

# THE INVENTORY OF A SURREY FARMER, 1637.

BY

GEORGE CLINCH, F. S. A. Scot.

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THE following is a transcript of an Inventory, dated 1637, which gives a good idea of the possessions of John Potter, a farmer living at Thorpe, in Surrey. There are several points in the list, brief as it is, which are well worthy of notice, because they help us to obtain an intimate knowledge of his home and household arrangements.

An Inventory of all and singular the goods chattells and debts of John Potter late while he lived of the parish of Thorpe in the County of Surrey deceased taken and praised the v<sup>th</sup> day of June, Anno Dni. 1637, by Wm. Gormy Richard Freind and John Hudson as followeth vizt.

Inprimis his apparrell and ready money ... x<sup>s</sup>

In the hall.

Item one cup-bord one long table a forme  
one cheare one stoole ... .. xv<sup>s</sup>

In the kitchen.

Item one brasse pott two kettells one fire  
shonell one pare of tongs one pothanger  
one spitt one gridiron ... .. xx<sup>s</sup>

In the chamber.

Item one bedstead ij chests and Curtaines ... xx<sup>s</sup>

In the lofts.

Item two bedsteddles six peices of pewtar  
two pair of sheetes one table cloth (?)... xx<sup>s</sup>

Item other lumber ... .. x<sup>s</sup>

Item xvij acres of corne ... .. xvj<sup>li</sup>

Item the kine two yearling Bullocks two  
Calues ... .. viij<sup>li</sup>

|  |     |     |                 |
|--|-----|-----|-----------------|
| Item five horse with harnes ...                                      | ... | ... | v <sup>li</sup> |
| Item one long cart one dungecart a pair of<br>harrows and a plow ... | ... | ... | xl <sup>s</sup> |
| Item two hoggs three sowes...  | ... | ... | xv <sup>s</sup> |
| Item one flich of Bacon ...  | ... | ... | x <sup>s</sup>  |
| Item one flockbed two conerletts ...                                 | ... | ... | v <sup>s</sup>  |

Su<sup>m</sup>a } xxxvii<sup>li</sup> v<sup>s</sup>.  
 Totalis }

Ext<sup>um</sup> fuit hūmod Inuentā<sup>r</sup>  
 p Annam Potter vid re<sup>l</sup>eam  
 et Execentricem ꝛ<sup>o</sup> decimo die Junii  
 Anno dñi 1637 pro vero et pleno  
 Inuentā<sup>r</sup> ꝛ<sup>o</sup> sub protesta<sup>c</sup>ōe tamen de  
 addo ꝛ<sup>o</sup> si ꝛ<sup>o</sup>.

WMus. Lock Reg<sup>rius</sup>.

This Inventory was of course made for the purpose of probate, and I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. J. Challenor C. Smith, F.S.A., for the following copy of the Will itself, which is preserved at Somerset House.

### Archdeaconry of Surrey, 431 Farmer, 1638.

IN THE NAME OF GOD AMEN.

I, John Potter, of the towne of Thorpe, in the County of Su<sup>r</sup>rey, being in body but of good memory doe make and ordayne this my last Will and Testam<sup>t</sup> in manner and forme followinge. First I bequeath my soule in to the hands of Almighty the Creato<sup>r</sup> thereof And my body to the Earth to be decently buried in certayne hope of a Resurre<sup>c</sup>ōn thereof at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. Item concerninge my Temperall estate I giue and bequeath vnto my daughter Elizabeth Potter forty pounds to be payd vnto her when shee shall attayne vnto the age of twenty and one years. Item I giue and bequeath vnto my louing Wife Anne Potter my dwelling-house together w<sup>th</sup> the barnes and Stable and Orchard belonginge therevnto and all other my moneable goods and the residue of my estate quietly to enioye and possess the same during the terme of her naturall life. And after her decease I will that the same shall be enioyed by my daughter Elizabeth Potter. And if she be at this p<sup>s</sup>ent young w<sup>th</sup> child; then my Will is That the same Child shall enioye the same estate after the death of my daughter Elizabeth. And I Ordayne my Wife Ann Potter to be my sole Execentrix of this my last Will and Testam<sup>t</sup>. And my will is that all my debts be duly and truly payd by her out of this my estate. In Witness of all w<sup>ch</sup> p<sup>t</sup>iculars I y<sup>e</sup> said John Potter haue herevnto sett my hand and seale the twenty and fourth day of Maye in the yeare of our Lord 1637. The marke of John Potter sealed and delin<sup>d</sup>ed in the p<sup>s</sup>ence of John Hudson—the marke of Richard Cave—ye marke of John Helder.

Proved 10th June 1637 by Anne Potter, relict.

These two documents show that the house was small, and consisted of two rooms on the ground floor, namely, a hall and a kitchen. A bedroom, called "the chamber" was over the hall, and lofts were over the kitchen. Stairs led from the hall to the chamber, and the lofts were reached by means of external stairs or even a ladder. The retention of the name "hall" for the living-room is noteworthy. The furniture in it was simple. There was a cupboard, perhaps under the stairs; a long table, or "board;" a chair for the farmer himself; a "stoole" for his wife; and a "forme" for the other members of the household who would all take their meals together at the same table.

In the kitchen, where of course the cooking was done, there was a large open fire-place with fire-back and fire-dogs. The "brasse pott," kettles, fire shovel, tongs, pot-hanger, spit and gridiron, of the Inventory, enable one to form a vivid mental picture of the old-fashion fire-place. It is also probable that the kitchen was furnished with a brick oven for bread-baking, although the fact is naturally not mentioned in the Inventory.

The household consisted of John Potter, the farmer, and Anne Potter, his wife. The Will also mentions a daughter Elizabeth. Two or three of the unmarried farm-hands probably lived in the farmer's house, and the "bed-steaddles" in the loft were for their accommodation. It is noteworthy that, whilst the chamber contained a bedstead and curtains, the lofts contained bed-steaddles, not precisely a diminutive of bed-stead, but an inferior article, unprovided with head- and foot-boards. The lofts, too, had no curtains, because they had no window proper, only a dormer, or even an opening which could be closed by means of a wooden shutter. The daughter Elizabeth doubtless occupied the flock-bed named in the Inventory, which was made up in the kitchen.

From John Potter's Will it appears that his freehold property comprised the dwelling-house and out-buildings consisting of barns, stable for five horses, cow-houses, pig-sties, and probably sheds for farm-carts, tools, fuel,

etc. There was also an orchard belonging to the property. The "corne," mentioned in the Inventory, was doubtless growing in the fields at the time, on land which John Potter rented.

The Inventory and Will furnish an interesting glimpse of the effects and home of a Surrey farmer nearly three hundred years ago. In May, 1637, the old man became so unwell that he made his Will. By a curious accident the word "sick" was omitted from the regular phrase "being sick in body but of good memory," but before June, and when the green corn was waving in the May breezes, John Potter lay on his death-bed in "the chamber." The Will, to which the marks, and not names, of the testator and witnesses were affixed, was proved by Anne Potter, the relict of the farmer, on the 10th June, 1637.