

INVENTORIES - 1732

by P. BURT

A study of the inventories of wills for the year from the Gloucester diocesan archives has been rewarding both from the point of view of contents and description of dwellings.

These inventories belong to the less well-off of the population, as those of the gentry and richer tradesmen were sent to London for probate. They range in value from £1,210, left by Charles Bicknell of Yanworth (87) who "died worth in money £930 and in estate worth £280", to that of Philip Wintle (84) a joiner, whose total assets amounted to £1.13s. of which £1.3s. were debts owed by five men.

The manner of execution of the inventories varies considerably. When the contents are given in detail, room by room as happens in the richer households, this is helpful in obtaining a picture of the dwelling. The inventory of John Smith (125) is a good example. He left £811 and the contents of Hall, Parlour, Pantry, Dairy, Over Kitchen, Hall Chamber are listed, together with land worth £480.

Mary Butt (179) had a house in Gloucester comprising Parlour, Kitchen, Brewhouse, Cellar, Pantry, Chamber over Cloister Passage, Chamber over Meeting House Stairs, Chamber over Kitchen, Chamber over Parlour, Dark Chamber and Garret. She also had a house at Arlingham with Hall, Parlour, Pantry, Kitchen, Cellar, New Chamber, Old Parlour, Day House, Old Kitchen Chamber, Cock Loft, Corn Loft, Malt House, Mill House, which contained such refined objects as a large flint decanter, drinking glasses, coffee dishes, tea pot, earthen decanter, chocolate cups. An iron bath in the kitchen is the only one to be mentioned in any inventory.

The bedrooms in John Browning's (128) house at Dursley are described by colour and give a picture of a substantial house commensurate with the £633 he left and his status of Esquire. It consisted of Parlour, Hall, Kitchen, Pantry, Brewing House and Cellar, Parlour Chamber, Blue Chamber, Brown Chamber, Green Chamber, Nursery, Roof, Servants. "Without Doors" is also given in great detail as to cattle, grain, etc. and was valued at £499.

Naturally enough in the poorer houses no detailed description of rooms is given and contents are usually to be found in the kitchen. Sometimes the contents are given in detail, but very often they are lumped together as "all sorts of lumber", or "some old household stuffe", or "goods most rotten".

The following is an inventory of a poor dwelling which gives a good picture of the contents and way of life.

Joseph Mills of Little Sodbury (72)

<u>In the Kitchen</u> - two iron doggs & tongs table board & pot & kettle & other lumber goods	10s.
<u>In the Lower House</u> - one bed chest & other lumber goods	15s.
<u>In the Outhouse</u> - one tub & two barrels, two pails & other lumber goods	4s.
All wearing clothes	10s.
All working tools	2s. 6d.
All wool, worsted & yarn	8s.
At the quarry in the bottom of Hare Lane Wood 16 load of "ruff" stone & 2 loads of paving stone	16s.
	£3 5s. 6d.

Wearing Apparel is nearly always one of the first items to be listed, sometimes together with "money in Purse". For the poor 10s. is an average amount. On the whole the value of the wearing apparel is an indication of the wealth of the deceased. Below are some figures to illustrate:-

		<u>MEN</u>					
<u>Name</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Amount Left</u>			<u>Wearing Apparel</u>		
		£	s	d	£	s	d
(898) Charles Ireland	Clothworker	8	2	6	1	10	0
(124) Robert Smyth	Carrier	19	14	6	1	0	0
(31) Thomas Hall	Boatman	27	0	0	1	10	incl. Money
(122) William Smyth	Reverend	56	0	0	5	0	0
(103) John Wilkins	Wheelwright	176	0	0	38	0	0
(100) John Collings	Carpenter	234	0	0	10	0	0
(105) Richard Perron	Yeoman	321	0	0	10	0	incl. Money
(37) Hercules Hide	Gent. Miller	439	0	0	25	0	0
(28) John Browning	Esquire	683	0	0	100	0	0
(108) Thomas Starte	Yeoman	733	0	0	25	0	0

		<u>WOMEN</u>					
		£	s	d	£	s	d
(32) Widow Roberts	Widow	2	0	0	10	0	
(102) Anne Thorne	"	58	0	0	9	10	incl. Money
104) Mary Francis	"	80	0	0	25	0	0
120) Anna Thurston	Shopkeeper	269	0	0	15	0	0
151) Mary Butt	Widow	371	0	0	20	0	0

FURNITURE

One fact which emerges clearly is the low value put upon furniture as compared with cattle and grain, both growing and stored, and food stuff like cheese.

For instance, 6 joint stools, 4 chairs and 2 tables are valued at 15s. The same value is given for an oak table and drawers, obviously of better quality. Again, 2 joint stools and a dozen chairs are valued at 5s. and the same for a round table and two flag-bottomed chairs in a parlour. A settle is valued at 3s. and two chests at 12s. Even Mary Butt's eight leather chairs in her parlour are only valued at 12s., and the furniture in a yeoman's "little chamber by the dining room", consisting of 1 looking glass, 1 chest, 1 desk, 3 chairs, 1 box, 2 boxes with drawers under, only come to 15s. (16)

Beds of course feature in every inventory. Those in the better-off households are of feather with curtains and valances and average £5. One in the best chamber is put as high as £10 10s. A flock bed averages 10s. and a truckle bed comes as low as 2s. and 1s.

Pewter was used in every home for eating and household utensils. They included dishes, tankards, bottles, potagers, chamber pots, candlesticks. Their value varied and it is difficult to work out as very often they are lumped together and with other items. John Smith's (125) pewter was valued by weight - 120 lbs at 3s., but in most of the households the value ranged from £3 to a few shillings.

Brass is also used but not to the same extent. Again John Smith's is valued by weight - 1 cwt brass at 5s.

Silver is listed only twice. One silver bowl (147) in a yeoman's house valued at £2., and a second Mary Butt, a (151) spinster of Gloucester, had a large silver buckle and a pair of small ones, value 6s. She also had a diamond ring, value £1 10s.

Gold is listed once - 3 gold rings value £1 (17).

Books are listed three times. Once in a clergyman's house (122) value £10; once in a yeoman's house (125), "books of all sorts", value £5; and once in a well off spinster's house (151) value £1 1s.

Looking glasses feature a number of times in the better-off households and are valued at 1s. to 1s. 3d., Mary Butt (151) had four - a large looking glass 10s., a small 1s. 3d., a little 6d., and a swing glass 4s.

Guns are seldom mentioned and then usually with other items. For instance, an old gun, and two spitts 8s. 6d., and again with a looking glass, a glass cage, 3 guns, tables joint stools, spitts - all sorts of lumber, in John Smith's hall - total £5. Two shooting guns are listed alone, value 6s. (147)

Linen is listed in most of the better-off houses, sometimes itemised, sometimes not. For instance 1 pair sheets, 1 doz. napkins with all other linen 12s. Linen £3. A pr. of flaxen sheets 12s. Mary Butt (151) had 1 large flaxen cloth 4s. 6d., 1 doz small napkins 6s., 1 holland sheet 10s., and 1 set of worked curtains £5.

CATTLE

The following is a cross section of cattle and grain prices:-

<u>Sheep</u>	£.	s.	
20 Ewes & Lambs & 15 Sheep	7	0	(8)
16 " 16 " & 15 "	8	9	(14)
48 Sheep	14	8	(36)
60 "	15	0	(125)

Cows

6 Milch Cows & 2 Calves	25	0	(8)
1 Heifer & Calve & 2 Heiffers to calve	8	10	(8)
4 yearling Heiffers	5	0	(9)
4 Heiffers	9	0	(9)
20 Cows	65	0	(17)
9 Kine, 1 Bull, 2 Heiffers, 2 Calves	80	0	(143)
1 year old Heiffer	15		(96)

Horses

2 yearling Colts	2	0	(8)
4 working Horses	20	0	(8)
1 black Horse	1	0	(11)
4 Mares, 1 Colt	16	0	(36)
2 Horses, 5 Mares, 1 Colt	16	0	(125)

Pigs

1 Sow & 6 Sucking pigs	4	16	(9)
2 Sows		5	(11)
1 Sow		10	(30)
2 Sows	1	12	(36)
26 Pigs	29	0	(125)
41 Hogs	22	0	(125)

<u>Grain</u>		£.	s.	
	Wheat in Barn, Rick Hay & wheat in dwelling house	23	18	(14)
7	Acres of wheat)			
10	" " pulse)	43	14	(14)
5	" " barley)			
6	Ricks Hay	50	0	(125)
9	Acres of wheat & beans	69	0	(125)
12	Wey of oats	54	0	(155)
	Hay	1	0	(79)
70	Wind Cocks of St. Fayn Hay	48	0	(90)
31	Acres of Corn	30	0	(90)
	Corn & unthreshed Hay	200	0	(156)
	" threshed & Malt	50	0	(156)

An interesting item is schooling discharged for a Margaret Wingwood. This came to £1. 0s. 6d. per year, and £20 for boarding for 2½ years. Her clothes came to £1 for a year and £1. 10s. for 2 years.

Funeral Expenses Coffins are mentioned twice and each time cost 10s. A shroud is 9s., Reading Prayers 5s., and digging a grave 10s.

TOOLS Unfortunately the calling of the person is not always put on the inventory, but here are a few with the value of the tools used.

		£.	s.	d.	
Wheelwright	Timber & Tools	35	0	0	(103)
	Brass in general	5	0	0	
Boatman	Boat & Tackle	25	10	0	(1)
Baker	Mill & furniture,	4	12	0	
	iron & boards,				
	iron pot & other				
	implements				
	60 Bushels of	11	11	0	
	wheat & meal				
	30 Bushels of	1	0	0	
	bran				
	A mortar &	3	13	3½	
	pestle				
	20 bags		13	4	
Carpenter	Tools	2	0	0	(100)
	Timber	25	0	0	
Fishmonger	Scales & Weights	5	0	0	(116)
Cordwainer	Working Tools				(93)

		£.	s.	d.	
Yeoman	1 Boat with appurtances & fishing net	5	0	0	(147)
Brewer	12 Wey of Malt	84	0	0	(67)
	2 Malt Mills	3	0	0	
	2 Cowles, vats & other brewing vessels	5	0	0	

The following is of special interest because it gives a detailed description of the contents of a shop belonging to Anna Thurston (120).

<u>In the Little Shop</u>	£.	s.	d.
All the earthen ware at		10	

In the Shop

35 pieces of woollen stuffs	40	0	0
42 yards check cotton & lining	2	4	0
23 whole pieces & part pieces of Holland	8	0	0
25 pieces of Dowla	30	0	0
16 pieces of coarse cloth	10	0	0
2 pieces of white stuffing	1	10	0
Stamp Calicoes & Linen	1	10	0
2 pieces of Muslin	16	0	0
Silk Handkerchiefs	5	0	0
Lace	10	0	0
Ribbons, tape, thread & other small things	15	0	0
1 pair brass scales & weights		10	0
Brushes & whisks		10	0
Rings & other plate		12	0
Debts good & bad on books	20	0	0
Part of Mortgage money at Rogett & Magro	20	0	0