

The cost of apparel in seventeenth-century England, and the accuracy of Gregory King¹

By MARGARET SPUFFORD

In 1980, Schuurman wrote in his introduction to a volume on probate inventories—which to him, rather startlingly, were a ‘new source’—that historians had given unequal attention to the four basic needs of the human species, procreation, nutrition, shelter, and clothing.² This was, and still is, undoubtedly true. Demographers have dealt exhaustively with ‘procreation’; specialists in vernacular architecture have done a great deal on ‘shelter’ in England; ‘nutrition’ has at last received some attention;³ but ‘clothing’ has been something of a Cinderella in seventeenth-century history. It has been neglected for a variety of reasons, the most significant of which is that there has not been a source for the clothing of ‘ordinary people’, ‘the common sort’ below the level of gentry. Probate inventories, which so frequently give a sum for ‘his clothing *and money in his purse*’ together, let us down here. Values for clothes alone in inventories, never mind specifications and prices of individual garments, do exist, but are very rare.⁴ They are also, of course, the resale values of used clothes. Wills are a much better source, but are slow to mine, and are useless for pricing since they give no values.

All in all, ‘costume history’ is at present only a historical handmaid among mainline historians. However, the situation has started to change dramatically. Lemire’s work on the cotton trade and the consumer, followed by her wider study of dress, culture, and commerce, reflects on the state of the clothing trade after 1660.⁵ Shammas meditated on pre-industrial consumption, including that of clothing, in 1990, and has since written a provocative article on the decline of textile prices before industrialization, a fall which ought to have affected the price of clothes.⁶ Moreover, Styles is preparing a major monograph on clothing which will, again, be focused on the period after 1660. Things are looking up and we can begin to hope for the integration of clothing history into mainline

¹ I thank the Pasold Fund for a grant to photocopy these documents, and the Leverhulme Trust for a generous grant to work on them. Of my research assistants constructing the database, I thank Mrs Nesta Evans, in particular for her assiduity, and Mrs Sue Stearn, especially for her computing skills.

² Van der Woude and Schuurman, eds., ‘Probate inventories’.

³ See Dyer, *Standards of living*, in particular ch. 6 on the peasantry, where he considers clothing, drawing his material from maintenance agreements.

⁴ Weatherill, ‘Consumer behaviour’, p. 297.

⁵ Lemire, *Fashion’s favourite*; *idem*, *Dress, culture and commerce*.

⁶ Shammas, *Pre-industrial consumer*; *idem*, ‘Decline of textile prices’.

history. Two difficulties remain. Few costume historians read this journal, and few economic historians read *Costume*. The cultural divide continues. A greater problem is presented by the relative paucity of source material before 1660. This article attempts to address the importance of a 'new' source, the probate accounts, to see whether they will fill this near-vacuum of information on the clothing of non-noble, non-gentle groups in society.

The subject matters. 'Clothing' in Polynesia might, perhaps, have only a symbolic value, connected with sexuality, for large portions of the year. But in north-western and continental Europe clothes are vitally important to survival. The simple exercise of keeping warm is indeed one of the basic needs of the human species. We need to know how 'ordinary people' in the past achieved this, and what proportion of the domestic budget of families was spent on this exercise of keeping warm, and achieving a reasonable degree of personal comfort. The definition of 'comfort' versus 'necessity' is difficult. For example, detailed accounts of Overseers of the Poor reveal the provision of two shirts and two shifts. So the need to change the garments next to the skin was not regarded as a luxury: basic cleanliness was a need.

For the social levels below the gentry, those people who do not have their portraits painted, there is just one late-seventeenth-century indicator. In 1688, Gregory King drew up a table he called the 'Annual consumption of apparell', which has been fully discussed by Harte.⁷ It lays out the annual new additions to the stock of clothing in the country. (We can never know, of course, how many items of old clothing people had. If any of us listed additions to our wardrobes, this year, we would be assuming a 'core' of clothes we already have, which we would not state.)

We do not know much of King's motivation for compiling this table, or the methods he used to do so. From some of the other material we have on his life, we know he was a polymath, obsessed by figures, eclectic, and interested in almost everything, from the speed of men and horses running, to the 'number of People in the World *anno* 1695', and the total amounts of gold and silver coined in 1659-88. He drew on his own observations for his vast generalizations. He had spent two and a half years working in the parish of Eccleshall in Staffordshire as a young man. Every day, he rode past the hovels of the very poor on the commons, and it is impossible to believe this first-hand experience of the poorest rural parish we yet know of in the 1660s did not influence his calculations in 1688 of the 300,000 'Day Labourers and Outservants' in rural employment, who decreased the wealth of the kingdom.⁸ Among his papers in the Public Record Office, next to 'Considerations for a scheme to Raising 3 millions on Woollen Manufactures' is an estimate for a fine calico gown for Mrs King.⁹ It is a very grand gown since it is to be embroidered with 230 'great flowers' at 2d. each, and 230 small ones at three farthings

⁷ Harte, 'Economics of clothing', pp. 277-96.

⁸ Spufford, *Poverty portrayed*, pp. 7-8, 16, 18-19.

⁹ PRO, T64/302. The items in this bundle are not numbered.

each, by a 'Mrs Mince'. She will embroider at the rate of 13 flowers a day and will take 160 days, or 183 if she takes Sundays off. Six months' work was to cost the King family over £4, so it was well worth doing the sum. King even sketched the flowers. We know his own budget for annual household expenditure, with a total of £10 for clothes allotted to his wife.¹⁰ He was, therefore, certainly aware of the extravagance involved. We also know that he undertook more practical and extensive purchases. He spent £10 in the 1690s at the shop of Ralph Minors, a mercer of Lichfield.¹¹ Lichfield was King's home city. We do not yet know much about those who, in the domestic environment, did the shopping for clothes and fabrics, but the debt lists of petty chapmen in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries show that the purchases of fabric and ready-made clothes in the sixteenth century were by no means confined to women. We are pinning a nineteenth- or twentieth-century stereotype onto the past if we assume the purchase of clothing was a feminine responsibility. All but one of the customers of William Davis, who ran a shop in Buckinghamshire in 1588, were men, as were three-quarters of the customers of Richard Trendall in Norfolk in 1595, and half those of James Pilkinton of Lincolnshire in 1635.¹² So King's purchases in Lichfield were by no means unusual. We also know King was an acute observer, heavily influenced by his environment, so it is reasonable to assume that prices in Lichfield, the city where he grew up and which he visited regularly, and in metropolitan London, where he lived, will have had a great influence on his thinking and the figures he produced for clothing.

King's table of 1688 listed types of garment in various groups (which Harte numbered 1-44; see below, tables 4 and 5) and estimated the total quantities and values of each type. He also estimated the value of a single item of a type. For instance, he estimated that 12 million pairs of new shoes were sold in 1688, with a total value of £1 million. The value of each pair was 1s. 8d. In total, 77 million items of apparel are recorded in his table, worth a total of £10,992,500. We are therefore not talking about an unimportant or inconsiderable amount of money. Even the value of King's 3 million hats was put at £387,000. In another of his exhaustive and exhausting studies, King estimated that food cost an 'average' person 51 per cent of his annual income of £7, whereas clothing cost him 25 per cent, one-half and one-quarter of his income respectively.¹³ Clothing clearly loomed large among the expenses of living. Indeed, Weatherill has stated, on the basis of her examination of household account books, King's own seventeenth-century domestic budget, and a set of calculations of expenditure, that clothing was 'the second

¹⁰ Harte, 'Economics of clothing', tab. I, p. 283.

¹¹ I am greatly indebted to Dr Anne Tarver who gave me this information from Ralph Minors' account books (Lambeth Palace Library, 1704, Ff2, inside cover) which she is preparing for publication, and to Nesta Evans who put me in contact with her.

¹² Spufford, *Great reclothng*, pp. 69, 72-3, 76.

¹³ Harte, 'Economics of clothing', p. 291.

largest expenditure after food and food production'.¹⁴ This makes it all the more unfortunate that there were no figures for the expense of clothing a family available to Woodward for his *Men at work*.¹⁵

The trouble with Gregory King's figures for clothing is that thus far it has been impossible to check them, for lack of a source to put against them. For instance, all Weatherill's sources come from a later period. Now, however, we have a source.

I

The third and last document in the probate series, which has been little known until now, is the probate account. The testamentary series of documents ought to run as follows: will (or letters of administration); probate inventory; probate account. The surviving accounts are very rare compared with wills or inventories, but Peter Spufford has recently finished an index to over 30,000 accounts, excluding those in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.¹⁶ The largest numbers to survive are in Lincolnshire and Kent. Each of the accounts opens with the 'charge' value, which was the same sum of the value of movable goods which had belonged to the dead person as that found at the foot of the probate inventory. They can therefore be readily comprehended, because we have all become familiar with the totals at the foot of probate inventories, and the sort of economic status they indicate. The important thing about the probate accounts, in the context of clothing, is that where there were minor children, the executor, or most likely the executrix (since normally the widow was executrix) ran the account on until the children were put out to service, apprenticed, or came of age. Her expenditure on the children in that year, or those years, is duly listed, often in great detail. Among the expenses are new clothes she bought for the child, or materials, thread, and other costs involved in making up a garment for the child, such as tailoring.¹⁷ Unfortunately, the expenditure is not broken up annually, nor is there any indication of the clothes in the child's wardrobe at the opening of the account, so it is impossible to work out exactly how long clothes lasted. Even so, the accounts give us more information than ever before. Accounts which contained information on children's clothing were duly flagged in Peter Spufford's index of accounts (as were items such as lists of debts, the costs of medicines for a dying

¹⁴ Weatherill, 'Consumer behaviour', pp. 298, 299, 309.

¹⁵ Woodward, *Men at work*, ch. 7 and app. 2.4, p. 282, on the cost of feeding a family in 1540-1699. Boulton, 'Standard of living in London', suffers from the same lack. Woodward's book is in part a scrupulous examination of the finances of labourers and building craftsmen, and of the household budgets of these people, including the cost of feeding their children. These men were at times hard put to it to feed their families, never mind clothe them.

¹⁶ Spufford, *Probate accounts*.

¹⁷ It is important to emphasize that the accounts record the retail purchase price of *new* clothing, or the fabric used, and the cost of making up, if the garments were made away from home. When a value for a garment was totally out of line with the other values for the same garment, the out-of-line value has been discarded, in case it represents a value for 'making over' the garment from someone else. Such entries were not at all common. The rare entries for specific garments in probate inventories, on the other hand, record the value of used, or second-hand clothing.

testator, rents owing, and so on), and we have done further work on these documents.¹⁸

Table 1. *Expenses of orphaned children*

	<i>No. of children</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Type of expenditure</i>
	748	47	Clothes only
	687	43	Board and clothes
	116	7	Board, schooling, and clothes
	47	3	Schooling and clothes
Total	1,598	100	

Source: probate accounts

In the first instance, this work has shown Weatherill to be correct: expenditure on clothing, in the maintenance of children, was indeed the second largest item, after food, in their upkeep. We looked at the sums spent on 1,598 children from 780 families who had lost at least one parent. The expense of board and lodging was not put down at all for 795, or almost exactly half, of these children, as table 1 shows. Presumably, the executrix, who was normally their mother, did not claim these expenses. She did, however, put down the expense of clothing them. All of the expenditure claimed on these children at home was on their clothes. The other half of the children, for whom a note was made of the expense of board and lodging, or 'tabling and diet' as it was frequently called, had widely differing levels of expenditure recorded for them, on both board and clothing. Most of them had relatively tiny sums spent on their clothing, but for 300 of these children at least 10 per cent of the expenditure was on clothes, as figure 1 shows. At least 20 per cent of the expenditure on 185 of these children was on their clothes, while more than half the expenditure was on the clothes of at least 50 of them. Sadly, only 10 per cent, or 163 of all these 1,598 children, had sums spent on their education. The picture we already have of an abrupt cessation in the schooling of orphaned children is thus maintained.¹⁹ Yet despite this immediate and obvious economy, new clothes were purchased in some quantity for all children lodged with their mothers, and half of those who were boarded out. Even the rest were not unfamiliar with the feel and experience of a new garment.²⁰ The wide range of sums spent on these children's clothes bears out the variations on spending shown

¹⁸ There were 23 accounts in the database with no charge values. Some other accounts had no precise date given. Yet another small group had values for 'suits' of clothes, but not for individual items. These were suitable for some purposes, but not others. The existence of these groups explains the fluctuating totals of accounts in various figures and references. However, the groups are too small to invalidate any conclusion.

¹⁹ See the case of Arise Evans (and its discussion) and of Thomas Chubb, Josiah Langdale, William Crouch, Benjamin Bangs, and William Edmundson in Spufford, 'First steps in literacy', pp. 420-2, 425, 428-9. They were all precipitated down the social ladder on the deaths of their fathers. It was usual to have to leave school.

²⁰ The charge values (inventory totals) of the dead parents of these children are examined below, pp. 689, 690.

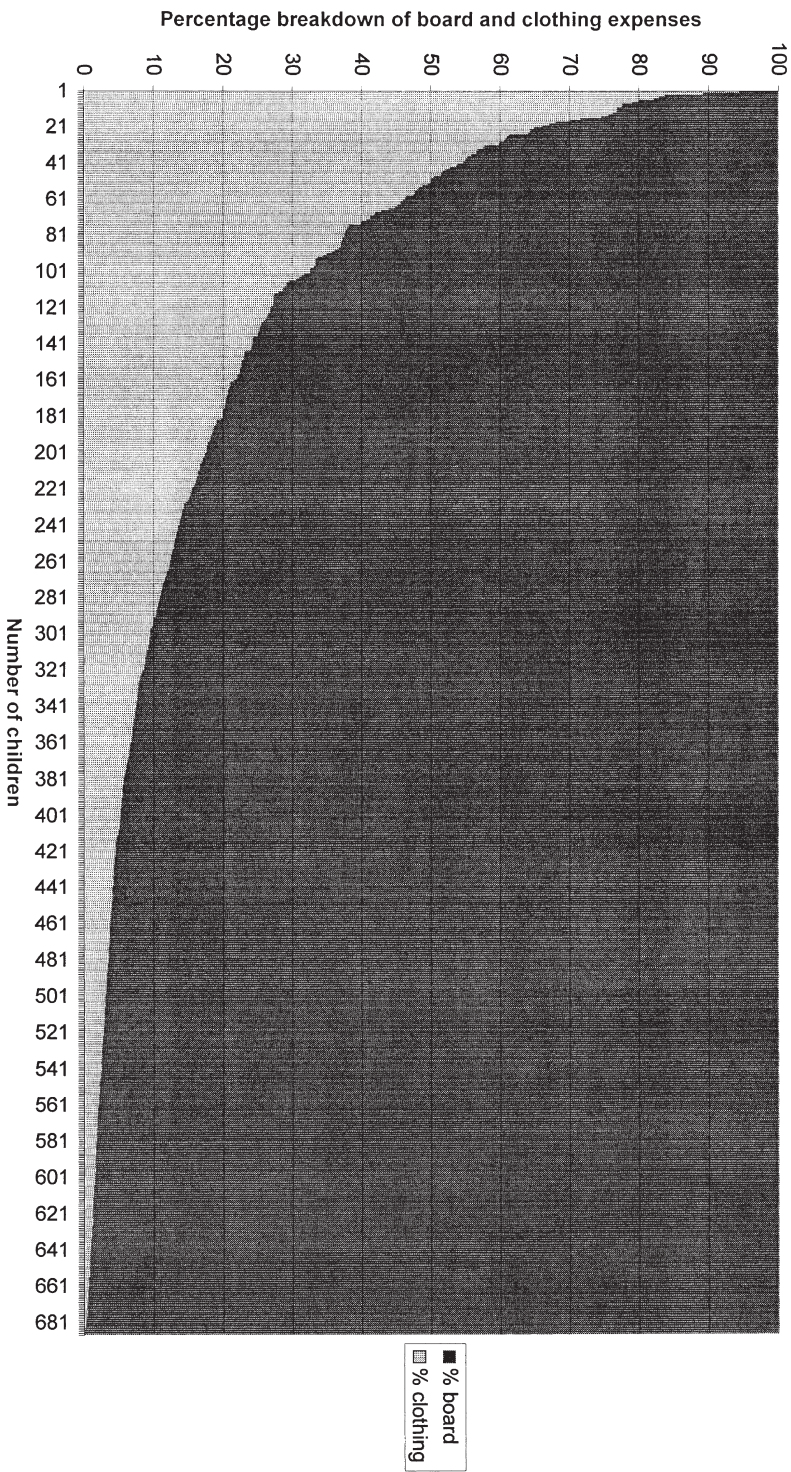


Figure 1. *Children who received board and clothing but no schooling*

Source: *Probate accounts*

in King's calculations from the lowest income groups spending 'almost £3' in a year on their families to the highest, 'about £1000'.²¹ The barefoot child dressed solely in second-hand clothes and rags came from the non-inventoried section of the population. As noted above, King based many of his observations on real life, and was well acquainted with an exceedingly poor area, Eccleshall in Staffordshire.²² Even after that experience, he reckoned that only one in 40 boys and one in 30 girls went barefoot. We know that John Croft, an unmarried day labourer, who was the poorest inventoried man in seventeenth-century Eccleshall, with goods worth in all just over £2, thought of his shoes as precious. He left all his own clothes, two coats, a waistcoat, and a pair of breeches to a male cousin, and his shoes to a female cousin. The non-inventoried section of the population may well have included building labourers. Woodward writes that in sixteenth-century Worcester the probate records of building workers amounted to only 2.1 per cent of the total body of records, while only 1.0 per cent of inventories sampled in a national survey for the period 1675 to 1725 were for labourers.²³ Perhaps the children of building workers at the bottom end of the spectrum were among that section of the population which did go barefoot.²⁴ But King had had ample opportunity, in this very poor area, to base his calculations of the proportion of barefoot children on observed facts.

So what were these accounts like? That of John Fleetwood of Wiltshire, presented in 1674, was unusual. The expenses, which are usually listed jumbled together, had been roughly sorted into separate categories: the funeral expenses, bread, cheese and cake; 2s. 6d. for writing the inventory and supplying the appraisers with ale; the expenses of proving the will; rent; house expenses including masonry repairs and re-thatching; and the expenses of his two little daughters Margaret and Joan. The latter ran for nine years, from 1665. Margaret had been apprenticed to one Hugh Godwin, in Bristol, and her schooling, clothes, and even pocket money had been paid to her both before, and surprisingly, after, the apprenticeship. The apprenticeship itself cost £4 2s. 6d. She had also had 'delivered to her when she went to Bristoll in money 10/-' and further sums were sent to her, so she was not left penniless. £1 was spent on 'her aparill when she went to her Master'. Before the apprenticeship, the jumble of entries included:

It. pd for a pair of shews	2s. 6d.
It. pd for Schooling	1s.
It. pd for Making a Westcoate	2s. 6d.
It. pd for Coyfes aprons & sleeves	3s.
It. pd for A Hatt	8s. 4d.
It. pd for a pair of stockings	1s.

²¹ Discussed by Harte, 'Economics of clothing', pp. 291-3, tabs. 4, 5, and commentary.

²² See above, p. 678.

²³ Woodward, *Men at work*, pp. 244-9, citing Dyer, *City of Worcester*, and Weatherill, *Consumer behaviour*.

²⁴ Woodward, *Men at work*, pp. 247-8.

After the apprenticeship some of the entries were:

It. pd for a Westcoate Cloth	7s. 6d.
It. pd for a stuff peticoate & Maken	13s. 6d.
It. pd for an apron, neckcloth & 1 pr of shewes	2s. 6d.
It. pd for a sarge Westcoate triming & Makeing	5s. 10d.

So the entries ran on, through two pairs of 'bodies', more shoes, stockings, and linen cloth, to a 'goune & triming' at as much as £2 16s. 2d. and for 'making her goune & peticoate, 9s., near the end of the list of her expenses. The possession of a gown often seems to make superior claims.

Margaret's sister Joan had not been apprenticed. Neither did she ever get a gown. She was boarded out: the account for her included £42 10s. 0d. 'for 8 yeares and a halves dyett at £5 per year'. In that time she had had 12 pairs of shoes, at prices between 2s. 6d. for a pair 'bought in the Markett' and 2s. 8d. Apart from the shoes, the account for Joan is less detailed than that for her sister, dealing more in generalizations including 'for a shewte of Apparill £2' and 'for a garment 2s. 2d.', although some entries were more specific such as 'for a Westcoate Cloth 4s. 9d.' 'for Making the Westcoate 1s.' and 'for triming of itt 1s.'. There were also 2 yards of red cloth costing 4s. 9d., 5d. spent on lace to go with it, and two petticoats at 8s. each. Joan, like her sister, had 1s. spent on her schooling, and her brief tuition was not wasted for she could read, or she would not have had a Bible bought for her at 5s. 6d. She, too, had pocket money to spend. Over the page, however, precisely and unemotionally conveyed in the dry listings of the accounts, is detailed 'The Accompt of Wt Wase Layd out for Jone Fleetwood in her sickness and at her funerall the 22 of October 1674'.²⁵ The entries include:

It. pd. the Apothycary for fisick	14s. 4d.
It. pd. to Wm. Stephens for Wine for her funerall	£1 10s.
It. pd. to Joseph Willis for Cake	£1 15s.
It. pd. to Jonathan Head for Gloves	4s. 10d.
It. pd. to ye Widd. Arnotte for attendance in her sicknesse	1s. 3d.
It. pd. ye sexton	4s. 4d.
It. pd. John Lealy for ye Coffin	7s.
It. pd. for ye hearscloth	1s.
It. pd. to Thos. Naish for a horse to Bristoll and ye Messenger [to fetch her sister?]	4s. 6d.
It. pd. to Mr King for dyett & horsemeate for her	12s. 11d.
Relacions which came to Her funerall	
It. pd. to Wm Head for 2 gravestones for her	?
It. pd. Thos. Brookes for beare for ye funerall	10s. 6d.

So the shadow of Joan Fleetwood slips away from us, and still all that we really know of her is that she had, and could probably read, the Bible and liked red cloth decorated with cheap lace, and shoes which were

²⁵ The expenses of proving her will at Sarum were listed, so she was 18 years old.

definitely expensive.²⁶ Judging from the number of people paid to sit with her, she also took a long time to die.²⁷ Her relatives cared enough about her to come to her funeral. She had the honour, which was still unusual in the 1670s, of gravestones at her head and feet. Apart from this document, and these stones—if they survive—this girl's existence is marked only by an entry in a baptismal register, another in a burial register, and a will. But the source is a very rich one. In many ways, it is much better to have only one document like this.²⁸ The temptation of itemized lists of this type, and indeed the obligation, is to produce at least elementary statistics that will give the reader an idea of the 'normal' as against the 'exceptional', which may have been stumbled on by mistake.²⁹ The inevitable problem, though, is that once the historian has viable statistics and adequate samples, he or she also tends to lose all sense of individual people.

II

The format for computer analysis of the information on clothing in these probate accounts took a long time to devise, but at last we have results for all record offices except Lichfield and Preston. Unfortunately, these latter two supply fewer than 20 more examples. Altogether, 812 of the accounts in the database contained the exact prices of 8,974 garments purchased or made for minors between 1573 and 1701.³⁰ Even in the absence of King's estimated millions of garments, this is nevertheless a very tolerable sample. Unfortunately, though, the survival of documents is geographically highly uneven, with single examples only for the counties of Gloucestershire, Shropshire, and Suffolk. Only Kent, which has 495 accounts, is adequately represented: West Sussex with 73 and Lincolnshire with 63 are second and third. Some questions are therefore unanswerable. For instance, it will never be possible to assess whether there was any pronounced regional variation in prices of clothing. Even Lincolnshire, where the accounts were more detailed on clothing than those of the Archdeaconry of Chichester, did not produce enough examples for a satisfactory regional comparison to be made with Kent.

As figure 2 shows, probate accounts generally started to survive from the 1570s, and became much more common in the 1620s.³¹ They peaked in the 1630s, but then disappeared almost entirely in the 1650s. However,

²⁶ For the price of shoes, see below, p. 698.

²⁷ Erickson has investigated the costs of nursing and care given to seventeenth-century children, and found there is no difference in the amounts spent on boys and on girls: Erickson, *Women and property*, p. 50.

²⁸ The amount that can be done with a single probate account is illustrated by Edwards, 'Farm and family'.

²⁹ The volume of work done on British probate inventories is illustrated by the publication, as long ago as 1983, of Overton, *Bibliography*. His own substantial work since then has continued to be based on them. In due course, the probate accounts should yield the same volume of results.

³⁰ Information on nearly 30,000 other garments in these same accounts was discarded when it was lumped together, or otherwise imprecise.

³¹ Only accounts with clothing references from the 801 records used so far, covering 1,598 children, have been graphed.

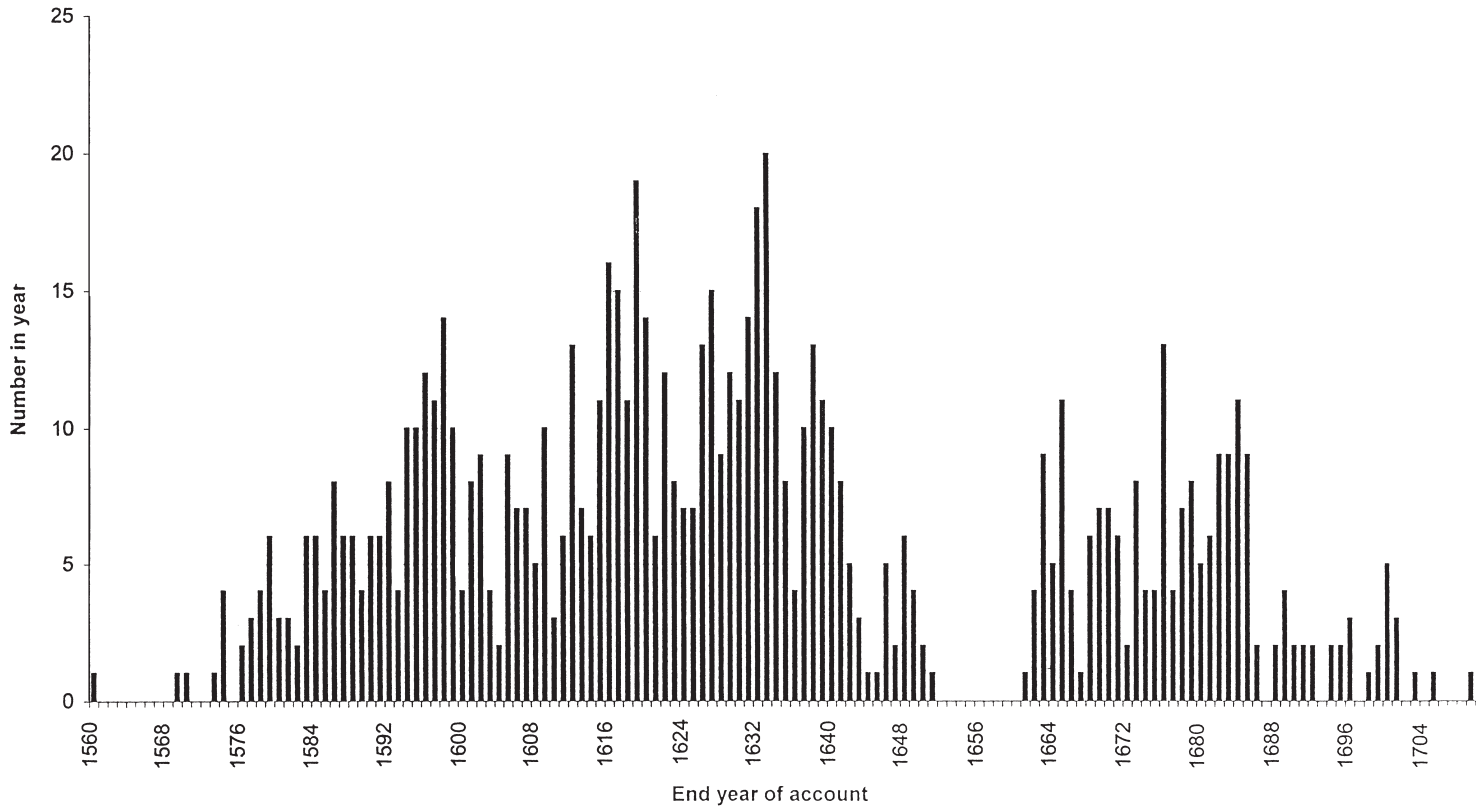


Figure 2. *Number of probate accounts by year, 1560-1708*

Note: All record offices except Lichfield and Preston; total number of accounts = 801

they reappeared from the Restoration until the uninspiringly titled 'Act for the Reviveing and Continuance of severall Acts of Parlyment' undermined a large part of their function in the 1680s.³² Even so, they were never as numerous in this latter period as they had been in the 1630s.

King's table of 1688 came, therefore, at the end of a period of renewed accounting after 1660. To compare his values for specific items of clothing, the median and average values of the same items have been calculated from the set of accounts dating from the 1660s to the early eighteenth century only, although the total numbers of garments are for the whole period, not just 1660 onwards.

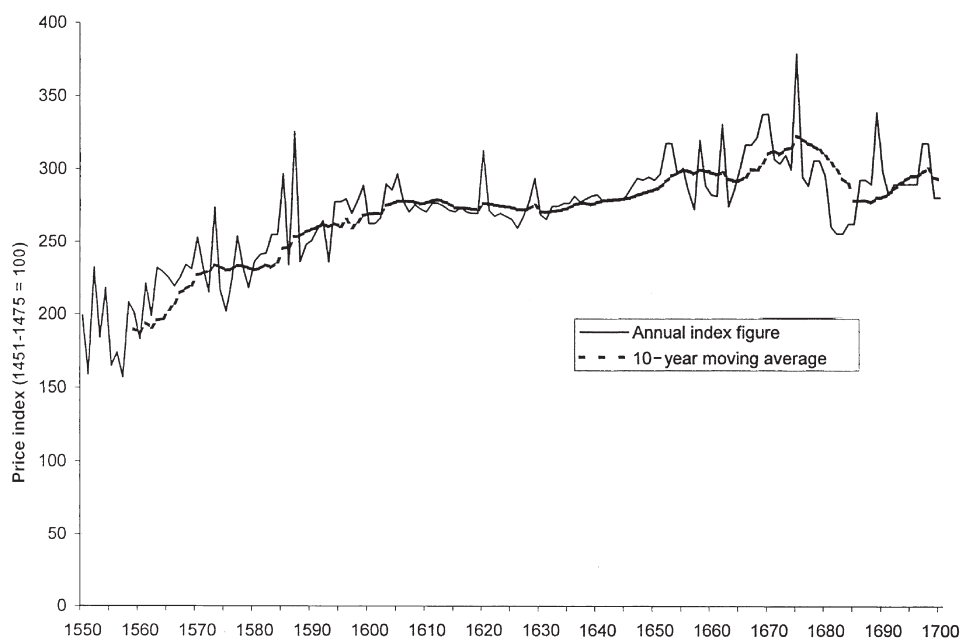


Figure 3. *Textile price index, 1550-1700*

Source: Phelps Brown and Hopkins, 'Seven centuries', app. c., textile col., pp. 51-4

The inflation in textile prices, which, as figure 3 shows, had been nearly continuous from the 1570s until the 1670s, warns against comparing King's values of 1688 with the prices per item of clothing over the whole period for which we have analysed accounts. Indeed, comparing the period before 1660 with the years 1660-1700 the price of a basic outfit of clothes for a boy and a girl rose by 56 per cent and 13 per cent respectively, as table 2 shows.³³ The decision to compare only the prices from the period 1660-1700 with King's seems entirely justified. The 'new' source of the probate accounts provides far more individual

³² Spufford, 'Long term rural credit'.

³³ The difference between the sexes is probably accounted for by the fact that the boy under consideration has been given a coat, doublet, and breeches in his imaginary wardrobe, while the girl has only a waistcoat and petticoat for outer wear. It is possible that before the civil war a boy normally had only a coat and breeches, rather than three garments.

Table 2. *Increase in price of an outfit over time (all counties)*

	Average price		% increase	Median price		% increase	Number in sample	
	early s. d.	late ^a s. d.		early s. d.	late ^a s. d.		early	late ^a
<i>Boy's outfit</i>								
Hat	2 5	3 8	51.7	2 3	2 6	11.1	124	35
Coat	6 5	10 7	64.9	4 6	8 9	94.4	50	16
Shirt	2 1	3 7	72.0	1 11	2 11	52.2	140	30
Jerkin/doublet	4 7	8 2	78.2	3 8	6 11	84.1	91	10
Breeches	3 11	5 11	51.1	4 0	4 7	14.6	40	18
Stockings	1 8	2 0	20.0	1 4	1 6	12.5	186	57
Shoes	1 5	2 9	94.1	1 4	2 6	87.5	329	103
Total	£1 2 6	£1 16 8	63.0	19 0	£1 9 6	55.3	960	269
<i>Girl's outfit</i>								
Headwear	1 2	1 9	50.0	0 7	1 1	85.7	26	34
Waistcoat	3 8	4 5	20.5	3 5	3 6	2.4	60	40
Shift/smock	2 1	2 3	8.0	1 10	1 5	-22.7	66	25
Petticoat	8 1	5 11	-26.8	6 6	6 11	6.4	116	20
Stockings	1 1	1 4	23.1	1 0	1 2	16.7	119	56
Shoes	1 1	2 4	115.4	1 0	2 2	116.7	296	135
Total	17 2	18 0	4.9	14 4	16 3	13.4	683	310

Note: early = before 1660; late = 1660-1700

prices for textiles than were available to Shammas, who essentially depended on 27 retailers' accounts for the period 1578-1738. These retailers provided her with an average of six mean prices for each fabric for each of her periods. Not only do prices derived from probate accounts survive in much greater numbers, as table 3 indicates, but they can also be used in the knowledge that they were the actual purchase prices paid by the customer. Strikingly, there was an extremely broad range of prices for each fabric throughout the period. The choice of fineness, quality, and cost for the customer was very wide indeed. The median of these prices has been taken, rather than the mean, but even so this may still not be representative where the number of examples is smaller. The findings for the period after 1660 are therefore less certain, since there are fewer accounts for those years, and, therefore, fewer examples. However, there is more certainty about the middle period, 1610-60. In those years, the prices of lockram, holland, fustian, frieze, russett, kersey, and 'cloth' all increased, some—including fustian and frieze—dramatically.³⁴ After 1660, when fewer examples are available, the median prices for

³⁴ This rise in prices seems completely contrary to the conclusions drawn by Shammas, 'Decline of textile prices', pp. 483-4, which indicates a similar decline in the cost of clothes, and *idem*, *Pre-industrial consumer*, tab. 4.8, p. 97. At this point, the difficulty can only be indicated. It would, of course, be solved if the labour costs involved in making up rose, while the price of fabrics dropped. However, my database of prices of material indicates that such a simple solution is not adequate, because the range of prices for each material for which there is enough evidence is huge. The lowest prices in the range dropped for some fabrics, but the highest prices did not, and the medians did not necessarily change at all.

lockeram, linen, stuff, kersey, and even 'cloth' all fell. The price of holland, however, rose dramatically. Further work needs to be done to resolve this conflict in the evidence, which can only be mentioned in passing here.

For the purpose of comparison, the major drawback to the garments itemized in the probate accounts is, of course, that they are all for children. King's average figures for the value of a particular item of clothing included clothing for children: he reckoned that 27.6 per cent of the population were under 10. Our information certainly covers this group. Of King's population, 38.3 per cent were under 15.³⁵ His figures have been corrected by Wrigley and Schofield, who estimate that only 31.3 per cent of the population were aged 14 or under.³⁶ Even so, we ought to be dealing with the type and price of the clothes of nearly one-third of the population, if only we were not besieged by yet another problem. Few children were put into service, or apprenticed, at under 15: Wrigley and Schofield suggest that 'very few children left the parental household before the age of 10' and that only a few children left for service between the ages of 10 and 15. Moreover, they indicate that as many as two-thirds of adolescents aged between 15 and 19 lived at home.³⁷

Unfortunately, we are dealing, in these probate accounts, with children who had lost at least one parent, and who are therefore likely to have left home earlier than usual, to be placed out in service or apprenticed. As a result, the data on expenditure on clothing from these accounts are likely to be slanted towards younger children.³⁸ It is difficult to estimate the amount of skewing this produces. However, the probate accounts are not those of paupers, who might commonly be out aged eight or younger, and they also contain a few reassuring details about the clothing of young adults: for example, a girl in Lincolnshire had a 'Wedding Smock' made for her, costing as much as 10s. 10d. compared with the normal shilling or two. So she was marriageable, and not all the 'children' for whom we have clothing details were very young. But we nevertheless have to allow for the fact that the clothing expenses in this source are mainly for younger children and that the cost of each item of clothing will be lower than King's. These executrixes simply had to supply less material for a child's body than for an adult's.

After listing these warnings, it comes as a relief to underline the very positive and useful fact to the historian investigating the clothing of lower social groups that the majority of this sample of accounts come from families with a 'charge' value, or total probate inventory value of movable

³⁵ Harte, 'Economics of clothing', pp. 286-7.

³⁶ Wrigley and Schofield, *Population history*, pp. 217-18 and tab. A3.1, p. 528, estimates that 31% of the population in 1686 was aged 14 or under.

³⁷ Wrigley et al., *English population history*, p. 210; Wall, 'Age of leaving home', tab. 2, p. 190.

³⁸ Sharpe, 'Poor children as apprentices', pp. 254-6. The same volume of *Continuity and change* contains Mayhew, 'Life-cycle service and the family unit', which establishes that many orphans were apprenticed within weeks of their parents' death, and Ben-Amos, 'Women apprentices', which demonstrates that in the seventeenth century, nearly two-thirds of female apprentices were orphans (p. 233).

Table 3. *Price information by material type by time period (d. per yd.)*

	<i>Canvas</i>	<i>Lockeram</i>	<i>Linen</i>	<i>Holland</i>	<i>Cotton</i>	<i>Fustian</i>	<i>Linsey woolsey</i>
<i>Up to 1610</i>							
Average	12.2	16.1	16.8	27.7	13.9	13.1	14.0
Median	11.7	11.4	17.1	20.6	8.3	12.0	14.0
Min. price 1 yard	6.9	8.6	8.0	15.4	8.0	9.6	14.0
Max. price 1 yard	25.7	32.2	30.9	82.3	47.2	28.0	14.0
Range	6.9 to 25.7	8.6 to 32.2	8.0 to 30.9	15.4 to 82.3	8.0 to 47.2	9.6 to 28.0	14.0
Instances	36	9	11	29	23	25	6
<i>1610-1660</i>							
Average	14.2	13.0	12.0	24.0	15.8	23.8	10.2
Median	9.4	12.9	12.1	22.3	13.3	20.0	10.2
Min. price 1 yard	1.7	11.1	8.0	17.1	12.0	4.0	4.4
Max. price 1 yard	39.1	17.1	14.2	32.0	24.7	72.0	16.0
Range	1.7 to 39.1	11.1 to 17.1	8.0 to 14.2	17.1 to 32.0	12.0 to 24.7	4.0 to 72.0	4.4 to 16.0
Instances	13	9	10	6	4	15	2
<i>After 1660</i>							
Average	13.7	14.0	12.6	45.2	16.0		14.8
Median	13.7	11.1	11.3	38.0	16.0	N/A	20.0
Min. price 1 yard	13.7	10.3	5.3	20.6	16.0		4.5
Max. price 1 yard	13.7	22.3	22.0	89.1	16.0		20.0
Range	13.7	10.3 to 22.3	5.3 to 22.0	20.6 to 89.1	16.0		4.5 to 20.0
Instances	1	8	31	19	1		3
<i>All periods</i>							
Average	12.7	14.4	13.4	33.5	14.2	17.1	13.5
Median	11.7	11.9	12.0	27.4	9.9	13.3	14.0
Min. price 1 yard	1.7	8.6	5.3	15.4	8.0	4.0	4.4
Max. price 1 yard	39.1	32.2	30.9	89.1	47.2	72.0	20.0
Range	1.7 to 39.1	8.6 to 32.2	5.3 to 30.9	15.4 to 89.1	8.0 to 47.2	4.0 to 72.0	4.4 to 20.0
Instances	50	26	52	54	28	40	11

goods, of under £100 as figure 4 (p. 696) shows. Just under two-thirds of the accounts, 519, were of people with goods in this range, and 353, or 44 per cent, had movable goods worth less than £50. Very few indeed of our accounts came from estates worth £300 or more, the normal bottom of the range for inferior gentry. We are all familiar with median or average values of movable goods, for gentry, yeomen, husbandmen and labourers. The fullest survey based on 2,879 inventories from 14 counties³⁹ shows the gentry with an average of over £300, the yeomanry with an average of £207, a considerable drop to the husbandmen with an average of £76, and a further drop to the labourers with an average of just under £30. These probate accounts, therefore, come from the bottom group of members of rural society with inventoried wealth: our information shows what clothing was thought suitable for the sons and daughters of yeomen, but preponderantly husbandmen, craftsmen, and

³⁹ Cressy, *Coming over*, p. 121; *idem*, *Literacy and the social order*, pp. 137-40. See also the medians of labourers', husbandmen's, and yeomen's inventory values in Spufford, 'Limitations of the probate inventory', pp. 155, 161, 165, and *idem*, *Contrasting communities*, pp. 37-41. Labourers' goods in the 1660s had a median value of £15, husbandmen's of £30, craftsmen's of £40, and yeomen's of £180.

Table 3. (*continued*)

	<i>Friese</i>	<i>Bays/Baize</i>	<i>Russett</i>	<i>Stuff</i>	<i>Kersey</i>	<i>Broad cloth</i>	<i>Cloth</i>
<i>Up to 1610</i>							
Average	20.1	22.9	23.7		47.3	87.6	30.4
Median	15.1	23.1	24.0	N/A	40.0	96.0	17.1
Min. price 1 yard	7.0	9.8	4.8		18.0	68.0	6.9
Max. price 1 yard	68.6	36.0	53.3		141.3	102.0	124.0
Range	7.0 to 68.6	9.8 to 36.0	4.8 to 53.3		18.0 to 141.3	68.0 to 102.0	6.9 to 124.0
Instances	22	16	46		19	10	36
<i>1610–1660</i>							
Average	42.0	36.0	32.1	42.6	47.3	90.0	35.6
Median	30.2	36.0	31.2	43.7	42.5	90.0	28.6
Min. price 1 yard	24.0	28.0	18.7	28.0	24.0	90.0	12.5
Max. price 1 yard	72.0	44.0	46.0	55.0	80.0	90.0	81.6
Range	24.0 to 72.0	28.0 to 44.0	18.7 to 46.0	28.0 to 55.0	4.0 to 80.0	90.0	12.5 to 81.6
Instances	7	2	5	4	18	1	17
<i>After 1660</i>							
Average		21.7		21.6	32.4	66.2	32.1
Median	N/A	17.3	N/A	25.1	25.6	66.0	17.8
Min. price 1 yard		12.3		12.8	14.2	5.0	6.0
Max. price 1 yard		40.0		32.0	110.0	140.0	128.0
Range		12.3 to 40.0		12.8 to 32.0	14.2 to 110.0	5.0 to 140.0	6.0 to 128.0
Instances		4		7	12	6	21
<i>All periods</i>							
Average	25.3	23.9	24.5	29.3	43.7	80.2	32.1
Median	16.0	23.1	24.0	28.0	39.3	84.0	24.0
Min. price 1 yard	7.0	9.8	4.8	12.8	14.2	5.0	6.0
Max. price 1 yard	72.0	44.0	53.3	55.0	141.3	140.0	128.0
Range	7.0 to 72.0	9.8 to 44.0	4.8 to 53.3	12.8 to 55.0	14.2 to 141.3	5.0 to 140.0	6.0 to 128.0
Instances	29	22	51	11	49	17	74

Source: probate accounts

labourers. It is immediately apparent that, despite their relative poverty, these children did not live just in second-hand clothes and rags. This is information which has, until now, been completely inaccessible and unobtainable.⁴⁰

III

It proved possible to organize the mass of detail from probate accounts on seventeenth-century clothing in the way in which King had analysed the value and price of clothing in 1688, and thus check, to some extent, the accuracy of his analysis. The King table of 1688 was used, as amplified by Harte,⁴¹ and yet further amplified here in tables 4 and 5.

⁴⁰ See Harte, 'Economics of clothing', p. 288. It should be emphasized that the present article deals only with *new* clothing, since this was what was bought for children and adolescents. Of course it was added to their existing wardrobes, and to family hand-downs, but no mention is made here of the very important second-hand market.

⁴¹ Harte printed the list of King's on which this table is based, adding his own numbers: Harte, 'Economics of clothing', pp. 293–4.

Table 4. *Numbers of types of garments in database, 1560-1709: comparison with King's estimated numbers*

	<i>From King</i>		<i>In all counties</i>		<i>In Kent</i>		<i>In Lincolnshire</i>		<i>Earliest</i>	<i>Latest</i>
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	occurrence Year	occurrence Year
1 Hat of all sorts	3,310,000	4.3	500	5.6	277	5.6	40	6.3	1573	1709
2 Caps of all sorts	1,600,000	2.1	62	0.7	36	0.7	6	1.0	1578	1703
3 Perruques	100,000	0.1	2	0.0	2	0.0		0.0	1683	1683
4 Coats	1,000,000	1.3	210	2.3	112	2.3	25	4.0	1560	1703
5 Campaign coats	66,000	0.1		0.0		0.0		0.0		
6 Cloaks	10,000	0.0	16	0.2	7	0.1	1	0.2	1599	1665
7 Doublets or wastcoats	1,000,000	1.3	425	4.7	165	3.4	28	4.4	1573	1703
8 Breeches	1,000,000	1.3	251	2.8	135	2.8	18	2.9	1573	1703
9 Drawers or linings	500,000	0.7	148	1.6	44	0.9	5	0.8	1595	1703
10 Stockings of wool, leather or silk	10,000,000	13.1	1384	15.4	753	15.3	95	15.1	1560	1709
11 Socks of linen and woollen	80,000	0.1	5	0.1		0.0		0.0	1608	1626
12 Stockings of cotton and thread	100,000	0.1	5	0.1	3	0.1		0.0	1597	1684
13 Shoos	12,000,000	15.7	2248	25.1	1303	26.6	147	23.3	1570	1703
14 Shoostings and buckles	6,000,000	7.9	23	0.3	6	0.1	8	1.3	1624	1698
15 Boots, shassoons & gambades	100,000	0.1	20	0.2	11	0.2	4	0.6	1618	1700
16 Spatterdashes	100,000	0.1	1	0.0		0.0		0.0	1625	1625
17 Spurrs	200,000	0.3	2	0.0		0.0		0.0	1608	1640
18 Swords	100,000	0.1		0.0		0.0		0.0		
19 Canes, walking staves & saddle whips	400,000	0.5		0.0		0.0		0.0		
20 Belts & girdles	100,000	0.1	60	0.7	47	1.0	1	0.2	1577	1694

21	Gloves & mittens	8,000,000	10.5	155	1.7	62	1.3	12	1.9	1576	1703
22	Bands & crevats	4,000,000	5.2	322	3.6	207	4.2	19	3.0	1577	1701
23	Shirts & smocks	10,000,000	13.1	942	10.5	461	9.4	97	15.4	1560	1703
24	Sleeves & ruffles	200,000	0.3	42	0.5	32	0.7	2	0.3	1576	1699
25	Pocket handkerchers	4,000,000	5.2	27	0.3	3	0.1		0.0	1588	1703
26	Night gowns & dust gowns	100,000	0.1		0.0		0.0		0.0		
27	Girdles & shashes	100,000	0.1	41	0.5	17	0.3	2	0.3	1574	1648
28	Frocks, trousers safeguards etc	1,000,000	1.3	34	0.4	25	0.5		0.0	1576	1701
29	Muffs	50,000	0.1	6	0.1		0.0	6	1.0	1670	1670
30	Hoods, dressing & commodoes	2,000,000	2.6	319	3.6	190	3.9	9	1.4	1576	1703
31	Tours & locks	40,000	0.1	1	0.0		0.0	1	0.2	1685	1685
32	Neck handkerchers & tuckers	2,000,000	2.6	232	2.6	101	2.1	3	0.5	1576	1703
33	Gowns & manteaus	200,000	0.3	152	1.7	91	1.9	21	3.3	1574	1701
34	Petticoats & wastcoats	1,000,000	1.3	641	7.1	409	8.3	32	5.1	1573	1701
35	Bodyes & stays	1,000,000	1.3	178	2.0	94	1.9	18	2.9	1578	1709
36	Pattens & clogs	400,000	0.5	26	0.3	20	0.4	1	0.2	1601	1701
37	Suits of nightcloaths	2,000,000	2.6	1	0.0	1	0.0		0.0	1648	1648
38	Masks, fans & busks	200,000	0.3	5	0.1	3	0.1	1	0.2	1619	1665
39	Tippets & palatines	50,000	0.1	6	0.1		0.0	6	1.0	1684	1685
40	Aprons & night rayls	3,000,000	3.9	353	3.9	206	4.2	21	3.3	1574	1709
41	Ribbands			4	0.0	3	0.1		0.0	1671	1701
42	Silk laces etc			117	1.3	78	1.6	1	0.2	1576	1700
43	Gold & silver lace etc			2	0.0		0.0			1665	1665
44	Point lace etc			6	0.1	2	0.0			1593	1630
Total		77,106,000		8974	100	4906	100	630	100		

Note: No. of accounts = 828

Sources: King's table of apparel of 1688 and probate accounts

Table 5. *Estimates of garment prices between 1660 and 1700: comparison with King's values*

	Total value: King		Cost per item							
	£	%	King	All counties			Kent		Lincs	
			s. d.	Median s. d.	Average s. d.	No. of garments	Median s. d.	Average s. d.	Median s. d.	Average s. d.
1 Hat of all sorts	387,500	3.5	2 3	2 9	3 9	54	3	4	1 3	2 11
2 Caps of all sorts	80,000	0.7	1	1 2	1 2	6	1 3	1 3	1 2	1 2
3 Perruques	100,000	0.9		6	6	2	6	6		
4 Coats	1,000,000	9.1	20	6 8	7 5	13	5	7 1	7 6	6 7
5 Campaign coats	100,000	0.9								
6 Cloaks	40,000	0.4								
7 Doublets or wastcoats	750,000	6.8	15	2 9	2 3	5	3 1	3 1	1 11	1 8
8 Breeches	500,000	4.5	10	4 11	6	12	5	6 5	6 7	6 7
9 Drawers or linings	100,000	0.9	4	1 6	2 3	19	1 2	1 2	3 6	3 6
10 Stockings of wool, leather or silk	1,000,000	9.1	2	1 3	1 5	148	1 6	1 9	10	9
11 Socks of linen and woollen	1,000	0.0								
12 Stockings of cotton and thread	10,000	0.1	2	1	1	1				
13 Shoos	1,000,000	9.1	1 8	2 4	2 6	268	2 5	2 8	1 9	1 10
14 Shoostings and buckles	50,000	0.5	2	2 6	2 6	2			4	4
15 Boots, shassoons & gambades	100,000	0.9	20	10	10	2	15	15	5	5
16 Spatterdashes	10,000	0.1								
17 Spurrs	10,000	0.1								
18 Swords	50,000	0.5								
19 Canes, walking staves & saddle whips	20,000	0.2								
20 Belts & girdles	5,000	0.0	1	1 2	1 2	1	1 2	1 2		
21 Gloves & mittens	400,000	3.6	1	6	8	41	7	7	8	1

22 Bands & crevats	200,000	1.8	1	6	1 6	30	1 5	2	5	5
23 Shirts & smocks	1,250,000	11.4	2 6	2 6	2 5	105	2 11	3	2	1 9
24 Sleeves & ruffles	100,000	0.9	2	9	1 5	3	2 8	2 8	9	9
25 Pocket handkerchers	200,000	1.8		2	1 8	4	4	4		
26 Night gowns & dust gowns	100,000	0.9								
27 Girdles & shashes	10,000	0.1	2							
28 Frocks, trousers safeguards etc	200,000	1.8	4	3 9	3 5	6	3 9	3 5		
29 Muffs	10,000	0.1	4	3	3	2			3	3
30 Hoods, dressing & commodos	400,000	3.6	4	1 1	1 8	39	4 6	4		
31 Tours & locks	4,000	0.0								
32 Neck handkerchers & tuckers	200,000	1.8	2	7	6	10				
33 Gowns & manteaus	200,000	1.8	20	12 11	19 8	15	19 6	29 6	10 8	15 6
34 Petticoats & wastcoats	1,000,000	9.1	20	3 10	5 7	75	3	5 11	5 9	12 5
35 Bodyes & stays	400,000	3.6	8	2 6	3 4	40	3	4	2 3	4 9
36 Pattens & clogs	30,000	0.3	1 6	1	1 1	4	2 3	4 9		
37 Suits of nightcloaths	100,000	0.9						6	1	1 1
38 Masks, fans & busks	10,000	0.1								
39 Tippetts & palatines	5,000	0.0		1 3	4 8	4			1 3	4 8
40 Aprons & night rayls	450,000	4.1	3	1 7	1 7	51	1 11	1 8	1 3	1 3
41 Ribbands	100,000	0.9								
42 Silk laces etc	10,000	0.1		2	2	3	1	1		
43 Gold & silver lace etc	100,000	0.9								
44 Point lace etc	200,000	1.8								
Total	10,992,500					967				

Note: Data taken only from accounts dated between 1660 and 1700.

Sources: as tab. 4

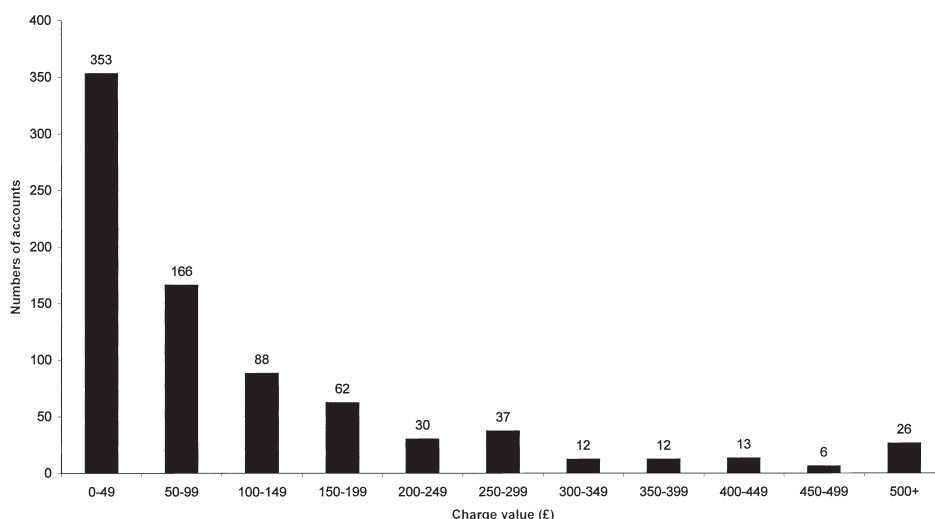


Figure 4. *Accounts by charge value*

Note: No. of accounts with charge value = 805.

Source: probate accounts

The fluidity of terminology that applies to clothing and changes in fashion presented some problems. For example, references to 'cloaks' were found in the accounts from 1599 to 1665. They were categorized in King's table of 1688 as male dress, but were so unimportant that they made up less than 0.1 per cent of the garments in the table. However, by the eighteenth century 'red cloaks were universal for adult country women'.⁴² In our own time a woman's 'suit' may also have recently been described as a 'costume', or a 'coat and skirt'. In the period covered by the accounts from the 1570s on, we were forced to lump together 'jerkins' and 'vests' with King's 'doublets' and 'wastcoats' to form one heading, as was the case with 'stockings', 'hose', and 'socks'. This could lead to the accusation of forcing clothing into the Procrustean bed of King's table, which lists fashions and clothing under the nomenclature and in the terminology of 1688. It is to be hoped that the situation has not been distorted too much and garments have not been mis-identified.⁴³

The tables are complex at first sight. The number of a particular type of garment as estimated by King is shown in the first column of table 4, and for each the percentage of the total number of garments has been calculated. The second column contains the numbers and percentages of all 8,974 individually priced garments found in the accounts covering all counties. The third column shows numbers and percentages of 4,906 garments from Kent, the county with the largest group of accounts recording clothing. The fourth column shows numbers of 630 garments

⁴² Information from Dr John Styles.

⁴³ I am particularly indebted to Miss Anne Buck and Dr Ann Saunders for their patient help here, but would like to stress that they are in no way responsible for any remaining errors.

from Lincolnshire and the percentage of each. After that, the county numbers were too small to be useful.⁴⁴

In table 5 King's total value for each type of garment is given, followed by the percentage again. Then King's own price for a single one of these garments is shown, followed immediately by the median and mean values for the same type of single garment calculated from the accounts for all counties. Because of the inflationary situation between the 1570s and 1680s (see figure 3) these calculations are based on the prices for just under 1,000 garments purchased or made up for children between 1660 and 1700. The local breakdowns for Kent and Lincolnshire have been added; this was as far as regional differences could be tested. We anticipated that prices would be lower in Lincolnshire, and so they were in some cases, but this was by no means universally true: the median coat for a child in Lincolnshire would be more expensive than in Kent, for instance.

In King's master table for 1688, 'five items of clothing accounted for half the value of the total of £11 million'. The discussion here will centre on these key garments. 'A million pounds or more was spent on coats for men, stockings, shoes, shirts and smocks, and petticoats and waistcoats. As many as 12 million pairs of shoes were acquired new in 1688, 10 million pairs of stockings and 10 million shirts and smocks.'⁴⁵ Coats and petticoats, and also waistcoats, were more expensive and King estimated that about a million of each were sold.

King's 12 million pairs of shoes with a total value of £1 million made up his largest single number of items, 15.7 per cent of the whole. Their value was lower, at 9 per cent of the whole. The 10 million pairs of stockings, with the 10 million shirts and smocks, both amounted to 13 per cent of the whole output he postulated. Shirts and smocks were more valuable, however, and were worth 11.4 per cent of the total value of the clothes. Stockings were, of course, cheaper, and only made up 9 per cent of the total value. Although 'only' 1 million coats were sold, they were obviously much more expensive, and were also worth 9 per cent of the total value. The 1 million petticoats and waistcoats were worth another 9 per cent of the whole value of new clothing.⁴⁶

As the number of zeros in his table suggests, King's figures for the total value of garments were rounded up. Nevertheless, his prices per item appear to be more accurate, although even they are generally given in whole shillings or to the nearest 6d., with only a few prices using 2d., 3d., or 8d.

However, the work we have so far done shows that his main emphases were right, and that some of his prices per item were right too. Where there were major differences, quite often they were solved just by con-

⁴⁴ After the completion of this article, the additional accounts from Lichfield and Preston were added to the database, but these were not enough to change this judgement.

⁴⁵ Harte, 'Economics of clothing', p. 287. Harte's article is the foundation for the present study.

⁴⁶ Buck, *Clothes and the child*, necessarily concentrates almost entirely on the upper social groups, but is extremely valuable for its descriptive sections: pp. 31, 82-3, 92, 95, 100-1, 153, 164, 175-8, 178-89, 184 (boys, 1650-1750), 185-92 (girls, 1650-1750).

sidering the probable differences in size between adults' and children's clothing. On the whole, King's estimates of price were too high, and my initial thought that the focus of the accounts on minors' clothes might produce lower figures seems justified. Indeed, clothes or accessories that were either for adults, or indicated superior social status, including wigs, shoebuckles, spurs, and nightgowns either did not appear in the accounts, or did so very rarely. Surprisingly, gloves were not mentioned either: seventeenth-century children, it seems, normally had cold hands.

Shoes, King's biggest single item, were even more important in keeping growing children shod than they were to adults, and King's figures, large as they are, are too low. One-quarter of the sum spent on children's clothing bought new shoes for them and these were in fact the commonest single item bought in the accounts.⁴⁷ There is sufficient information on enough pairs of shoes to be sure about the prices of new shoes for children in the seventeenth century. King seems to have been entirely accurate in this case: his notional pair of shoes cost 1s. 8d.; the 'real' pairs in Lincolnshire and Kent cost 1s. 9d. and 2s. 5d. respectively. It is tempting to think the price difference lay in the craftsmanship rather than the quality of leather.⁴⁸

Stockings, which made up 13 per cent of King's total clothing output, were important in the dressing of children too. In both Lincolnshire and Kent 15 per cent of purchases for children were of stockings. The prices were different, though. To King, stockings cost 2s. a pair for wool, leather, or silk; in comparison, seventeenth-century children's stockings cost 10d. in Lincolnshire and 1s. 6d. in Kent. Even cheaper stockings than these could be found in the shops: Ann Clark, a chapwoman who ran a shop in Donington in Lincolnshire, had 19 pairs of stockings at 10d. a pair in her shop when her goods were itemized by the appraisers in 1692. But she also had stockings which were cheaper still: there were four pairs at 6d. a pair, and even two pairs at 3d., perhaps for babies. She had two pairs which stood out as 'extravagant', in her chapwoman's world, at 1s. 1d. each. Thomas Webb, chapman and shopkeeper of Kent, had in his shop in 1721 three pairs of 'Womens Clock hose' at 3s. 6d. a pair—so Ann Clark's stockings were not really luxurious at all. But Thomas Webb also had 'Womens hose' at 2s. each, 'large Ladds hose' at 2s. each, men's wool hose at 1s. 4d. each, and even 'Childrens hose' at 4½d. a pair. The more one reads of these shopkeepers' documents, the more amazing is the range and quantity of different finenesses and variety available. So the median price of the children's garments here lies at the centre of a very large range of prices. It is important to remember that King faced the same problem and that we do not know whether he was

⁴⁷ Surprisingly, there were around five times as many new pairs of shoes bought as there were pairs repaired. Shoe repairs were still very common, though.

⁴⁸ This is interesting, because Harte, and King himself, believed that the consumption of leather by adults was higher than that by children: Harte, 'Economics of clothing', tab. 2 and discussion, pp. 284-5. The probate accounts used for this article demonstrate that King was correct in believing that two pairs of shoes per year were required.

estimating means or medians, or indeed what data his calculations were based on.

This range of larger and smaller, coarser and finer, garments has constantly to be borne in mind when considering these round figures. For instance, Robert Amsden of Canterbury had in his shop in 1703:

- 12 womens damask Mantues at 8s apiece
- 6 Womens Serge Gownes at 7s apiece
- 9 Womens Silke crepe Gownes at 7s apiece
- 9 Womens worsted Gownes at 6s 6d apiece
- 12 Girls worsted Gownes at 4s 6d apiece
- 30 smale girls gowns at 3s apiece
- 16 ditto girls Gowns at 4s apiece

Among petticoats, he had women's petticoats at 3s. 6d., as well as 'damask and serge' at 5s. 6d. apiece and 'course' petticoats at 2s. apiece.⁴⁹ A variety of prices in shops like this can be produced for most of the garments on King's list, and he was clearly attempting to average out the varying figures for different sizes and finenesses.

King priced his 1 million 'wastcoats and petticoats', like his 'coats', at £1 each. A waistcoat and a petticoat constituted normal wear for girls: a front-fastening jacket, with an outer skirt.⁵⁰ They seem to be ordinary clothes for the majority of girls, though those with more pretensions may well have had a gown, or even the latest fashion, a mantua, bought for them. From the account data, 32 petticoats and waistcoats were bought for Lincolnshire girls, and another 409 were purchased in Kent. Their prices, again, covered a wide range, but the medians were 5s. 9d. in Lincolnshire and 3s. in Kent. Neither was anywhere near King's value of £1 each. Once again, the explanation must lie in the lesser amount of cloth used for children. The marked difference between Lincolnshire and Kent prices, however, is mystifying.

Smocks and shirts were next-to-the-skin wear. Girls slept in their smocks, but also wore them as undergarments, or, confusingly, as what would now be called a petticoat. Between 1650 and 1750, a 'smock' became a 'shift', though King still used the 'smock' terminology.⁵¹ His 'table of apparel' contained as many as 10 million shirts and smocks, more than any other garment except shoes. He estimated that they were worth 2s. 6d. each, a price which the probate account data support. Children's shirts and smocks were bought or made up for a median of 2s. in Lincolnshire and 2s. 11d. in Kent. It seems that both these garments were normally made at home, for unlike other basic garments on King's list no shop prices for ready-made shirts and smocks have yet been found.

The garment we know from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century usage

⁴⁹ Printed in Spufford, *Great re-clothing*, p. 210.

⁵⁰ Buck, *Clothes and the child*, pp. 169, 173.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 191. The figures for 'shifts' in the accounts used in this article have been run together with King's 'smocks'.

as a 'smock'—normally embroidered with the county patterns symbolizing the occupation of carter, ploughman, gardener, dairymaid, and so on, and most commonly worn by servants hired by the year—did exist in the seventeenth century, and seems most likely to have been known as a 'frock'. This exemplifies the difficulty of nomenclature. King recorded 200,000 frocks, sold along with various other garments at 4s. each. There are seventeenth-century illustrations of these. Samuel Pepys collected a chapbook which contained a deliberately satirical woodcut of a smart chapman selling a new twopenny 'merry' book to his hayseed customer, who was dressed in a 'frock' or smock.⁵² The very rare pack of cards produced in 1679 called 'The Knavery of the Rump', with individual cards engraved from designs by Francis Barlow, included a six of hearts bearing the image of a waggoner dressed in what we would call a smock, just as he would have been two centuries later. But his garment was not called a smock in contemporary usage.⁵³

King's 1 million coats, which he valued at £1 each, were garments in which the amount of fabric would be quite different for adults and for children. Children of both sexes wore coats from infancy, over the gowns of girls, and the gowns that preceded breeching for boys, through to adulthood. They seem to have started wearing coats at the age of about six months.⁵⁴ It is not surprising, therefore, that there is a wide range of prices of coats for children recorded in the accounts. In Lincolnshire these prices range from just over 1s.⁵⁵ to nearly 13s. with a median of 7s. 6d., compared to a median of 5s. in Kent. King's price of £1 for a 'coat' did not apply to children. Robert Amsden of Canterbury had in his shop in 1703 men's lined cloth coats at 10s. each, 14s. each, 15s. each, 18s. each, and £1 each, as well as a dozen children's coats at 5s. 6d. each and 38 at 4s. each.⁵⁶ So both my values and King's look reasonable. Robert Amsden's shop goods also demonstrate the point that children's clothes were indeed cheaper.

IV

Coats were among the garments which seem to have shifted during the seventeenth century from being made up by the local tailor to being available for purchase ready made, at least in some places, such as Kent. The appearance of ready-made clothing is one of the important innovations of the century, even though it may have occurred at this time

⁵² Magdalene College Library, Cambridge, *Penny Merriments*, I (22), p. 484. Reproduced on the jacket of Spufford, *Small books and pleasant histories*.

⁵³ Facsimile of the 'Knavery of the Rump' pack (published by Harry Margary and the Guildhall Library, London, 1978).

⁵⁴ All general information on clothing is taken from Buck, *Clothes and the child*.

⁵⁵ Discounted here are the two coats in Lincolnshire which cost only 1s. 4d. One description was for 'making a coate' which might well mean the cost of material was excluded. The other, paid to a tailor, was simply for a 'coate', and perhaps was also the making-up cost alone. Likewise discounted are the two Kent accounts which had coats at 7d. and 8d., where the entries contained no indication as to whether both making up and material were included.

⁵⁶ Printed in Spufford, *Great re-clothing*, p. 211.

only in certain regions. Historians used to think that ready-made clothes were a nineteenth-century invention, but there is no doubt that they appeared, and possibly became widespread, in the seventeenth century. There were 'salesmen' in London, Kent, and Staffordshire in the late seventeenth century and the early eighteenth.⁵⁷ Certainly, McKendrick was mistaken in asserting that the eighteenth century saw the appearance for the first time of 'mass-produced cheap clothes', although Styles did not find salesmen selling 'heavy-weight garments' in the north of England even in the eighteenth century.⁵⁸ Lemire concluded that 'by the last half of the seventeenth century the clothing trade was neither novel nor original and therein lies its importance. . . . It is ironic that this trade received relative [sic] little attention from historians when contemporaries found it such a rewarding avenue of advancement.'⁵⁹

In 1688, the year in which King's 'table of apparel' appeared, Richard Cartridge, of the parish of St Botolph, Aldersgate, died. His appraisers priced the goods in his two-storey warehouse⁶⁰ as follows:

In the Warehouse two pair of Stairs			
Item One hundred thirty four Coats Seventy nine Sutes forty seven Waistcoats One hundred and ten pair of Breeches	}	£208	
In the warehouse One pair of Stairs			
Item One hundred thirty two Coats fifty one Sutes eighteen Clokes Seven mens Gowns, forty peticoats and waistcoats One hundred forty seven Womens gowns			}
In the Shop			
Item One hundred and fourteen peticoats and several odd things	}	£33 11s.	
In the Little Shop and Warehouse			
Item One hundred and two Coats forty four Sutes Twenty mens Waistcoats forty four pair of breeches eighty five gowns and peticoats	}	£146 6s.	

There is no doubt that these garments were already made up for the customers. Another warehouse held his materials. This find is important for the history of clothes production, and gives more advanced information on seventeenth-century ready-made clothing for civilians than

⁵⁷ Styles, 'Clothing the north', p. 141, n. 18.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 143.

⁵⁹ Lemire, *Dress, culture and commerce*, pp. 38, 40.

⁶⁰ PRO, Prob. 32/25/212, erroneously catalogued under the name of Edward Hill, as an account, is in fact Richard Cartridge's inventory.

hitherto.⁶¹ Lemire has drawn attention⁶² to the major role of the various armies of the period, the navy, the Hudson's Bay Company, the American colonies, and the slave trade in stimulating the clothing trade. Outfitting these provided major markets, and major profits, for contractors. 'Slopsellers',⁶³ and the 'salesmen' who, to start with, specialized in ready-made clothing,⁶⁴ were not unrelated. But at the beginning of the civil war, contractors existed who, from the very outset in August 1642, could supply literally thousands of coats, breeches, 'suits', knapsacks, shirts, and pairs of stockings and shoes. These contractors were mainly, but not entirely, based in London: there were also some from Cambridge, Hertford, Plymouth, and Nantwich. The suppliers of suits were variously described as 'merchant', 'woollen draper', 'linen draper', 'tailor', and 'silkman'. Vigorous complaints were made about the quality of some of the garments supplied: the 'breeches were cutt so narrowe, that men were not well able to gett into them [without] tearinge' argued the supplier of 50 suits. Captain Bromly deposed that 'Many of the sleeves of the Coats were so shorte as thatt they came butt a little below their Elbowes, and for their shirts, they were so shorte [that] dyverse of them would nott hide their pryvities, And for the breeches, they were so scantey [or] they did Ripp in the hinder seame.'⁶⁵ Despite this miserable picture, the capacity of these people to organize the sudden purveyance of thousands of garments, however ill they were made up, suggests a very high degree of organization indeed. There is then a chicken-and-egg situation. The sudden opportunities given to the clothing trade by the needs of whole armies must have encouraged the making of ready-made clothes for civilians: but could the army in August 1642 have been outfitted at all on this scale without the existence already of an organization accustomed to making up large numbers of garments?

It is interesting to note that the group of seven men indicted at Petty Sessions in Oxford in 1668, charged with 'using the trade of Salesmen', that is 'selling Sales clothes' ready-made, against the Elizabethan Statute of Artificers, defended themselves by saying the statute was irrelevant, 'for [their own trade] hath not been in use about [above?] 30 years . . . and they doe not make the coates or things they sell, but only buy them ready made, of the Taylors whose Trade it is to make garments; and buying them ready made and soe selling them againe'.⁶⁶ This defence

⁶¹ This inventory is not unique: both David Mitchell and John Styles have similar inventories including wholesale civilian clothing, which I have yet to see.

⁶² Lemire, *Dress, culture and commerce*, ch. 1, *passim*, but note especially p. 11, on civil war supplies, and pp. 25, 26, containing a list of clothing approved for an individual footsoldier in 1689 by William III. I thank Dr Peter Edwards, of University of Surrey, Roehampton, who has drawn my attention to supplies of clothing to the army, and given me the reference to McGurk, *Elizabethan conquest of Ireland* as well as access to his own analysis of the equipment for the civil war armies, including the complaint quoted below. A brief account will appear in Edwards, *Dealing in death*, ch. 6.

⁶³ Lemire, *Dress, culture and commerce*, pp. 12-25, for slopsellers, contractors for navy basic clothing. See also *ibid.*, p. 164, n. 50.

⁶⁴ Spufford, *Great reclothing*, pp. 123-5, 210-30.

⁶⁵ Dr Peter Edwards also gave me the text of this complaint (PRO SP 28) 253 B (ii).

⁶⁶ Quoted in Lemire, *Dress, culture and commerce*, pp. 45-8. See also the 'farren merchant' trying to sell ready-made suits at a fair in Oxford in 1647, *ibid.*, p. 45.

takes the rise of the trade in ready-made clothes for civilians back to 1638, perhaps fortuitously to before the outbreak of war. Despite these claims that the trade had its beginnings in the 1630s, there is an earlier account describing how the army which quelled the Irish in the late 1590s was clothed, which demonstrates the clothiers' profits out of this large trade, their frequent corruption, and also the quite frequently appalling end results. It was then estimated that the common soldier's winter wear should cost £2 13s. 8d. for a winter coat, a canvas lined doublet, a pair of lined breeches, two shirts with bands, three pairs of shoes, and three pairs of kersey stockings. Two more pairs of shoes, one more pair of stockings, and a hat should be added in the summer for a further 14s. 4d.⁶⁷ Essex's army was dressed in two sizes only: 'large' and 'small'. This provides an interesting comparison with William III's footsoldier of 1689, whose clothes should have cost £3 19s. 10d. over two years. They included a coat and breeches, which would have been a 'suit' to the civil war contractors, a pair of stockings, gloves, a sash, a belt, shoes, and a hat in the first year, all at £2 10s. 6d., with the addition in the second year of a greatcoat, a shirt, a cravat, second pairs of stockings and shoes, and another hat for a further £1 9s. 4d.⁶⁸ Did Essex's war in Ireland in the late 1590s come as a complete shock to the clothing trade, or were 'the salesmen' in Oxford in 1668, who claimed that their trade did not go back beyond the 1630s, mistaken or deliberately being misleading? Did they have trade ancestors despite the Statute of Artificers?

It appears that they did. The area around Birchin Lane in London, extending into Lombard Street and Cornhill, was an established centre for the retail sale of ready-made garments by the mid-Elizabethan period, and the 'enthusiastic selling techniques' and Sunday opening hours of the salesmen were unpopular with some citizens as early as the 1580s. There is also a tale that in 1612 a visitor to London was set upon by Birchin Lane apprentices, who persuaded him with much 'bawling in his ears' to purchase a new suit of apparel with every conceivable accessory.⁶⁹ Ready-made clothes were cheaper than tailor-made, but often of inferior quality. Sleigh-Johnson dates the increasing scale of the ready-made trade to c. 1625, and there were waves of complaint against their workmanship in the 1640s and 1680s.

⁶⁷ McGurk, *Elizabethan conquest of Ireland*, pp. 209-14. For the common soldier's appropriate outfit, see p. 210.

⁶⁸ Lemire, *Dress, culture and commerce*, pp. 25-6.

⁶⁹ Sleigh-Johnson, 'Merchant Taylors' Company', ch. 7, is a detailed examination of the workings of the company and the organization of the tailoring trade in the City of London; quotation from pp. 365-7. I am grateful for permission to quote his work. Following him, Styles, 'Product innovation', dates the appearance of 'salesmen' in increasing numbers to the second quarter of the seventeenth century. (The last section of that article also discusses the sizing of garments in the ready-made clothing trade.)

V

This article represents the end of the first step in this project, and has examined the economic value and separate prices of different garments, and established whether the garments Gregory King thought were commonest were, in reality, the commonest.⁷⁰ It seems that they were. His prices also seem reasonable, given the enormous variety of shop prices and qualities for the same garment, and the fact that, throughout, we have been comparing his prices for the whole population with those for the clothes of minors only.

Harte asked a rhetorical question: 'Can any reliance be placed on the average prices [King] provides for each category of clothing?'⁷¹ The answer given by the probate accounts seems to be 'yes'. The surprising fact to emerge is that so many of the children of inventoried people below the level of gentry were relatively well-clad; indeed, almost all of them had some new clothes.

University of Surrey, Roehampton

⁷⁰ The next stage of this project will concentrate on the range of fabrics used for individual garments. After that, I hope to look at the evidence for the relative costs of material and 'making up' of these garments, and which were commonly made up individually for the particular child.

⁷¹ Harte, 'Economics of clothing', p. 285.

Footnote references

- Ben-Amos, I. K., 'Women apprentices in the trades and crafts of early modern Bristol', *Cont. & Change*, 6 (1991), pp. 227-52.
- Boulton, J., 'Food prices and the standard of living in London in the "century of revolution", 1580-1700', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, LIII (2000), pp. 455-92.
- Brown, H. Phelps and Hopkins, S. V., 'Seven centuries of the prices of consumables compared with builders' wage rates', in H. Phelps Brown and S. V. Hopkins, *A perspective of wages and prices* (1981), pp. 51-4.
- Buck, A., *Clothes and the child: a handbook of children's dress in England, 1500-1900* (Bedford, 1996).
- Cressy, D., *Literacy and the social order: reading and writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980).
- Cressy, D., *Coming over: migration and communication between England and New England in the seventeenth century* (Cambridge, 1987).
- Dyer, A., *The city of Worcester in the late middle ages* (Leicester, 1973).
- Dyer, C. C., *Standards of living in the later middle ages: social change in England, c. 1200-1520* (1989).
- Edwards, P., 'Farm and family: administering the estate of William Poore, a Hampshire downland farmer, 1593-6', *Southern Hist.*, 16 (1994), pp. 21-43.
- Edwards, P., *Dealing in death: the arms trade and the British civil wars, 1638-1652*, Ch. 6 (Farthrupp, Stroud, 2000).
- Erickson, A. L., *Women and property in early modern England* (1993).
- Harte, N. B., ed., *Fabrics and fashions: studies in the economic and social history of dress*, special number of *Textile History*, 22 (2) (1991).
- Harte, N. B., 'The economics of clothing', in *idem*, ed., *Fabrics and fashions*, pp. 277-96.
- Lemire, B., *Fashion's favourite: the cotton trade and the consumer in Britain, 1660-1800* (Oxford, 1991).
- Lemire, B., *Dress, culture and commerce: the English clothing trade before the factory, 1660-1800* (Basingstoke and London, 1997).
- McGurk, J., *The Elizabethan conquest of Ireland: the 1590s crisis* (Manchester, 1997).
- Mayhew, G., 'Life-cycle service and the family unit in early modern Rye', *Cont. & Change*, 6 (1991), pp. 201-6.
- Overton, M., *A bibliography of British probate inventories* (Newcastle, 1983).
- Shammas, C., *The pre-industrial consumer in England and America* (1990).

- Shammas, C. 'The decline of textile prices in England and British America prior to industrialization', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, XLVII (1994), pp. 483-507.
- Sharpe, P., 'Poor children as apprentices in Colyton, 1598-1830', *Cont. & Change*, 6 (1991), pp. 254-6.
- Sleigh-Johnson, N. V., 'The Merchant Taylors' Company of London, 1580-1645 with special reference to government and politics' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of London, 1989).
- Spufford, M., *Contrasting communities: English villagers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (1974).
- Spufford, M., 'First steps in literacy: the reading and writing experiences of the humblest seventeenth-century spiritual autobiographers', *Soc. Hist.*, 4 (1979), pp. 407-35.
- Spufford, M., *Small books and pleasant histories* (1981).
- Spufford, M., *The great reclothing of rural England: petty chapmen and their wares in the seventeenth century* (1984).
- Spufford, M., 'The limitations of the probate inventory', in J. Chartres and D. Hey, eds., *English rural society, 1500-1800: essays in honour of Joan Thirsk* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 139-74.
- Spufford, M., *Poverty portrayed: Gregory King and the parish of Eccleshall* (Keele, 1995).
- Spufford, P., ed., *Index to the probate accounts of England and Wales*, 2 vols. (Index Library CXII-CXIII, Brit. Rec. Soc., 1999).
- Spufford, P., 'Long term rural credit in seventeenth-century England', in T. Arkell and N. Evans, eds., *When death us do part* (L.P.S., 2000).
- Styles, J., 'Clothing the north: the supply of non-elite clothing in the eighteenth-century north of England', *Text. Hist.*, 25 (1994), pp. 139-66.
- Styles, J., 'Product innovation in early modern London', *P. & P.*, 168 (2000), pp. 124-69.
- Van der Woude, A. and Schuurman, A., eds., 'Probate inventories: a new source for the historical study of wealth, material culture and agricultural development', *A.A.G. Bijdragen*, 23 (Wageningen, 1980), pp. 2-3.
- Wall, R., 'The age of leaving home', *J. Family Hist.*, 3 (1978), pp. 181-202.
- Weatherill, L., 'Consumer behaviour, textiles and dress in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries', *Textile Hist.* 22 (1991).
- Weatherill, L., *Consumer behaviour and material culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (1988).
- Woodward, D., *Men at work: labourers and building craftsmen in the towns of northern England, 1450-1750* (Cambridge, 1995).
- Wrigley, E. A., Davies, R. S., Oeppen, J. E., and Schofield, R. S., *English population history from family reconstitution, 1580-1837* (Cambridge, 1997).
- Wrigley, E. A. and Schofield, R. S., *The population history of England, 1541-1871* (1981).