

## PRICES IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

**Some careful testators specified the value of the objects they bequeathed, especially silver and gold plate and jewellery.**

Richard Turnaunt, esquire, whose daughter and heir Thomasina was married to Sir John Risley, had decided to leave her £80 worth of plate. He listed (in Latin):

- my covered silver cup gilded and fashioned with a floral design and beads on *le knop* of the cover weighing 43 ounces troy
- two silver and parcel gilt basins with the sign or arms of leopard heads in the base weighing together 109 ounces
- two lavers called *ewers* in English of different designs weighing together 44 ounces
- two silver and parcel gilt potell pottes together weighing 162 ounces
- a silver gilt covered standing cup *chasid* with *plomptes* weighing 49½ ounces
- 6 silver gilt spoons of diverse designs weighing 7¾ ounces
- a little covered gold salt cellar with the figure of a stag on the cover weighing 2 and half a quarter ounces
- and a silk girdle with a double buckle ornamented with gold of old design weighing 5½ ounces.

If those pieces did not amount to £80-worth in the eyes of independent assessors, she was to receive further items to make up the value to £80.

**Many testators left money for the purchase of valuable items to bedeck churches:**

### (a) vestments:

Lostwithiel in Cornwall received a bequest of £16 to ‘bye an hoole vestiment, that is to witt a cope, a chesible, deacon and subdeacon’ ... A canon of ‘the free chapel royal of St Stephen within the Palace of Westminster’ left £20 to St Stephens’s to buy a set of vestments of white silk for use ‘on the feast days of virgins and commemorations of the blessed Mary’ ... A leading member of the Grocers’ Company of London left the church of St Katherine Colchurch £80 ‘for to mak a sute of vestimentes of cloth of gold of tissue for to worship there almyghty God therwithall’.

Less splendid would have been the vestment left to the almshouse chapel in Oakham – worth 26s.8d ... And John Hardheede, M.A., clerk of Cambridge, left his ancestral church at Rattlesden, Norfolk, a full range of vestments, presumably already in his possession and use: ‘a white vestement and a white cope according to the same vestement, the price of both togedre £6 13s.4d, [and] for every Sondag another vestement the price 26s.8d. [and] another vestement for every day, the price 8s. or 10s.’

One will shows that a Franciscan friar’s habit cost about the same as this last vestment: ‘I will that I have an abite of the mooste pouerest frere ther of thorder of saint Fraunces aboute my body at the tyme of my passing out of this world and so to be buried in the same abite, for the which saide abite so to be had I geve and biqueth to the said pouer frere 8s.4d. for a newe abite.

### (b) ornaments:

A legacy of £40 was left to buy ‘a peir of honest sensours of silvere’ for Fyncham parish church in Norfolk ... To the church of St Andrew the Apostle at Shoebury £5 to buy a chalice, gilded on the outside and inside ... 40s. to the buying of an alabaster table for the high altar of the church at Stanway ... ‘I will that my executors provide ... a silver cross or

two silver-gilt chalices or a book or vestment or some other ornament to the price of 20 marks [£13 6s.8d.]' ... 'that myne executours ordeigne a paire of kandilstykkkes of silvere ... and delivere ... thaim unto the maistre and brethern of saint Thomas of Akys in London ... *summa* £10' ...

### **Books may be costly objects:**

About a dozen testators left money to buy missals, antiphoners or breviaries to be kept in churches. They envisage sums ranging from six to twenty marks (£4 to £13 6s.8d.).

Unfortunately the testators who left actual books do not say what they were worth. How much would have been paid for 'my grete booke called Saint Grall bounde in boordes covered with red leder and plated with plates of laton', or 'my litle booke of praiers closed in plates of silvere and circled with an image of the crucifyxe on the oon side and an image of our ladie on the othere side'?

### **Prices in the workaday world:**

I geve to the said Johanne vj horses, two shoed cartes with that, that she deliver or do to be deliveryd unto eche of my sonnes whenne they come to the age of 20 yeres 3 horses, the price of every hors 20s., and to eche of them a shoed cart, price of a carte 20s. ... To John Hille, *wever*, a length of woollen cloth to the value of 40s. ... I leave one cow worth 10s. to find one candle to burn on Sundays and principal feast days before the image of St George so that from the profits of that cow one candle a year should be provided forever ... I acknowledge that I owe John Kenaules 13 hundredweight of tin, worth 24s. a hundredweight ... I will therbe wared of the west syde of the water from the towne end to Cardon stone in mending of the wey 30s., and in mending of the wey at Forthend 10s. ... I biqueth 12 gownes to 12 pouere men housholders ... and redy to be maade of russett clothe, price of every yerd 20d. ...