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THE BEDFORDSHIRE
HISTORICAL RECORD
SOCIETY
1997
Frontispiece: Brass of William Cobbe, smith, of Sharnbrook, showing also his wife Alice and their son Thomas. William died in 1522, and his will is no. 3 in this volume.

Thomas Fisher
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# ILLUSTRATIONS

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The lithographs of monumental brasses are taken from Thomas Fisher’s *Monumental Remains and Antiquities in the County of Bedford*, published in 1828.
INTRODUCTION

The first surviving wills in the probate records of the Court of the Archdeacon of Bedford, dating from 1480, are to be found in the first registers of wills and testaments proved by the Archdeacon or his commissary. These were deposited with other local probate material in the Bedfordshire County Record Office in 1950. For later years original wills survive as well as the registered copies. Original wills begin in 1536, though few survive for that year, but by 1560 probably most original wills copied into the registers have survived, and can be found stored in bundles arranged under the date of probate.

Wills are an invaluable source for local, family and social history, and abstracts of the 396 wills in the first Bedford archdeaconry probate register, ABP/R 1, which date between 1480 and 1526, were published by this Society in 1957 and 1966 as volumes 37 and 45. Only those people with at least a little property made a will, and so such local probate records relate to the more prosperous husbandmen, yeomen and tradesmen and their widows, and also to the parish clergy and some minor gentry. Such a person would use the parish priest or another literate person to write down in proper form what he or she wanted done with their property, and after death those named as executors took the document to the Archdeacon’s Court for probate, and then, armed with the probate copy, they could execute the testator’s wishes.

People of higher rank or with extensive estates used the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. Mrs Margaret McGregor edited a volume of P.C.C. wills between 1383 and 1548 of people connected with Bedfordshire which was published by this Society in 1979 as volume 58. She notes that two wills proved in the P.C.C. were also registered, though not proved, in the Bedford archdeaconry court, one being no. 9 in this volume, John Hardynge of Harlington, which was no. 94 in volume 48. A full account of all probate courts and probate records covering Bedfordshire can be found in the introduction by Christopher Pickford to the Index of Bedfordshire Probate Records 1484–1858.

In the present volume we are continuing the publication of wills proved in the court of the Archdeacon of Bedford, and include all the wills in the second probate register, ABP/R 2, and some from the third register, ABP/R 3. ABP/R 2 contains 219 wills, most of which were proved between 1510 and 1530, though there is one of 1484 and one of 1533. The contents of this register are not in date order. It would seem that loose sheets or foldings were used by the Archdeacon’s clerks for
copying wills and testaments and these were then allowed to pile up on the shelves for a number of years, until a decision was made to have them bound into a volume. ABP/R 1, containing 396 wills between 1480 and 1526, seems to have been put together in a similar somewhat haphazard fashion. However the third register, ABP/R 3, appears to have been in volume form before its use for registration, and in this register the wills are entered more or less in the date order of probate. From ABP/R 3 I have included material from folios 1 to 36, which are wills proved from early 1529 to the end of 1530. Thus we might hope that abstracts of nearly all surviving Bedfordshire probates up to the end of 1530 are now available in print. Several wills were printed in extenso in vols. 37 and 45, and so none are included in this volume. Year dates from 1 January to 24 March are given in double form.

This volume owes much to two very able voluntary helpers at the Bedfordshire County Record Office, John S. Thompson and his wife, Isobel. Isobel was already a regular helper in 1957, when I joined the staff of the Record office, and on John’s retirement from his work at the RAE aeronautical research establishment at Thurleigh he began to come regularly, and took to archives with great enthusiasm. He preferred to exercise his problem-solving talents on medieval sources, especially those with palaeographic obscurities, and a great deal of his work was published by this Society in 1990 in volume 69. However, he also produced an abstract of ABP/R 2, and Isobel worked on ABP/R 3, and it is because of the preliminary work of these two capable and valued helpers that I have been able to produce this volume in a very limited time.

The methods used in volumes 37 and 45 have been used here. The testator’s name comes first, then the parish or place of burial, date of will and then date of probate, and after that the volume (ABP/R 2 or 3) and folio number. Nearly all the wills began with the usual “In the name of God Amen”, followed by the bequest of the testator’s soul to Almighty God, Our Lady, and to all the saints in heaven, and this has been omitted from the abstract, unless there is a variation from the formula, as in no. 54. After that there comes the place of burial, and if this is to be inside the body of the church it would appear that the fee was usually 6s. 8d. Invariably a sum was left to the high altar for any tithes that might inadvertently have been left unpaid by the deceased. Then came the mortuary or principal, a required donation to the parish priest, generally the best of the testator’s goods. After these came the spiritual or charitable bequests made for the health of the testator’s soul. Nearly all testators left money to the church bells and to the torches for lighting the church. All included a donation, often 2d., to the cathedral at Lincoln, and money was left for a mass to be said for the soul of the testator, or for a number of masses, perhaps a trental (thirty masses). The money sometimes went to a secular priest, but very popular bene-
ficiaries were the various orders of friars. Occasionally a prosperous testator would leave funds for a priest to sing for a year, or for several years. Many people left a small endowment, perhaps a rent charge on a building, to pay for an obit or anniversary mass, usually on the day of the testator’s death. There were often gifts to the church building or furnishings, and to the many lights before images of saints in the church. There are some charitable gifts to the poor, and very often gifts to bridges and for the repair of highways, which were then considered charitable causes.

A man had control over what was to be done with his goods and chattels, and these he could dispose of in his testament. Before the Statute of Wills, 1540, in theory a man had no such jurisdiction over his land, and so the will was a separate document which stated what he wished to be done with land. However, a surprising number of testators had already transferred their land to feoffees to uses, and in the will the testator would instruct his feoffees what they should do. Some probates still kept the distinction between will and testament, as in nos. 9 and 28, but on the whole this was disregarded, and one document covered both areas.

Provision was usually made for widows and children, if the testator’s means permitted. Cattle and sheep are frequently mentioned, and sometimes horses, and measures of barley or malt were useful legacies. In the wills of widows we find details of clothing, and of household utensils. At the end come the names of the executors, and then of the witnesses who were present when the deceased declared that the document contained what he wished to be done. Sometimes the probate shows that one or all of the executors decided that the task was going to be too difficult, and so he or they refused to act. If all refused, then letters of administration would be granted to a relative to deal with the estate.

Such a mass of material will always have points of interest for a local historian. For instance, we find the Skevington family already well established in Turvey, where they remained as leading inhabitants for several centuries, and where the name survives to this day. Potton, as a centre for education, first appeared in volume 58, where we find that Sir John Gostwick, knight, born c. 1480–90, had been educated at Potton, and in a will made in 1545 Robert Burgoyne mentioned George Gifforde “Whome I finde at scoole at Potton”. In this volume William Hale of Marston (no. 244) who made his will in 1529, required his executors to keep his grandson Thomas Hayle to school at Potton for two years. On another subject we have the will of John Slade of Blunham, made in 1528, with the bequest to the church of Little Barford of “all my play bookes and garmentes” and all the properties and other things belonging to the same (no. 218). This is the only evidence so far for plays being performed in Bedfordshire parish churches in this century.
Unfortunately the will comes at the end of the volume ABP/R 2, and some parts have been rubbed away. There are two bequests towards the making of a Palm Cross in the churchyard at Dunton, a cross usually sited in the churchyard on the north side of the church and at the east end.\(^4\) We have more evidence of people with Welsh names living in the Chicksands area of the county. In volume 37 there was Owen Vap Jenkyn, otherwise called Humfrey Gough of Chicksands, 1515 (p. 70) and in this volume we have Agnes Johnson of Chicksands in 1521 (no. 115); and David and Alice Jones of Haynes, 1514 and 1528 (nos. 133 and 154). George Joye, the Protestant reformer of Peterhouse, Cambridge, is mentioned in the will of his father John in 1521 (no. 198). In the will of the widow Margaret Parcell of Riseley, made in 1521 (no. 210), we seem to have one of the last members of the ancient Pertesoil family of Riseley, who after three hundred years were selling their manor and estates to the St. John family, and in this will we have some vivid descriptions of women's clothing more decorative than utilitarian, and also of jewellery other than the usual pair of beads.

With one exception all the wills in this volume are for people living in or very near to Bedfordshire, and the exception is no. 16, the will of Robert Whitstone of Watton in Yorkshire, made in 1519 and proved in 1520. No one has suggested an explanation for this stray.

With the present renewed interest in the course of the Reformation in England, it is possible that probates are one of the few sources for discovering the attitudes of ordinary people, and for this reason if for no other, it would be good if the Society could continue the publication of wills to cover those made until at least the early years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

*Patricia L. Bell*

**NOTES**

2. *B.H.R.S.* vol.58. Bedfordshire Wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury,  
3. *The Index Library* Index of Bedfordshire Probate Records 1484–1858, *compiled by*  
   A. F. Cirket, *edited by* Joan Stuart and Peggy Wells, *with an introduction by*  
1.  
pr. 15 Nov. 1522. (ABP/R 2: 1)  
— for their labours 10s.; residue of goods between children by minds of three indifferent honest men —  
Witnesses Matthew Colman, Thomas Childerhowse, sir Robert Bisshopp.

2.  
Johan Wynne now abiding in Steventon. 28 Aug., pr. 8 Nov. 1522. (2: 2)  
Burial in the churchyard of Our Lady in Steventon before the image of St. Kateryn; her mortuary after the custom of the town; to the cathedral church of Lincoln 2d.; to the high altar 12d.; to the rood loft a sheep; for a priest to say mass for the testator’s soul each year 4d.; to the Grey Friars of Bedford to be prayed for each year 4d., these payments to be made by son George Wyffe during his lifetime. Son George Wiffe to distribute yearly on Good Friday 8d. to poor people.  
Residue to son.  
Executors son George Wyffe and son-in-law Henry Parker. Witnesses John Walgrave, William Tawer, John Bak—.

3.  
Burial in church of St. Peter in Scharnbroke for which 6s. 8d. to the church; his mortuary as customary; to the mother church of Lincoln 6d.; to high altar of the parish church for tithes forgotten 2s.; to the bells 2s.; to the sepulchre light 2s.; to the torches 2s.; to Our Lady’s light 12d.; to the rood light 12d.; to the church of Bletsow 3s. and to the high altar of same 4d.; to Felmersham church 3s. and to the high altar 4d.; to Knottyng church 6s. 8d. and to the high altar 4d.; to Soldroppe church 3s. and to the high altar 4d.; to Wodell (Odell) church 3s. and to the high altar 4d.; to Wemington church 3s. 4d.; he wishes a priest to sing for one year in the parish church of Schernebroke for the souls of himself, his wife, his father and mother; to the friars of Bedford for a trental 10s..  
To Clenyogges bridge 20d.; to Harwold bridge 2 bushels of barley; to Stafford bridge 2 bushels of barley.  
If the parish of Schernebroke will begin again the brotherhood of the
Trinity then it is to have 6s. 8d.

To his wife Alys all lands, tenements, meadows and pastures in the parishes of Scharnebroke, Bletsowe and Felmersham for life, reversion to son William and his heirs and assigns for ever.

After the deaths of testator and his wife, his daughters Elizabeth Maryett and Jone Carter are to have 40s. each. Daughter Annes Meryell to have £3 paid her within 3 years, that is 20s. a year. To every grandchild 3 sheep, and to every godchild one sheep. To servant Nicholas Kyng a sheep; to servant Thomas Clarke a one year old bullock; to Margaret Varnam the daughter of Thomas Cobbe a two year old heifer.

Residue to be divided between wife Alys and son William.

Exors. son sir Richard Cobbe vicar of Felmersham, son William Cobbe and Robert Carter, who are to have 6s. 8d. each. Witn. master Hardwyke, John Negus, Nicholas Kyng.

_Probate granted to one executor, reserving power of the other._

4.
William Butteler of Litlyngton. 4 Oct., pr. 31 Oct. 1522.  (2: 4d)

Burial in churchyard of parish church of All Saints Litlyngton; to the high altar for tithes and offerings negligently forgotten 8d.; to mother church of Lincoln 12d.; to bells 8d.; to the mending of the steeple there 6s. 8d..

To his son Henry the house he dwells in with appurtenances and horses and cart and plough, 3 kine (cows), 3 calves, 2 steers. To wife Agnes a cow and a calf. To son Robert the house the testator lives in with appurtenances.

Residue to wife and to son Henry to dispose of for testator’s and all Christian souls.

Exors. wife and son Henry; supervisor master Thomas Dekons. Witn. sir Richard— (?Forthe), master James Button, Thomas Dekens, John Kaynow, John Davy.

5.
Thomas Caryngton of Dunton. 14 Oct. 1522, pr. 10 Jan. 1522/3.  (2: 5)

Burial in churchyard of Our Blessed Lady of Dunton; to high altar 12d.; for his principal as is customary; to the sepulchre light 12d.; to the rood light 12d.; to the bells 12d.; to the torches 12d.; to mother church of Lincoln 4d.; son Gerard to pay son Richard x — within a year after testator’s death; to the ringers at the time of his dirige 6d.; son Gerard or whoever holds his property to keep every year testator and wife Margaret’s names in the bede-roll with dirige and mass once a year, and each year for ever to give 12d. in bread to the poor where there is most need.

His son Richard to have “a certeyn frewe yearly” if there is sufficient
at discretion of son Gerard; son Gerard to have all lands and tenements in town and fields of Dunton and Millow with their appurtenances, to hold to him and his heirs male, in default to son Richard and heirs male, in default to son William Caryngton and heirs male, in default to the next heir male.

Wife Margaret to have all lands given to son Gerard during her lifetime, and she may fell a tree or two for the fire if she so needs. After the death of his mother son Gerard to make no waste in felling of the wood, but only to have wood to repair his houses, or loppings for his fire. If he does make such waste then the property to revert to son Richard.

Residue to wife Margaret.

Exors. wife Margaret, sons Gerard and Richard, each to have 6s. 8d. Witn. William White priest, Thomas Caryngton, Peter White.

6.

Henry Feyry of Shefforth. 3 Jan., pr. 24 Jan 1522/3. (2: 6)

Burial in churuchyard of All Hallows in Camelon (Campton); for his principal as is customary; to high altar of Camelon for tithes and oblations forgotten 12d.; to mother church of Lincoln 2d.; to the maintenance of the bells in Camelon 12d.; for two new torches there 10s.; for two new torches for chapel of St. Michael in Shefforth 10s.; to Dane (Dom) John Rackett subprior of Chyxsand (Chicksands) to sing a trental for testator 10s.; to the friars of Bedford 10s.; to cousin [?]Gromon a friar of Dunstaple for a trental 10s.; for a vestment to maintain the service of Almighty God in the chapel of Shefforth 33s. 4d.; for a convenient priest to sing for testator in Camelon church for half a year 4 marks.

Wife Beterys to have tenement in Shefford where testator lives for her life, reversion to his daughter Johan and the heirs of her body, in default to the use and maintenance of the chapel of St. Michael in Shefforth, and his feoffees are instructed to hold his properties to these uses.

To daughter Johan 2 chaffing dishes, a latten bason, a pewter pot, a sallet, a little posnet, a pair of cobbards, 4 pewter dishes, 3 brass pots and a posnet, a great brass pan and another brass pan with a band of iron, a "Tynkkers" kettle, 4 candlesticks, a featherbed, a mattress, a salting trough, a table and a form, a plain coffer, a bedstead, 2 coverlets one yellow the other with flowers, a chair, a painted cloth, a pair of sheets "flexen and harden", 2 table cloths, 2 towels and an aumbry. The residue of his household stuff to his wife Beterys.

7.
Robert Laurence, Nether Stondon, Shitlyngton (Shillington), singleman. 6 Feb., pr. 14 Feb. 1522/3. (2: 7)

Body for burial in the churchyard of All Hallows in Shitlyngton; for his mortuary as customary; to mother church of Lincoln 2d.; to high altar for tithes forgotten 6d.; to the brotherhood of Jesus a quarter of barley; to the bells 4d.; to the torches 4d.; to the sepulchre light 2d.; to the light before Our Lady of Grace a bushel of barley; to the light before All Hallows a bushel of barley; to the light before Our Lady of Pity a bushel of barley; to the upkeep of the lights in the church 12d.; for a tental of masses to be said in Shitlyngton church for testator and friends 10s.; testator's portion of the goods bequeathed to him by his father to be used to find a priest to pray for him and his friends as long as the money lasts; a cow is to be let out along with his father's two beasts to keep his yeartide at the same time as his father's yeartide for ever.

To godson William Lille a sheep; to brother Richard Laurence the bullock that was testator's by bequest of his father; to brother Richard Laurence his black coat; to Alys Sheppard a young sheep; to John Sheppard junior a weaning bullock; to the 4 children of William Laurence of Peggisden (Pegsdon) a cow bullock of 2 years of age.

Residue to brother William Laurence of Peggisden, who is to be the executor and John Sheppard of Peggisden to be supervisor and he to have 3s. 4d. for his work. Witn. Thomas Childerhows and Robert Bisshopp parish priest of same town.

8.
William Lecher of Careleton. 1 Feb., pr. 21 Feb. 1522/3 (2: 7d)

Body to be buried in churchyard of St. Mary of Careleton; to mother church of Lincoln 2d.; to high altar for tithes forgotten 4d.; to sepulchre light 4d.; to the bells 4d.; for his mortuary as the custom of the town.

To his son Thomas 3 acres in the fields of Felmersham and to Thomas' daughter an aumbry and a bushel of barley. To his daughter Elizabeth half of testator's goods and to her daughter a bushel of barley. The residue to his wife Alys for life.


9.
John Hardyng of Harlyngaun Woodend. made 12 Apr. 1523, but no note of probate. (2: 8)

Testament. His body to be buried in the church of Our Blessed Lady in Harlyngaun in the middle space of the said church; his mortuary as is
customary; to the high altar for tithes forgotten 3s. 4d.; to said church for his burial place 6s. 8d.; to mother church of Lincoln 4d.; to church of St. Laurence in Stepingley 3s. 4d.; to church of Mary Mawdlen in Westonyng 3s. 4d.; to the upkeep of Harlyngdon bells 3s. 4d.; to the torches there 3s. 4d.. His executors are to sell the house once of William Lincoln with all lands and use the money from the sale to hire for 9 marks yearly an honest priest to say masses and suffrages in church of Our Blessed Lady in Harlyngdon for soul of testator for as long as the money lasts. 9 marks sterling are to be paid to the said priest to say masses and suffrages immediately after testator’s death for one year, which sum to come from his moveable goods. To every godchild 4d.. To mend the highway in Hoorde lane 20d.. To Alys Hardyng daughter of testator’s son William Hardyng £3 6s. 8d..

Residue to wife Agnes Hardyng to be used for health of testator’s soul.


Will To his wife Agnes Hardyng for life all testator’s lands and tenements in Harlyngdon, Westonyng, Todyngton and Tynggriff, both free and copyhold. On death of wife to William Hardyng the son of William Hardyng deceased two tenements, the one called Hardynges Place the other Acles in Harlyngton, with all their lands, when he comes of age. Should Agnes die before William comes of age, the executors are to have the guiding of him “to sett hym to scole gyvyng hym his fyndyng competently to his statue duryng the said nonage” and until he comes of age the executors are to give yearly accounts of their expenditure to testator’s feoffees on St. Katerin’s day in Harlyngton church, and executors to have 6s. 8d. each annually for their work, any surplus income to be used by feoffees in work for testator’s soul.

Should William Hardyng die without heirs of his body, then William Akirk the youngest to have testator’s place in Woodend for ever, and John Davy, testator’s godson, to have the tenement at the Church End late Robert Acle. Should both William Akirk and John Davy die without heirs, then all to go to testator’s right heirs held of chief lord by the service due. The reversion /sic/ of all the estate to his wife Agnes Hardyng to give or sell.

10. Matthew Arnold of Shitlyngton. 14 Apr., pr. 9 May 1523. (2: 9d)

Burial in churchyard of All Hallows in Shitlyngton; to mother church of Lincoln 4d.; for his mortuary as custom of the town; to high altar for tithes forgotten 3s. 4d.; to every light in the church a pennyworth of
candles; to the brotherhood of Jesus 3s. 4d.; to the torches 20d.; to the sepulchre light 12d.; to every godchild 4d.; to a priest to say mass for half a year for testator and friends in Shitlyngton church £3; four of his milk beasts are to be let out annually at 20d. a head to keep his yeartide for ever with mass and dirige for testator, his wife and friends.

Testator’s son Richard to have the beasts in his keeping for his lifetime, then they are to be let by the churchwardens to an honest man in the parish who must enter into a bond to ensure that the number is kept up.

To his wife Margery the place which is called Brikles House with the close and pightles for her life, his son Richard doing all repairs at his own expense. Wife to have also 3 loads of wood from Richard, also 3 sown acres of land each year one sown with wheat, one with barley, and one with peas or beans all the work to be done by son Richard. She is to have also 3 of his best milch beasts and 6 couple of ewes and lambs, also 2 heifers and all household stuff not bequeathed elsewhere.

To his son Richard a brass pot that goes on the fire every day; all tables and forms in testator’s said place with testator’s own mattress, the copyhold called Shitlyngton Bere with all appurtenances and testator’s part of the farm in the parish of Mepersall; to Elizabeth Arnold daughter of testator’s son Richard ten quarters of malt; to son Richard all cattle and corn not already bequeathed; to Alice Hokkill daughter of Roger Hukkill of Henlow a bullock 2 years old; to Laurence Inge (?Juge) a quarter of malt; to Margery Yong a quarter of malt.

If wife Margery be in great need or poverty then the place called Brikles Hows to be sold and wife to have half the money.

Residue to executors who are wife Margery and son Richard. Witn. Robert Bisshopp priest, John Walen, Richard Huges, Thomas Thelderhoff.

11.

Robert Cooper of Temmysford. 28 Mar. 1522/3, pr. 22 May 1523 (2: 11)

Burial in church of St. Peter of Temmysford in the middle aisle before the rood; to high altar for tithes forgotten 6s. 8d.; to mother church of Lincoln 4d.; to the upkeep of every altar in the church of Temmysford 3s. 4d.; to the bells 6s. 8d.; to the sepulchre light 6s. 8d.; two wax tapers each weighing 4 pounds to be bought after testator’s death one to go before Our Lady of Pity and the other before St. Peter in the chancel, to burn every holy day at the time of divine service; to the repairs of Eynysbury church 6s. 8d.; to the church of Barkford 6s. 8d.; to the church of Sandy 3s. 4d.; to the church of Northivell 3s. 4d.; to the parish church of Bikeswade 3s. 4d.; to the brotherhood of Jesus within St. Neots 13s. 4d. if his goods produce sufficient, otherwise 6s. 8d.; to the church of Everton 3s. 4d.; towards buying a vestment, 2 tunicles, a cope