



Cobbler John Wasson and Life in 1765 Dailly

The 1765 personal property inventory of the deceased John Wasson (no relation), a shoemaker in New Dailly, gives a bit of insight into what life was like in Dailly when our ancestors were living there.

I found the testament and inventory for John Wasson, a cobbler in New Dailly, who died in 1765. He left behind his wife Jean McGill and his personal items.

I have not found a relationship between this John Wasson and our Watson ancestors in Dailly – he was one of a handful of Watsons/Wassons/Wasons I found in Dailly Parish who shared the Watson-rooted name simply because it was a relatively common name.

Inventories of the deceased's personal items were rather thorough back in those days. After all, most people did not have all that many possessions, which made the possessions they had all the more valuable. And often they did not have wills, as was the case with this John Wasson. Typically, any estate debts had to be paid and the remainder belonged to the surviving spouse and children.

The content of the inventory of John Wasson's personal items was probably not all that unusual for that time. He owned some clothes, a limited amount of furniture and household items, and he had some items related to his profession, in his case a cobbler. As a village-dwelling cobbler, he wouldn't have owned much in the way of livestock or farm equipment.

Looking through the items listed in his estate inventory can give us some insight into what life was like for some of the people of Dailly Parish in the mid-1700s. Usually, there were a few items that I couldn't read, and a few others for which I couldn't find the meaning. But most of the items in his estate inventory are listed below.

Clothing

- An old coat
- 4 body coats
- 4 vests
- A bonnet
- 3 pairs of britches
- 6 old shirts
- 6 pairs of hose or old stockings, much worn

Body coats were generally dressier coats. A man might have worn one to church or as more formal work attire. As John was a cobbler, I was particularly surprised that shoes and boots were not mentioned. Neither were undergarments. Perhaps the inventory was not complete, or such items weren't counted. Or perhaps he was buried in the ones he owned.

Furniture

- Some old beds
- 5 chairs and a little table
- 2 old chests
- A shelf

I don't know what the size of John and Jean's family was, but beds could also provide additional seating or accommodate travelers.

Bedding

- 2 ½ old blankets
- 8 ½ blankets
- 2 bed coverings

Most houses were not well-heated in those days, so having plenty of blankets would have been especially useful in winter.

Kitchen Items

- 3 pots
- A griddle
- A bake board
- Some old timber (wooden) plates
- Some old spoons
- A churn
- A churn staff
- 2 old water sloups

A bake board was used to mix and knead bread dough, a staple of the time. I believe that the sloups were close to what we'd call ladles.

Beer and Ale Making and Storage Supplies

- Some old twenty-pint casks
- 2 ten-pint casks
- A pint sloup
- A white iron jug
- 1 dozen bottles
- A kettle for brewing ale
- A cropt of corn and beer

There is a widely believed but wrong view that in the olden days people drank beer or ale instead of water because it was safer. One of the first steps in making beer or ale is to boil the water, which kills waterborne diseases. So, beer and ale were indeed safer, and people knew back then that water could carry disease. But they didn't know how, so they generally relied on the smell of the water to determine whether it was safe rather than boiling it.

What beer and ale provided were cheap, easy to obtain calories. A person working in the field could easily burn 3000 calories per day. "Small beer" was a low-alcohol beer typically made from the third runnings of corn mash used to brew ales. And it had about 200 calories per pint. On average, an adult drank as much as a gallon of beer or ale a day, so it was a good source of the day's calories.

Such alcohol was a common part of the culture back then. People during those times believed that alcohol was good for you, doctors often prescribed it, and it was routinely served at business and social events, even in courtrooms and at funerals.

Work-related Supplies

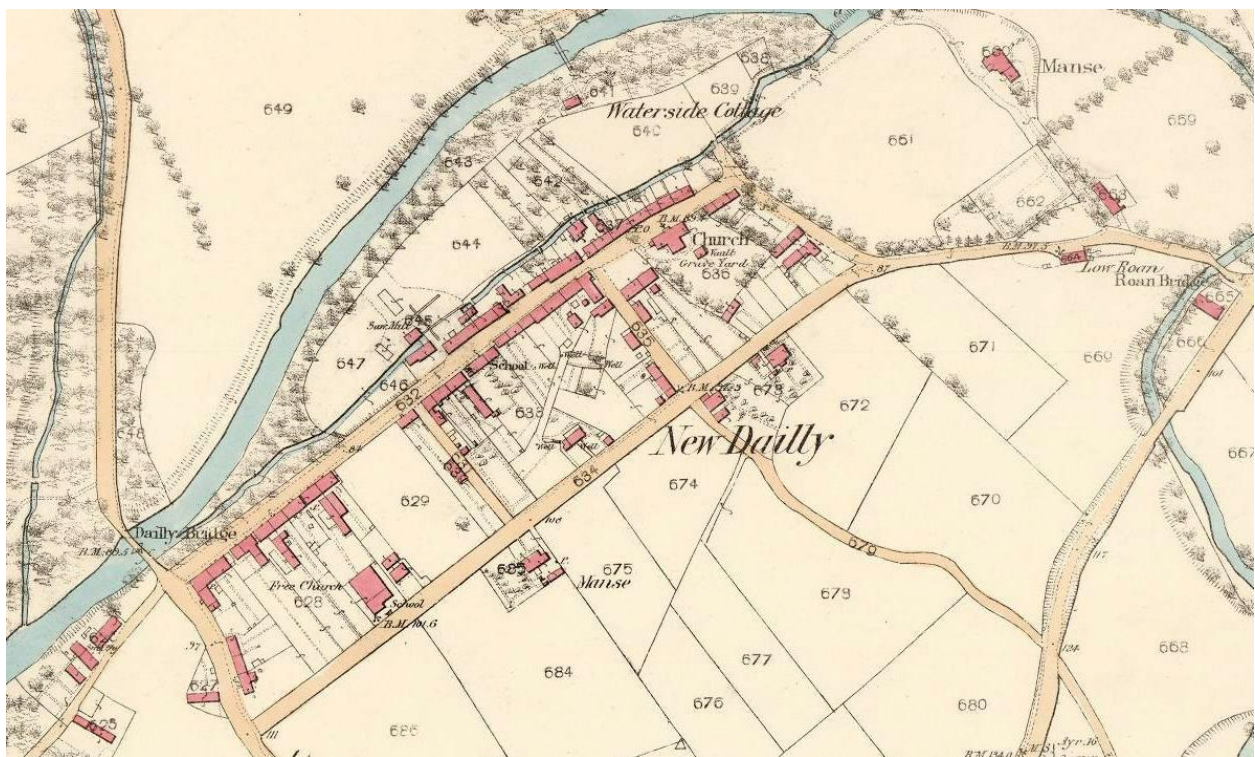
- A bakie
- A manger
- Tann trough
- Nolt stakes
- A chest
- An old barrel
- 12 hides
- 1 calf skin
- A parcel of old salts(?) and working tools
- One knife and shimmer

I'm guessing that these are all related to making and repairing shoes as they were grouped together in the inventory. A cobbler would need a supply of leather, and he would need to have the means to tan, cut, work with and stitch together leather, which was generally much tougher to work with than fabrics were.

Miscellaneous Items

- Timber through the house
- Two old wheeled ploughs and plough braith
- A parcel of books
- A little hay in the yard
- A chimney crook and tongs

The timber through the house was probably firewood stored inside. The ploughs would be useful in the back gardens – properties in New Dailly were laid out with deep backyards, or small allocations of land nearby.



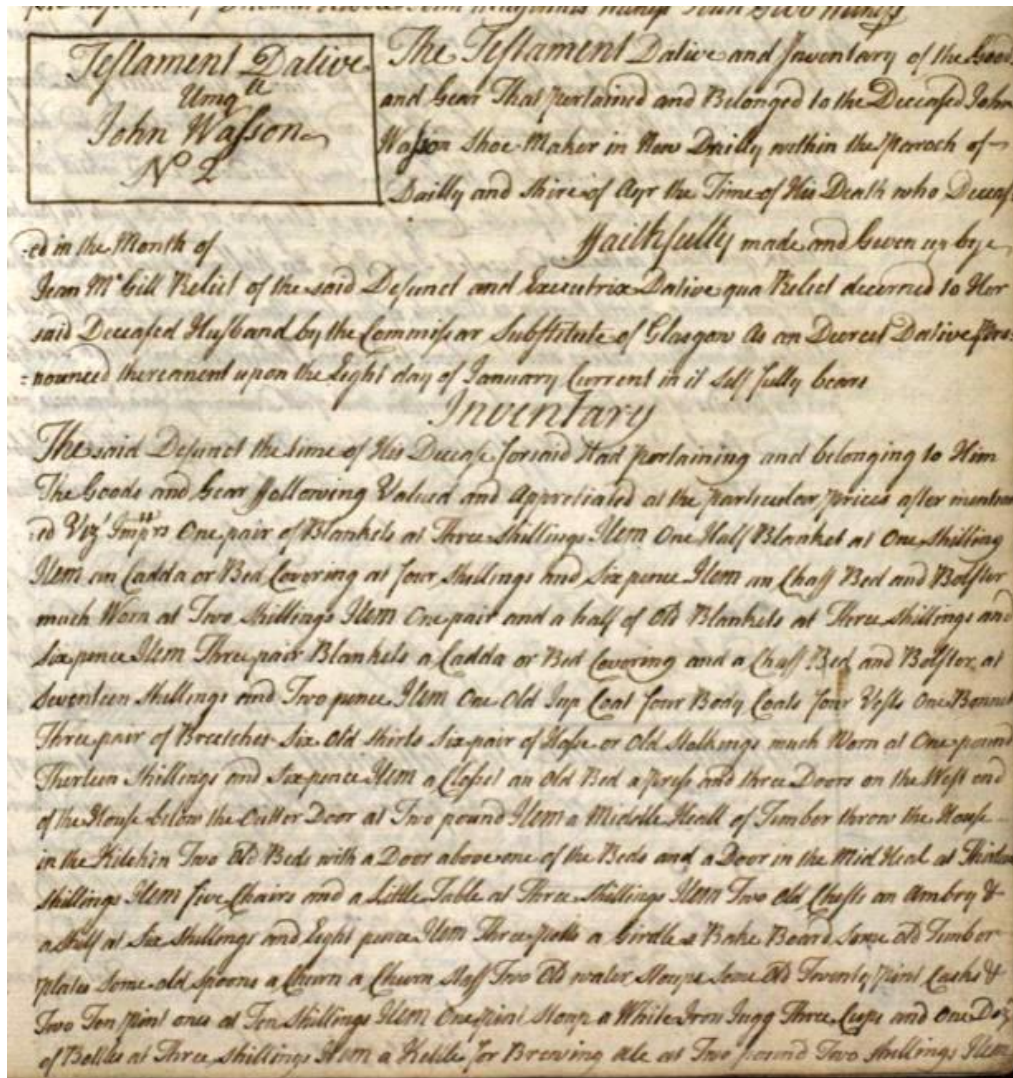
This 1856 map of New Dailly shows that most of the houses along Main Street had deep back yards, and that the surrounding land had been divided into numerous small acreages.

Money

- 27 pounds, 5 shillings and 10 pence sterling

John Wasson clearly was not a wealthy man, although 27 pounds sterling went a lot farther in those days than it would today. Those 27 pounds were worth about 5500 of today's pounds, or about \$7600.

John Wasson's Estate Inventory



John Wasson's estate inventory, first page

Item a Brake and Manger and Tonn Trough and Neth Stakes at fifteen Shillings Item Two old whee
 wheels plough and plough brith and old Wheel and one Old Chest at Ten Shillings Item Two Cars and
 Sticks at five pounds Item a parcel of Peas at fifteen Shillings Item a Crop of Corn and Beer at five pounds
 Ten Shillings Item a Little Key in the Yard at Two Shillings and Six pence Item Trenches one half
 and a Coloc-shon at Six pence Six Shillings Item a parcel of Old Saffs and working Tools at one
 Shilling Item one flaying Knife and Shear at One Shilling Item a Chimney Crock and Tong at
 Three Shillings All which Sums of Money before written are Sterling Money and belond to the sum of
 Twenty seven pound five Shillings and Ten pence Sterling *Summa Inventarij Palet*

Confirmation granted heron in Common form By William Wier Commissary Depute and
 Alex^r Swenson Clerk of the Commissariat of Glasgow All Glasgow the Eleventh day of January 1763
 and Sixty five years *Bond of Cautionry*

All Glasgow the Eleventh day of January 1763 and Sixty five years In presence of William
 Wier Commissary depute of Glasgow Compaired Robert Chapman Writer in Glasgow as record for the
 after defunct Hugh Jackson and gave in the Bond of Cautionry under written referring the same
 might be insert and Registrat in the Commissary Court Books of Glasgow to the effect mentioned in
 the Clasp of Registration therein contained which desire the said Commissary Depute James Ross
 abill and ordained the same to be done whereof the Tenor follows I Hugh Jackson in Glasgow
 do hereby Enact Bond and Oblige Me my Heir Executors and Successors as Cautioner: and further
 Acted in the Commissary Court Books of Glasgow for Jean M^{rs} Gill Relief of the Deceased John Wason
 Shoe-Maker in Dailly That the Goods Loan Bells and Effects which pertained and belanged and were
 additid and Owing to the said John Wason the Time of His Decease And which are to be given up
 in Inventory and Confirmed before the Commissary of Glasgow or His Depute by the said Jean M^{rs} Gill
 as Exec^{tr} qua Relief to the said Deceased John Wason Her Husband shall be made forth coming to
 all persons having Intrest therein as Records of the Law And I the said Jean M^{rs} Gill hereby bind
 Oblige Me my Heir Executors and Successors to free and Relieve the said Hugh Jackson my Cautioner
 and his Heirs of their Cautionry above written And of all Damage and Expenses may be thereby
 Sustained Consenting to the Registratong herof in the Books of Council and Session Commis
 ary Court Books of Glasgow or others Competent That Letters of Warning and others needfull
 may flap heron in a Charge of Six days only And We constitute
 Our Procurator In Writings entrued wth us before we
 This presents written by Thomas Morton writer in Lyr at Lyr the Eleventh day of December
 1762 and Sixty five years Before us James Winespas Andrew Taylor writer in Lyr and the said
 Thomas Morton the Subscribers Hugh Jackson And Taylor Winespas Thomas Morton

John Wasson's estate inventory, second page

Prepared by Mark David Wasson

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