

The 1622 probate inventory

The inventory presents an interesting picture of an early Stuart yeoman's house in southern England. It includes the rooms within the house itself, the contents of adjacent outbuildings, and items stored off site. The rooms and other spaces were only noted so that items could be found again: as a result, they do not necessarily run in logical order, nor distinguish between which spaces were in the house, and which were outside.

The following table follows the list of rooms and spaces in the order given in the document, and tries to identify their functions and possible locations.

| Room/space/building | Function/location |
|----------------------------|--|
| The Hall | Always situated on the ground floor, this was the main family and dining room, also the space into which guests were invited. This hall had a framed table (i.e. one with the top fixed to the legs, as opposed to a removable trestle table) ¹ , three stools, a bench and two chairs. The hearth was big enough to accommodate a hanging pot (making some cooking possible), and may have had an iron fireback ('plate'). The hall will also have been the place for family prayers, and Bowbrook appears to have been an unusually literate man, for he possessed 'a Bible and certain other books' (studies of inventories from the 1675-1725 period suggest that even then, fewer than one yeoman in five owned any books). ² The hall also seems to have contained a 'coslett', or body armour ('corslet'), suggesting that Bowbrook had served in the local militia, as was required by law for all able-bodied men. On a more peaceful note, the hall also contained a cradle. |

¹ Yaxley 2003, 210-11.

² Weatherill 1996, 168.