

John Fardon, Deddington clockmaker

Many of us are aware of the local clockmaking family of Fardon, which flourished in the 18th century, and a few Fardon clocks survive in the neighbourhood. The discovery of a will and inventory for John Fardon (d. 1744) is therefore likely to be of interest to members. The will is too long for full transcription here, so I have made extracts. The inventory is in full.

Will, 8 April 1743

I, John Fardon, of Dadington [*sic*] in the county of Oxford, clockmaker, being weak and infirm of body but of a sound mind, memory and understanding, blessed be God for the same, do make, publish and ordain this my last will and testament in manner following, viz. first I give to my loving wife Mary all that my messuage [*ie* house] or tenement wherein I now dwell, situate in Dadington aforesaid in a street there called the Market Street and after her decease to my son John. Also all those my three messuages in a certain lane there called Hoofe Lane [*ie* Horsefair] which I bought of Job Cole and others, and my closes called Deep Slade, to Mary my wife to hold until John shall attain the age of one and twenty years. If John should die without lawful issue before the age of one and twenty years then I bequeath the aforesaid property to my wife for term of life. The remaining part of my personal estate I will that my wife shall have at her own disposal if she remain a widow, but if she shall marry again I then give and bequeath to my wife only the rents for the term of her life. After her decease all my property is to go to my loving brothers Richard and Jonathan Fardon, both of Northnewton [North Newington], my loving sister Mary Fardon of Dadington, widow, wife of my late brother Thomas, my two loving brothers John Smith of Temple Mill in the county of Oxford and John Sutton of Roke near Wallingford, to be equally divided between them, share and share alike. I give to my loving brother-in-law Samuel Cox of Thame 20s., and to my two brothers-in-law John Cox of Milton in the parish of Adderbury and Thomas Cox of Bloxham 50s apiece. If my son John should die without lawful

issue before the age of one and twenty years, my brothers-in-law John and Thomas Cox shall receive £20 apiece. I give to my loving brother-in-law George Pottinger of the west side of Adderbury £10. And to my brother-in-law Samuel Cox the further sum of £10. And to my sister-in-law Mary Pottinger of the west side of Adderbury, £10. And to William Marshall[?] of Millcomb, tailor, £10. And to Thomas Gilkes of Sibford Gower, with whom I served an apprenticeship, £5. And to John Adkins of the west side of Adderbury, £5. To Hannah, daughter of John Taylor of Milton, £5. To be paid to them nine months after the decease of my son John. The remainder of my estate I give to my wife Mary.

Witnesses: Richard Adkins, Charles Spencer and Richard Davis. The will was proved 5 June 1744.

Inventory

Inventory of the goods etc. of John Fardon, clockmaker, taken 30 May 1744 by Edward Robinson and Joseph King.

First, his wearing apparel and money in his purse, £10 2s. 7d.

Also in the Hall, pewter and brass, a table, four chairs, five irons and some other odd things, £4 15s. 0d.

In the Parlour, a table, two joined stools, eight chairs, a clock and two cases, two weather glasses, £3 1s. 6d.

In the wash house, some odd lumber, 5s.

In the Cellar, four barrels, four tubs, six forms and lumber, £2. 2s. 0d.

In the Chamber over the hall, a bedstead, bed and furniture, hanging press, two coffers, and two chairs, £2 15s. 0d.

In the chamber above the parlour, a bedstead, flock bed and a chest, trunk, case of drawers, little Table, three chairs, £3 11s. 0d.

In the garrets, a little bedstead, flock bed, and some lumber, £1 6s. 0d. Linen, £2 5s. 0d.

Working tools, £3 15s. 0d.

Money due to the deceased on securities, £70.

Total = £103 13s.

Fardon's will is fairly typical of the period. It is useful in tracing family connexions, which were widespread across the county. There is an interesting reference to his time as an apprentice and to his fellow apprentice Thomas Gilkes. Clockmaking was a trade in which religious nonconformists were prominent, and both the Fardon and the Gilkes families were Dissenters. You may feel that John is unduly pessimistic about the survival chances of his son. The son may, of course, have been sickly, but bear in mind that even the healthy young were at risk from opportunistic infections and epidemics. The death of the young was something that parents experienced much more than we can imagine.

The will tells us what street Fardon lived in, but not which house. We learn about his other properties in Deddington, both houses and land. He may have farmed on a small scale, as craftsmen and tradesmen often did. The overall impression is of modestly comfortable circumstances.

The inventory (which is of movable goods and debts) is disappointing in that the appraisors gloss over the item we would most like to have details for, viz. his 'working tools'. Note that almost seven tenths of the value of his estate is in credit. The money bequests in his will may never have been paid out if the debts could not be recovered. At this date most tradesmen were similarly precariously placed. The house furnishings again suggest modest comfort rather than luxury. It is likely that Fardon owned some books. If so, we would like to know what, but the appraisors ignored any books they saw, or included them with 'lumber'. Those who saw the recent television programme 'The Shock of the Old' will have seen how the role of the hall has changed over the centuries, from being the main living room to a reduced role as an entrance lobby. In Fardon's house the hall is still a living room, but the parlour has made its appearance. The house appears to be of three storeys, with a cellar and two rooms on each floor at ground level and above.