

## THE WHYTONTON HOUSEHOLD 1423, 1452, 1525 - a dearth of furniture and an abundance of furnishings.

Three abstracts from successive wills of the Whytynton family' offer rare glimpses of mediaeval contents at Pauntley Court, in Gloucestershire. It was from this small estate-house, mill, dovecote, church, and home farm, all surviving today, that the legendary 'Dick Whittington' of 20th century pantomime fame, set out on his journey to London around 1450. Richard Whytynton, younger son of Sir Guy and Lady Cecilia Whytynton, did indeed achieve fame and fortune there as a wealthy merchant and generous benefactor.

A later sale of contents at Pauntley Court in February 1811 vividly reflects the change of use to which this once important property had been subjected over the subsequent four centuries of occupation - from genteel, wealthy family home to that of a tenant farmstead. Comparatively few items of furniture were specified in the early wills, with seeming emphasis given to the beds and their rich hangings and cushions. By 1811, the list of furniture had expanded greatly to include sets of ash chairs, many small occasional tables, dining and other large tables, benches, painted furniture, a longcase clock, bureau etc.

### From the will of Robert Whytynton, dated 29th April 1423

After bequests of much silver (basins, cups and covers, salts), a small amount of pewter and latten brass, and two favourite horses 'Cook' and 'Dor' with 'the best saddle and bridle', and the following items of furniture were listed:

*1 Bed PANYLED of cloth of black and green of the largest assize, with three curtains and COSTERS (tapestries); A red bed of worstede, embrowdyd with white stags, and three curtains of the same set.'*

*1 long chest for napery, with two GARDEVYANTEZI'  
2 tables JEMEONS with one pair of trestles;'  
2 tables DORMANTZ (in permanent positions?) with two long forms'  
1 bed of worstede red, embrowdyd, PALYD with black, marked with my arms, with the cornice, tester and 3 curtains'*

There is no mention of seating furniture apart from the two forms. The soft furnishings - no less than another 30 items of embroidered tapestries, cushions, hangings, towels, tablecloths etc. to add to those adorning the three beds mentioned - would appear to constitute a highly regarded section of the will, almost more important than the pieces of furniture.

### From the will of Cecilia Whittington (Whytynton) October 13 1452

Among wide ranging items of silver, brass and latten brass, bed hangings and linens, cushions, tapestries, towels, we see the appearance of much domestic ironwork - hearth furniture and cooking implements - with the only additional furniture being listed as follows:

*'One pair of TRUSSYNG COFFRES'  
'One pair of lesser TRUSSYNG COFFRES'  
'A red chest'  
'a pair of COPHARDIS' (cupboards)  
'A pair of do  
'A TOURNE with LE HEHELL' (spinning wheel)*

### From the will of John Whittington 1525

The only additional items of furniture are:

*'A feather bed and the hangings of my rede chamber and also the hangings of the hall and parlour'  
'2 GREAT STANDYNG COFFRES, one in the rede chamber, the other in the great chamber'*

Transcribed by F S Hockaday.  
Hockaday Abstracts 310, Gloucester Public Library

### **ABSTRACT OF FURNITURE FROM SALE OF CONTENTS OF PAUNTLEY COURT FEBRUARY 1811 (prices given where quoted)**

#### KITCHEN

*Long table and two benches 15s 6d  
An excellent clock in oak case  
8 Ash chairs  
Oval oak dining table*

#### PARLOUR

*Square oak dining table  
Round oak pillar and claw do.  
Painted oak bureau  
Square oak table  
Small painted table  
Four frame chairs, hair seats  
Two painted elbow chairs, seg (sedge) bottoms*

## DAIRY

*Dough trough and cover 7s 0d*

## CHAMBERS

*Stump bedstead 8s 6d*  
*Feather bed and bolster*  
*Stump bedstead 8s 6d*  
*Feather bed and bolster*  
*Stump bedstead 6s 0d*  
*Feather bed and bolster*  
*Tester bedstead 5s 6d*

## PASSAGE

*One large deal box on stand*  
*One large deal box on stand*  
*Square pear tree dining table*

A few questions remain. Could the 'long table and benches' mentioned in the above sale of contents be one of the 'Two tables Dormantz with two long forms' listed in the 1423 will? We can only speculate - and what of the 'Two great standyng Coffres' which stood 'in the rede chamber and the great chamber'? 'Standyng' is a curious descriptive term - I wonder whether the word itself suffered in translation or transcription and could have been 'ystenyd', meaning stained or painted. This would be a more appropriate term for a large oak chest of that period.

'Two Gardevyantezi' - a box or chest for containing food (viands) perhaps?

'Two Tables Jemeons with one pair of trestles' - this entry is puzzling. What type of fifteenth century table is this? Perhaps members with expertise on mediaeval inventories, when language and word-forms and word spellings were changing yearly, may be able to offer a solution.

My grateful thanks are due to Mrs Christine Skelding for her invitation to Pauntley Court and free access to records held.

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**Fig. 5 Pauntley Court.**