

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

These 379 wills and testaments afford a newly-available corpus of material for the study of various aspects of late-fifteenth-century life. If, for example, you are interested in any of the following, you will find new information in the Logge wills:

- the guilds or fraternities set up in many parishes to provide financial and moral support for their members, both male and female
- the inter-relations between the members of London livery companies. See the legacies these men left their companies, each other, and whom they chose to be their executors and witnesses
- the balance between religious and secular advantage: who spent heavily on masses and gifts to the religious to ensure their souls' salvation – and who preferred to leave the bulk of their wealth to their families?
- which charitable causes received the highest and the most donations: was it the mendicant friars, leper hospitals, prisons or the poor in general?
- how were women treated in these wills by their husbands or fathers?
- the pursuit of immortality: how did testators ensure that they were remembered after their deaths?
- to what extent did testators try to control their children beyond the grave?
- the role of private finance in public works; who gave how much, and what strings were attached?

We have wills of some of the highest – or most interesting – people of that time, some of whom made their mark in the history of the period:

- *Edmund Albon, Doctor of Medicine, physician to King Edward IV, who left a legacy to Gonville College, Cambridge, to fund the studies of two bible clerks*
- *Richard Beauchamp, Bishop of Salisbury, a good man who did his best to deserve his privileged life*
- *Sir John Blount, Lord Mountjoy, who in his will tells his sons not 'to desire to be great about princes for it is dangerous' – ancestor, according to one website, of Barack Obama*
- *William Catesby, Esquire, hanged by Henry VII after Bosworth; he says he never offended Henry of his own free will, 'for God I take to my juge I have ever loved him'*
- *Master William Goldwyn, Bachelor of Physic, who features in the Stonor Letters, left £20 and all his books of 'fysyk' to All Souls College, Oxford*
- *Thomas Hampden of Hampden, esquire, perhaps killed at Bosworth. His son Edmund (who fought for Lancaster at Tewkesbury and was at Bosworth on Henry Tudor's side) had obviously recently made his peace with his father*
- *William, Lord Hastings, executed by Richard III on Friday 13 June 1483, but whose heirs were not excluded from their inheritance*
- *William Ive, Chancellor of Salisbury Cathedral, who left his sins to 'the deceiving devil, to pile up his damnation further', and a silver spoon to each of his kinsmen*
- *Edward Lupton, Doctor of Divinity, who bequeathed his extensive library to several different colleges and monasteries*
- *Anne [Neville], Duchess of Buckingham, grandmother of the Henry, Duke of Buckingham, who helped Richard III gain the throne and then rebelled against him*

- *John Pake, draper of London, father-in-law of the chronicler Robert Fabian, who is his executor*
- *John Ravening, salter of London, in whose house a miracle may have taken place by the sainted intervention of the late King Henry VI*
- *Sir Richard Roos, Lancastrian poet, who wrote the fifteenth-century *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* and whose will clearly shows his delight in beautiful things*
- *Dr Ralph Shaw, preacher of the sermon 'Bastard slips shall take no deep root' 22 June 1483, part of the plan by which Richard III set out his claim to the crown*
- *Thomas Spring, cloth merchant of Lavenham, who left large sums of money towards building the belfry of his parish church and to be distributed among his work force*
- *Sir Humphrey Starky, appointed Chief Baron of the Exchequer on 15 June 1483, knighted by Richard III, and continued his office under Henry VII*
- *William Waynefleete, Bishop of Winchester, patron of learning, founder of Magdalen College, Oxford, loyal to Henry VI, who withdrew from politics under the Yorkists*

We also have the wills of some people a long way further down the social scale, whose bequests are made in shillings and pence rather than pounds, and in livestock and trade goods rather than luxurious artefacts. These people are not the poorest of the poor, however. Because their wills were proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, they must have owned land in at least two dioceses, even if it was just a field in each.

- *Thomas Hywode, burgess of Wells, Somerset, perhaps a woad merchant. The silver spoons he leaves to his children are to be kept in the town's communal chest until they come of age or marry, and his widow is to pay the town 12d. a year for this facility*
- *John Mudde, yeoman of Southwark, Surrey. Tenant of an inn called *The Barge at the Stewessyde* in Southwark, i.e. beside the red-light district*
- *Stephen Crudde, husbandman of Ickleton, Cambridgeshire. Bequeathes horses, carts, sheep and malt – and herrings to the poor – and has bought shops in Newport.*
- *John Hikkys, whose bequests are in shillings and pence. He had a messuage in Cranbrook, a shop in Benenden, and eight 'peces of land' in Royden, and envisaged the need to sell land to pay his debts*
- *Thomas Larder, of Martock, Somerset. He left his sheep in Dorset to one son, and his sheep at 'Westkyngton' in Salisbury diocese to the other.*
- *Richard Hunt left 20s. for the day of his burial, 26s.8d. for his month's mind, 33s.4d. for 500 masses to be said for him within a month after his death, his bed to his daughter, and a pair of shoes each to 12 poor men and women.*
- *John Bulman. Was he a builder? 'I will that the newe stable in Stevenhich ... bildid for my lord Latymer remayn to my lord so that he geve to my wiff or my son £40'*
- *Thomas Leemster, perpetual vicar of Mayfield, Sussex. His bequests in cash add up to £8 18s.4d., of which £6 13s.4d. is to be spent on a priest to say masses for his soul for one year*
- *Thomas Sewy, barker, burgess of Gloucester, left 1s. each to four altars in his parish church of St Nicholas, 6s. to its high altar, and 1s.8d. to Worcester cathedral – his only cash bequests. The residue of his goods he left to his wife*
- *John Cowley, yeoman of Quainton, Buckinghamshire, left cows for the upkeep of lights in his parish church, and cash for repairs there. Each of his children got £20*
- *John Gravener, husbandman of East Bergholt, Suffolk, left his house to his wife, and 'the outer room where she now dwells' to his daughter for her life*

In this website you will find samples of the information it is possible to gather from the Logge wills on the following topics:

- *Medieval churches and chapels*
- *Medieval church repair and embellishing*
- *Medieval clothes*
- *Medieval funerals*
- *Medieval genealogy*
- *Medieval gold and silver plate*
- *Medieval houses*
- *Medieval jewellery*
- *Medieval migration*
- *Medieval prices*

It is difficult to recover the authentic voices of ordinary people in the past. Very few families left a corpus of letters, but in wills it is often possible to hear those authentic voices. Here are some examples from the Logge wills:

John Don, senior, mercer of London:

I wille and biqueth unto the mariages of pour maidenens of gode name and fame ... that shalbe dwellyng or abedyng in the town of Shirbourn ... 40s. to the couple that so shall marie ... to be bistowed upon catell or houshold moost to the pleasure and profite of thaim that so shalbe married ... for I deme that if redy money were unto thaim delyvered shuld be occupied in mete and drynke for their weddyng dynere and so occupied soone forgotten and litle or no profite to thaim ...

William Swayne, esquire of Salisbury:

I geve and bequeth unto Gyles my wiff if she pleas me duryng my liff as a goode woman ought to pleas her husbond my hede place with my ponde therto belonging sett in the Newstrete in the city of Sarum aforseid ... And if the seid Giles pleas me not duryng my liff as is abovesaid than I woll that the seid Giles be excluded of all such gyfte in my seid hede place ...

Sir John Yong, late Mayor of London and late Mayor of the Calais Staple:

Item whereas heretofore of gode zeles and tender faderhode toward my iij daughters, that is to saie my lady Parre, my daughter Molyneuxe and my daughter Brixie, I was in wille and purpose to have given unto thaim certaigne plate aftir my decesse, so it is that I have been late in a grete and grevous trouble for a variaunce bitwene my Lord Ferrers and me which Lorde Ferrers is nowe my veray gode lorde. In which trouble I have spent largely of my goodes for my defense and peas to be had which hath caused me of the saide plate as of myn own goodes to helpe my silf wherfore I can nott perfourme my first wille and purpose ... so that nowe I woll that noon of my said daughters shalhave anny parte of the said plate ne nothing therfor, trusting that they full wele woll consider my grete age with my grete expenses and litle gettinges manny a day and my grete trouble aforesaide ...

William Pratte, mercer of London:

... the reversion therof to Richard my son and to the heirs of his body lafully begoten so that such heiris of his body lafully begoten be nott begoten upon the body of one Gress Hemper ...

John Coket of Ampton, Suffolk:

I yeve and bequeth to my seid wiff, over all such maner of money and other goodes and catalles which by her wisdom and labour hath approvid and gaderid to her owen use in her entent and by my sofraunce, whereof I will in noo wise that no parcell betake from her by my executours, 100 mark [£66 13s.4d.] to be paid as it may growe of my dettes. ...

John Mapilton, parson of Halstow, Kent:

Item to Philip my child a boke of Onglish and a chist, and that myn executours aray hym honestly and geve hym money in his purse and send hym to his fader. ...

John Rogere, esquire of Freefolk, Hampshire:

I willl that everich of my manyall servantes have of my goodes beside his gown his half yere wages to pray for my soule and also that he may the better provide hym silf a new maister. ...

Sir John Blount, Lord Mountjoy:

I wull that John Bunteyn and his wife Margarete be entreatid with all and recompensid of and for such wronges as I have done unto theym ...

Thomas Hampden, esquire of Great Hampden, Buckinghamshire:

Also I charge the said John my sonne on my blessing ... thou ne let nor trobell my will ... for I myght have geven from the moch more than I have. If thou observe my will and breke it not I geve the my blessing and if thou breke it I geve the my curse ... And that it wull please you to be lovyng unto my wife and to my sonne Edmunde which hath be come moost lowly and humbly child, wherefor I besech John geve hym his blessing ...

John Wode:

Also I leave a noble to the friars preacher, on condition that the prior does not dishonour my brother for the offence, as the prior says, that he with many others took thieves out of the prior's church against their will. ...

John Grene, esquire:

And as for my doughters mariage I putt it all in my wifes discretion for my speciall trust is in heir of all creatures ...

Hugh Denne of Attlebridge, Norfolk:

Also I will that my firstborn son John Denne, chaplain, should say mass in the church at Attilbrigge for my soul and the souls of my parents and benefactors for a term of two years immediately following my death and that he should have as his stipend from my executors nine marks 6s.8d. [£6 6s.8d.] a year ... if John shall be willing to behave with prudence, sobriety and good sense by the guidance of my executors ...

William Catesby, esquire:

... my dere and welbelovid wiff to whom I have ever be trewe of my body, putting my sole trust in heir ...