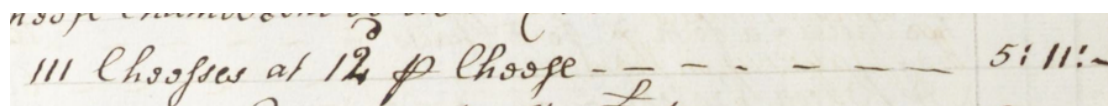


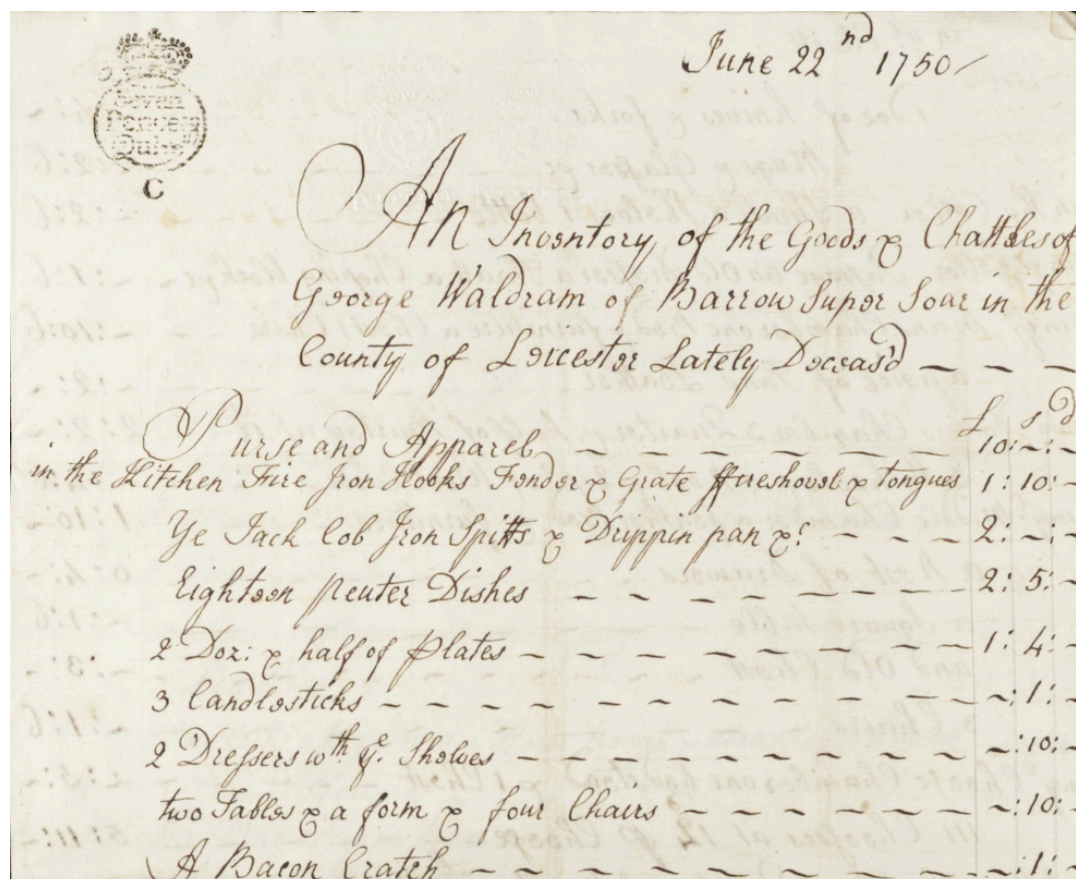
Trading Stories, Working Lives

Graham Barker walks around the farmstead of his ancestors, George and Anne Waldram of Barrow upon Soar in 1750

"And including this top shelf we have 109, 110... that's 111 cheeses in all, by my reckoning," says John Collishaw as he finishes his counting. He's standing in the cheese room at Waldram's farm in Barrow upon Soar. It's slightly dank in here, with a pungent aroma filling the air. Resting on a wooden chest in the corner, Joseph Haddon, his fellow appraiser, carefully adds to his list the number of cheeses and ascribes them a value of 14d each. After a discussion, they nudge that down to 12d apiece, which he carefully over-writes in heavier ink strokes before totalling them – with perfect arithmetic – at £5 11s.



It's late morning on Friday 22nd June 1750. Collishaw and Haddon are about half way through the task of preparing 'An Inventory of the Goods and Chattles of George Waldram of Barrow Super Soar in the County of Leicester Lately Deceased.' So far they've worked their way through eleven rooms – starting in the kitchen, and moving through the brewhouse and dairy, and on to the pantry, hall, hall parlour, cellar, cellar passage, man's chamber, doctor's chamber and middle chamber, before arriving at the cheese chamber. Already the inventory runs to a page and a half, and there's plenty more still to record.



June 22nd 1750

*AN Inventory of the Goods & Chattles of
George Waldram of Barrow Super Soar in the
County of Leicester Lately Deceased*

	<i>£ s d</i>
<i>Purse and Apparel</i>	<i>10:~:~</i>
<i>in the Kitchen Five Iron Hooks Fender & Grate Fireshovel & tongs</i>	<i>1: 10:~</i>
<i>Ye Jack Cob Iron Spitts & Dippin pan &c</i>	<i>2:~:~</i>
<i>Eighteen pewter Dishes</i>	<i>2: 5:~</i>
<i>2 Doz: & half of plates</i>	<i>1: 4:~</i>
<i>3 Candlesticks</i>	<i>~: 1:~</i>
<i>2 Dressers wth g. Shelves</i>	<i>~: 10:~</i>
<i>two Tables & a form & four Chairs</i>	<i>~: 10:~</i>
<i>A Bacon Cratch</i>	<i>~: 1:~</i>

Just before noon, Anne Waldram pokes her head around the door of the cheese room to tell them lunch is almost ready, if they would care to join her. Having buried her husband in the village churchyard only two weeks earlier, she's keeping herself busy and trying to maintain the daily routine around the farm. Her children are a great help; George, with assistance from his teenage brother William, is responsible for seeing to the animals and crops, and her four as-yet-unmarried daughters make themselves useful with working in the dairy, spinning wool, and duties about the house.

After a simple lunch – bacon for the guests, a homemade loaf, and some of that reddish-orange crumbly cheese – the appraisers continue with their work. By dusk, they've finalised their three-page appraisal, peppered with uncertain spellings and the erratic use of capital letters, which runs to 87 items with an overall value of £381 3s 2d. And so it is – more than 250 years after the inventory was taken – that I'm able to get a sense of my ancestors, George Waldram (1693-1750), a yeoman farmer of Barrow upon Soar, and his wife Anne (1694-1771). I can almost walk from room to room with them, glimpsing the furniture, household chattels, livestock and crops they had managed to accumulate in 32 years of married life together. It's a family historian's delight.

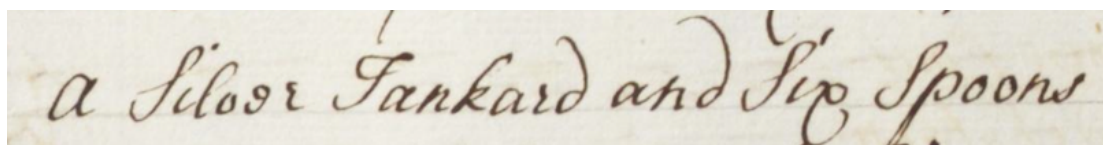
As David Hey writes in 'Journeys in Family History':

"From the second quarter of the sixteenth century until well into the eighteenth century... church courts insisted that the executors of a will should appoint three or four local men to make a 'true and perfect inventory' of the personal estate of the deceased, in order that disputes over wills might be settled more easily... The appraisers, as the valuers were usually known, were friends and neighbours of the deceased. They did their best to make an accurate list... Probate inventories do not provide a complete picture of an individual's wealth, however. The appraisers were asked to record personal estate, but not the value of buildings, land or other real estate."

Leicestershire wills and inventories – along with an extensive collection of parish registers and poll books – have recently been uploaded at Find My Past (www.findmypast.co.uk). I dig in and quickly unearth George Waldram's documents. His will makes an interesting enough read – there are properties in Loughton and Humberstone to hand on, £100 bequests to each of his children, an annual allowance of £20 for his widow Anne, and the residue of his estate is left to eldest son, George – but it's the room-by-room inventory that adds the real colour.

Back at the farmhouse in Barrow upon Soar, some items are straightforward for Collishaw and Haddon to describe and value – 3 kitchen candlesticks at 1s, or a looking glass in the hall parlour at 15s – whereas other items are best grouped together and their value estimated. What's clear is that George, Anne and their family live comfortably. There are tables and chairs aplenty about the house, and upstairs three 'feather beds with furniture' and two other beds, enough for some of the children to avoid sharing. And they eat well, sitting

around two tables in the kitchen – the heart of the farmhouse – and using ‘Eighteen pewter Dishes’, ‘2 Doz and half of Plates’, ‘1 doz of knives and forks’, ‘A Silver Tankard and Six Spoons’, ‘Mugs and Glasses’, ‘6 Tables Cloths, 2 doz of Napkins and all other Linnen’.



Anne’s collection of cooking equipment has grown over the years – a few pieces passed down through the family, other pieces bought – such that it now extends to a ‘Jack, Cob Iron Spitts and Drippin pan’, ‘5 Brass Pans, a Copper pott and a Stew Pan, frying Pan and sauce Pan’, ‘an Oven and bakeing tins’ and ‘a Brass Morter and Iron Pestil’. The kitchen is her domain, and coming from yeoman farming stock herself – the Hentons of Ragdale and Hoby – she knows the benefits of running an orderly household.

Everywhere, there are signs of the family being productive, working their farm produce into finished goods. In the dairy, cows’ milk, stored in ‘3 pails and a churn’, is converted into butter and cheese using ‘a pr of butter schales’ and ‘a Cheese press, ... boles and Earthen Ware’. Step into the brewhouse and we find ‘a Mash Tub and four other tubs’, ‘8 Barrels, a tundish’, and ‘2 Coppers with Grates’, whilst ‘Five doz of Glass bottles’ are stored in the pantry until the fermented beer is ready for bottling. And the Waldram daughters are all competent spinners, using ‘2 pr of Wool Cards’, ‘3 Wheels and a keel’ and ‘a Woollen Wheel’ to comb and spin sheep’s wool into yarn. It’s a self-sufficient household.

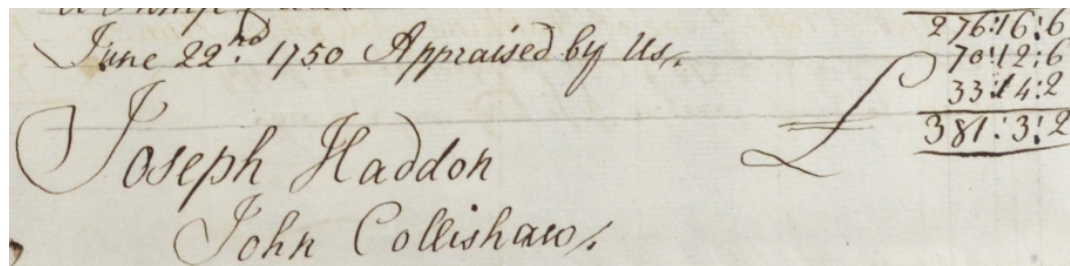
Outside, the farm is mixed arable and livestock, with the crops and animals accounting for the bulk of George’s inventory value. They grow wheat, barley and ‘paies’ on farmland that extends to more than 37 acres. The fields are flourishing with crops at the moment – it’s summertime, after all – and stored in the ‘Corn Chamber’, there’s a further ‘8 Quarter of Malt at £1 [per quarter]’, ‘10 Quarter of Wheat at 3s’, and ‘1 Quarter of Payes at 2/6’.

12 Acre & half of paies	18:15
7 acre of Wheat at 50 ^s	17:10
6 Acre of Barley at 50 ^s	15
12 Acre and 3/4 of Clatts	12

Harvesting is back-breaking work, but to help with ploughing and carting the Waldrams maintain a stable full of horses – eight mares, a gelding and two yearling filleys. From an enclosure on the other side of the farmyard, occasional squeals arise from ten ‘Store pigs’ – unweaned piglets – that are due for the chop in a few months’ time. And seventeen cows, bulls and calves

graze in the surrounding pastures. Curiously, for this is sheep farming territory, there's no sign of sheep on the inventory but the bucolic scene continues with a 'Thatcht Dovecoat' standing near to the 'Pump and Led Setern' in the orchard.

And so, after a day of sorting and counting, scribing and valuing, the appraisers complete their inventory. They sign with a flourish, pleased with their work.



The appraisers have been gentle and courteous but Anne Waldram has found the process rather intrusive and is relieved when it's over. A week or so later, her brother – George Henton of Ragdale Hall – and her eldest son George take the will and inventory to swear their oath as executors, and probate is granted.

That evening, as Anne works in the kitchen, memories of her husband come to mind. His life is worth more than the value of a few pans, a field of peas, and a sty of store pigs, she thinks to herself; she pictures George sitting in his favourite chair, chatting to their daughters and relishing a beer from his silver tankard – the same tankard that now sits, silently, by the 'six spoons' in the best chamber.



Auntie Mabel: inspiring family histories

To read Graham's previous 'Trading Stories, Working Lives' articles – and for ideas on writing your own family history – visit www.auntiemabel.org or follow him on Twitter [@auntiemabel.org](https://twitter.com/auntiemabel.org)