MATHS

Inventory of Joan Patrick, almswoman, 1597



Joan Patrick, with her husband Thomas and daughter Ann, lived in Henley Street in Stratford-upon-Avon, in the same street and at the same time as William Shakespeare and his family. When he was a young man Thomas had been a tailor, and might well have made clothes for his neighbours, including the Shakespeares.

By 1582, when William was eighteen years old and about to marry Anne Hathaway, Thomas found that he was no longer able to work to earn enough money to keep his wife and daughter, and so the whole family moved into the almshouses.

Almshouses were the Tudor equivalent of sheltered accommodation for people who were too old or infirm to earn a living or to look after themselves. The Stratford almshouses were next door to the schoolroom, and as a schoolboy Shakespeare would have been very aware of these poor and needy people. The Corporation (Town Council) was responsible for the almshouses and their 24 residents, providing them with money for their food and clothes as well as a place to live.

Thomas lived there until his death in August 1590. Ann and Joan stayed there until they too died, just weeks apart, seven years later.

It was the custom when someone died for two or three neighbours or friends to go into the house a few days after the burial to make a list of all their possessions, and to value them. After Joan died, John Gibbs and William Wilson, both members of the Corporation (Town Council) did this, and it is this list, or inventory, which tells us so much about the domestic items people had in their homes. (Please note, this is not the same as a will: a will lists the possessions that one person wishes to leave to others after his/her death.)

We do not have the inventory either for William's parents' house or for his own house (although we do have his will) but Joan Patrick's inventory gives us a very good idea of the sorts of everyday domestic items and possessions that William's friends and neighbours used in their houses.

Please refer to the Glossary and to the information on Roman numerals to help you understand the goods and values recorded in Joan's inventory.

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MATHS

An inventorye of the goodes of Joane Patrick late of Stratford uppon Avon in the county of War', almeswoman, taken the ixth daye of December the fortyeth yere of the raigne of our soverayne lady Elyzabeth Queen etc., by M^{r} John Gybbes & M^{r} William Wilson.

		£	s	d
Inprimis	her apparell prised at		xij^{s}	
Item	three old beddes, one boulster, 3 little pillowes ...		xiij^{s}	iiij^{d}
Item	3 blanketes, 3 hillinges mad of listes		x^{s}	
Item	4 payer of sheetes, 3 table napkines & 4 little toweles		xvj^{s}	
Item	one brasse pott, 4 kettles, a skellet, a chaffing dishe, 2 candlestickes		x^{s}	
Item	2 platters, 2 counterfet disshes, one saucer, a pewter pott, one salt, 2 spones		ij^{s}	
Item	one old coubbord, 3 old coffers, a spinning wheele, 2 boules, a treen platter, 2 trenchers, a cheir, 2 stoles & quisshines		vj^{s}	viij^{d}
Item	a pere of bedstedes, 2 shilves			xviij^{d}
Item	a peire of bellowes, a gridyorne, potthookes & a hocke, a fyer shovell			vj^{d}
	Summa	iij^{li}	xij^{s}	

You will see that the value of the items is recorded in three columns, not two as we do today. That is because in Elizabethan times we used a different counting system for money, not the decimal one we use now. To find out more about this, look at the sheet '**Exploring Elizabethan Money**'.
The symbols **li, s** and **d** refer to the Latin words librum (shortened to li) for our word **pound**, sesterce (shortened to s) for our word **shilling**, and denarius (shortened to d) for our word **penny**. They are written here after the amounts of money being recorded. To find out the value of Joan's goods you will have to add up the pence column first, then the shillings column, and finally the pounds column.
If the total in the pence column is more than 12 you will need to divide your answer by 12 (to make shillings) and carry that number to the shillings column. If the total in the shillings column is more than 20 you will need to divide your answer by 20 (to make pounds) and carry that number to the pounds column.

Can you work out the total value of the items in the inventory?

Did you get the same total as John Gibbs and William Wilson?

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