**Making the House a Home in Later Medieval York**

The timber-framed town houses with overhanging jetties that grace such medieval urban communities as Bury St Edmunds, Lavenham, Ludlow, Norwich, and York are both evocative and aesthetically attractive. Archaeologists of standing buildings have done much to understand the way such buildings were constructed and developed over time and between regions.[[1]](#footnote-1) The ravages of internal alterations and the complete loss of original furnishings, however, significantly hampers our ability to understand these structures as lived spaces or the way people thought about the houses they inhabited. This chapter turns instead to documentary sources that can help us imagine the interiors of more substantial town houses as furnished and also habited by artisans, merchants, and their wives, their servants and apprentices, and their children. Rejecting simplistic notions of public and private or of gendered spheres, it explores the way houses may have functioned as complex and fluid spaces. It asks about the gender and power dynamics that were played out and how far for later medieval artisans and merchants the house might also have constituted home.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Later medieval York was a busy manufacturing and trading city of some 12,000 people.[[3]](#footnote-3) The seat of an archbishop and possessing numerous parish churches, several religious houses and hospitals, the city supported a range of specialist crafts such as masonry, goldsmithing, and glass painting, as well as cloth weaving, tanning, metal working, and various victualling trades.[[4]](#footnote-4) Merchants engaged in both regional and international trade through the port of Hull.[[5]](#footnote-5) The city is fortunate that numbers of the artisanal and mercantile houses have survived, albeit often much altered, especially internally. It also possesses substantial later medieval archives, but especially from the archdiocese. It is this archival evidence that this article will draw upon, specifically a collection of mercantile and artisanal probate inventories and a large body of deposition evidence from instance litigation in the ecclesiastical Court of York (*Curia Eboracensis*), primarily in relation to disputed marriages, the largest single category of the court’s business.[[6]](#footnote-6) The inventories appraise the moveable goods of the deceased and usually order these spatially under headings such ‘*aula*’ (hall) and ‘*camera*’ (chamber).[[7]](#footnote-7) As such they offer an invaluable clue to the spatial arrangements and furnishings of houses as lived spaces. Made by a range of people, including householders and their wives, the apprentices and servants they employed, and women and men who visited or passed by, deposition evidence offers narratives of activities and events within the house.[[8]](#footnote-8) Because these were contested actions, we cannot always be confident of the historicity of the events described.[[9]](#footnote-9) They still provide a remarkable – and hitherto largely unexplored window – onto the actual social and spatial dynamics of the house.[[10]](#footnote-10)

The homes of more substantial artisans and merchants are most readily represented in extant probate inventories for the city. Extant structures vary considerably in size and design, but they contain numbers of elements in common. The basic form of the artisanal house comprised a hall, a kitchen, and one or more upper chambers. Numbers of houses possessed in addition a summer hall or a parlour, terms that appear to have overlapped. Neither term is especially common in the extant probate inventories before the last decades of the fifteenth century.[[11]](#footnote-11) A summer hall, on the other hand, is noticed only in the 1422 inventory of the merchant William Plovell.[[12]](#footnote-12) Both terms are used in depositions from the Court of York, though Agnes Bolton testified in 1434 to events located in the ground-floor parlour or summer hall (‘*in quodam bassa parlura sive aula estimali*’) of her Coppergate home, a usage that might imply similarity or congruence of usage. Her husband, however, talked of a ground-floor room (‘*camera*’) or summer hall.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Some further spaces sometimes belonging to the house should be noted. Gardens, though external, must nevertheless be seen as integral to the house. They are sometimes noticed in cause paper depositions since they were a common venue for the exchange of verbal contracts to marry.[[14]](#footnote-14) Gardens are scarcely noticed in inventories, probably because they did not contain moveable goods of any value. Gardens are, however, recorded in two Beverley inventories. That of the mason, John Cadeby included chickens and ducks, but also tables and trestles which might suggest its use as an outdoor seating area for the retail of ale since Cadeby, or more probably his wife, engaged in large-scale brewing.[[15]](#footnote-15) Ducks and chickens are listed in kitchen entries of the inventories of the York masons, Robert de Crackall and Hugh Grantham. Grantham also had a cow and calf so listed. Several inventories list stables and horses, the primary means of transport for those with sufficient means. Burgage plots perhaps provided space located to the rear of houses that might have been used for grazing. John Stubbes, a singularly prosperous barber, kept a cow in addition to a horse, both itemised under the heading of stable. William Coltman, brewer, likewise possessed a cow, but apparently no horse, in association with a stable. Thomas Ovedo’s inventory has lost its headings, but a cow and probably a horse were listed in what was presumably a stable.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Another space common to most artisanal houses is the shop or workshop.[[17]](#footnote-17) This may often have represented an extension of the hall and the demarcation between the two may often have been slight.[[18]](#footnote-18) The remains of original shopfronts survive on several former butchers’ houses down York’s Shambles. Shops are described in the inventories of a barber, a girdler, a pewterer, a skinner, a stringer, and a tailor respectively. It is likely that these served as retail spaces as well as – in most instances at least – work spaces and that they consequently would usually have opened onto the street. However, the workshop listed in, John Collan, goldsmith’s inventory of 1490 was probably not accessible from the street, but followed the pattern outlined by David Clark whereby customers would be invited in by arrangement.[[19]](#footnote-19) The same was likely true of Thomas Gryssop, described as a chapman, but whose voluminous stock, including lengths of cloth, spices, caps and bonnets, gloves, purses and the like suggests he was more akin to a merchant.[[20]](#footnote-20)

John Carter, tailor’s inventory describes workshops for ‘western’ cloth, i.e. from Halifax, Craven, and Kendal, and for ‘southern’ cloth in addition to a shop. This last appears to have been both a workspace and a retail space since it contained sheers for cutting cloth, tables on which cloth might be cut to shape, but also two long tables upon which cloths could perhaps have been laid out for display. Unlike the workshops, it appears not to have been a place for storing cloth since only comparatively small measures of inexpensive canvas and painted cloth are noticed.[[21]](#footnote-21) The shoemaker, William Coltman’s shop contained both tools and stock in the form of pairs of men’s, women’s, and children’s shoes as well as boots and slippers. The inventory of Thomas Catton, weaver, lacks headings, but the space containing his two looms is readily identifiable as his workshop.[[22]](#footnote-22) Shops or workshops, usually described by street, are also noticed in depositions. Thus we find shops located in Fossgate, Girdlergate, Micklegate, and Petergate.[[23]](#footnote-23)

A space regularly found in both deposition evidence and probate inventories is the cellar or store room (*cellarium*).[[24]](#footnote-24) Rooms described as cellars are found in three different cases. A 1372 deposition of the apprentice John de Wald described how the children of the household slept ‘in a cellar below the aforesaid chamber’ (‘*in cellario sub camera predicta*’) being the chamber occupied by his mistress in Walmgate.[[25]](#footnote-25) Another deposition dated 1438-9 describes ‘a certain small cellar located next to the … parlour’. The cellar was located in front of the entrance to the parlour. A connecting grill gave sight from the cellar into the parlour, though its main function was probably ventilation.[[26]](#footnote-26) The final example noted is a ‘small cellar’ patently used to store ale since when Agnes Barbour was asked for ale, she went to the cellar to return with a cup of ale.[[27]](#footnote-27) Cellars are also noted in probate inventories. A wine cellar is listed in Robert Talkan’s inventory.[[28]](#footnote-28) Robert Crakall’s cellar served as a store for ale, but also for valuables including silver plate and spoons. Similar items of value are found elsewhere together with napery.[[29]](#footnote-29) In the low-lying and flood-prone city of York, the presence of underground cellars would be perhaps slightly surprising. It may be that cellar storage spaces sometimes represent comparatively shallow excavations taking the floor below ground level, but not necessarily creating entirely subterranean spaces.[[30]](#footnote-30) The grill linking the cellar with the parlour was implicitly at eye level suggesting that the floor level was only some four or five feet below ground.

Several inventories describe brewhouses, gilehouses – for the fermenting of wort for brewing, and, in a few instances, bakehouses.[[31]](#footnote-31) These were presumably adjacent or in close proximity to the main house, but physically separate as was the case in respect of grander houses. Sometimes these constituted the working spaces of a householder in respect of his (or her) craft as brewer or as baker. The baker, Thomas Overdo’s inventory has lost its headings, but had separate spaces for brewing and for baking.[[32]](#footnote-32) William Coltman, brewer, who possessed a gilehouse containing brewing equipment, additionally had a bulting-house for the sifting of flour, but also for preparing bread since it contained dough troughs and tables.[[33]](#footnote-33) In both instances these men likely retailed ale and bread regardless of the occupational designation attributed to them.

Separate provision for brewing is documented in respect of two masons’ households. Another example is found in the case of the Beverley mason, John Cadeby.[[34]](#footnote-34) In all three cases their wives probably ran commercial brewing businesses. This was true of Hugh Grantham and his wife Agnes: a matrimonial case from only months after his death documents that Agnes employed female servants in her brewing business, supplying *inter alia* the household of the master of St Leonard’s hospital.[[35]](#footnote-35) The small number of other instances where separate accommodation for brewing is recorded were likely for domestic consumption.[[36]](#footnote-36) The example of John Stubbes is unusual in that he likely ran a hostelry alongside his business as a barber. His shop contained chairs, razors, basins and the like, and his house boasted an unusual number of furnished chambers, including a chamber above the bulting-house containing beds and bedding with three feather beds. Atypically for a chamber, this room also contained tables and trestles. That Stubbes’ wife had particular responsibility for the hostelry side of the business can only be surmised.[[37]](#footnote-37)

The presence of structures integral to the main house, such as the shop or workshop, or probably separate, such as brewhouses and stables, is physical manifestation of the artisanal and mercantile house as both work place and domestic space. Although modern technology has permitted a modest degree of home working, the process of industrialisation and the separation of workplace and homeplace makes it hard to comprehend the duality of the domestic and the economic in the pre-modern, pre-industrial era. This, however, was a cultural norm for the more privileged members of urban society, who owned their own businesses and – in the case of male and some widowed female householders – enjoyed privileges as burgesses or citizens. I have recently argued that this duality of purpose was essential to the identity of bourgeois wives as co-workers, business partners, household managers, sexual partners, and mothers. That wives would assist their husbands in their craft was such a commonplace that it is hardly documented, but the capacity of wives to run well-ordered households, to supervise servants, to ensure guests were suitably looked after, and that husbands were satisfied in bed was as much a contribution to the economic well-being and reputation of the household as it was about domestic harmony.[[38]](#footnote-38) Only to the modern mind do these occupy separate categories.

This distinctive duality that characterised the pre-modern bourgeois house can be explored using probate inventories and depositions. The material cultural evidence offered by probate inventories provides clues to the function and use of the spaces such as halls, chambers, and shops. It is, however, the evidence of depositions that provides evidence for the dynamic use of space and thus begins to allow us to ask how houses function as lived spaces, even to explore how far those who inhabited these houses may have invested in them emotionally and so thought of them as more than simply buildings, but as homes. There is here an implicit tension between firstly an understanding of the house as both economic and domestic space where the distinction between the two is both fluid and fuzzy and secondly of the house as a vehicle for bourgeois values of domesticity and conjugality.[[39]](#footnote-39) Our exploration of this problematic will focus particularly on the spatial dynamics and daily rhythms of the house and it constituent rooms, but also on the dynamics of power and gender that were played out between the four walls.

*Shops and Workshops*

The central function of the shop or workshop as the location of both manufacture and retail is apparent from the presence of tools, stock and furnishings. Thomas Baker, stringer’s shop contained a chest for stock and a quantity of bow strings, but also hemp used in the making of strings and some tables which presumably served as work surfaces. The goldsmithing workshop of John Collan contained specialist tools including anvils, hammers, rivets, tongs, and scales, working spaces in the form of tables and desks, but also raw materials such as pearls, maple wood, and gold leaf together with a few items of stock, perhaps uncollected commissions, including a silver pax and a silver bow and arrow with a small gold bell. Robert Fawcette, pewterer’s shop likewise contained raw pewter and specialist tools. A set of salt cellars represented the only items of stock.[[40]](#footnote-40)

An example of a shop functioning as a retail space is found from the deposition evidence. Joan Scharp testified in 1430 to Margaret Harman’s purchase of a very large quantity of candlewick worth 23s. 10d. for her chandlery business from her master, the Petergate merchant Robert Lascelles.[[41]](#footnote-41) Present in the shop (‘*in schoppa*’) at the time were Joan, Margaret, Robert’s wife Isabel, and Robert himself. We can surmise that another of Robert’s servants, Alice Bawmburgh and Margaret’s own servant, also Margaret were present or nearby. Robert and Margaret together weighed the wick presumably using a balance in the shop. Robert informed Margaret of the cost, which she later promised to pay at Michaelmas. Finally Alice Bawmburgh and Margaret’s servant, Margaret, together carried the candlewick to Margaret’s own house. Implicit from the case is that Robert and Margaret had a business relationship – Robert probably sold the candles Margaret produced – and this may be why Robert personally weighed the candlewick, but his involvement may also have been a consequence of the value of the purchase. We may note that his wife, Isabel, was also in the shop at the time as were one and perhaps two of his female servants. Merchants were particularly inclined to employ female servants presumably because they were valued as shop assistants and perhaps because potential customers preferred to be served by young women.[[42]](#footnote-42)

A case from Scarborough, provides another vignette of craft activity in the weaver, William Goddeshelp’s ‘warkhous’ attached to his house. Witnesses testified to how both female and male workers gathered one morning to set up a loom against weaving a new cloth. These included what was probably William’s journeyman, John Bergh, Agnes Schilbotill, a widow and householder, Agnes’ servants, Katherine Lorymer and Alice Burton, and William Belet, a servant of his uncle William Forster, whom Agnes had asked to come along. It becomes apparent from the testimony that this preparation, involving among other things weighing white woollen balls of yarn, was an event of some importance and the numbers involved are atypical. This process, which had begun between eight and nine in the morning and carried on until two in the afternoon morphed into an occasion for drinks and recreation ‘as is the custom among neighbours of the said town of Scarborough’ whenever a loom was so prepared.[[43]](#footnote-43)

The fluidity between the shop or workshop as economic, domestic or social space is suggested from some other depositions from the Court of York. It is apparent that servants or apprentices employed in the workshop might have their bed there. When defamatory words were supposedly voiced in Fossgate in the afternoon or evening of Thursday in Pentecost week, 1465, Andrew Kynkcorne heard them ‘lying on his bed by a booth of the shop’ of Robert Lonesdale. The reference to the ‘*stallum*’, which the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* renders variously as craftman’s booth, bench or table, suggests that he had his own space within the shop. His deposition, which gives his age as twenty or more, does not identify him as Lonesdale’s servant, but implicitly he worked for Lonsdale and was perhaps his apprentice.[[44]](#footnote-44) Edmund Whipp, Agnes Barbour’s servant, testified that he was present in the shop of Agnes’ mother’s house when a late-night visitor called. Implicitly Edmund slept in his employer’s shop. A board bed was appraised as part of the contents of Robert Tankard, girdler’s shop in 1439.[[45]](#footnote-45)

The shop served not just as a work or retail space and as a sleeping space for employees, but perhaps specifically male employees whose physical presence at night might function as security against the theft of tools or stock. As in the case of the Scarborough weaver, the shop might also function as a social space. In 1433 Richard Meke and his wife, Ellen, testified how three years earlier they had sat in the Girdlergate shop of their neighbour Marjory Wadyngton together with another man when Marjory and Robert contracted marriage.[[46]](#footnote-46) John Elwald, then a city chamberlain, testified in 1486 to witnessing a like contract between Margaret Esingwald and William Newton in his own workshop. Also present was the barber William Caton.[[47]](#footnote-47)

John Kirkeby visited Agnes Barbour late at night in Goodramgate. Calling her downstairs and requesting ale, he went into Agnes’s shop. Edmund Whipp and John Rayner, alias Barber, both then Agnes’ servants, were already there as were Richard Langthorne and another man. They were joined by Agnes with the ale. During the ensuing conversation, Agnes reminded John Kirkeby that he was wont to call her his wife. John agreed and the couple then each swore before those present that were husband and wife. Agnes gave John a ring of silver with gems that she was wearing. In return he proffered a silver-ornamented strap from his collar. One of the men there said he wished more than twenty nobles that he were as close to another woman as were this couple.[[48]](#footnote-48)

Whereas the social gathering in Scarborough went on around the actual work of the workshop, on no other occasions just discussed are we told why those present gathered in the shop rather than the hall or parlour. The shop perhaps offered a more informal social space, especially outside working hours.[[49]](#footnote-49) This sense is perhaps reinforced by Maud Kirk’s deposition from a 1503 marriage case that she often saw Hugh Manyfold eating and drinking with the widow Elizabeth Foster in her shop (‘*in opella dicti* [sic] *ffoster*’). It is not made apparent how she came to see the couple in Elizabeth’s shop, but she likely looked through the open shop window. This is the implication of one of the articles in the case which countered a claim that Elizabeth was ill in bed one day and unable to go into her shop. It argued that Elizabeth was in the shop that day and had been seen and talked to by many (‘*sepius visa fuit et allacuta in sua opella*’). In like vein another article denies that Thomas Danby could have observed whether Elizabeth was in her shop or not if he watched from a tavern in Petergate since it was impossible to see at such a distance (‘*in tanta distancia … impossibile videre*’).[[50]](#footnote-50)

The shop window regularly opened up onto the street making the shop semi-public space so long as the window was opened. Conversation could be carried on alongside trade as a way of maintaining friendly relations with customers, but talk through the open window need not accompany trade. Elizabeth Cok, widow, deposed how in Pentecost week 1465 she stood outside entrance to Peter Roberd’s house in Fossgate talking to his wife Margaret who was in the shop (‘*infra opelle sive shoppe*’).[[51]](#footnote-51) Only at night would the shutters of the shop window be closed to be opened again the following morning. Richard York testified in 1467 how at dawn one Monday he went outside his house in Micklegate and opened up the window of his shop. Since his deposition concerns the conversation he had whilst in the street, the action of opening the shutters helped locate the event in time.[[52]](#footnote-52)

*Halls*

The hall was the most formal space within the house. It was into the hall that guests might be invited. The multiplicity of its uses is suggested by probate inventories. It was a living space designed to be both comfortable and attractive. Decorative cloths and tapestry coverings for seats or cloths used as wall hangings known variously as costers, dossers or dorsers, and bankers are a common feature.[[53]](#footnote-53) Sometimes these formed colour co-ordinated sets. The prosperous girdler, Robert Talkan, had two different sets of dorsers, costers, and bankers, which also included cushions, though only a red and blue dorser is described.[[54]](#footnote-54) The weaver, Thomas Catton, had a red and green dorser and matching banker. Painted wall hangings are also regularly found. John Carter, a tailor, had six painted and one striped hanging. Cushions were ubiquitous in the bourgeois hall. Catton, for example, had thirteen, Talkan exceptionally twenty.[[55]](#footnote-55)

The comparative formality of the hall is suggested *inter alia* by its use as the setting for marriage contracts witnessed by kin or by employers in the case of servants. Thus John Kirkeby and Margaret Thweng allegedly contracted marriage in the hall of the Thweng family house in the extra-mural parish of St Lawrence on the feast of the dedication, 1435. Margaret’s parents, her brother, and one Richard Langthorne were all present.[[56]](#footnote-56) Although Henry Wadde contracted marriage with Joan Lee in her father’s gilehouse in 1509 with only two women servants for witnesses, the following day he placed a silver ring on her finger in the hall of her father’s house.[[57]](#footnote-57) When Robert Tavarner contracted Margaret Goldsmyth in the Goodramgate house of Robert Stillington having eaten together as guests of Robert and his wife, they did so sat on a bench (‘*scannum*’) under a window ‘in the front part of the hall’. Robert sat with the couple, but his wife stood at the other end of the hall folding a kerchief.[[58]](#footnote-58)

Dining was integral to the hall’s function. Tables, benches and other seating are always found. Common too are basins and ewers. Catton’s hall contained seven basins and six ewers.[[59]](#footnote-59) We also find candlesticks that imply use after dark, dishes for keeping food warm, and salt cellars. The plurality of provision for hand washing alone suggests that the hall might accommodate guests at meal times as well as just family. A 1446 case, for example, where Agnes Benson petitioned to live apart from her husband, Peter, offers a vignette of a mealtime where Agnes and her husband entertained another married couple and their daughter. The two couples and the daughter sat at the table, but Agnes’ son by a previous marriage, as was perhaps usual with younger children, stood.[[60]](#footnote-60) The frequent use of trestle tables which might be folded away suggests, however, the potential versatility of the space. The mason, Hugh Grantham’s hall included a ‘*tabeler cum menye*’ (gaming board with pieces) suggesting recreational activity.[[61]](#footnote-61)

Grantham’s hall also contained ‘*ij rotis de filatione*’ or spinning wheels. The same is true of some other halls recorded in York probate inventories, often alongside wool cards for carding.[[62]](#footnote-62) From a 1372 case we learn how Marion, the wife of Thomas de Walde, her neighbour Margaret de Burton, a kinswoman of Marion’s husband, and Thomas’ apprentice John, also a kinsman, listened in on a conversation between Thomas and his mistress. When they heard Thomas enter the room, Marion and Margaret hurried back to spinning wheels in the hall. John, however, ran into the garden. His master chased him and struck him on the foot with a staff.[[63]](#footnote-63) Implicitly the two women were keeping one another company whilst spinning woollen yarn.

The capacity of the hall to function as a dining space was dependent on the presence of the kitchen, a comparatively ubiquitous and necessary element of the bourgeois house. It provided daily meals not only for household members including live-in servants, but also day labour or journeymen who would be provided with a midday meal, and the guests whose entertainment was a facet of bourgeois society. Only in the most prosperous town houses associated particularly with higher clergy was the kitchen associated with buttery and pantry, an arrangement that suggests the hall, cross passage, and service wing arrangement of the aristocratic house.[[64]](#footnote-64) The kitchens recorded appear to be well equipped for general cooking tasks. Most, but not all, provided spits and related utensils for roasting. The capacity to roast meat and poultry such as might be expected for major feasts and entertaining appears to be equated with wealth. The well-equipped kitchen of the prosperous mason, Hugh Grantham contrasts with the rather Spartan kitchen – no roasting spits here – of Katherine North, whose total goods were valued at less than twelve shillings and who probably made her livelihood making cheap clothing and as a laundress.[[65]](#footnote-65)

The toll collector, Thomas Peerson’s probate register designates no separate kitchen, implying no clear demarcation by means of screens or partitions within the hall.[[66]](#footnote-66) Instead his cooking utensils are itemised as part of the hall, which implies cooking was achieved over a hearth in the hall, which contained *inter alia* seating, tables, cushions, cooking pots, spits, a mortar, spinning wheels and cards. Peerson’s goods were less valuable than was true of many inventories associated with separate kitchens and is probably more typical of poorer artisans who are under-represented in the inventory sample.[[67]](#footnote-67)

*Summer Halls and Parlours*

Another space noticed in both our sources is the summer hall or parlour. Two different depositions equate the summer hall with the parlour. For example, Agnes, the wife of Robert Bolton described marriage negotiations taking place ‘*in quadam bassa parlura sive aula estivali*’.[[68]](#footnote-68) The barber, John Stubbes’ inventory distinguishes a summer hall from a ‘winter hall’, a usage that may imply that the former was unheated, whereas a hearth was a prerequisite for regular halls.[[69]](#footnote-69) There is indication that the term parlour had largely displaced summer hall by the end of our period.[[70]](#footnote-70) The furnishing of summer halls or parlours found in four artisanal inventories from York before 1500 offers clues as to their usage. All contain furnishings or utensils that suggest eating as an activity, though the brewer, William Coltman’s contained mostly utensils and no tables, but some seating. The merchant, William Plovell’s summer hall – the three others are all called parlour – also contained a bed and bedding. John Carter also kept quantities of hemp and equipment for making bow strings in his despite his declared identity of tailor.[[71]](#footnote-71) Implicitly tables and seating could be moved from hall to summer hall or parlour if needed, but the space might also function as additional work space, storage space, or spare bedroom.

The summer hall is noticed several times in matrimonial cases as a venue for the exchange of words of contract. We see couples contracting solely in the presence of the householder and his wife in a High Ousegate summer hall in 1435 and a Davygate parlour in 1465.[[72]](#footnote-72) On another occasion a group, including the fathers of the prospective couple and the bride’s uncle, met in a York combsmith’s parlour to discuss what each family would give the couple.[[73]](#footnote-73) As the probate inventories suggest, the summer hall or parlour might also be used for dining. When Margaret Harman and her husband were dined by Robert Lascelles, the merchant from whom she had bought the candlewick noted earlier, it was in the summer hall of his Petergate home. It may be that the summer hall was usually a smaller – the term ‘small’ (‘*parva*’) is sometimes used – and hence more intimate space than the main hall. When, for example, John Busford, clerk visited his girlfriend, Joan Wright in her North Street home one Sunday evening, the couple sat together in the small parlour or summer hall. The couple exchanged words of marriage spied on by Joan’s mother peering into the room through the grating of the adjoining cellar and her maid, Joan Yarm, listening at the doorway. It was also presumably a space best suited for use in the summer months; the Harmans were dined in later July.[[74]](#footnote-74)

*Chambers*

The final significant room type is the chamber. In the two or even three-story box-framed houses that were the norm in later medieval York, the chamber is usually understood as a room located on an upper floor. In the few instances that ground-floor chambers are referenced in depositions, they are so distinguished. Thus the room in William Naburn’s house in Walmgate in which his servant John More slept is described as a ‘*bassa camera*’ or downstairs room.[[75]](#footnote-75) Most inventories name only one *camera*, invariably identifiable as a bedroom from its furnishings. Where there are a plurality of *camerae*, the term is occasionally qualified to distinguish a principal chamber. John Collan, goldsmith, for example had a ‘great chamber’ and ‘another chamber’. Atypically for an artisanal householder, John Stubbes, the Goodramgate barber is associated with seven *camerae*. One was designated the ‘servants’ chamber’, another as ‘above the boulting house’. The ‘servants’ chamber’ is described as two rooms above the brewhouse. One of Stubbes’ chambers, which contained quantities of oats and of peas and a miscellany of other items, was used for storage, but the others were clearly bedrooms providing accommodation for guests at what was evidently a hostelry.[[76]](#footnote-76)

The deposition evidence rarely notices chambers, though references to couples seen together in beds are to be found. For example Maud Katersouth or Katerforth and her son witnessed a contract of marriage and saw Maud de Bradelay join her new husband in bed. They also testified to the couple getting up the following dawn and the son deposed that he heard them having sex during the night, but no detail of the location is offered beyond that it was in Maud de Bradelay’s house in North Street.[[77]](#footnote-77) More informative is the example of Agnes Grantham given protection in the home of the York draper, William Pountfret early in the fifteenth century. Agnes shared a room and a bed with Pountfret’s kinswoman, the vowess Christiana. Pountfret’s servant Agnes Kyrkeby recalled serving her with food and drink, carrying candles for her, and even covering her in bed with the sheets.[[78]](#footnote-78) The most telling example is that found in a case from 1372 where testimony was given about an adulterous affair between the Walmgate potter (i.e. metal founder), Thomas de Walde and his ex-servant Joan Suardby. John de Wald, Thomas’ apprentice and kinsman, testified to how whenever Joan visited, she and Thomas shared a bed. Thomas’ wife, Marion, thus displaced from the marital bed, went downstairs and slept on her own (‘*sola*’) in a bed in the same cellar room as their sons and daughters.[[79]](#footnote-79)

The marital bed, as the de Walde case demonstrates, was located in the principle chamber. Children – and, as we have seen, servants – might sleep elsewhere, in this instance in a lower level room. The same was true of servants who might sleep in the shop or in another multi-purpose ground-floor space, perhaps in part to provide security for stock and tools. The inventory evidence, however, rarely records beds and bedding outside the single chamber regularly found in the inventory sample.[[80]](#footnote-80) Unusually Thomas Overdo, baker, had three chambers, of which one included two pairs of servants’ sheets.[[81]](#footnote-81) A second or even third chamber thus might provide dedicated space for servants, perhaps facilitating separate accommodation for female servants, but also providing the possibility of guest accommodation. Plural beds are sometimes recorded within the one chamber suggesting that numbers of household members and not just the master and mistress of the household slept in the one chamber. Hugh Grantham’s inventory documents a plentiful supply of bed linen in the form of sheets and pillows. His chamber was well equipped with chests, an ubiquitous feature of chambers, but only one actual wooden bed is recorded. At his death Hugh was living with his wife Agnes, quite probably their son and one or more female servants.[[82]](#footnote-82) Three overlapping possibilities arise. One is that all slept in the chamber, but only Hugh and Agnes slept on bedding contained within a physical bed with curtains, the others making do with paillasses of virtually no value and so unrecorded in the inventory. A second is that paillasses were put out at night elsewhere in the house, perhaps providing for the female servants to sleep separately.[[83]](#footnote-83) A third is that there were more solid bed frames, but these were deemed the personal belongings of the users and so unrecorded. In the light of the deposition evidence that servants and children might sleep downstairs, these two last seem the more likely.

Testimony from the ecclesiastical Court of York does much to illuminate the way spaces were used, although their focus was on specific moments, particularly when couples allegedly exchanged words signifying marriage. Much everyday activity is largely unnoticed. We occasionally glimpse women servants at their duties in the house. In one case a furious husband discovers in the morning that the pewter vessels used to entertain guests the previous evening remained unwashed because his wife had dismissed the servants after the meal was served.[[84]](#footnote-84) A male journeyman testified to having to fetch water from the river in the temporary absence of the female servant, but the labour of male servants inside the workshop is almost invisible.[[85]](#footnote-85) Children too young to give testimony within the Church court are likewise largely unseen, though the husband angry at the lack of washing up was the man who fell out with his wife because her young son by a previous marriage stood at the dinner table when the household dined. Household devotions are unreported. So is personal hygiene. Sex, however, is noticed periodically as future contracts of marriage – “I will marry you” etc. – were rendered binding if the couple subsequently consummated the relationship, though couples in bed became less visible over the course of our period implicitly because of a growing fashion for bed hangings, screens and separate chambers. I have elsewhere remarked that this probably had implications for who might see each other naked in the family home and for the degree to which sexual activity was hidden from others.[[86]](#footnote-86) It may have implications for the understanding of beds and chambers as both private and intimate spaces.

Despite these lacunae, a bigger picture is possible. Artisanal and mercantile houses are distinctive in their provision of a plurality of rooms including hall, kitchen, chamber and shop / workshop – and probably a garden. They are distinct in their comparative comfort and provision of furnishings when compared to even prosperous peasant houses and implicitly the more modest accommodation of most York residents.[[87]](#footnote-87) Merchants and craftsmen tended to enjoy much greater stability of tenure compared to poorer inhabitants, some of whom rented rooms in shared accommodation and almost none of whom would have engaged live-in adolescent and young adult servants and apprentices so ubiquitous in artisanal and mercantile houses.[[88]](#footnote-88) Their houses tended to be on the more principle streets and not on infill sites such as churchyards. Both male and female servants supported the business of the workshop, the apprentice perhaps even sleeping there at night. Women servants might serve customers in the shop or across the counter opening onto the street. They were also actively involved in domestic tasks, fetching water, fetching food, cleaning, lighting candles, and doubtless helping with cooking activities or washing and dressing young children.

The comfortably furnished artisanal or mercantile home was the focus of daily life. The kitchen provided food through the day, catering for both household servants and family. Journeymen were fed in the middle of day on work days, but guests might be invited to dine periodically such as on feast days.[[89]](#footnote-89) This contrasts with poorer inhabitants whose accommodation did not necessarily allow the preparation of hot food and whose entertainment was focused on the ale house.[[90]](#footnote-90) During the working day, the shop or workshop was the focus of much activity. Wives might socialise through the shop window, both parents and servants would be around to watch over children. A degree of familiarity, cooperation, even perhaps of affection would necessarily develop between the various members of the household meeting together in the workshop. Only masons’ households conspicuously deviate from this model since the mason’s trade necessarily took him out of the house to where his skills were in demand. This would explain the prominence of separate occupations for masons’ wives who might be involved in commercial brewing and, on a more modest scale, the rearing of poultry.[[91]](#footnote-91)

The regular advent of day labour, the encounters at the shop window, the invitation in of customers to inspect the merchants’ wares, the ubiquitous presence of one or two or sometimes more teenaged or young adult live-in servants or apprentices, and the periodic entertainment of guests so necessary in a cash-starved culture where trade depended on trust, all served to make the house a busy and very permeable space.[[92]](#footnote-92) However, this superficial impression obscures more subtle patterns. We can discern different parts of the house, even different times of day, where and when space had particular meanings associated with particular social relations. Perhaps the busiest space was the artisanal shop. We see this most clearly, if atypically, in the Scarborough weaver’s shop. We may note that even outside working hours that the apprentice barber, his mistress, her fiancé and other visitors gathered in the barber’s shop to drink ale and chat. Both master and mistress might be found there alongside apprentices and other servants, perhaps also younger children. The hall was another busy space because used through the day as a place for the family to eat – employees may have eaten in the shop – for guests to be entertained, for the women of the household to sit and spin, but probably also converse as they worked, and for socialising in the evening and on holidays. This was primarily family space, particularly in the evening, and it was space into which guests might be invited.

Off-duty servants might socialise, but neither with their employers nor in the hall. Often the alehouse was a venue for relaxing, for meeting friends, and probably for courtship. Occasionally young men stayed out so late that their master had locked them out by the time they made their way home. We also find servants socialising in their employers’ house and in spaces over which they had some sense of ownership.[[93]](#footnote-93) A 1464 matrimonial case shows some young friends meeting in a ground-floor parlour in the Walmgate home of William Naburn in the early afternoon of a holiday. Margaret Beverley and Nicholas Chandler leaned against a standing chest in the parlour in the presence of Isabella Rayner, a teenage servant from a neighbouring house. Richard Tunstall stretched out on his bed resting in the room next door listening in to the conversation.[[94]](#footnote-94) In another case from 1509, Henry Wode and Joan Lee met up together in the gilehouse of her father’s house where Joan Wales and Joan Rawson were working. According to Rawson, Henry sat himself on the side of the gilevat.[[95]](#footnote-95)

Church court depositions regularly take us into the shop, the hall, and the summer hall or parlour. We also occasionally witness contracts of marriages in gardens.[[96]](#footnote-96) Rarely, however, do we penetrate the deeper space of the house.[[97]](#footnote-97) Once we glimpse servants caught in compromising circumstances by their master in an upper room of his house ‘where hay lies’.[[98]](#footnote-98) Another time Alice Camplay called for Agnes Horsley, whom she knew was spending the night with her lover, Master Thomas Cleveland, in his lodgings in Ogleforth. Thomas answered the door in his bare feet and Alice made her way upstairs to where she found Agnes lying naked in Thomas’ single bed.[[99]](#footnote-99) When Margaret Whitell turned to Richard Den to persuade John Beaumond, skinner, her abusive lover to mend his ways, Den turned up at night with a group of men and women. The women knocked on the door claiming that Margaret’s young daughter was seriously ill. Margaret answered the door and the men rushed in brandishing an axe and a sword. Guided by a candle they discovered John lying naked in Margaret’s bed with a dagger lying on a chest by the bed.[[100]](#footnote-100)

We have here a sense of the violation of personal and intimate space. The same is true of Marion de Walde’s displacement from her marital bed in the upper chamber by her husband’s former servant – implicitly a younger woman – and lover. In general, however, what went on in upper-floor chambers is invisible in depositions. The reason is fairly simple. The instance actions relating to marriage, breach of promise, and defamation used here required witnesses for one or other party to testify to what they had seen and heard. The pre-modern house provided much opportunity for conversations to be overheard or parties to be spied upon. We see this in the case of the mother and servant listening or peeping in on the daughter and her young man in the parlour, or of the wife, her friend, and the apprentice, eavesdropping on the adulterous husband and his lover. That said, what went on in the upper chamber or behind bed curtains was not readily observed or overheard and so could not be testified to. The chamber appears a more private and intimate space than any other part of the house.[[101]](#footnote-101)

The chamber may have been a place where private devotions took place. It provided a space where wives could converse privately, argue with, or even challenge their husbands. Above all it was the locus of the marital bed, the sole place were sexual relations might take place and indeed were expected.[[102]](#footnote-102) All others who slept under the same roof shared with someone of the same sex or slept on their own. Only the master of the house and his wife were permitted to have sex. Such servants who fornicated did so outside of the house or only surreptitiously and – as the apprentice found with a fellow servant in the upper room with the hay found to his cost – riskily. His irate master made him marry the young woman rather than go to prison for breaching his oath as an apprentice.[[103]](#footnote-103)

The spatial dynamics of the house are clearly linked to power dynamics. The medieval household was both patriarchal and hierarchical. It was the master who as householder exercised authority over his mesnie, that is to say his wife, his children, and his servants. He it was who directed the activity of the workshop, presided over the dinner table and hosted guests in the hall, and who expected sex of his wife in the marital bed each night. He regulated access to the house. It was he who locked the front door at night and it was he shuttered and unshuttered the shop window at the beginning and end of the working day. The master’s authority was, however, mediated. His wife enjoyed delegated authority as household manager and she carried the keys of her office. In her husband’s absence, she directed the workshop.[[104]](#footnote-104) The success of the household indeed rested or fell on the success of the partnership between the master and his wife.

In thinking about the medieval artisanal or mercantile house as home we introduce a concept freighted with resonances which are necessarily historically contingent. The late medieval usage of ‘home’ tends to be to signify the place a person – or even a thing – normally belongs. Some London churchwardens’ accounts record a payment ‘for fecchyng home of þe same crosse’, that is transporting a newly crafted cross to the church it was to be set up in.[[105]](#footnote-105) The adverb ‘homely’ perhaps brings us closer to the emotionality we invest in home. Nicholas Love described Mary at the marriage feast in Cana as ‘homely as in hir owne hous / ordeynynge and mynistrynge as maistresse therof’.[[106]](#footnote-106) The bourgeois house frequently provided the couple who stood as master and mistress over their households with a degree of stability of tenure that many, perhaps most other residents lacked. It was a space that couples invested in, buying furniture and furnishings, wall hangings, beds and bedding, kitchen utensils, silver spoons, and increasingly over our period pewter plates. These possessions were designed to create an attractive and comfortable environment. Wives took pride in managing such possessions and itemising them in their wills. Their contribution to family economy and even their direct earning through brewing, spinning and the like may have allowed them some voice in purchasing priorities.[[107]](#footnote-107) Work was done to make houses homely. Women servants helped clean, washed up after meals, fetched candles, lighted fires, served at table, did shopping, ran errands. Wives managed. Good housekeeping was a virtue.[[108]](#footnote-108) We may not have the cult of the domestic such as has been vividly described of the bourgeoisie in the nineteenth-century Bürgertum, but at play were similar processes of using material culture to signify a settled and secure identity that belies the fact that most citizens were of migrant stock and family lines seem often to have been short-lived.[[109]](#footnote-109)

Our analysis suggests three broad elements of the house characterised by different power and gender dynamics, associated with different household members, and with differing levels of privacy and intimacy. The first, the shop or workshop, though integral to the identity and economic success of the householder and his wife and physically part of the house, represents a distinct spatial element. This was in some ways the realm of the apprentice, who might sleep in the shop at night. During the day the shop was open to the public. Conversations were held through the window. Passers-by could look in and see who was present and what was going on. The second, the hall, the kitchen, the parlour or summer hall were less readily visible or accessible. The mistress of the house presided over housekeeping, directing the woman servant or servants to assist at preparing meals, to serve at table, to wash the dishes, to keep the floors and the table linen clean, to see to the fire and the lighting of candles. During much of the day the hall was probably the mistress’s domain. In the evening and at meal times her husband would have the principle seat and would host any guests at dinner.[[110]](#footnote-110)

The final space of the chamber offered a rather higher degree of privacy and indeed intimacy for the householder and his wife. Probate evidence suggests that the principle chamber was often a place of some comfort. Comparatively more wealth was invested in linen sheets, coverlets, bed curtains, hangings, and feather mattresses as well as wooden beds than was true of peasant households. As a space primarily enjoyed by the couple, this is in effect an investment in the conjugal relationship. It was here the couple could speak without servants listening in. Wives could question or reprimand their husbands. Here private devotions might be performed. Here the couple had regular sexual relations and conceived their children. Something of the wider cultural meanings of bed and chamber have recently been brilliantly essayed by Hollie Morgan.[[111]](#footnote-111) The thesis here is that the chamber symbolised the union of husband and wife. The bourgeois values of conjugality that sustained the later medieval artisanal and mercantile household where wives were as much partners and workmates as they were subordinates is played out in a space that allowed wives a voice and – in theory at least – and a degree of sexual equality.[[112]](#footnote-112)

The substantial artisanal and mercantile houses of later medieval York comprised three common elements, viz. chamber, hall, shop (see figure 1).[[113]](#footnote-113) In this respect York probably shares similarities with other larger urban centres in England and north-western Europe such as Bristol or Bruges.[[114]](#footnote-114) The chamber was as comfortably furnished and aesthetically pleasing as the hall. The hall allowed the householder to project a sense of worth and stability to guests. The chamber was a more intimate space in which couples might converse, argue, pray, make love, and find companionship. Both were spaces to be enjoyed by the master and mistress. More functional was the shop, which might literally serve as a window onto the householder’s identity as a craftsman or craftswoman. The husband might command servants and apprentices here just as his wife might direct female servants in the kitchen or the hall. Here then gender and power relations were played out on a daily basis. Although the household, comprised of apprentices and servants who might be around for several years or who might depart after just one, and of children who would quickly grow up and go into service by their early teens, changed year by year, some sense of collective identity was forged through the repeated daily interactions. The house was the theatre in which these interactions were played out and given meaning. The house was also a home, not so much for the transitory servants, but for the master and mistress who invested in its furnishings, took pride in the craft or trade their pursued from its premises, and whose very identity as citizens and householders the building served to project.

customers / public

guests

Figure 1. Schematic representation of three elements of the late medieval artisanal and mercantile house.

1. The literature is extensive. See for example Jane Grenville, *Medieval Housing* (London, 1997); John Schofield, *Medieval London Houses* (New Haven, 2003); Anthony Quiney, *Town Houses of Medieval Britain* (New Haven, 2003); Matthew Johnson, *English Houses 1300-1800: Vernacular Architecture, Social Life* (Harlow, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For a discussion of contemporary understandings of house as home see Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, *Home* (Abingdon, 2006), 88-132. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. P.J.P. Goldberg, *Women, Work, and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy: Women in York and Yorkshire c. 1300-1520* (Oxford, 1992), 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. P.M. Tillott, ed., *A History of the County of York: the City of York* (London, 1961), 84-91. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Jenny Kermode, *Medieval Merchants: York, Beverley and Hull in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2002), ch. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Of 332 extant files (excluding appeals) for the period 1300-1500, 134 (some 40 per cent) are matrimonial cases. Tithe cases are the next largest category at 44 (13.2 per cent), followed by testamentary (37), defamation (36), breach of faith (28), and violation of church rights (27). There are a further 201 appeals, of which a significant proportion are also matrimonial. Ideally we would use property deeds to map these sources onto extant buildings, but this is beyond the scope of this article. It is not at all clear whether any inventories or Church court cases in fact relate to extant structures. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. I have here used published translations by Philip Stell together with some transcriptions made by James Raine. Some inexpensive items, particularly wooden and ceramic items, were probably excluded from the appraisal: Philip Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories of the York Diocese, 1300-1500*, The Archaeology of York: Historical Sources for York Archaeology after AD1100, 2/3 (York, 2006); James Raine, ed., *Testamenta Eboracensia*, 6 volumes, Surtees Society, 4, 30, 45, 53, 79, 106 (1836-1902), iii and iv. For the value of inventories for understanding the use of space see for example P.J.P. Goldberg, ‘The fashioning of bourgeois domesticity in later medieval England: a material culture perspective’, in Maryanne Kowaleski and P.J.P. Goldberg, eds., *Medieval Domesticity*, 124-44; Christopher Dyer, ‘Living in peasant houses in late medieval England’, *Vernacular Architecture*, 44 (2013), 19-27. See also Barbara A. Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History* (New York, 1993), 25-6; Maurice Howard, ‘Inventories, Surveys and the History of Great Houses 1480-1640’, *Architectural History*, 41 (1998), 14-29. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Only persons below canonical majority were debarred from testifying, though there was some preference for older and for male witnesses. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Shannon McSheffrey talks in terms of ‘story’ and ‘narrative’ where each case generates two competing narratives. The more important point is that the incidental spatial detail etc. has to be credible irrespective of its specific historicity. See Shannon McSheffrey, *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture in Late Medieval London* (Philadelphia, 2006), 131-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. McSheffrey uses late fifteenth-century depositions from the London Consistory to think about the use of space in respect of courtship and marriage: Shannon McSheffrey, ‘Place, space, and situation: public and private in the making of marriage in late-medieval London’, *Speculum*, 79 (2004), 960-90. For a slightly later era some use of deposition material informs Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern Europe* (New Haven, 2017), especially 19, 50-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 645, 649, 658; *Testamenta Eboracensia*, iv, 56-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 534. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. York, Borthwick Institute for Archives (hereafter BI), CP.F.114. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Shannon McSheffrey, ‘Place, space, and situation’, 976-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 560, 662. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid., 494 (Crakall), 551, 557, 567 (Overdo), 572, 581 (Stubbes), 615, 646 (Coltman); *Testamenta Eboracensia*, *iii*, 49 (Grantham). The opening of Overdo’s entry is lost, but a bridle and saddle are listed. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Tanners, metal founders, and some other crafts probably had detached work spaces. Building craftsmen, including masons, had no need of domestic workshops. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. William Plovell’s inventory lists a ware chest and a coffer ‘in the shop’ after a list of moveables associated with the hall: Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 534. More substantial partitions between the shop and the main body of the house may have been erected from the late fifteenth century. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 551, 553, 557, 582, 614, 650; *Testamenta Eboracensia*, iv, 58-9 (Collan); David Clark, ‘The Shop Within? An Analysis of the Architectural Evidence for Medieval Shops’, *Architectural History* 43 (2000), 58–87. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 569-71; *Middle English Dictionary* (hereafter *MED*), under **chap-man** (n.), 1a. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 649-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ibid., 522, 658. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. These tend to be principle streets: BI, CP.F.103, 174, 244, 335. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (hereafter *DMLBS*), under *cellarium*, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. BI, CP.E.111. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. BI, CP.F.181. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. BI, CP.F.182. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 524. Other than for some high-status clerical households, this is the only cellar noticed in York probate inventories before 1500. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 494, 507; *Testamenta Eboracensia*, iii, 48, 88. A storeroom (‘*promtuarius*’) is described in the inventory of John Collan, goldsmith: *Testamenta Eboracensia*, iv, 57-8 [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. The Middle English noun could refer to a store room, sometimes specifically for wine etc., but also for a specifically underground space and, more rarely and confusingly, as another term for solar: *MED*, under **celē̆r** (n.(1)). Dyer writing of peasant houses notes that ‘celers may have been located on the first floor’, but this observation is apparently unreferenced: Dyer, ‘Living in Peasant Houses’, 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. MED, under **gīle** (n. (2)), c. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 566 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. MED, under **bulting** (ger.), 2c; Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 646 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 494; *Testamenta Eboracensia*, iii, 49, 100 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Jeremy Goldberg, *Communal Discord, Child Abduction, and Rape in the Later Middle Ages* (New York, 2008), ch. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. The prosperous girdler, Thomas Talkan, who had a brewhouse cum gilehouse and a wine cellar, the similarly prosperous skinner, Roger de Burton, and the merchant, William Plovell: Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 524, 535, 551, 559; [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 581; P.J.P. Goldberg, ‘Household and the Organisation of Labour in Late Medieval Towns: some English Evidence’, in Myriam Carlier and Tim Soens, eds., *The Household in Late Medieval Cities: Italy and Northwestern Europe Compared* (Leuven, 2001), 63-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. P.J.P. Goldberg, ‘Home Work: The Bourgeois Wife in Later Medieval England’ in[Merridee L. Bailey](https://www.routledge.com/products/search?author=Merridee%20L.%20Bailey" \o "search for all books by Merridee L. Bailey)**,**[Tania M. Colwell](https://www.routledge.com/products/search?author=Tania%20M.%20Colwell)**,**[Julie Hotchin](https://www.routledge.com/products/search?author=Julie%20Hotchin), eds, *Women and Work in Premodern Europe: Experiences, Relationships and Cultural Representation, c. 1100-1800* (Abingdon, 2018), 124-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Felicity Riddy, ‘“Burgeis” domesticity in late medieval England’, in Maryanne Kowaleski and P.J.P. Goldberg, *Medieval Domesticity: House, Housing and Household in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2008), 14-36. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 553, 614; *Testamenta Eboracensia*, iv, 58-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Assuming the wick cost about 1d. a pound weight, 23s. 10d. worth represents some 130kg: J.E.T. Rogers, *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England, vol. III, 1401-1582* (Oxford, 1882), 549-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Goldberg, *Women, Work, and Life Cycle*, 186-202. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. BI, CP.F.113, depositions of John Colstan, John Bergh, William Belot, Katherine Lorymer, and Alice Burton. The testimony demonstrates Agnes’ continuous presence at William Goddeshelp’s house that morning. We may question the historicity of the events described, but we can be reasonably confident that the testimony is credible and so reflective of social practice. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. ‘… *reclinatus super cubitum suum ad stallum opelle*’: BI, CP.F.335; *DMLBS*, under *stallus, stalla, stallum*, 2. Deponents only routinely describe blood, marriage or employment ties to the litigants. There is no significance in the omission of Kynkcorne’s tie to Lonesdale from his deposition. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. CP.F.182; Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 557; *Testamenta Eboracensia*, iii, 97. Such beds may well have been fairly common, but if seen as the *de facto* property of the employees would not be appraised in probate inventories. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. BI, CP.F.182. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. BI, CP.F.269. Elwald’s house is not located. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. BI, CP.F.182. The noble was a gold coin worth 6s. 8d. (a third of a pound sterling). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. McSheffrey observes that shops were occasionally used as the venue for contracts of marriages, but on non-work days: McSheffrey, ‘Place, Space, and Situation’, 975. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. BI, CP.G.8. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. BI, CP.F.335. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. BI, CP.F.244. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. # *MED*, under **cō̆ster** (n. 1)**, dō̆ser** (n.), 1, **bankēr** (n.); *OED*, under coster (n. 1), dosser / dorser (n. 1), 1, banker (n. 1). Dyer observes from a sample of mostly later fifteenth-century and moderately well-to-do peasant inventories that ‘eating and drinking, conversation and entertainment were concentrated in the hall’: Dyer, ‘Living in Peasant Houses’, 22.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 523. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Goldberg, ‘The fashioning of bourgeois domesticity’, 126-7, 132-3; Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 521, 523, 648. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. BI, CP.F.182. McSheffrey likewise notices that halls were the ‘most common venue’ for contracts of marriage in later fifteenth-century London, especially where numbers of witnesses were present: McSheffrey, ‘Space, Place, and Situation’, 975. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. BI, CP.G.40. The pertinent deposition merely reports the giving of the ring which perhaps suggests it was unwitnessed. Nevertheless the symbolism of the action and location add strength to the testimony around the contract itself. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. BI, CP.F.108; *DMLBS*, under *scamnum*, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 521. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. A violent argument followed when Peter demanded that the boy leave the table: BI, CP.F.235. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. *MED*, under **meinẹ̄** (n.), 4; *Testamenta Eboracensia,* iii, 48. A Wakefield marriage case records that after the couple had contracted they went into the hall and ‘*recrearunt*’: BI, CP.F.265 [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. *Testamenta Eboracensia,* iii, 48; Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 534, 610, 617; BI, CP.E.111. Cf. Dyer, ‘Living in Peasant Houses’, 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. BI, CP.E.111. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. An exception is the merchant, William Plovell, whose inventory is dated 1422: Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 534. Sarah Pearson likewise notes the lack of evidence for such service rooms in town houses: Sarah Pearson, ‘The Provision of Services in Medieval Houses in Kent’, *Vernacular Architecture*, 43 (2012), 44. See also Grenville, *Medieval Housing*, 93-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Katherine North’s inventory lists a quantity of harden (cheap flax or hemp cloth), harden shirts, yarn, and a table and form in her chamber. She was also owed 1s. 4d. for washing a priest’s shirts: Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 617. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Detached kitchens seem more a rural than urban phenomenon: Sarah Pearson, *The Medieval Houses of Kent: An Historical Analysis* (Swindon, 1994), 104-7; Nat Alcock and Dan Mills, *The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England* (Oxford, 2013), 34-35, 128, 159; Sara Pennell, *The Birth of the English Kitchen, 1600-1850* (London, 2016), 8, 41-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 610. Cf. Helen Clarke, Sarah Pearson, Mavis Mate and Keith Parfit, *Sandwich: The ‘complete medieval town in England’* (Oxford, 2010), 258; Dyer, ‘Living in Peasant Houses’, 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. ‘in a ground floor parlour or summer hall’: BI, CP.F.114. Another case refers to ‘a small parlour or summer hall’: BI. CP.F.181. McSheffrey notes a ‘somer parlour’ in a late fifteenth-century London marriage case: McSheffrey, ‘Place, Space, and Situation’, 964 [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 579. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Walter Hilton (?) in his *Commentary on Qui Habitat* uses summer hall in metaphorical contrast to the hall or winter hall: ‘He þat is not planted in þe wynter halle, þat is, holi chirche ... and lyuen in dedly synne, þei schal not florisschen in þe somer halle, þat is, þe blis of heuene’, quoted in *MED*, under **hal(le** (n.), 1b. See also *MED*, under **parlǒur** (n.), 1a; *OED*, under summer hall (n.), parlour (n.), 2b. The *Oxford English Dictionary* distinguishes the use of parlour in respect of non-aristocratic houses as a later usage offering a 1448 example as its earliest usage. Both our sources use parlour rather than summer hall by the later fifteenth century. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 534, 645, 649, 658. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. BI, CP.F.115, 208. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. BI, CP.F.114. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. BI, CP.F.174. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. BI, CP.F.203. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 580-1, 614, 645. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Jeremy Goldberg, ‘John Skathelok’s Dick: Voyeurism and “Pornography” in Late Medieval England’, in Nicola McDonald, ed., *Medieval Obscenities* (Woodbridge, 2007), 113-15; P.J.P. Goldberg, ed. and trans., *Women in England c. 1275-1525* (Manchester, 1995), 156-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Goldberg, ed. and trans., *Women in England*, 153-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. ‘*iacuit sola in alio lecto prope in eadem camera filii et filie domicelle eorumdem iacuerunt in celario sub camera predicta*’: BI, CP.E.111. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Dyer has made a like observation for peasant housing: Dyer, ‘Living in Peasant Houses’, 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Stell, trans., *Probate Inventories*, 566. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. *Testamenta Eboracensia,* iii, 47-53; Goldberg, *Communal Discord*, ch. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Cf. Dyer, ‘Living in Peasant Houses’, 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. BI, CP.F.371. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Goldberg, ed. and trans., *Women in England*, 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Goldberg, ‘John Skathelok’s Dick’, 114-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Goldberg, ‘The fashioning of bourgeois domesticity’. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Goldberg, *Women, Work, and Life Cycle*, 163-4, 299. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Steven A. Epstein, *Wage Labor and Guilds in Medieval Europe* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1991), 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. McSheffrey notes how alehouses were used inter alia as venues both for courtship and for the contract of marriage: McSheffrey, ‘Space, Place, and Situation’, 982. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Goldberg, ‘Home Work’, 129-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Gervase Rosser, ‘Crafts, Guilds and the Negotiation of Work in the Medieval Town’, *Past and Present*, 154 (February, 1997), 3-31; Goldberg, *Women, Work, and Life Cycle*, 180-1; McSheffrey, ‘Space, Place, and Situation’, 978. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. P.J.P. Goldberg ‘[Desperately Seeking the Single Man in Later Medieval England](https://www.academia.edu/21142784/Desperately_Seeking_the_Single_Man_in_Later_Medieval_England)’, in Julie De Groot, Isabelle Devos and Ariadne Schmidt, eds, *Single Life and the City 1200-1900* (Houndsmills, 2015), 117-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. The day was the patronal feast of the parish of St Denys [Denis], Walmgate: BI, CP.F.203. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. BI, CP.G.40. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. BI, CP.E.111, 242, 248; F.36. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. The term ‘deeper space’ relates to access analysis, viz. the spaces accessed only by passing through a plurality of entrance ways or where access is controlled. In this sense upper floor rooms represent deep space since access to the upper level is controlled. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Goldberg, ed. and trans., *Women in England*, 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Thomas undressed again and joined Agnes in the bed: BI, CP.F.63. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. BI, CP.F.75. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. McSheffrey, citing John Schofield’s access analysis (see n. 92 above) of late medieval London houses, notes that the parlour and the garden have been identified as the ‘most private’ spaces associated with the house, but Schofield’s dependence on early modern survey evidence does not allow for upper floors to be considered. In fact McSheffrey suggests from her analysis of late fifteenth-century London matrimonial cases that chambers were rarely used as venues for contracts because of the their ‘associations with intimacy and sexuality’: McSheffrey, ‘Space, Place, and Situation’, 976-7; John Schofield, ‘Social Perceptions of Space in Medieval and Tudor London Houses’, in Martin Locock, ed., *Meaningful Architecture: Social Interpretations of Buildings*, ed. Martin Locock (Aldershot, 1994), 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Cf. the Knight of the Tower’s advice to wives to reprimand their husbands: William Caxton, trans., *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, ed. M.Y. Offord, Early English Text Society S.S. 2 (1971), 35; Goldberg, ‘Home Work’. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Goldberg, ed. and trans., *Women in England*, 110-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. ‘How the Good Wijf tauƷt Hir DouƷtir’, in *The Babees Book*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall, Early English Text Society O.S. 32 (London, 1868), 41-2, ll. 102-34; Goldberg, ‘Home Work’. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Henry Littlehales, ed., *Medieval Records of a London City Church: Churchwardens' Accounts and Memoranda*, EETS, OS 125, 128 (1904-5), 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Nicholas Love, *Mirrour of the blessed lyf of Jesu Christ*, ed. Lawrence F. Powell (Oxford, 1908), 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Goldberg, ‘The fashioning of bourgeois domesticity’, 137-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Goldberg, ‘Home Work’. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Jason Tebbe, ‘Landscapes of Remembrance: Home and Memory in the Nineteenth-Century Bürgertum’, *Journal of Family History*, 33 (April, 2008), 195-215. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. The association of the aristocratic hall with the masculine may not translate to more egalitarian bourgeois hall. Cf. Gail Ashton, *Medieval English Romance in Context* (London, 2010), 102; McSheffrey, ‘Place, Space, and Situation’. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Hollie Morgan, *Beds and Chambers in Late Medieval England: Readings, Representations and Realities* (Woodbridge, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Goldberg, ‘Home Work’. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Such houses also made provision for cooking, either in a separate kitchen or in a space contained by the hall. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Cf. Pearson, ‘The Provision of Services’, 38-9, 44; Quiney, *Town Houses of Medieval Britain*, 245-54; Roger H. Leech, *The Town House in Medieval and Early Modern Bristol* (Swindon, 2014), 117-23; Philippe Contamine, ‘Peasant Hearth to Papal Palace: The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries’, in Georges Duby, ed., *A History of Private Life: Revelations of the Medieval World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), 462-3; Julie de Groot, ‘At Home in Renaissance Bruges: Material and Domestic Culture in a City in Decline, 1438-1600’ (PhD thesis, University of Antwerp, 2017). Shops and workshops tended not be associated with living accommodation in late medieval Florence or Genoa: Sandra Cavallo, ‘The artisan’s *casa*’, in Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Flora Dennis, eds, *At Home in Renaissance Italy* (London, 2006), 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)