Buttons enough for the 2 waistcoats and frocks & stay tape & thread & silk & all materials for them except Buckrom'. A month or so later she ordered from him '5 yards of 3 quarter camlett, I don't care much what colour so it is but strong, 'tis for a charity coat for a girl'. In June 1741 she had to order material for another frock and waistcoat, as a footman had gone away taking his clothes with him. This time Mr. Woodfield was asked to supply mohair thread and a yard of fustian for the pockets.

From 1739 to 1741 a Bicester girl called Mary Blake was apparently Mrs. Purefoy's personal maid. At her suggestion Mrs. Purefoy wrote to Mary's mother¹⁰⁶ asking her to send a 'Cook maid that can roast and boyll butcher's meat and flowlls' and a 'Dairy-maid that can manage a small dairy & clean an House'. Both were to 'have a character of their honesty and sobriety'. After Mary came back to live in Bicester she herself was asked to find a man-servant to look after the garden and upon occasion to wait at table, as well as a maid to fill her own old place.¹⁰⁷ Thomas Edwards obtained the gardener's job in September 1745, and three months later, when his employer wrote again to Mary Blake asking for a cook-maid and a foot-boy, he told her of a suitable lad who lived at 'Mr. Penrose the Apothecaries' in Bicester.¹⁰⁸ Edwards' father supplied vegetable seeds for them in 1746,¹⁰⁹ although Thomas himself left Shalstone after twelve months. As they needed both to replace him and also to find another cook-maid—this time, one who could manage their little dairy of three cows as well as cook—they decided to take Edwards' advice and visit the Statute Fair in Bicester on Friday October 3rd 1746.¹¹⁰ This was the regular time for hiring servants, both indoor and outdoor. A print of about 1860 shows a line of posts jutting out into the Market Place at an awkward angle, in front of the Red Lion Inn. Behind them stood those who wished to be hired, wearing tokens such as the carter's

¹⁰³ *Purefoy Letters*, vol. 1, p. 103.

¹⁰⁴ *Ib.*: p. 165.

¹⁰⁵ *Ib.*: II, pp. 306-7.

¹⁰⁶ *Ib.*: I, p. 139.

¹⁰⁷ *Ib.*: p. 150.

¹⁰⁸ *Ib.*: p. 151.

¹⁰⁹ *Ib.*: p. 95.

¹¹⁰ *Ib.*: p. 152.

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whipcord to denote their trade; the hiring-period was for a year; both master and servant could be punished for breaking their contract. While they were in Bicester the Purefoys put up at Mrs. Potter's at the King's Arms Inn, precisely as one would expect gentlefolk to do. They met Mary Blake. She was still being asked to find them servants in 1751, after she had married.¹¹¹ John Blake, her brother, occasionally did odd jobs for the family. When Henry Purefoy felled some oaks he asked John to arrange for the Bicester Town Crier to cry the sale and sent 6d. to pay for it.¹¹²

An unsatisfactory workman is brought to light in some forthright letters written by Henry Purefoy to Mr. Ball, a Bicester clockmaker.¹¹³ On March 8th 1735/6 he writes: 'When you was here ye 17th of Jan. last you promised to bring me an Allarum of a guinea price in a month or six weeks time and to take ye Clock Allarum again and give me a guinea and an half in money. The Clock Allarum has not gone since you was here neither can I make it go & I am unwilling to let anybody else meddle with it, as thinking it not a credit for it to be known that you make a thing not to perform as it should do'. The cutler was to bring a reply to be left at a Brackley baker's, stating whether or not Ball accepted the order and, if so, what day he would bring over the guinea alarm. 'Now the roads are so good' Purefoy hoped he would see him soon. By the end of July, however, he was complaining once more; the alarm had again failed, within a week of being repaired at the cost of a shilling by a local man. This time Purefoy's condemnation is absolute: 'I am credibly informed 'tis a mean piece of work & will not perform, so 'tis good for nothing to mee. Pray come over here & make it good to mee, which will save me the Trouble of giving you further trouble, for I am resolved not to be imposed on in this manner'.

The letters also contain an interesting reference to a Bicester chimney sweep in 1738.¹¹⁴ This man, Samuel Hind, was addressed c/o Mr. William Meads, the Rose and Crown. He failed to turn up at Michaelmas, as appointed, but went to Shalstone with his boy on December 8th. It seems a long way for a sweep to be fetched. The whole correspondence, however, shows how Bicester was regarded over a wide area as a source of useful people and plain, generally reliable goods. It is thus an excellent supplement to the narrower view gained from the wills and inventories of the townspeople themselves.

During the period under investigation, what standards of housing, furnishing and personal comfort prevailed in the town? Prints of the mid-19th

¹¹¹ *Ib.*: p. 156.

¹¹² *Ib.*: p. 40.

¹¹³ *Ib.*: p. 114.

¹¹⁴ *Ib.*: p. 83.

century¹¹⁵ show how the town most probably looked at a much earlier date. On the east side of Water Lane (now Chapel Street), which was then the main road to London, about half the two-storeyed houses had been enlarged by the addition of dormer-windows in the roof; some of the roofs were tiled, others remained thatched. Chimneys were generally placed at the gable-ends. One house of a single bay had a jettied first floor. Another house with a jettied upper storey, a half-timbered building, survived on the opposite side of the road until about 1940. Other cottages there, probably of 17th century origin, were of two storeys with diamond-paned windows; another pair had dormer windows; these were demolished in 1961. A print of New Buildings shows the turnpike across the northern end of Sheep Street. There were still one or two single-storeyed thatched cottages; one had been extended with an eyebrow dormer under the thatch; the rest were of two stories. In Church Street, the Six Bells Inn and the Swan, dated respectively 'TNI 1676' and 'EME 1681', speak well for the taste of the Restoration period. The 20th century has, however, exacted a heavy toll of buildings. Variegated brick has been plastered over or rough-cast, as at Mary's Café in Sheep Street in 1961, and the desire for up-to-date shop fronts is altering houses out of all recognition. Casualties of the mid-century have included a row of thatched cottages in King's End, built about 1790, another in Crockwell probably of the 17th century, and more on the south side of Bell Lane or lying behind the main buildings in North Street. Most of these were originally thatched houses built of coursed rubble with walls about eighteen inches thick. In Crockwell the front door led straight into the living room, the floor of which was well below the level of the pavement and consisted of tiles laid directly on the earth; a staircase built into the wall, reached through a cupboard-like door, led to the first floor, consisting of one proper bedroom and a landing with space for another bed. The night-soil cart collected the contents of the privies here, but in Water Lane where the stream that runs through the town had been artificially channelled at some date prior to 1753, to run a short distance behind the houses, there were privies at the bottom of the garden with the seats placed directly over the stream, still in use in 1940. In the old part of the town almost all the houses are entered straight from the pavement, although some of them still have attractive walled gardens behind.

Eighty-one of the inventories give details of rooms and, by naming them, make it possible to judge the size of the house. Table D tabulates this information, while Table E is the graph of distribution.¹¹⁶ As the latter shows, two houses had only a single room while seven had two; thus 11.1 per

¹¹⁵ E.g. *V.C.H. Oxon.*, vi, p. 47.

¹¹⁶ V. below, pp. 274-7 and p. 278.

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cent of the total consists of nine houses with sixteen rooms between them. Eight three-roomed houses and thirteen each with four or five rooms, a total of thirty-four houses comprising 141 rooms, form 41.97 per cent, the largest group, 22.2 per cent of the houses had six, seven or eight rooms, while a further 22.2 per cent were houses with from nine to twelve rooms. One inventory mentions sixteen rooms and another twenty, together accounting for 2.47 per cent of the whole; the twenty rooms of Henry Potter¹¹⁷ in 1625, however, seem to belong, from the names given, to a number of inns rather than one building. The Flower-de-Luce, which was somewhere in Sheep Street, the Black Boy, now No. 30 Market Square, and the Half-Moon (whereabouts unknown) are all included in his total; obviously the inventories must be used with caution. Yet they make it clear that in Bicester the majority of houses had from three to five rooms, while in the Petworth inventories 55 per cent of the houses had five or six rooms, and in those of mid-Essex¹¹⁸ the majority group contained six, seven or eight rooms, so that Bicester people were clearly less prosperous in terms of house-property than the householders of either Petworth or mid-Essex.

The single-roomed households of our inventories cannot be guaranteed as separate buildings. In 1728 those who valued the 'few goods' of Thomas Hurles,¹¹⁹ who described himself as 'Gent', made their list 'in his only room where he lived'; it was furnished with a bedstead worth £1 with its curtains, 'valiants' and rods; his bed, bolster and one pillow were reckoned at £2 2s. 6d., a coverlet and blanket at 4s.; two wooden chairs, a large chest and old woollen and linen clothes brought his worldly estate to the sum total of £4 1s. 6d. As there is no mention of any facility for cooking Hurles may have rented his room and boarded with the household. His bequests imply that he belonged originally to Wootton Underwood, so that he may have sought refuge in Bicester when his estate decayed. Elenor Bull's¹²⁰ 'Chamber where shee sojourned' was, however, so fully furnished that it may perhaps have been a medieval hall-house. When she died in 1696 it contained one bedstead with curtains, valance, mat and cord, equipped with a featherbed, bolster and pillows; there were also a flock-bed, two blankets and two coverlets. Her wooden furniture consisted of a chest, a cupboard, a table, two boxes, one joined chair, two joined stools, a leather chair, three 'flagg bottom' or rush-seated chairs and a trencher rack. She had ten pairs of sheets and other

¹¹⁷ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 144/1/38. For Potters of King's Arms: C.R.O. Misc. Pe IV.

¹¹⁸ *Sussex Arch. Coll.*, vol. 96, p. 54; and F. W. Steer: *Farm and Cottage Inventories of Mid-Essex, 1635-1749* (1950), a book of which I have made use throughout.

¹¹⁹ *Ib.*: 134/2/2.

¹²⁰ *Ib.*: 115/5/3. An echo of the hall-house can be found in a common saying of elderly Bicester women: 'I've done all the cleaning *except the house*', meaning that the principal room has still to be done (Inf.: Mrs. J. H. Waine.)

TABLE D

						Domestic																	
Name						Date	Hall	Buttery	Kitchen	Parlour	Ch. over Hall	Ch. over Buttery	Ch. over Kitchen	Ch. over Parlour	Chamber	Ch. over Entry	Lower Chambers	Other chambers	Garrets	Cockloft	Cellar	Ch. over Cellar	
Alley						1705		I	I				I			I							
Alexander, H.						1630	I		I		I				I								
Antwissell						1666	I	I			I	I											
Bass						1715	I	I	I						I			✓					
Bates						1715		I	I						I								
Baylis						1667	I	I			2						I						
Beamsley						1720			I	I								2	I				
Bellow						1703	I		I	I	I		I	I					I		I	I	
Bly						1684	I	I	I		I		I					I		I			
Broome						1705	I								I								
Bull						1696									I								
Burges						1703	I								I								
Butler						1670		I							I								
Chillingworth						1649	I		I					I	I								
Clarke						1688		I		I					I				I				
Clemens						1641	I	I	I	I	I			I							I		
Clements						1624	I	I	I		2		I								I		
Cooke						1642	I	I	I		I		I										
Cooper, John						1661	I		I		I				I								
Cooper, Wm.						1702	I	I	I		I	I		I									
Cornish						1698	I		I	I				I				I; I	I		I		
Deely, M.						1674	I								I								
Dewey						1676	I		I		I		I			I				I	I		
Dodd						1671	I	I		I	I				I				2	I			
Dormer						1688							I						I				
Edwards, Ellis						1714			2 + I				I					2	I				
Edwards, Mary						1692					I				I		I						
Edwards, Susannah						1705	I				I			I				I	2		I	I	
Ewen, E.						1708		I							I		I		2				
Ewin, R.						1699	I	I	2	I													
Ford, G.						1704			I														
Ford, M.						1660							I						3	I		I	
George, J. (II)						1643	I				I												
Gomm, R.						1684	I				I				I								
Guyes, T.						1702	I	I	I		I	I				I		I	I				
Hamlyn, W.						1632	I	I	I		I		I							I			
Hanwell, C.						1629	I	I			I				I								
Hanwell, T.						1687	I	I			I								I				
Harris, R.						1702	I			I	I			I					2		I		
Hayward, E.						1671	I	I			I			I									
Hayward, R.						1669	I	I			I					I							
Hedges, W... .. .						1621	I							I				I + I					
Henn, C.						1692									I								
Heverton, S.						1700		I									I		2				
Heverton, W.						1698	I	I			I	I				I							

Trade

Out-houses

Shop	Brewhouse	Milkhouse	Malthouse	Bakehouse	Kilnhouse	Millhouse	Boulting-house	'Slatter'-house	Hovel	House or cottage	Barn	Stable	Woodhouse	Unusual details	Total No. of Rooms	Sum Total of Inventory
																£ s. d.
1+1			1+1						1		1				4	7 0 6
1															6	34 0 0
1															6	47 3 2
															7 ²	30 0 0
															3	18 15 1
															6	69 14 4
		1							✓✓					Upper room; an inward room	6	138 0 5
			1								1				10	182 6 10
															8	81 11 6
															2	2 10 2
															1	86 7 10
									✓✓						2	11 4 11
		1							✓✓						3	31 2 2
			1+1						✓✓		1				6	110 10 0
															4	60 8 8
			1			1			✓✓		1				+210 debts	
			1			1		1			2				9	434 13 4
											2				9	156 8 10
											2				5	179 17 6
															4	5 6 8
															6	28 3 10
													1	Pantry; Little Chamber	8	(Partial)
															}	64 11 2
																18 3 4
															7	48 4 10
		1														
															9	265 11 2
															2	52 4 6
1+1													+	Back kitchen and room over it; room over woodhouse	9	136 5 1
															3	59 0 0
															10	109 5 0
															6	77 1 11
															5	70 16 6
				1+1					5	1	1			The Tuns; the Crowne	3	53 4 0
															7	48 18 11
															2	6 6 4
			1												4	150 10 3
															8	158 2 0
1+1															8	19 9 1
			1						2		1				5	140 0 0
															5	13 11 0
															9	397 3 9
															5	68 7 6
															5	19 3 2
										1	1			Little Parlour and Chamber over it	5	126 7 8
										3;1					2	16 12 4
										7					4	52 15 0
															5	129 2 10

TABLE D—Cont.

						Domestic											
Name	Date	Hall	Buttery	Kitchen	Parlour	Ch. over Hall	Ch. over Buttery	Ch. over Kitchen	Ch. over Parlour	Chamber	Ch. over Entry	Lower Chambers	Other chambers	Garrets	Cockloft	Cellar	Ch. over Cellar
Hicks, E. ..	1727									1		1	2				
Hinton, J. ..	1621	1	1		1	1			1		(1)		1	2	1		
Hudson, I. ..	1628	1	1	1		1	1	1					1				
Hudson, W. ..	1693		1							1		1	1				
Hughes, T. ..	1677	1		1	1	1			1		1						
Hunt, W. ..	1623	1	1	1	2	1			2								
Hurles, T. ..	1728									1							
Jakeman, E. ..	1630	1	1	1	1	1			1				1		2		
Jakeman, E. ..	1643	1	1	1	1	1							3		2		
Jeffes, J. ..	1681	1	1		1	1			1								
King, T. ..	1686	1	1	1	1									5	2		
Leaper, M. ..	1637	1	1		1	1			1			1	1				
Linney, W. ..	1622	1	1	1	1	1			1				1				
Lock, B. ..	1691	1	1	1	1	1		1	1		1					1	
Lock, N. ..	1665	2		1		1							2				
Lyne, W. ..	1643	1	1			1											
May, J. ..	1707			1						1				2		1	
Maynard, W. ..	1605	1				1				1	1						
Parsons, R. ..	1638	1				1											
Paxton, T. ..	1634	1	1	1	1	1	1		1								
Pearson, E. ..	1707											1	2				
Peart, R. ..	1635	1	1									1	2	2			
Potter, H. ..	1625	1	1	1	1				1				5			1	1
Smith, E. ..	1701	1	1			1	1										
Smith, J. ..	1694	1		1		1				1							
Stiles, W. ..	1723		1	1	1				1								
Stiles, W. and H. ..		1723		1	1	1					1			1			
Sturch, E. ..	1681	1		1		1		1									
Sumner, G. ...	1667	1	1	1		1	1	1					1				
Sumner, R. ...	1608	1			1												
Sutton, E. ..	1676	1			1				1								
Tanner, H. ..	1695				1			1	1								
Waring, J. ..	1622	1	1			1	1										
Wiggs, R. ..	1730	1								1			4				
Wootton, A. ..	1667					1											
Wootton, J. ..	1688	1	1		1				1					1			

NOTE: In trade rooms, +1 indicates e.g. chamber over the shop.

The following give sum totals of inventories, but no details of houses:

	£	s.	d.			£	s.	d.
Abetts 1669	5	10	0	Gibson, E. .. 1616	20	2	0	
Ayres, R. .. 1701	78	5	6 (£63 of this in bonds and rings)	Gibson, T. .. 1616	43	0	4	
Baylis, W. (II) .. 1667	94	13	0	Grantham, T. .. 1664	145	0	0	
Bouchier 1700	58	9	9	Green, R. .. 1636	30	11	4	
Deely, J. 1695	173	0	0	Griffin, R. .. 1623	43	3	2	
Dormer, N. .. 1615	169	17	2 (no inventory)	Hall, C. 1615	9	17	7	
Duck, J. 1616	27	2	0 (no inventory)	Hancock, G. .. 1602	64	0	4	
Duck, R. 1635	20	17	4	Hanly, S. 1680	3	7	0	
Edwards, E. .. 1638	31	18	4	Hawkins, A. .. 1682	30	7	7	
Franklin 1669	89	7	8	Hayward, K. .. 1680	18	12	4	
George, J. (I) .. 1643	15	18	6					

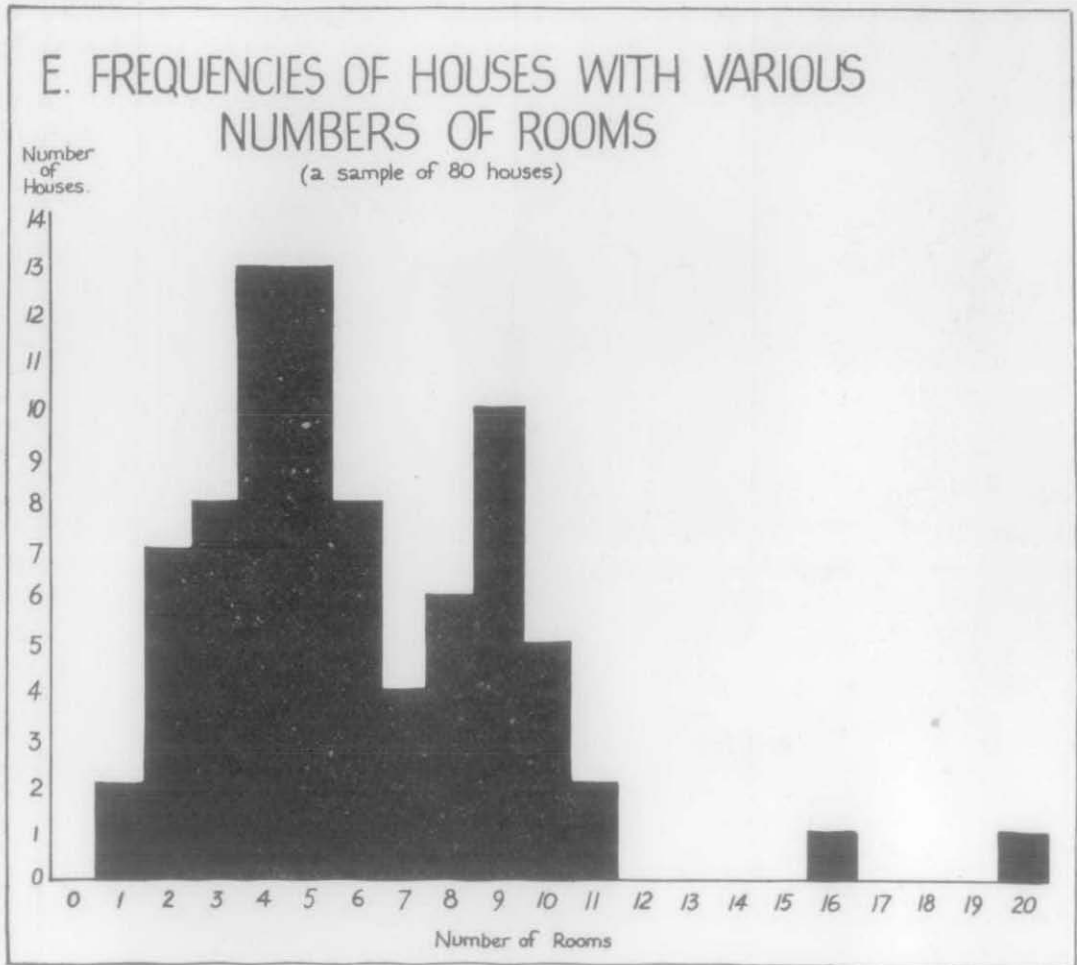
Trade										Out-houses				Unusual details	Total No. of Rooms	Sum Total of Inventory		
Shop	Brewhouse	Milkhouse	Malthouse	Bakehouse	Kilnhouse	Millhouse	Boulting-house	'Slatter'-house	Hovel	House or cottage	Barn	Stable	Woodhouse			£	s.	d.
1+1	1+1			1+1						1					4	19	19	4
1+1	1	1			1						1	1			16	204	16	8
									1	1				A room under the stairs	12	33	5	4
+1	1	2							3			3			4	31	17	0
		1			1?									Kibhouse	10	45	15	0
															1	4	1	6
						1			1	1	1	1		New Chamber and Cocklofts	9	166	9	2
									1	5					11	304	2	0
									1						5	146	8	0
									1						11	363	7	4
1+1		1			1+1				3	3	3		1		10	95	18	0
										1					9	52	7	0
1+1								1				1			9	159	16	10
			1								1				8	17	1	4
1															4	80	10	0
									2						6	130	5	5
															4	10	5	4
									1	2		1			3	17	0	0
															7	262	6	8
1+1									1						3	23	8	6
1+1	1	1					1		2			2		Spence; New Chamber	9	49	6	6
									2						20	140	0	0
									2						4	14	18	2
+1									2						4	119	7	10
+1														His share in partnership with brother	5	56	9	0
															6	43	0	6
	1														4	9	8	4
															8	49	5	10
															2	55	16	8
															3	304	18	8
1										1				Churchhouse	3	282	12	0
	1	1										2			5	18	3	4
1+1															8	183	6	0
															4	18	19	0
															5	25	19	0

			£	s.	d.
Henn, R.	..	1681	65	0	10
Hunt, R.	..	1602	327	6	4
Jakeman, R.	..	1624	86	16	0
Lilcate, M.	..	1647	44	4	4
Mathew, T.	..	1615	7	5	5
Matthews, R.	..	1629	14	18	7
Mawall, R.	..	1619	7	10	8
Nurth, R.	..	1622	73	18	10
Porter, S.	..	1631	15	8	0
Redding, E.	..	1664	19	14	0

			£	s.	d.
Stiles, H. . .	..	1676	16	3	6
Stiles, H. . .	..	1730	7	16	0
Swifte, G.	..	1635	55	17	4
Tanner, M.	..	1692	45	18	0
Triplett, J.	..	1637	495	7	0
Vinson, E.	..	1638	6	2	4
Walcott, A.	..	1639	32	7	0
Wall, T. . .	..	1662	3	5	2
Ward, R.	..	1682	9	0	1
Wigfall, J.	..	1621	20	16	6

G. H. DANNATT

TABLE E



linen, worth £3 16s. 8d. Her pewter, brass and iron, estimated at £2 6s. 8d., must have furnished a good hearth and board. She had a Bible and two other books. In spite of restricted space, the total impression is one of comfort and decency.

Some of the two-roomed houses were obviously built on the medieval plan of a hall and one other room, both on the ground floor. The second room is called either the chamber—a term which Mr. M. W. Barley points

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out¹²¹ is characteristic of the southern counties as far as Oxfordshire—or, from 1621¹²² onwards, the parlour. The earliest described is that of Roger Sumner¹²³ in 1608, whose hall seems to have contained only a cupboard, pewter and brass, while in his chamber there were two beds with their furnishings, three pairs of sheets, half a dozen napkins and two 'borde cloathes', though there is no mention of a table; three coffers and 'the iron', including a spit and frying-pan, appear to have been in the same room. Three other houses also contained just a hall and chamber. The widow Catherine Henn¹²⁴ (d. 1692) lived in a chamber and a lower chamber, but as she was 'crazy and aged' they may have been only part of a house. Sarah Dormer¹²⁵ (d. 1688) had a hall and another room.

Houses with three rooms, as in other parts of the country, were originally developed from the hall-house by boarding over either the hall or the parlour to form a loft. Richard Parsons' inventory¹²⁶ of 1639 names the hall with the chamber over it and the shop. As he was a shoemaker the shop may have been just one end of the hall. The latter contained only a cupboard, a table, an old chair and other lumber. The chamber over it was used for storage as well as sleeping. Besides beds and bedding, chests and coffers, it contained boards and the cooking utensils—two brass pots, a brass pan, a kettle and a skillet, that is, a long-handled pan with three legs for standing in the ashes to simmer—an old warming-pan, the fire-irons, seven pieces of pewter, and the surprising item 'Eight dozen of hattes & one Bible'. Other variations of the three-roomed plan are Jasper Butler's¹²⁷ rare combination of chamber, buttery and brewhouse in 1670, Elizabeth Sutton's¹²⁸ more usual hall, parlour and chamber over the parlour in 1676, Mary Edwards'¹²⁹ parlour, chamber and lower chamber of 1692, and the chamber, buttery and kitchen of Elizabeth Bates¹³⁰ in 1715. The last example perhaps illustrates the change in name by which the original hall came to be called the kitchen because the cooking was done there.¹³¹ There is no evidence in these inventories of a detached kitchen. Gabriel Ford's¹³² buttery and two bakehouses sounds an unsatis-

¹²¹ M. W. Barley: *The English Farmhouse and Cottage* (London 1961), p. 44.

¹²² *Ib.*: p. 66; p. 212 for a house in Monmouthshire called Parlour, built c. 1600.

¹²³ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 58/4/30.

¹²⁴ *Ib.*: 34/4/12.

¹²⁵ *Ib.*: 18/4/56.

¹²⁶ *Ib.*: 144/3/3.

¹²⁷ *Ib.*: 6/4/9.

¹²⁸ *Ib.*: 149/3/27.

¹²⁹ *Ib.*: 20/5/1.

¹³⁰ *Ib.*: 116/3/38.

¹³¹ Barley, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

¹³² Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 127/4/10.

factory house, but the inventory makes it clear that he also had 'The Tuns' and 'the Crowne'.

Six of the thirteen four-roomed houses contained a hall and a chamber over it, to which two of them added a kitchen and a chamber on the ground floor, while others had either a buttery or a shop and a room over it; a third variant was the addition of a buttery and a malthouse. Sometimes the fourth room was a chamber over the entry. While in the West Country this was usually built over the cross-passage that had originally divided hall from shippon,¹³³ there is no evidence of such a plan in Bicester, unless John Hinton's¹³⁴ 'long Entrie' is thus interpreted. A number of houses in the town, especially in Sheep Street,¹³⁵ have a first-floor room built over a wide gap which gives access either to outbuildings or to a row of cottages lying behind and at a right angle to the main building-line. These rooms are correctly described as chambers over the entry. Two of the inventories for larger houses mention the chamber over the gatehouse, a rare description because it implies construction round a courtyard, as in the case of an inn. Richard Dewey (1676) had both a chamber and a cockloft over his gatehouse, while Benjamin Lock's inventory of 1692 refers simply to the gatehouse chamber.¹³⁶

Garrets, as one would expect, became more frequent in the larger houses. They appear twice in the five-roomed houses, while four of the eight six-roomed ones mention them and nine of the larger ones, or about 30 per cent. Where space was restricted men built upwards, letting dormer windows into the roof-space of a two-storied house to make what we should call attics and they termed garrets.¹³⁷ Ten of our houses acquired more space for storage by the building of cocklofts which differed from a garret because access to them depended on an outside staircase or merely a ladder. It was natural that as the house grew larger the number of service rooms should increase.¹³⁸ Twelve of the inventories mention a brewhouse, twice with a chamber over it; seven refer to a milkhouse or dairy: the eastern counties' term 'milkhouse' seems the older, as the western term 'dairy' is only used twice in the 17th century.¹³⁹ Nine inventories mention a malthouse, another speaks of a kilnhouse and yet another of a kibhouse; only two mention separate bakehouses, but in each instance there were two of them; four mention a milkhouse, one of which had a room over it. A boulting-house, where the flour was sifted, occurs once, although boulting-mills kept in the kitchen or another room were often part

¹³³ Barley, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

¹³⁴ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 30/4/4.

¹³⁵ E.g. at Franklin's Yard.

¹³⁶ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 18/4/12 and 42/2/22. V. also *Sussex Arch. Coll.*, vol. 98, p. 110.

¹³⁷ Barley, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

¹³⁸ *Ib.*: *passim*.

¹³⁹ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 120/1/29 and 132/2/18.

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of the household gear. Nicholas Lock's 'slatter-house' and Ralph Clements' 'kill-house' are the only ones specified, though a number of butchers left inventories. Outbuildings were numerous. Twenty-one or just over 25 per cent of the inventories include 'hovels' varying in number from one to five, in the yard or backside; while fourteen mention from one to three barns, only seven refer to stables; a woodhouse occurs once by name and once more by implication from the wood stored over it.¹⁴⁰

Inside the house, new rooms were at first added by flooring part of the space under the rafters with loose boards. These belonged to the tenant and could be removed when he left; even when the boards were fixed they were for a long time still regarded as tenants' fixtures, like windows and window-glass.¹⁴¹ Several inventories illustrate this attitude. That of Thomas Mathew¹⁴² in 1615 contains the item 'on loft over the Halle to be taken up and unneyled', valued at 6s. 8d. Walter Baylies,¹⁴³ Senior, in 1667 left the boards of four upper chambers and one lower room, worth together £1 4s. 0d. Thomas Hughes¹⁴⁴ by 1677 had found it necessary to provide a third storey by putting boards over the parlour chamber and the hall chamber. There is no reference to window-glass in either wills or inventories, although Humphrey Alexander's inventory¹⁴⁵ of 1631 includes 'transomes', a word which at that period might equally well have referred to a mullioned window divided by a transom or to a cross-beam or a lintel.

The importance of the hall throughout the period from 1600 to 1730 is manifest. 72.8 per cent of the inventories name it as the principal room in the house; if the five other inventories which call similarly furnished rooms a kitchen are added, the percentage is raised to 79. This newer term first appears in Bicester in Margery Ford's inventory¹⁴⁶ of 1660, nearly thirty years after it was being first used in Sussex.¹⁴⁷ Other people remained obstinately old-fashioned in their usage; three inventories,¹⁴⁸ dated respectively 1666, 1667 and 1730 employ the term 'hall-house', that is, a medieval hall open to the rafters. Such a term in 1730 seems late for the south midlands. Whatever

¹⁴⁰ For all these details, above, pp. 274-7 analysis of houses. The *kibhouse* mentioned in Walter Hunt's inventory of 1623-24 was chiefly a grain-store. A similar word, *kiphouse*, however, was in use about sixty years ago to designate a common lodging house situated between Sheep Street and Victoria Road. Old Bicester people still say, 'I'm going to take a bit of a kip', i.e. have a nap (Inf.: Mrs. W. Cherry and Mrs. Ward.)

¹⁴¹ Barley, *op. cit.*, p. 42, p. 154.

¹⁴² Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 43/4/20.

¹⁴³ *Ib.*: 6/3/19.

¹⁴⁴ *Ib.*: 132/2/18.

¹⁴⁵ *Ib.*: 1/5/45 and Oxford Dic.

¹⁴⁶ *Ib.*: 127/2/3.

¹⁴⁷ Barley, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

¹⁴⁸ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 2/1/19; 156/2/14; 157/4/7. One of these (156/2/14) was a house discharged by poverty from payment of hearth-tax.

name was given to it, this important room was the chief one in the house; the family lived and fed in it, the cooking was done there, the housewife might spin there in the evenings and, at a pinch, the goodman might store some of his gear there. It often contained the only hearth in the house. In 1605 William Maynard's hall¹⁴⁹ was furnished with a 'Table bord w.th a frame', at which he and his family sat for meals on a bench and a short form. John Sherman's will¹⁵⁰ of 1607 mentions a long table with one form and another table 'by the fier side' with a form, one high stool and a wainscot chair in which he himself, as master of the house, would have sat. John Hinton's hearth¹⁵¹ in 1621 was equipped with a pair of andirons, a fire-shovel, tongs, a fire-fork and a pair of bellows; two pothangers were suspended over the fire, two gridirons were kept handy and there was a slice which may have been either a cooking-implement or another fire-shovel. Although dripping pans, spits and pothooks were stored in the room next to the long entry and buttery, the chopping-stool was kept in the hall, which was also furnished with a trestle-table, a form, a stool, two old chairs and two benches. A 'clock and wenscott' stood by the wall, the first to be mentioned in these documents, and a halberd with some other weapons hung on the wall. Ralph Clements' ¹⁵² hall (1624) contained a cradle in addition to the usual furniture; his Bible lay there too. But he also kept his scales in the hall, with a todweight for his wool and two pound weights; John Smith¹⁵³ had his cheese press and vats in the hall in 1694, while a few years earlier Edward Sturch¹⁵⁴ kept the barrels and cowns used on brewing days there. On the other hand, Humphrey Alexander's hall¹⁵⁵ was decorated with a 'paynted cloth', the poor man's substitute for the expensive woven tapestry; together with his three cushions and one book it suggests a modest standard of comfort for a weaver of 1631. John Chillingworth¹⁵⁶ of the same generation had 'a little room under the stairs in the hall' for his kettles, pots and pans. People who had no storage space partitioned off sometimes kept chamberpots made either of pewter or of earthenware in the hall; James Dodd¹⁵⁷ in 1671 had four pewter ones, which perhaps lay behind his joined screen. The screen was a frequent item of furniture in these large rooms. Dodd's hall also contained a looking-glass, a fairly common article in Bicester houses after 1634. Thomas Paxton's¹⁵⁸ of that date is nearly thirty years earlier than the first one men-

¹⁴⁹ *Ib.*: 43/3/23.

¹⁵⁰ *Ib.*: 58/4/14.

¹⁵¹ *Ib.*: 30/4/4.

¹⁵² *Ib.*: 120/1/29.

¹⁵³ *Ib.*: 62/4/15.

¹⁵⁴ *Ib.*: 62/1/31.

¹⁵⁵ *Ib.*: 1/5/45.

¹⁵⁶ *Ib.*: 120/2/20.

¹⁵⁷ *Ib.*: 18/4/1.

¹⁵⁸ *Ib.*: 144/2/20.

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tioned in the mid-Essex inventories. The first reference to a warming-pan appears in John Sherman's will¹⁵⁹ of 1607, where it is called 'a froe to warm a bed'. They were to be found in hall, parlour or chamber, according to preference.

Next in importance to the hall was a ground-floor room known as the parlour or chamber. When the 17th century opened it was still being used as a bedroom. William Maynard's¹⁶⁰ chamber (1606) contained a joined bedstead with a flock bed and its other 'furniture'; Mathew Deely's¹⁶¹ chamber of 1674 had in it three beds—a curtained four-poster, a trundlebed and an old-fashioned wall-bed. The parlour of William Hedges (1621)¹⁶² was furnished with a bedstead on which was a featherbed; there were also a cupboard, a framed table, William's own chair, six stools, a bench and a form; his wife's spinning-wheel stood there and—at that date it must have been a very modern touch—there was one window curtain. Such a room was in a state of transition between bedroom and sitting-room. Edward Jakeman¹⁶³ in 1631 had furnished his parlour with a framed table, a form and benches, a coffer for his valuables and a linen chest in which four tablecloths, 2½ dozen napkins, sixteen pairs of sheets and six 'pillowberes' were stored. Nine cushions lightened the severity of the room; his friends probably commented on the absence of a bed. Richard Harris's¹⁶⁴ parlour of 1702 was a handsome room. Instead of an open hearth there was a fireplace with two pairs of brass andirons, a pair of dogs, a fire shovel, tongs and bellows. On the chimney piece over it were sixpennyworth of 'odd things'. A round table and ten leathern chairs were the main pieces of furniture. On the walls hung two looking-glasses, pictures and escutcheons. Like the 'Coat of Arms' William Stiles¹⁶⁵ had in his parlour (1724), the latter must have been the pride of the household, but as Harris was a maltster and Stiles a shoemaker, their presence serves to underline for the historian the Heralds' report of 1634 that apart from Cadwallader Coker there was 'no gentleman' in Bicester.¹⁶⁶ In other houses old ways lingered for a long time. As late as 1671 Elizabeth Hayward's¹⁶⁷ parlour was still a bedroom. Her own curtained four-poster had a stout corded base with a rush mat over it and a flock mattress; there was also a straw-bed, used probably by the maidservant to whom she bequeathed 2s. 6d. She had a joined chair and a cupboard covered

¹⁵⁹ *Ib.*: 58/4/14.

¹⁶⁰ *Ib.*: 43/3/23.

¹⁶¹ *Ib.*: 18/4/7.

¹⁶² *Ib.*: 30/4/5.

¹⁶³ *Ib.*: 37/3/27.

¹⁶⁴ *Ib.*: 35/1/16.

¹⁶⁵ *Ib.*: 63/3/18.

¹⁶⁶ J. Dunkin, *History of Bicester and Alchester* (London, 1816), p. 180.

¹⁶⁷ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 33/3/22.

with a cloth, over which her shelf may have hung. Her one concession to modernity was a close-stool kept in all probability behind the screen. Pushed into the same room were seven little barrels and a form. Richard Gomm¹⁶⁸ in 1684 was using his parlour mainly as a storeroom. By way of furniture it contained only two old chairs and a trunk full of linen, but three bushels of wheat and ten pounds of yarn were there when he died.

First-floor rooms were at first intended for storage, although in this particular sample of inventories the earliest to be specified as 'chamber over the hall' or 'over the parlour' are used both for sleeping and storage. They are dated 1621 and 1622 and are found in the homes of John Hinton the baker and William Linney the fuller.¹⁶⁹ Linney's chamber over the parlour must have been terribly crowded. The joined bedstead had on it a feather-bed, a flock-bed, a feather bolster and two coverlets; there was a trucklebed equipped with three flock bolsters and a coverlet; 'certaine oulde Curtens' may have been left on top of it too. There were two tables, a framed one and a round one, two chairs, three joined stools and a joined form, an old press, an old coffer, an old pair of playing-tables, a chest in which lay a rich store of linen; two trunks, a supply of spare bolsters, pillows and cushions and one blanket are also listed. There were painted cloths worth 4s. and finally nineteen skeins of linen yarn and hemp. Hinton's chamber over the parlour was less cluttered; the curtained bedstead had a feather-bed; the room also contained a cradle, six pillows, a framed table, six stools, one chair, two coffers and a bench. Walter Hunt¹⁷⁰ (1623/4) used his third bedroom purely for storage, putting in it an old bed, a cheesevat, three old coffers, an axe, a saw, an iron bar and an old tiltcloth. Richard Dewey's¹⁷¹ chamber over the hall contained in 1676 two beds, one curtained with a featherbed, the other with a flock mattress, but there were also two framed tables, a joined chest, a box and a form in the room, which was dignified with a looking-glass. By 1724 William Stiles¹⁷² had his room over the parlour elegantly furnished with one 'sacking bottom'd' four-post bed liberally supplied with three blankets and a quilt; his clothes were kept in a chest of drawers; there was a glass case and a looking-glass. Surprisingly, 'Some Tea things' are included. Yet Stiles was only a cordwainer and he died less than a decade after Queen Anne, on whose tea-drinking habits Pope had seen fit to comment in 'The Rape of the Lock'.

His house was also fortunate in the possession of a well-equipped kitchen. It was out of date in one respect because it still had an open hearth for cooking.

¹⁶⁸ *Ib.*: 27/4/20.

¹⁶⁹ *Ib.*: 30/4/4 and 41/3/14.

¹⁷⁰ *Ib.*: 30/4/32.

¹⁷¹ *Ib.*: 18/4/12.

¹⁷² *Ib.*: 63/3/18.

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Here Stiles' daughter Anne hung her cast pot over the fire with a short hook, a pair of pot-hooks and a pair of links, rested her frying-pan and perhaps her tin pasty-pan on the gridiron and stood her skillet in the ashes. Her meat was roasted on a spit turned by a jack which she could rest on either brass or iron andirons; she would test the condition of the joint with a fleshfork. There was a pair of iron dogs on the hearth; her iron shovel and tongs had brass 'Nobs'. She owned a brass ladle and a slice. Her pepper-box and flour-box stood somewhere handy. When the meal was ready there were eight pewter dishes, thirteen plates and a porringer, with a chafing-dish to keep things warm for a latecomer; the family had four knives, six forks and a tankard. There was a wooden board for the cheese. The eleven round trenchers were old-fashioned and probably not often in use. There were four wooden chairs and one rush-bottomed one; the cloth-covered screen with three folds kept out draughts. On washing-days the lock-iron and pads came into their own. The warming-pan hung on one wall. At night the hanging candlestick would be lighted and when bedtime came their way upstairs was illuminated with five candlesticks, one of brass, two of iron and two of tin: to each according to his degree. Henry Potter's inventory¹⁷³ of 1625 has the earliest mention of a dresser-board, a table on which food was prepared for cooking. In 1628 Isabell Hudson¹⁷⁴ already had a 'furnace,' that is an iron grate, in her kitchen. Thomas King's¹⁷⁵ of 1686 was equipped with a furnace and brewing implements as well as the usual pots and pans.

Such were the principal rooms in the house glimpsed in isolation. Certain factors stand out. From the original hall-house of earlier times the Stuart period in Bicester saw the evolution of the parlour and the separate kitchen as well as upstairs rooms and garrets. The parlour, in 1600 generally a bedroom and perhaps a storeroom as well, became first a combined bedroom and sitting-room and by the time of Queen Anne the comfortable, civilized family sitting-room had evolved from it. Similarly, upstairs from the loose-boarded storechamber under the rafters had developed first a bedroom-cum-store, then by George I's time a best bedroom where an early morning cup of tea might perhaps be enjoyed. Both changes, however, were happening side by side with the persistence of old ways of less comfortable living. Houses were built to last and old people, then as now, ignored new-fangled ideas. Bicester changed less quickly than places in the south-east corner of England, as one would expect.

Two or three of the inventories are worth studying in full because they help the reader to build up a picture of complete interiors. Elizabeth Cooke's¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ *Ib.*: 144/1/38.

¹⁷⁴ *Ib.*: 131/5/6.

¹⁷⁵ *Ib.*: 138/2/5.

¹⁷⁶ *Ib.*: 13/3/4.

house in 1643 consisted of a hall with a closet in it, a buttery, a kitchen, and bedrooms over hall and kitchen. The hall had an open hearth with the usual fire-irons and hooks; there were three spits. The long framed table was accompanied by three chairs, two of them 'turned,' and six joined stools. Her two broken stools were probably in a corner. There were five good cushions and three old ones. The carpet either hung on the wall or lay on the table. Elizabeth's £4 8s. 4d. worth of pewter was kept in the closet. It was a good collection, containing a basin and ewer, three other basins, fourteen large plates, eighteen smaller ones and four others, eight porringers, twelve saucers—used then to hold sauces—three 'salts,' two wine flagons, three quart pots, one pint pot, and three little ones; two spoons, four candlesticks and a chamber-pot complete the list. The buttery was filled with kettles, pots and pans and other utensils, including a little brazen mortar and pestle, 'one mynseinge knyfe' and two little baskets. The cheese vats were kept there too. The kitchen contained an iron grate, an old framed table and a dough kiver. The room over the hall was furnished with a high curtained bedstead on which lay a featherbed and a green rug. The great chest probably stood at the foot of the bed. There was a court cupboard with a 'woollen cupboard Cloth'. The great green chair and two leather ones could be used in the day-time, as well as two little stools. Judging by the fire-irons there was a hearth in the room. Elizabeth's skill at embroidery is shown by the 'six wrought quishions unstuffed'; her silver thimble and her two gold rings were no doubt kept in the coffer which may have stood on the court-cupboard; she had three pairs of glasses, the only reference we have to spectacles; her two brushes one can imagine lying near the looking-glass. Her supply of linen was abundant—twelve pairs of finer sheets, five of the coarser type, nine pillow-slips, forty-six napkins of various qualities, table-cloths, cupboard-cloths, four towels including two damask ones, and seven ells of new flaxen cloth. Her apparel is listed in more detail than usual; she left three gowns, three petticoats and a stock of aprons. Her bedroom over the kitchen held an old standing bedstead and an old trucklebed with a collection of feather and flock bedding, a coffer, an old chair and a joined stool.

The carrier Richard Ewin¹⁷⁷ (d. 1699) had a house containing a great room, a little room, garrets and a kitchen. 'On ye other side,' a phrase which implies an L-shaped plan, there was another kitchen and a little buttery. The great room had in it a joined bedstead with curtains; the feather-bed on it was covered with three blankets and a green rug. Green was a popular colour in Bicester. There were two trunks full of old linen and more of it in one drawer of the chest of drawers. A great chest was there, but its contents are not

¹⁷⁷ *Ib.* : 20/5/16.

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indicated. The silver, thirteen spoons and a small cup, was kept in a little trunk. There was a round table, four joined stools, two green stools, two others with green tapestry seats, two green chairs, a glass case and glasses, and a looking-glass. Two pairs of andirons, a pair of fire-shovels and tongs stood in the hearth. It was an uneasy combination of bedroom and sitting-room, impossibly crowded to our way of thinking. In Ewin's little room the bed-curtains were red; a hanging-press, two tapestry-seated chairs, yet another green one, a joined stool, a trunk, a coffer, two old boxes, a shelf and another mirror completed the furniture. Plenty of linen was kept there and some earthenware, which presumably stood on the shelf. The garrets were used to store old furniture, as well as a dough kiver, a spinning-wheel, an old sack and old linen clothes, a close-stool, two levers, two forks and two old scythes. The kitchen was full, with one long table and two little ones, six joined stools, six old chairs, an old screen and a spinning-wheel. There was a cupboard where Mrs. Ewin probably kept the only 'our glass' to be mentioned in these inventories. Besides the usual equipment of a cooking-hearth and a reasonable supply of pewter dishes, there was a colander and a pewter chamber-pot, a warming-pan and a dozen earthen dishes. Two pairs of scales were perhaps used more for business purposes than for the household. The second kitchen contained a set of weights, an egg 'basquett,' a folding-table, a tinder-box (so common an article that no other assessors thought it worth listing), a cleaver, a chopping knife, a narrow axe, two smoothing irons and two buckets. Old table-linen, towels and cushions were also in the room. The fireplace was well-stocked. Three shelves and a rack hung on the wall and finally there was a window-board, probably used as a shutter. The little 'buttrey' contained a miscellaneous collection of brass, iron, tin, pewter, earthenware and wooden vessels, including a wooden tray and a rolling-pin. There were meal-sieves, a tin funnel, a vat, two stills, glass bottles and barrels, a wash-bowl, a scuttle, a dresser-board and a trencher-rack. The buttery's original use as a storage-place for liquor was still there, but much had been added to it.

A contemporary of Ewin's was Henry Cornish¹⁷⁸ the Nonconformist pastor, who died in Dec. 1698 at the age of eighty-nine. The house where he lived with his daughter Joanna was one that reflected the tastes of an Oxford scholar who had once been a Canon of Christ Church. It contained six living-rooms, a pantry, a cellar and garrets, with a woodhouse outside. A clock stood or hung in the hall; the fireplace had a fender and bar, a jack and weights stood ready to turn the spit, and six smoothing irons were there as well as the customary fire-irons and bellows. Nine leather chairs, two rush-seated armchairs with five cushions and two joined stools made it a comfortable room.

¹⁷⁸ *Ib.*: 121/2/5.

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There were two tables and a salt-box; two pictures hung on the walls. His parlour was another pleasant room, furnished with seven leather chairs, two serge-covered ones, a couch—apparently the only one in the town at this period—and two little tables. There was a hearth in the room; over the chimney hung a 'landskip' destined for a kinsman in Witney; another picture and three maps hung on the walls, and there was a carpet which one is tempted to think covered the floor, though this was unlikely in the 1690's. The kitchen had an iron grate with cooking utensils of brass or tin; there were three brass candlesticks and snuffers; the pewter was worth £2 17s. 6d. A rack of glass bottles, a mashvat and tubs show that Joanna sometimes brewed beer in the kitchen to replenish the six barrels and the still in the cellar. A folding screen and a warming-pan were kept in the kitchen too. In the pantry over the cellar lay a mortar and pestle, a meatsafe and two chopping-knives.

The room over the parlour held a four-poster with curtains and valance, a feather-bed and bolster, a pair of blankets and a quilt; a trunk, two chairs, a stool and a table and desk suggest that this was Cornish's bedroom. The bellows and dogs point to the presence of a fireplace which must have comforted his old age. The little room held the family plate—£14 7s. 6d. worth of it; unfortunately no details are supplied. Also stored there were two flock-beds and a bolster, a blanket, a rug, an old trucklebed, two curtains, a chair, a little table and two or three old drawers. The room over the hall held another great bedstead with a feather-bed, bolster, quilt, a pair of blankets, rug and counterpane, a pair of curtains and a valance. The great elbow chair, two low chairs, three stools, a pair of stands, a plain chest of drawers and a looking-glass added to its comfort. The garrets held seven guineas' worth of linen, besides a bedstead and bedding, including an under-quilt and a rug. A Turkey-work carpet, three trunks, old fire-irons, a desk and boxes complete the tale. The woodhouse held other fuel as well as wood, with a saw, two hatchets and four iron wedges. The inventory ends on a scholarly note: 'Item ffor Books £10.' Cornish's will names some of these: there were the nine books of Caryl upon Job which he left to nine of his friends and the volumes of 'Zanchies and pareus works' which went to his successor, John Troughton the younger. A casual note in Cornish's handwriting on the first page of the baptismal register¹⁷⁹ of the Congregational Church provides the clue to another, for he lent his 'bunnian' to Jonathan Willis. So well-stocked a household as this is a pleasure to contemplate.

Table F analyses the distribution of the chief articles of furniture in the houses of Bicesterians and indicates how common the varieties were. Trestle

¹⁷⁹ Penes Hon. Sec. Bicester Congregational Church. It dates back to 1695-96.

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TABLE F
Furniture in Bicester Houses: 1600 to 1732

Article	Type	Frequency	Date of last mention*		
			(a) Bicester	(b) Mid-Essex	(c) Petworth
TABLE	Trestle	4	1621	1638	
	T. with frame	71	1605	1638-9	
	Joined	2	1682	1635	
	Drawing-t.	3	1623-4	1671	
	Stool-t.	2	1723		
	Round	8	1622	} 1638	
	Square	2	1621		
	Oval	1	1723	1672	
	Side-t.	3	1669	1673-4	
	Dresser-board	3	1625		
	Folding t.	2	1702	1689-90	
	Dish-bench	1	1669		
	Walnut-tree-t.	1	1702		
	Little drinking t.	1	1643		
	Shuffleboard-t.	1	1703	1724	1725 a shovel-board room
	Counting-board	1	1667		
	Playing-t.	1	1622		1670
	Pair of t.'s	1	1643		
BEDS (a) Bedsteads	Unspecified	223	1605	1637	
	Joined	26	1605	1638	
	Standing	6	1622	1638	
	Pallet	1	1624	1689-90	
	Sacking-bottomed	1	1723	1743-4	
	" 'that turns up'	1	} 1743 (will)		
	' Wenscott that turns up'	1		(1681 Wainscot)	
	Wall	1	1674		
	' Scrue '	1	1700-1		
	' Dale '	1	1705		
	Half-headed	2	1665	1635	
	Truckle or trundle	40	1621	1638	
	Cradle	2	1621	1638	
	' Child bed-basket '	1	1707		
	B. for servants	10	1624		
	(b) Bedding, etc.	116	1607	1635	
	Feather-bed	98	1605	1635	
	Flock-b.	1	1715		
	Feather mixed w. flock	20	1623		
	Wool-b.	15	1621	1638	
	Straw-b.	1	1702		
	Chaff-b.	1	1677	1692	
	Bedlines		mat both	mat both	
	B.-mat and cords	29	1632; 1634	1671; 1659	
	Testers	2	1659		

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Article	Type	Frequency	Date of 1st mention*		
			(a) Bicester	(b) Mid-Essex	(c) Petworth
BEDS Bedding etc. cont.	Coverlets Counterpanes Quilts; 2 q.'s, 1 under q., 1 painted q.	110 2 4	1605 1692 1698-9	1635 1686 1689-90	1691 painted calico q.
CHAIR	Unspecified Leather Joined Flag-bottomed Great Wicker Wooden Twiggen Covered Wrought Turned Cane Bass Low Elbow Wainscot Child's	128 8 7 5 3 2 2 2 5 2 1 1 1 2 1 1	1605 1642 1643 1671 1642-3 1623 (will) 1723 1671 1671 1702 1642-3 1723 1622 1698-9 1698-9 1607 (will) 1671	1635 1665 1638 1691 (rush c.) 1672 1638 1690 1672 1690 1665 1659 1677 1663 1669	
SETTLE	Unspecified Bench w. back ' Benches with the lettis ' Drink-s.	2 1 1 1	1605 1622 1607 1621	1638	
STOOLS	Unspecified Joined Covered High Low Wrought Close-s.	60 54 2 1 3 1 5	1605 1622 1702 1607 (will) 1643 1699 1671	1637 1635 1674 1682	
COUCH		1	1698-9	1689	
CUPBOARD	Unspecified Court-c. Press Hanging-press Joined Safe (for meat) Dresser Board and shelves ' Wainscott shutt '	63 19 8 10 4 4 4 1 1	1605 1623 1622 1665-6 1655 1623 1702 1621 1643	1635 1660 1635 1667 1639 1663 1638 (w. press)	

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Article	Type	Frequency	Date of 1st mention*		
			(a) Bicester	(b) Mid-Essex	(c) Petworth
CHEST OF DRAWERS		16	1686	1673	
CLOCK, etc.	Unspecified	4	1621	1670	1614
	Clock and case	1	1719	1688-9	
	Silver watch	2	1688		1732
	Hour-glass	1	1699	1678	1632
CARPET	Unspecified	13	1621	1638	
	Turkey-work	1	1698-9	1689-90	
LOOKING GLASS		24	1634	1663	
PAINTED CLOTH		3	1605	1638	1633
CUSHION		29	1607 (will)	1635	
BIBLE		17	1621	1639	1613
WINDOWS	W.-board	1	1699		
	W.-curtains	10	1621	1672	
	Transomes	1	1631		
PICTURES		4	1698-9	1671	1670
MAPS		1	1698-9	1743-4	1711
COAT-OF-ARMS		3	1702		1670

*When comparing dates of first mention, it should be borne in mind that the Bicester inventories used in this article run from 1605-1732, while Mr. Steer's Mid-Essex ones are from 1635-1749 and Mr. Kenyon's Petworth ones run from 1610 to 1760.

tables, although first specified only in 1621,¹⁸⁰ were clearly on the way out. Practically every inventory mentions at least one 'table with frame,' that is the long rectangular kind of table associated for us with the monks' refectory or the college dining-hall. Joined tables of this shape had their frames morticed and tenoned and the joints secured with wooden pegs; they are mentioned twice only, beginning in 1682.¹⁸¹ Drawing tables, which either had leaves in them or were provided with a top that 'drew' or slid to reveal a capacious box for storing linen,¹⁸² are mentioned three times. Both square and round tables are first listed in the early 1620's,¹⁸³ though round ones were more popular; the one oval table does not appear until a century later¹⁸⁴ (1724).

¹⁸⁰ *Ib.*: 30/4/4.

¹⁸¹ *Ib.*: 34/1/43.

¹⁸² A table of this kind, procured locally, was sold in a Bicester antique shop in 1941 and is now in Ireland.

¹⁸³ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 30/4/4 and 41/3/14.

¹⁸⁴ *Ib.*: 63/3/18.

Dresser boards for preparing meat are mentioned three times from 1625,¹⁸⁵ while side-boards or side tables begin in 1669.¹⁸⁶ The shuffleboard-table¹⁸⁷ which Richard Jeffes left to be equally divided between his grandsons in 1703 was used for playing shovelboard, a game rather like shove-halfpenny; such tables, because of their great length, were often made of elm. Walter Baylies' counting-board¹⁸⁸ (1667), like the '2 tallie clothes' of Richard Antwissell (1666)¹⁸⁹ reminds the reader of medieval exchequer tables. They must have saved many a headache when the arithmetic used in accounts was still frequently worked out in Roman figures. In 1622 comes the first mention of a pair of tables;¹⁹⁰ William Linney left two, one of them an old pair of playing-tables. Walnut is the only wood actually named and that in a single inventory¹⁹¹ of 1702; it can safely be assumed that the majority of tables were oaken.

When the 17th century began, benches, forms and particularly stools were commonly used for seating. Chairs as domestic furniture only came into general use under the Stuarts. John Sherman (1607) had a wainscot chair,¹⁹² a heavy piece of furniture with a solid wooden panelled back, characteristic of the early half of the century. The wicker chair¹⁹³ of Walter Hunt's inventory dated 1623/4 is fourteen years earlier than the first mention of such a chair in the Essex inventories; Linney's bass chair¹⁹⁴ (1622) is unusual, but was probably not unlike the 'flagg-bottom'd' or rush-seated chairs that began to appear in 1671; to the same year belong 'twiggen' chairs, the only child's chair and the first 'covered' chair¹⁹⁵; serge and an unspecified green material were used. Wrought chairs,¹⁹⁶ which had tapestry seats, are not named before 1702, although leather chairs¹⁹⁷ first appeared in 1642 and were fairly common. The first of the seven joined chairs¹⁹⁸ was listed, appropriately enough, in a carpenter's inventory of 1643/4. Joined stools,¹⁹⁹ distinguished from the everyday three-legged variety by their four legs joined with stretchers, were far commoner and date from 1622. Their hardness was often relieved

¹⁸⁵ *Ib.*: 144/1/38.

¹⁸⁶ *Ib.*: 33/2/34.

¹⁸⁷ *Ib.*: 38/2/26.

¹⁸⁸ *Ib.*: 6/3/19.

¹⁸⁹ *Ib.*: 2/1/19.

¹⁹⁰ *Ib.*: 41/3/14.

¹⁹¹ *Ib.*: 35/1/16.

¹⁹² *Ib.*: 58/4/14.

¹⁹³ *Ib.*: 30/4/32.

¹⁹⁴ *Ib.*: 41/3/14.

¹⁹⁵ *Ib.*: 18/4/1 for all these.

¹⁹⁶ *Ib.*: 35/1/6.

¹⁹⁷ *Ib.*: 13/3/4.

¹⁹⁸ *Ib.*: 26/3/14.

¹⁹⁹ *Ib.*: 41/3/14.

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by cushions. Upholstered stools with tapestry seats were found only in Richard Ewin's²⁰⁰ house in 1699, but Richard Harris's²⁰¹ inventory mentions 'covered' ones three years later. It was in 1671 that Elizabeth Hayward had the first close-stool,²⁰² eleven years before the first one to be listed in the mid-Essex inventories.²⁰³ Settles were rarely to be found.²⁰⁴ The first 'clock and wenscott'—a grandfather clock?—belonged to John Hinton²⁰⁵ in 1621. Cupboards are often mentioned, generally without further description unless they are called 'old'. In 1669 Richard Heyward's neighbours pointed to their origin when they listed 'one Cup-board, one Dish-bench'.²⁰⁶ The court cupboard, originally intended to display plate, resembled a stand in three stages; it often had either a central cupboard or a drawer beneath the middle shelf. The press, with its lower tier fitted with doors and the upper part recessed and fitted with smaller cupboards, is, like the court-cupboard, found from 1623 onwards.²⁰⁷ Hanging presses were intended, in the words of Nicholas Lock's inventory²⁰⁸ of 1666, 'for to hange clothes in', like our wardrobes. A 'little cupboard to sett meat in' comes in Walter Hunt's will of 1623;²⁰⁹ this may have been a livery-cupboard, or perhaps a safe. The first joined cupboard is in John Symes' will,²¹⁰ 1655. Several 18th century dressers, from 1702²¹¹ onwards, appear to have been used for holding pewter plates and dishes; this of course was a distinct article of furniture from the 'dresser-board', and was in fact what we ourselves call a dresser. The chest of drawers²¹² dates from James Clarke's inventory of 1688/9. It had first appeared in great houses in the middle of the century.

Beds are of all varieties. The assessors generally summed them up with a phrase like 'one bed and bedstead with all furniture thereto belonging'. More detailed inventories make it clear that these are free-standing bedsteads, with a stoutly-corded base like those at Chastleton House, on which a mat was placed; over it came a featherbed, or less frequently a flock-bed. Joined bedsteads, the rigid four posters with a canopy, are mentioned twenty-six times, beginning with William Maynard the mason's²¹³ in 1606; the

²⁰⁰ *Ib.*: 20/5/16.

²⁰¹ *Ib.*: 35/1/16.

²⁰² *Ib.*: 33/3/22.

²⁰³ A safe comparison at this date; the mid-Essex inventories date from 1635-1749, as compared with 1605-1732 for these Bicester inventories.

²⁰⁴ E.g. Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 41/3/14: 'a benche with a backe thereunto'.

²⁰⁵ *Ib.*: 30/4/4.

²⁰⁶ *Ib.*: 33/2/34.

²⁰⁷ *Ib.*: 30/4/32 and 120/1/29.

²⁰⁸ *Ib.*: 41/4/28.

²⁰⁹ *Ib.*: 30/4/32.

²¹⁰ P.C.C. Aylett 2; fol. 56.

²¹¹ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 129/3/4.

²¹² *Ib.*: 14/4/24.

²¹³ *Ib.*: 43/2/23.

expression 'standing bedstead' occurs six times. The half-headed bedstead which had short corner-posts and no canopy is first mentioned in 1666,²¹⁴ but it was rare in Bicester. Trucklebeds, sometimes called trundlebeds, or once 'truncklebed', intended for children or perhaps for personal servants sleeping in the same room as their master or mistress, were low wheeled ones that could be pushed under the principal bed during the day. In those crowded rooms when families were large some such device was essential. Forty of them are listed from 1622²¹⁵ onwards; Clemens' 'pallet bedstead'²¹⁶ may have been another. Only three cradles are mentioned, the first in 1621,²¹⁷ though May's 'child's bed-basket'²¹⁸ of 1707 was another form of it. Deely's wall-bed²¹⁹ of 1674/5 was something of an anachronism. Space could also be saved by folding bedsteads; Mary Smith's codicil²²⁰ of 1753 speaks of a 'sacking-bottom bedsteed that Turns up' and a 'wenscott Bedsteed that Turns up'. John Bouchier²²¹ (1700/1) had a 'scrue' bedstead and Susannah Edwards²²² (1706) possessed a 'dale' one.

Bede tells us that Caedmon the poet slept with the cows. A thousand years or so later, so did Ralph Clements'²²³ servant, whose bed was in the stable. That was in 1624. Other beds were to be found in the cockloft, the chamber over the brewhouse, the outhouse, the barn, the room over the gatehouse, and as late as 1730 in the wool-chamber.²²⁴ In all these cases the inventories imply that the beds were in use; obviously they were where servants slept.

Bedding was of many kinds. Featherbeds, bolsters and pillows were the favourite type, though flock ones were also common. Flock-beds are first mentioned in 1606,²²⁵ feather-beds in 1607.²²⁶ Wool-beds and straw beds date from 1621 and 1623/4²²⁷ and were less popular. A chaff-bed is mentioned once, in 1703,²²⁸ and in 1715 Elizabeth Bates²²⁹ had one of feather mixed with flock. It must have been uncomfortable! Sheets were in good

²¹⁴ *Ib.*: 41/4/28.

²¹⁵ *Ib.*: 41/3/14.

²¹⁶ *Ib.*: 120/1/29.

²¹⁷ *Ib.*: 30/4/4.

²¹⁸ *Ib.*: 141/3/16.

²¹⁹ *Ib.*: 18/4/7.

²²⁰ *Ib.*: 152/1/40.

²²¹ *Ib.*: 77/3/21.

²²² *Ib.*: 21/1/7.

²²³ *Ib.*: 120/1/29.

²²⁴ *Ib.*: 37/8/27; 31/3/32; 136/4/6; 33/3/22; 132/2/18; 157/4/7.

²²⁵ *Ib.*: 43/3/23.

²²⁶ *Ib.*: 58/4/14.

²²⁷ *Ib.*: 30/4/32; 30/4/4.

²²⁸ *Ib.*: 8/3/23.

²²⁹ *Ib.*: 116/3/38.

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supply, made sometimes of hemp,²³⁰ occasionally of holland,²³¹ once of 'Dowlis',²³² but most frequently of linen. Blankets, on the other hand, seem to the modern reader to have been in rather short supply. They were supplemented by bed rugs and coverlets. While coverlets appear throughout this range of inventories, the word 'counterpane' does not occur until 1692,²³³ and 'quilt'²³⁴ is first used in 1698/9. An interesting item is John Bouchier's²³⁵ 'painted quilt' in 1700/1. Bed-curtains and valances, mat and cords, appear in practically all the detailed inventories. John Chillingworth's curtains²³⁶ were made of linsey-wolsey, a suitable material for a maltster of 1649. Edmond Lewis²³⁷ ten years later could boast of a 'Satten Tester' and a new orange coverlet, but he claimed to be a gentleman.

Some idea of the range of household utensils in everyday life will have been formed from the contents of the rooms described above. References to more prized possessions are naturally rarer. Richard Matthews' will²³⁸ refers in 1629 to the general habit of the head of the household in keeping such valuables in a locked coffer in his bedroom. All his legacies were to be paid 'out of the Coffe I reserved to my selfe'; the inventory shows that he had £14 of 'Readie Money' in it. Walter Hunt's²³⁹ luxuries in 1623/4 included a 'Venice glass' valued at 12*d.*, 'one Massarde Bole Tipped about wth silver' rated at 13*s.*, and a set of silver spoons. Eighty years later Richard Harris²⁴⁰ left £6 worth of silver, consisting of one silver cup with a cover, one smaller cup and ten silver spoons; he kept them in the chamber over the hall. In 1688 James Clarke²⁴¹ left his daughter-in-law his silver watch. William Stiles²⁴² left his silver tobacco stopper to the brother with whom he was in partnership in 1724; Sewell Stevens,²⁴³ a grocer of 1788, bequeathed a watch to his son John and his silver snuff-box to a married daughter. A silver seal and two pairs of silver buttons are mentioned among Elizabeth Ewen's possessions²⁴⁴ in 1708. Rings, generally gold ones, are mentioned in the inventories ten times altogether; they range in value from a ring and pin²⁴⁵

²³⁰ E.g. *ib.*: 1/5/45.

²³¹ *Ib.*: 18/4/1.

²³² *Ib.*: 67/4/30.

²³³ *Ib.*: 42/2/22.

²³⁴ *Ib.*: 121/2/5.

²³⁵ *Ib.*: 77/3/21.

²³⁶ *Ib.*: 120/2/20.

²³⁷ P.C.C. Pell 9; fol. 450.

²³⁸ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 141/1/8.

²³⁹ *Ib.*: 30/4/32.

²⁴⁰ *Ib.*: 35/1/16.

²⁴¹ *Ib.*: 14/4/24.

²⁴² *Ib.*: 63/3/18.

²⁴³ *Ib.*: 64/2/16.

²⁴⁴ *Ib.*: 126/2/11.

²⁴⁵ *Ib.*: 141/1/8.

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worth 4*d.*, to a gold ring worth £1.²⁴⁶ Bequests of either a ring or of 10*s.* to buy one are common. John Sherman in 1607 made careful disposition of the best and the 'worst' aquavita bottles.²⁴⁷

Weapons were still to be found in these houses. The owner of a splendid Elizabethan crossbow discovered about thirty years ago in the cellar of a house in Sheep Street²⁴⁸ remains, however, a mystery. In 1602 George Hancoke²⁴⁹ bequeathed a rapier and dagger. William Hedges²⁵⁰ in 1621 had a sword and dagger; while Walter Hunt (1623) might well have boasted with David of his 'artillery': he possessed an old gun, one halberd, one brown bill and a glave.²⁵¹ Edmond Lewis in 1659 bequeathed his sword and belt,²⁵² which might easily have seen active service in the Civil War. John May the iron-monger²⁵³ had a gun hanging in his kitchen in 1707. Eighty years earlier Ralph Clements had 'one muskett with the furniture', also in his kitchen.²⁵⁴

References to the water-supply are occasionally made. In the yard beyond Richard Clements' stable²⁵⁵ were 'wheelles to fetch water' (1623/4), while Henry Potter²⁵⁶ had a water-cart in his courtyard (1625) and Isabell Hudson's inventory²⁵⁷ mentions in 1628 'the Curbes Chaines & Bucketts of both wells'. Anne Bellow's inventory²⁵⁸ of 1703 includes a lead trough and frame worth 13*s.* 4*d.*

That Bicester was not an illiterate community is shown by the fairly frequent references to books. They are first mentioned in William Hedges' inventory²⁵⁹ of 1621; he had a Bible and other books valued at 4*s.* altogether; that was eighteen years before the first mention of a Bible in the Essex inventories. In 1692 Catherine Henn²⁶⁰ left her grand-daughter Jane 'halfe a Crowne to buy her a Booke'. While nobody else could rival Cornish's library, described above, Richard Harris²⁶¹ had twenty-eight books. Several people had relations at Oxford University, the earliest of them being Humphrey

²⁴⁶ *Ib.*: 120/1/29.

²⁴⁷ *Ib.*: 58/4/14.

²⁴⁸ Shown in 1951 at the Bicester Bygones Exhibition; then penes Mr. Coggins, 2 Old Parr Rd., Banbury.

²⁴⁹ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 29/3/76.

²⁵⁰ *Ib.*: 30/4/5.

²⁵¹ *Ib.*: 30/4/32.

²⁵² P.C.C. Pell 9; fol. 450.

²⁵³ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 141/3/16.

²⁵⁴ *Ib.*: 120/1/29.

²⁵⁵ *Ib.*

²⁵⁶ *Ib.*: 144/1/38.

²⁵⁷ *Ib.*: 131/5/6.

²⁵⁸ *Ib.*: 8/3/23.

²⁵⁹ *Ib.*: 30/4/5.

²⁶⁰ *Ib.*: 34/4/12.

²⁶¹ *Ib.*: 35/1/16.

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Hunt's son John,²⁶² who was a Fellow of New College at the end of Elizabeth I's reign. Thomas Guyes²⁶³ in 1702 left £50 to his son Samuel 'now a Scholar in Oxford'; Samuel had perhaps been a pupil of the grammar school established in the parish church by a Vicar of Bicester about 1669, which the Verneys of Claydon considered as good as Eton, Winchester or Westminster.²⁶⁴ Mary Smith in 1755 left all her books to her nephew John Spire of St. John the Baptist's College in Oxford.²⁶⁵ Less academic families valued the culture that came from a craftsman's training and made careful provision for binding their children as apprentices. Even Edmund Bodicott,²⁶⁶ the wealthiest of our testators, intended his children to be put forth 'in honest mens servis'. That was in James I's reign. James Clarke²⁶⁷ in 1688/9 left the interest on £500 to maintain his son 'and place him out to some good honest Substantiall Trade'. What it cost to do this is shown in the accounts²⁶⁸ of Walter Baylies' administrators (1665):

	li	s	d
It' for binding ye two eldest boyes apprentices	15	00	00
It' for ye apprenticing Edward and Elizabeth	25	00	00
It' for apprenticing ye yongest and clothes	14	00	00

The accounts also provide information about the cost of education:

	li	s	d
It' for Boarding and Schooling for The children	03	10	08

Another sign of literacy is the extent to which people were able to sign their own wills. Between 1600 and 1649 24 per cent of the wills were signed by men, although women could do no more than write their initials at the best; in the second half of the century 31 per cent were signed by men, while another 28 per cent were initialled or signed by some other mark than a cross; as to women, only one was able to write her name, though others could make a distinctive mark to 20.8 per cent of the wills. The number of wills made greatly increased in the 18th century; of the 114 wills examined from this period, 47.37 per cent bore the signatures of men and 11.4 per cent those of women; 13.18 per cent were signed by men with a distinctive mark, 9.35 per cent were similarly signed by women. The percentage of men who could do no more than make a cross fell from 16 per cent to 13.4 per cent in the two halves of the 17th century and rose again slightly to 14 per cent during

²⁶² *Ib.*: 29/3/52.

²⁶³ *Ib.*: 129/3/4.

²⁶⁴ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, 1, pp. 463-4.

²⁶⁵ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 152/1/40.

²⁶⁶ *Ib.*: 4/2/32.

²⁶⁷ *Ib.*: 14/4/24.

²⁶⁸ *Ib.*: 76/4/18.

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the 18th; for women, it stood at 6 per cent for the period 1600-49, fell to 2.83 per cent from 1650-99 and rose again from 1700 to 6.1 per cent. The slight rise in pure illiteracy is accounted for by the increasing number of people making their wills. It is clear that during the two centuries under review the ability to write was becoming more widespread in Bicester and was not confined purely to men.

The local historian may well ask himself whether the town was stagnating at this period. There is, for example, little evidence of new building in the documents under consideration. The earliest reference is in the will of Wyllyam Wykyns²⁶⁹ in 1621, who mentions his newly-built house in St. John's Street (now Sheep Street). Seventeen years later Ellis Edwards²⁷⁰ specifies 'the newly-erected house which I built'. Henry Potter's inventory²⁷¹ of 1625 mentions 'the new chamber'. 18th century wills are silent on the subject. Yet it is to that epoch that eight of the nine masons on our list belong. The impression given by a walk round the town today is that much of the old part, particularly in the Market Square and Sheep Street, dates from that time. The black and red chequered brickwork that was then fashionable has left a mellowed, pleasant effect; there are good examples, too, of the use of local stone in the same century. The Congregational Church in Chapel Street, licensed in 1728,²⁷² built on land cleared by a disastrous fire, is a dignified combination of brick and stone. All this points not to stagnation but to prosperity; it shows clearly how unwise it would be to rely exclusively on the evidence of wills and inventories.

Although the great majority of the testators confined their interest in property to the town they lived in about ten per cent (27 out of 251) owned either houses or land elsewhere. Most of this property lay, as might be expected, in neighbouring villages. These include Caversfield, Launton, Ambrosden, Arncott, Blackthorn,²⁷³ Piddington, Fringford, Weston-on-the-Green, Charlton-on-Otmoor and Oddington.²⁷⁴ A few people owned houses in Banbury,²⁷⁵ Chipping Norton,²⁷⁶ Oxford,²⁷⁷ or Thame.²⁷⁸ Beyond the confines of Oxfordshire there is mention of London, Feltham in Middlesex, Leighton Buzzard in Bedfordshire,²⁷⁹ and other places in Warwickshire,

²⁶⁹ *Ib.*: 70/2/4.

²⁷⁰ *Ib.*: 20/3/14.

²⁷¹ *Ib.*: 144/1/38.

²⁷² *V.C.H. Oxon.*, vi, p. 48.

²⁷³ P.C.C. Ruthen, f. 282.

²⁷⁴ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 142/2/36.

²⁷⁵ *Ib.*: 129/3/4 and 116/3/7.

²⁷⁶ *Ib.*: 126/2/11.

²⁷⁷ *Ib.*: 121/2/5.

²⁷⁸ *Ib.*: 30/4/4 and 127/5/1.

²⁷⁹ *Ib.*: 70/2/18.

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Gloucestershire and Staffordshire. By 1734 the tobacconist Richard Dumbleton²⁸⁰ had acquired the seventy acres of Barley Close and also Windmill Close, both in Caversfield. When Richard Allen²⁸¹ died in 1729, there were freehold lands in Caversfield which he had bought from Mr. John Willson; he also had £200 due to him on a mortgage of lands in Warwickshire. The widow Ann Willson²⁸² (d. 1731) had let part of her land in Caversfield to George Mukill and Joseph Humphreys, while the elder Robert Oakley owed her £200 on mortgage for the rest; a mortgage of £240 was due to her from John Kirby for a messuage and lands in Charlton-on-Otmoor. When John Box²⁸³ in 1700 left his daughter Anne Swift a cottage in Launton, he feared that the Lord of the Manor might refuse to admit her as tenant 'according to the custom of the said Mannor', or alternatively that her brother Joseph might interfere with her occupation of the premises; if either situation arose she was to receive £50 as compensation for the loss of the tenement. Medieval Launton had insisted on the re-marriage of widows who wished to continue as tenants for more than a year and a day after their husbands' death,²⁸⁴ but as Anne Swift's husband was still alive it is to be hoped she was allowed to enjoy her legacy undisturbed. Gabriel Maynard²⁸⁵ (1792) also held land at Launton, two copyholds in the Brook Closes; besides this he owned a house and mills at Weston-on-the-Green. James Clarke's²⁸⁶ land at Upper Arncott included about a hundred and ten acres of woodland called Upper or Further Coppice and Middle Coppice, held on a lease of 9,900 years; at Feltham in Middlesex he also held a messuage called the Nursery with a close of pasture adjoining and arable land in the common fields. He died shortly after William and Mary came to the throne. A generation later the Bowler²⁸⁷ family held land in the adjacent village of Ambrosden called 'Bauleings Mead' (1720) or 'Balding's Meadow' (1729). Richard Ibell²⁸⁸ also had land in that parish in 1730, known as the Way Ground and the Little Ground at the Gate. Nicholas Dormer²⁸⁹ in 1615 left leases in Piddington to pay legacies to his children. A shepherd of the Commonwealth period, Henry Allum,²⁹⁰ had 'a quarterne Land and three bayes of houseing

²⁸⁰ *Ib.*: 19/3/3.

²⁸¹ *Ib.*: 114/2/4.

²⁸² *Ib.*: 157/4/20.

²⁸³ *Ib.*: 116/1/5.

²⁸⁴ *V.C.H. Oxon.* vi, p. 236.

²⁸⁵ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 142/4/30.

²⁸⁶ *Ib.*: 14/4/24.

²⁸⁷ *Ib.*: 8/5/3 and 117/2/6.

²⁸⁸ *Ib.*: 137/2/5.

²⁸⁹ *Ib.*: 17/3/39.

²⁹⁰ P.C.C. Pell 11.

in frinckford Towne (Fringford) and field'. Outside Oxfordshire his contemporary Edmond Lewis²⁹¹ kept a chamber in London. In 1731 a 'plasterer', Gabriel Harwood,²⁹² of the parish of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, left 'a barn in Biciter' to his wife and a house in the town to his son. The man whose interests were the most far-flung was, however, a soldier called William White²⁹³ who probably served in the New Model Army. He owned a house in Tidbury, Staffordshire, for which £40 rent was due on Lady Day 1655/6 and another in Marshfield, a Gloucestershire village; he also possessed 'horses in Scotland' which must surely have been left behind after Dunbar; they were to be sold towards the payment of his debts. He owed £40 to two men in 'our Troope', but £18 of this was to be paid by his captain. He had left a bed with its 'furniture' and some of his clothes at Wotton in Norfolk, though most of his goods were in London—at least four trunks at Mr. Isaac Ash's in Blackfriars, another at the Mermaid in Carter Lane and still more goods at Mr. Edward Glover's in Great Woodstreet in Paul's Alley. His pay was evidently in arrears.

White was by no means the only one to find himself short of ready money. Hannah Stallion²⁹⁴ (1717) stipulated that her legacies should be paid within six months of her death if the executrices could get in enough money to pay them so soon; when she was left a widow ten years earlier her husband Francis²⁹⁵ had expressed the wish that when their daughters married she should provide what she could spare without doing too much damage to herself. Several people, for example Christopher Hall²⁹⁶ in 1615, forbade the making of any bequests until after the widow's death; Christopher Hanwell²⁹⁷ made it clear that the household stuff bequeathed to his children was to be used by his wife Gillian as long as she lived (1630); Richard Griffin²⁹⁸ left gifts in kind to every one of his children that had 'Crisninge peses', but delivery was not to be made before they reached the age of twenty-two and then only if they were setting up house and needed to use the things. Thomas Paxton²⁹⁹ in 1634 bequeathed his son Richard £5, with £5 more to be paid by the widow when she could conveniently make it for him. The following year Richard Ducke³⁰⁰ instructed his executors to pay the legacies as they gathered in the debts that were due to him. Bequests were sometimes to be

²⁹¹ P.C.C. Pell 9.

²⁹² Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 134/2/55.

²⁹³ P.C.C. Berkeley 4 (W. White 1656: 'soulderer').

²⁹⁴ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 150/4/28.

²⁹⁵ *Ib.*: 150/2/48.

²⁹⁶ *Ib.*: 30/2/29.

²⁹⁷ *Ib.*: 31/3/1.

²⁹⁸ *Ib.*: 129/1/42.

²⁹⁹ *Ib.*: 144/2/20.

³⁰⁰ *Ib.*: 18/2/1.

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paid at carefully spaced intervals to ensure that the necessary money was available. Nicholas Dormer's will³⁰¹ is the extreme example of this habit and one of the earliest, having been drawn up in 1615. Each of his nine existing children and another then unborn was to be paid £10 out of their father's leases in Piddington; the eldest was not to receive his portion until six years after Dormer's death; the others were to await their turns, generally at intervals of two years until finally the posthumous child was to be paid twenty-three years after the death of his father. Under 17th century conditions it appears unlikely that the executors survived for so long to carry out their duties. Careful provision is made for the sharing among survivors of the money that would have gone to a child dying before he could inherit it.

From 1637 onwards there is evidence that some people were rich enough to lend money on bond. This happens also to be the year in which bonds are first mentioned in the mid-Essex inventories.³⁰² The Bicester reference is in the will of Dorothea Alexander³⁰³ who had £10 due on bond from Humphrey Hunt. Amounts mentioned later vary from the £5 of Matthew Deely³⁰⁴ in 1674 to the £131 of his grandson John's bond³⁰⁵ in 1695. Sums ranging from £20 to £40 are more usual.³⁰⁶ Mortgages are more rarely mentioned, the earliest being Elizabeth Ewen's³⁰⁷ in 1708 which amounted to £30 on a house in Chipping Norton. Ann Willson³⁰⁸ left mortgages totalling £440 in 1731.

Charitable bequests are another indication of comparative wealth. When amounts seem small Professor W. K. Jordan's recently published analysis³⁰⁹ is a valuable yardstick. He points out that in the early 17th century £2 10s. 0d. was sufficient to maintain a pauper family at a level just above subsistence for a whole year, while £30 would set up a young tradesman in the provinces and £100 would suffice to bring up a young man and educate him. He adds further that when the wages of a farm-labourer were 5d. or 6d. a day, as they were in 1647, a legacy of 20s. for the poor of a parish was 'not a socially insignificant sum'. Nineteen of the Bicester wills leave sums of money varying in amount from ten groats³¹⁰ to £23³¹¹ to be distributed

³⁰¹ *Ib.*: 17/3/39.

³⁰² Ed. F. W. Steer, *op. cit.*

³⁰³ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 1/6/2.

³⁰⁴ *Ib.*: 18/4/7.

³⁰⁵ *Ib.*: 19/1/1.

³⁰⁶ Eg. *ib.*: 40/1/1 and 67/2/21.

³⁰⁷ *Ib.*: 126/2/11.

³⁰⁸ *Ib.*: 157/4/20.

³⁰⁹ W. K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in England 1480-1660* (Allen & Unwin 1959), pp. 36-7, 132; ch.

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³¹⁰ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 30/4/5.

³¹¹ *Ib.*: 66/2/23.

among the poor of the whole town; six others specify payments to the poor of Market End only and a further seven leave sums ranging from 1s. to 20s. for the poor of King's End. In other words, 12.75 per cent of the total number of wills show enough social conscience to provide indiscriminate charity. The most usual custom was a distribution at the funeral, which often took the form of gifts of bread; sometimes only poor widows were entitled to it. The 'auncient maids' of Henry Cornish's will³¹² in 1698 are exceptional. Only a few individuals were concerned to establish some more permanent type of charity. John Ducke's will³¹³ of 1658/9 left 40s. for the poor of Market End, to be paid to the feoffees of the poor's land; the Feoffee Charity, founded probably in 1529,³¹⁴ still exists. Drusilla Bowell left money in 1682 for ten 'olde Maydens' each year and another sum for the apprenticeship of two poor boys annually; this latter fund Bicester was to share in turn with two other places. Neither will nor codicil is clearly drafted and her charity was lost in the 18th century.³¹⁵ In 1657 Humphrey Bayles³¹⁶ established a charity known as the Weekly Bread; his nephews John and George Burroughs were to give six twopenny loaves every Sabbath day to six poor widows of the town for ever; the overseers of the poor were to supervise the distribution and if it fell into neglect they had power to enter the house in Sheep Street and distrain on the goods. The loaves were still being distributed in the 19th century. Although no large scale relief was established here between 1600 and 1800, the indiscriminate charities were fairly frequent between 1600 and 1729 and no doubt did something to mitigate the poverty of many people in the town.

Whether there were resources available to cope adequately with disaster on the scale that befell the Bennet family in 1607 must, however, remain unknown. Richard Bennet had married Dorothy Durrant on Christmas Day 1592; their children, Dorothy, Thomas, William and Elizabeth were born between October 1594 and January 1600.³¹⁷ On June 10th 1607 Richard Bennet realized that there was plague in the house and dictated his will.³¹⁸ Anyone who should come into the house to 'take paynes for their good' in this extremity was to have a third part of his household stuff. If his wife should die before September 29th that year her two brothers were to provide for any of the children that survived; they were reminded that the lease of the house would soon need renewing. Though Bennet himself was

³¹² *Ib.*: 121/2/5.

³¹³ P.C.C. Pell 3.

³¹⁴ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, vi, p. 54.

³¹⁵ *Ib.*: p. 55 and Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 7/2/52.

³¹⁶ P.C.C. Ruthen 6.

³¹⁷ Bicester Parish Registers for 1592-1607.

³¹⁸ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 4/1/43.

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then in good health, the Parish Register records his burial on June 16th, less than a week after making his will; three days later William was buried and on July 14th Thomas followed them to the grave. The widow was left to bring up Dorothy, not yet fourteen, and Elizabeth, still only six. Nothing further is known of them. As there were relatives in Tingewicke just over the Buckinghamshire border and at 'Thridington' in Worcestershire, they may have left the district. Bennet's will is a vivid illustration of the isolation that threatened a household stricken with plague, while his bequest to the hypothetical kind neighbour—if it were ever realized—can only have helped to spread the epidemic. The number of burials in Bicester during the summer months of 1607 greatly exceeded the average.³¹⁹

To estimate the range of wealth and poverty among Bicester people and the comparative prosperity of the town in relation first to other Oxfordshire towns and then to different parts of the country is not an easy task. The wealthiest of all our testators was Edmund Bodicott:³²⁰ although there is no indication of his total income, the bequests he made out of his leases in 1610 amounted to £631 10s. 0d. Next to him comes John Triplett who died in 1637. Since his inventory has not survived all we know of Triplett's wealth is from a note at the foot of the probate record;³²¹ his estate was worth £495 7s. 0d. At the other end of the scale is Thomas Broome:³²² whose personal possessions were assessed in 1705 at £2 10s. 0d. This total is, however, only part of the tale, for Broome's will shows him to have been the owner of four houses, including the two-roomed one that he lived in. None of these is assessed in the inventory, although in Bicester the valuers often did include both leasehold property and land held in fee-simple. John Cooper,³²³ for example, a collarmaker who died in 1661, lived in a four-roomed cottage with a lease valued at £2 0s. 0d.; the deeds of 83 and 85 Sheep Street³²⁴ show that Cooper's cottage was one of several on that site, near the junction with Crockwell. Its condition is indicated by the Hearth Tax returns for 1665, which mention Samuel Cooper, John's son, as having two hearths in Market End but discharged by poverty from paying the tax.³²⁵ Considerations like these show that the figures given in inventories or quoted for probate are not to be regarded uncritically as reliable estimates for the whole of a man's wealth.

³¹⁹ Bicester Parish Register, 1607.

³²⁰ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 4/2/32. Ref. is made in *V.C.H. Oxon.*, vi, p. 37 to a Chancery suit in which it was alleged that Bodicott's lands and tenements in Bicester had been worth £1,500 p.a.

³²¹ Bodl. MS. Wills Oxon., 66/2/23.

³²² *Ib.*: 116/2/10.

³²³ *Ib.*: 13/4/14.

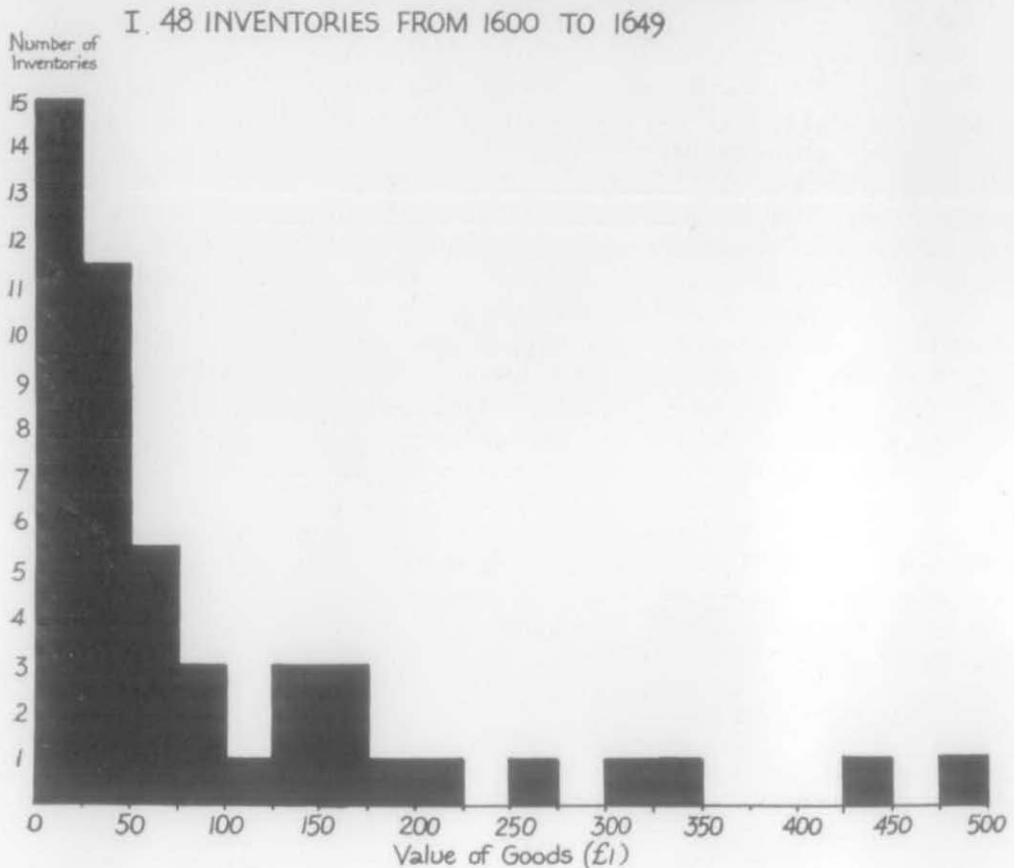
³²⁴ Penes Mr. Eric Trinder.

³²⁵ Ed. M. M. B. Weinstock, pub^d for Oxfordshire Record Society in 1940.

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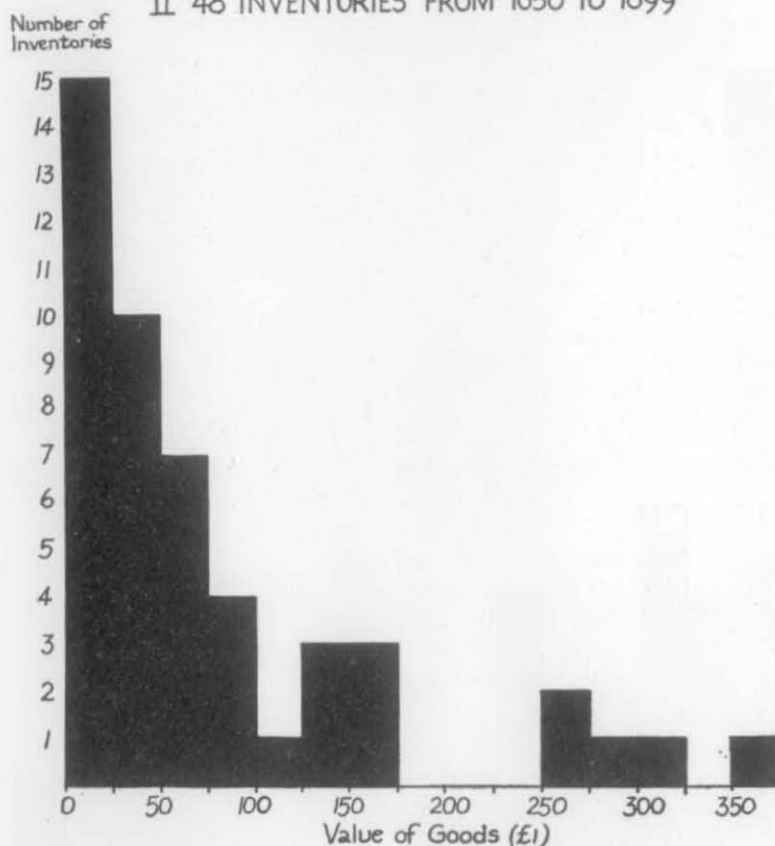
These figures are, however, the nearest index of general prosperity that we have. They represent the total value of a testator's goods and chattels, not his annual income. TABLE G uses them in an attempt to estimate the distribution of wealth, by means of a graph for each of the three half-centuries from 1600 to 1749. The first two by a coincidence happen each to be based on forty-eight inventories; the period from 1700-49, for which there are only twenty-six inventories available—in spite of the fact that more people were making their wills—is based on so small a sample that extreme caution is necessary when attempting to draw conclusions from it. In the two halves of the 17th century the proportion of people with worldly goods worth £25 or

TABLE G
Frequencies of inventories according to value from 1600 to 1749.



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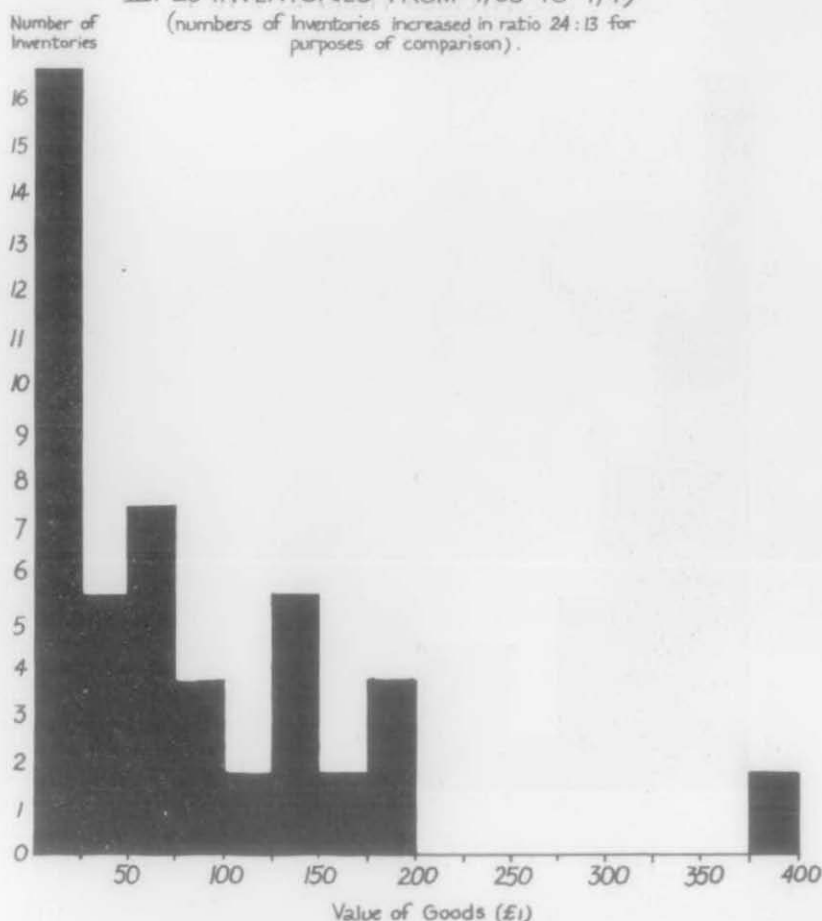
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less happens to be the same, namely 31.25 per cent of the sample; the proportion of people with goods valued from £25 to £100 varies by only .1 per cent, though the graph shows a slight movement upwards in the second half of the century. From £100 to £125 both graphs fall, rising again to a small peak in the range of £125 to £175. From 1600 to 1649 seven people had goods valued between £175 and £500, though the spread is uneven with a noticeable gap between £350 and £425. In the second half of this century only five men were worth from £250 to £375; the gap occurs lower down the scale, from £175 to £250, so that the range of these richer men's wealth is more closely concentrated, although it does not rise as high as it did in the earlier period. Between 1700 and 1749 a slightly larger proportion, namely

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(numbers of Inventories increased in ratio 24:13 for purposes of comparison).



34.37 per cent of the sample, left goods worth £25 or less; it is in fact to this period that the poorest of all belong. In the range from £25 to £200 the graph shows three small peaks: from £50 to £75, from £125 to £150, and from £175 to £200. Then there is a large gap from £200 to £375, with the one rich man of this period in the range from £375 to £400. Throughout the 150 years under consideration the great majority of Bicester people possessed goods below the £150 range.

If the occupations of the richest and poorest sections of the community are examined (see TABLE H) some interesting light can be thrown on class

TABLE H
CLASS STRUCTURE

Those with goods over £100

Date	No. and	% of total	Farming only			Farming + Trade			Trade only			Widows		
			Nos.	% of those over £100	% of total	Nos.	% of those over £100	% of total	Nos.	% of those over £100	% of total	Nos.	% over £100	% of total
1600-49	14*	27.5	6	43	12.5	5	36	10.43	—	—	—	1	4.14	2.08
1650-99	12	25	3	25	6.25	8	66.6	16.7	1	8.33	2.08	1	8.33	2.08
1700-49	8	30.77	2	25	7.7	2	25	7.7	2	25	7.7	2	25	7.7

*In period 1600-49, no information available about how 2 of the 14 gained their wealth.

Those with goods under £20

Date	Nos.	% of total	Farming only			Farming + Trade			Trade only			Widows, etc.			Unspecified		
			Nos.	% of those under £20	% of total	Nos.	% of those under £20	% of total	Nos.	% of those under £20	% of total	Nos.	% of those under £20	% of total	Nos.	% of those under £20	% of total
1600-49	12	25	3	25	6.25	1	8.33	2.083	5	41.66	10.83	1	8.33	2.083	2	16.66	4.15
1650-99	15	31.25	2	13.33	4.15	—	—	—	7	46.66	14.58	3	20	6.25	3	20	6.25
1700-49	8	30.76	—	—	—	1	12.5	3.5	3	37.5	11.52	1 + 1 spinster	25	7.7	1 + 1 'Gent'	25	7.7

Median value of inventories

1600-49	£43	13	10	} 1600-1749	£49	5	10
1650-99	£49	2	5				
1700-49	£52	19	6				

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structure in the town. Taking those whose goods were worth over £100, during the years from 1600 to 1649 43 per cent gained their wealth from the land, while 36 per cent combined farming with a trade; nobody in this category owed his wealth exclusively to trade. It was a period when the yeoman prospered. From 1650 to 1699, the proportion of richer men who owed their wealth to farming alone fell to 25 per cent, but in the case of those who combined farming with one or more trades it rose to 66.6 per cent. Another 8.33 per cent owed their success to a trade. During the first half of the 18th century 25 per cent of the richer people are to be found in each of these groups, while the remainder were widows. At the other end of the scale, taking those whose goods were valued at less than £20, the proportion of those engaged only in farming as husbandmen or labourers fell from 25 per cent in the period 1600 to 1649 to 13.33 per cent between 1650 and 1699, and ceased altogether between 1700 and 1749. 8.33 per cent of the poorer men combined farming with a trade from 1600 to 1649 and 12.5 per cent from 1700 to 1749; none of them derived their wealth in this way during the intervening period. The percentage of the poorer men engaged only in trade was 41.66 per cent in the earliest period, 46.66 per cent in the middle one and 37.5 per cent in the latest.

Bicester's position in relation to other Oxfordshire towns can be estimated from the Hearth Tax returns of 1665.³²⁶ The figures for Bicester itself can be analysed as follows:

Number of hearths taxed															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
No. of owners	12	16	21	11	4	1	4	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
	1	-	2	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
"	4	12	-	-	in Market End, discharged by reason of poverty.										
"	-	-	-	1	in Market End, uninhabited.										

³²⁶ *Calculations based on Hearth Tax Returns*: The 1665 returns give 236 as the total no. of hearths taxed in Market End, corrected from CXXXVI. The true total is 232. I have based my percentage on the total no. of hearths in the town, i.e.

232	taxed in Market End.	
23	" " King's End.	
28	discharged by poverty	} in Market End.
4	uninhabited	
287	Total	

When using the Constables' Returns the totals on which the percentages are calculated have been obtained by adding the number of hearths taxed, the number discharged by poverty and the number not inhabited.

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The comparative size and prosperity of the leading Oxfordshire towns can be estimated from the Constables' Returns for 1665, which accompanied the Hearth Tax list. They are summarized below.

Name of Town	Total No. of hearths taxed	No. discharged by poverty	No. not inhabited
Henley	633	18 = 2.41%	90 = 12.15%
Banbury	451	35 = 6.86%	24 = 4.7%
Witney	402	28 = 6.73%	6 = 1.37%
Burford	379	15 = 3.63%	19 = 4.6%
Thame	364	17 = 4.45%	None
Chipping Norton	335	32 = 8.9%	15 = 3.92%
Bicester	259	28 = 9.62%	4 = 1.34%

If King's End and Market End are taken together, 72.34 per cent of the owners possessed three hearths or less; of the 287 hearths listed in the Bicester tax returns, 28 or 10.25 per cent were discharged by poverty and only four (or 1.39 per cent) were uninhabited. As is often the case there is a discrepancy between the totals actually listed—one of these is inaccurate to begin with—and the summary given in the Constables' Returns. From the latter, however, some conclusions can be drawn. In order of size Bicester ranked seventh among the Oxfordshire towns, considerably behind Thame and Chipping Norton, her nearest rivals; yet she was not threatened by decay, as Henley, then apart from Oxford itself the largest town in the county, appears to have been, if the percentage of uninhabited hearths is any criterion. On the Constables' Returns Bicester had the smallest percentage of uninhabited property among the leading seven towns, though Witney ran her up very closely and led when Bicester's figures are corrected; both, however, had less than 2 per cent. The proportion of hearths discharged from payment through poverty is, however, highest in Bicester, perhaps because there was no staple industry comparable with Witney's blankets or Burford's wool.

Mr. Barley's recent book makes it possible to compare Bicester's general prosperity with that in other parts of the country. The yardstick here is provided by the median value of inventories, with some reference to the total range. In Bicester the median value for the period from 1600 to 1649 is £43 13s. 10d., at a time when the total range is from £6 2s. 4d. to £495 7s. 0d. In mid-Essex from 1635 to 1640 the median value was £53 17s. 0d. and the range went from £2 11s. 9d. to £389 4s. 6d.;³²⁷ in Bedfordshire the median value was only £26 19s. 10d.,³²⁸ while in the East Midlands in 1635 it was £34 7s. 0d.³²⁹ Bicester was thus less prosperous than Essex, but better off

³²⁷ Barley, *op. cit.*, p. 139 (quoting Steer).

³²⁸ *Ib.*: p. 150 n.

³²⁹ *Ib.*: p. 151 n.

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than either Bedfordshire or the East Midlands at that time. For the period 1650-99 the median value in Bicester rose to £49 2s. 5d., a figure in excess of the mid-Essex median of £44 14s. 0d. for the period 1658-70,³³⁰ but well below Kent's median of £70 15s. 2d. for the year 1663³³¹ and Norwich's figure of £115 17s. 0d. for the years 1666 and 1668 taken together.³³² From 1700 to 1749 the median value is £52 19s. 6d. in Bicester; it has not been possible to compare this particular figure with others taken from outside the county.

The most apt comparison that can be made is, however, that with the town of Petworth in Sussex. Mr. G. H. Kenyon's study³³³ covers the period 1610 to 1760, while the Bicester inventories (as distinct from wills) run from 1605 to 1732. The Petworth inventories are exclusively those of tradesmen, but the Bicester ones are not selective. Over the whole period the following table gives an indication of comparative wealth in the two towns:

Total inventory value	Bicester (122 inventories) %	Petworth (140 inventories) %
+£500	—	10%
£101—£500	26%	31%
£51—£100	22%	19%
£26—£50	19%	28%
£11—£25	21%	9%
Under £10	12%	3%

Thus, while 33 per cent of the Bicester inventories have a total value of £25 or under, only 12 per cent of the Petworth ones fall into this range. Between £51 and £500 the difference is only 2 per cent, again in favour of Petworth, but Bicester can offer no parallel to the 10 per cent of Petworth's traders whose inventories were valued at more than £500. This is what one would expect. While Petworth was a developed community of an almost entirely urban character, fostered by the presence of a great house that was being rebuilt during the period under consideration, Bicester's economy was by comparison still largely medieval. With their town surrounded by open fields until 1758, and with one of its manors still unenclosed in 1790, Bicester

³³⁰ *Ib.*: p. 195 n.

³³¹ *Ib.*: p. 185 n.

³³² *Ib.*: p. 197 n.

³³³ G. H. Kenyon, F.S.A., article on Petworth Town and Trades 1610-1760, in *Sussex Arch. Coll.*, pt. 1 in vol. 96 and pt. 11 in vol. 98. The inventory totals are taken from vol. 96, p. 39. I regret that I only came across this article when my own was nearly finished; it is invaluable, but my use of it has necessarily been somewhat cursory.

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tradesmen still saw nothing incongruous in combining farming with craftsmanship or with retailing, a way of life that Petworth folk considered characteristic of a village rather than a town.

That Bicester should lag behind a great city like Norwich or the prosperous yeoman or trader of the south-east was natural. Her interests were those of an agricultural region that depended on small tradesmen and local markets. Though yeomen might prosper here, merchant princes were unknown in the town. During the century and a half under review Bicester as a community was growing more prosperous. Those who depended entirely on agriculture for their living did best in the first half of the 17th century, but their proportion fell by nearly half during the next hundred years. Those who avoided specialization by combining farming with one or more trades were most prosperous in the second half of the 17th century. At this time only a few pure tradesmen were prosperous, although after 1700 tradesmen began to come into their own. The proportion of rich widows was increasing throughout the period from 1600 to 1749. Individuals were richest before the Civil War and yeomen were then the wealthiest people. How far the apparent increase in general prosperity in Bicester indicated by the rising median value of inventories was offset by rising prices is a factor beyond the scope of this article. All the conclusions drawn in it are tentative because the sample on which they are based is not an extensive one. The 'studious artisan' of history who ventures to explore the wills and inventories of his own town will find a world of profit and delight awaiting him.