

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 7 March 1558 and proved 7 September 1558, of Joan Mery, whose great-nephew, William Lewin (d.1598), accompanied Oxford on his continental tour in 1575, and who left Oxford a bequest of 100 ounces of gilt plate. See the will of William Lewin, TNA PROB 11/91/472:

Item, I give unto my special good Lord, the Earl of Oxford, in token of my duty toward his Lordship, another hundred ounces of gilt plate or fifty marks in money, to be delivered unto Mr Young, one of his Lordship's gentlemen, to buy the said plate of fashion to his Lordship's best liking.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

The testatrix' family background is unknown. In the will below she refers to several persons as her cousins:

Item, I give to my cousin Bowyer my best gown of grogram with a black silk kirtle and my best velvet bonnet.

The testatrix' 'cousin Bowyer' appears to be Jane Mery (d. 3 August 1579), who married firstly the London grocer, Thomas Bowyer (d.1558), and secondly Alexander Nowell (c.1516/17–1602), Dean of St Paul's. See the will of Thomas Bowyer, TNA PROB 11/41/93, and the *ODNB* entry for Alexander Nowell.

Item, I give to my cousin Mylles a gown lined with damask and my kirtle of grogram with a velvet bonnet.

Item, I give to my cousin Casye my six cushions of needlework.

The testatrix' 'cousin Casye' appears to be Joan (nee Bowyer) Cassy Nowell (d. 24 September 1584), who married firstly the London grocer, George Cassy (d.1568), and secondly Thomas Nowell (d. 5 September 1583) of the manor of Runcton in North Mundham, Sussex, nephew of Alexander Nowell, Dean of St Paul's. In his will, *supra*, Thomas Bowyer (d.1558) refers to 'my daughter, Joan Cassey', and to 'my son Cassey and Joan, his wife'.

Item, I give to my cousin Bacon my best carpet of Turkey work.

The testatrix 'cousin Mylles' appears to be Elizabeth Mery, who married the London grocer, Henry Mylles (d.1574?). See his will, TNA PROB 11/56/176, the nuncupative will of Elizabeth (nee Mery) Mylles, TNA PROB 11/68/483, and:

<https://www.geni.com/people/Henry-Mylles-Rites-Alderman-of-London-Grocer/6000000001985898438>

The testatrix' 'cousin Bacon' appears to be Jane Mery (d.1563), the first wife of Thomas Bacon. See the will, TNA PROB 11/55/374, of James Bacon (d. 5 June 1573), and the History of Parliament entry for Thomas Bacon which states that he married firstly, by dispensation dated 26 February 1536, Jane Mery (d.1563), and secondly Elizabeth Mery:

<https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/bacon-thomas-1505-73-or-later>

b. c.1505, 1st s. of Robert Bacon of Drinkstone and Hessel, Suff., and bro. of Nicholas. m. (1) disp. 26 Feb. 1536, Jane (d.1563), da. of one Mery, at least 1s. 1da.; (2) Elizabeth, da. and h. of Thomas Mery of Hatfield, Herts. suc. fa. Aug./Dec. 1548.1

Item, I give to William Gardiner, my cousin, two of my best goblets of silver and gilt, three small goblets, [f. 69v] six silver spoons and my best salt-cellar, with my bed of down as it standeth, over and besides his portion for th' executorship.

Finally I give and bequeath to my cousin, William Gardiner of Greenwich, barber . . .

The testatrix may also have been related to the London grocer, John Downes (see below).

MARRIAGE

The testatrix married William Mery (d.1547). See his will, TNA PROB 11/31/559, and the Mery pedigree in Metcalfe, Walter C., ed., *The Visitations of Hertfordshire*, (London: Harleian Society, 1886), Vol. XXII, p. 152 at:

https://books.google.ca/books?id=uFE_AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA152

It appears there were no issue of the marriage.

John Mery and his brother Edward are mentioned in the will below. They are also mentioned in the will of the testatrix' husband, William Mery (d.1547):

Item, I will that mine executors shall pay yearly to Edward Mery of Northaw during his life the sum of forty shillings at two terms in the year, half yearly by even portions.

Item, I will that mine executors in like manner do pay yearly unto John Mery of Northaw, brother of the same Edward, during his life the sum of forty shillings at two several terms in the year, half yearly by even portions.

OTHER PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE WILL

The testatrix leaves a bequest to Martha Downes, daughter of the London grocer, John Downes (living 1547, d. by 1558):

Item, I give to Marthey Downes in money one hundred pounds, the which hundred pounds remaineth now in the hands of Margery Downes, late wife of John Downes of London, grocer, and if it happen the said Marthey Downes to depart out of this world before she be married or come to th' age of twenty years, then I will that the said hundred pound shall be divided amongst the children of Bartholomew and William Gardiner.

In his will, the testatrix' husband, William Mery (d.1547), left a bequest John Downes:

Item, I will that John Downes shall have the hundred pounds which I promised at the marriage of his wife to be paid at the hour of my death, that is to say, one half of my wife's portion and thother half of mine.

For John Downes, see Somerset Heritage Centre DD\WHb/2634, a power of attorney to deliver seisin granted in 1548 to John Downes, citizen of London, and John Lowyn of Cuffley. See also TNA C 147/179, and TNA C 1/1185/22-29.

Thomas Strickland mentioned in the will below appears to be the Thomas Strickland mentioned in the will of the testatrix' husband, William Mery (d.1547):

Item, whereas Thomas Strickland was indebted unto me in the sum of four hundred and forty pounds and 15s, I have remitted unto the same Thomas the same debt upon condition that the same Thomas do after my decease bind himself in an obligation to mine executors to pay them the sum of two hundred and twenty pounds in case the same Thomas fortune hereafter to come to substance as shall be devised and required by mine executors.

He can likely be identified with Thomas Strickland of London, grocer, mentioned, with John Downe, citizen and grocer of London, in an indenture dated 10 April 1552. See TNA C 146/7636.

T{estamentum} Ioanne Merye

In the name of God, Amen. The seventh day of March in the year of Our Lord a thousand five hundred fifty and seven, I, Joan Mery, widow, of the parish of Northaw in the county of Hertford, being of whole and perfect remembrance, do ordain and make this my last will and testament in manner and form as followeth:

First I commit my soul to the great mercy of Almighty God;

And my body to be buried in the parish church of Northaw aforesaid;

Item, I will that my executors shall bestow on the day of my burial meat and drink for the poor of the parish and other necessaries for the furniture of my burial six pounds thirteen shillings four pence;

Item, I will that my executors and supervisors with their wives shall have black gowns of fine puke, and all the rest of my household, old and young, coats or frocks of coarser cloth;

Item, I will that James Procter shall have a coat and gown of the best cloth, and his wife a gown of the same;

Item, I will that Master [f. 68v] Allen shall have a coat and a gown of the best cloth;

Item, I give to the children of Anthony Mery, to be delivered by my executors to them at the day of their marriages, and one to be another's heir, the sum of ten pounds;

Item, I give to the poor in London to be delivered to them by my executors and supervisors four and twenty pounds;

Item, I give to the hospital of Saint Thomas in Southwark in money the sum of ten pounds;

Item, I [+give?] to Christ's Hospital in London the sum of ten pounds;

Item, I give to Saint Bartholomew's Spital the sum of ten pounds;

Item, I give to Henry Gardiner, the son of Bartholomew Gardiner, the sum of forty marks in money to be delivered to his master at such time as he shall be able to be bound prentice, and in the meantime I will that my executors shall see him brought up in learning to the uttermost of their powers;

Item, I give to Thomas Gardiner, his brother, to be used in like manner the sum of twenty pounds, and one of them to be other's heir, and if they both depart this world before they come to the age of twenty years, then I will that their portions shall be divided betwixt Joan and Ellen Gardiner, the daughters of William Gardiner;

Item, I give to Joan Gardiner and Ellen Gardiner, the daughters of William Gardiner, to either of them in money at the days of their marriages to be delivered to them by my executors twenty pounds;

Item, I give to John Tidcastell in money the sum of twenty pounds to be delivered to the hands of Henry Mylles, grocer, during his years, and then to have it again, and if it fortune the said John Tydcastell to depart out of this mortal world before he come out of his years, then I will that the said twenty pounds to be delivered to the next of his kin;

Item, I give to Cecily who dwelleth with Master Wyse dome the featherbed in the gallery chamber as it standeth, saving the bedstead, and in money ten pounds;

Item, I give to Alice Bowyer who is now with Mistress Barname [=Barnham?] the featherbed in the chamber at the west end of the gallery as it standeth, and in money the sum of ten pounds;

I will that the foresaid Alice and Cecily shall have their legacies with as much speed as may be;

Item, I give to Master Thomas Bowyer of London a ring of gold, the price thirty shillings, and to his wife a ring of gold of like price;

Item, I give to Master Henry Mylles a ring of gold, the price thirty shillings, and to his wife a ring of gold of like price;

Item, I give to Master Thomas Bacon a ring of gold of thirty shillings, and to his wife a ring of gold of like price;

Item, I give to Mr Casye [=Cassy?] a ring of gold, the price thirty shillings, and to his wife a ring of gold of like price;

Item, I give to John Gulle a coat and to his wife a gown, and in money three pounds;

Item, I give to Thomas Ponnell(?) a coat and gown, and in money the sum of five pounds;

Item, I give and bequeath to Mary Procter, my servant, in money the sum of six pounds thirteen shillings four [+pence?] with the featherbed in the gatehouse chamber, the mattress, two bolsters, two pillows, two coverlets lined with canvas, a pair of blankets, with the curtains and a chest in the same chamber, three brass pots, two pans, six broad-brimmed platters, six dishes, six porringers, six saucers, a posnet of brass, a pair of creepers, a pair of tongs, a fire shovel, a pair of rackes(?), two spits, two pot-lids, a chafing-dish with a foot, a pottle pot of pewter, a latten(?) pail, a dripping-pan, a trivet, a bayled(?) kettle, a scummer, a stone mortar, two kine, two hogs, two chamber pots of pewter, a carpet of red say, four joint-stools in the parlour, four candlesticks, six cushions in the parlour windows, a basin and an ewer, a salt-cellar, a basin to wash in, and a close-stool;

Item, I give and bequeath to Agnes Rowe, my servant, in money the sum of five pounds with the featherbed that she lieth on with all things thereunto belonging, two kine, two hogs, three pair of sheets, six platters, six dishes, six porringers, six saucers, two brass pots, two brass pans, a spit, a fire shovel, a pair of tongs, two tablecloths, two dozen of table napkins, a trivet, a pair of pot-hooks, a dripping-pan, a pair of creepers, and a little table in the parlour and six green cushions, a glass to look in, and a brush;

Item, I give to Michael, my servant, a coat, and his wife a frock, and in money twenty shillings;

Item, I give to Richard Foster, my servant, in [+money?] five pounds and a coat;

Item, I give to James Procter, my servant, in money the sum of ten pounds to be delivered to the said James by my executors within the space of one month after my death;

Also I give to the said James the featherbed in the chapel as it standeth with all things thereunto belonging, as curtains and valance, coverlet, blankets, bolsters and whatsoever belongeth to the same, with a pillow and a pillow-bere;

Item, I give and [f. 69r] bequeath to the said James a cypress chest in my chamber, the lesser of the two, with a chest bound with iron the which I brought from London;

Item, I give to the said James my Bible with the rest of my books;

Item, I give to John Procter, Edward Procter and Emanuel Procter, the sons of James Procter, to each of them in money five pounds, and one to be another's heir;

Also I will that they shall have their portions within the space of three months after my death;

Item, I give to Margery Dunbery(?) in money three pounds, and her husband a coat, and to her a frock;

Item, I give to Margaret Bedford, my servant, two kine, and in money twenty shillings;

Item, I give to Thomas Lee, my servant, forty shillings and the featherbed that he lieth on, with all things thereunto appertaining, a cow, four sheep and two pair of sheets;

Item, I give to William Boughe, my servant, the bed that he lieth on as it standeth and a coat(?), four sheep, and in money twenty shillings;

Item, I give to William Foster, my boy, forty shillings, with a mattress, a coverlet, a bolster, two pair of sheets, four sheep and a coat;

Item, I give to Mother Dode the featherbed that she commonly lieth on as it standeth with two pair of sheets, a pillow with a lace(?), two plain tablecloths, and yearly whiles she liveth paid by my executors every year forty shillings;

Item, I give to Marthey, my maid, one of the featherbeds in the chamber over the milkhouse as it standeth with all things thereunto belonging, with two pair of sheets, a pillow with a pillow-bere, two plain tablecloths, two dozen of table napkins and a towel;

Item, I give to Agnes Sawekins, my servant, the better of the two featherbeds in the chamber over the milkehouse as it standeth, two pair of sheets, a dozen of table napkins, two plain tablecloths, two towels, a pillow with a bere;

Item, I give to the children of Thomas Strickland the sum of forty pounds to be divided amongst them by equal portions, and every one to be other's heir, and the said money to be delivered to Jane Strickland, the mother, if she be alive at the day of my death, otherwise it shall be delivered to James Procter to see them bestowed as he thinketh good;

Item, I give to Joan Strickland, widow, ten pounds with a camlet frock and a kirtle;

Item, I give to Marthey Downes in money one hundred pounds, the which hundred pounds remaineth now in the hands of Margery Downes, late wife of John Downes of London, grocer, and if it happen the said Marthey Downes to depart out of this world before she be married or come to th' age of twenty years, then I will that the said hundred pound shall be divided amongst the children of Bartholomew and William Gardiner;

Item, I give to my cousin Bowyer my best gown of grogram with a black silk kirtle and my best velvet bonnet;

Item, I give to my cousin Mylles a gown lined with damask and my kirtle of grogram with a velvet bonnet;

Item, I give to my cousin Casye my six cushions of needlework;

Item, I give to my cousin Bacon my best carpet of Turkey work;

Item, I give and bequeath to Alice Gardiner, the wife of William Gardiner, and to Mary Procter, my servant, all my apparel woollen and linen whatsoever it be, to be equally divided betwixt the said Alice and the said Mary, I mean all such apparel as is not given away by manifest words written in this my last will and testament;

Also I give unto the said Alice Gardiner and Mary, my servant, all my napery as sheets, tablecloths, towels, table napkins, pillow-beres and what kind of napery soever it be not bequeathed and given away in this my last will and testament I give unto the said Alice and Mary to be equally divided betwixt them by the discretion of my supervisors;

Item, I give to John Mery and Edward, his brother, and to their wives yearly during their lives by year forty shillings, that is twenty shillings to John Mery and his wife so long as either of them liveth, and so of the other;

Item, I give to Mistress Ettes(?) in money forty shillings;

Item, I give to Dennys [=Dionyse?] Rowe twenty shillings;

Item, I will that Adams shall have a coat, and his wife a frock;

And Christerson's wife a frock;

Item, to John Smythe of London twenty shillings;

Item, Ockloy a coat, and his wife a frock;

Item, I give to William Gardiner, my cousin, two of my best goblets of silver and gilt, three small goblets, [f. 69v] six silver spoons and my best salt-cellar, with my bed of down as it standeth, over and besides his portion for th' executorship;

Item, I give to Master Thomas Dignam of Hamersoun in money to be delivered unto him by my executors the sum of ten pounds, and for that I ordain and make him my overseer of this my last will, and charge him as my trust is in him that he aid and defend to the uttermost of his power my executors and that he see every one to have his legacy, and furthermore I will that he and the rest of my supervisors shall make division of such goods as shall remain not bequeathed, and deliver one of my executors the one half and the other to the other so that there may be no contention;

Item, I join with the said Thomas Digname to be my supervisors Master Edmund Needham, grocer of London, and John Sawekins, shoemaker, requiring them as they will answer for to see my legacies paid and my will in all points performed, and for their pains I give them twenty pounds, that is to say, each of them ten pounds or ten pound apiece to be delivered to them by my executors;

Finally I give and bequeath to my cousin, William Gardiner of Greenwich, barber, and to Richard Tompkins, my neighbour, all my goods and chattels and other my movable goods whatsoever they be not bequeathed nor given away by special words in this my last will and testament, and the said William and Richard do I make my full executors and to see my will performed in all points and my body buried according to my estate;

In witness whereof I have set to my hand and seal the day and year above-written in the presence of Thomas Dignam, gentleman, John Sawekins, cordwainer, and John Carpenter, buckle caster.

Probatu{m} fuit H{uius}mo{d}i Testamentu{m} coram d{omi}no cant{uariensis} Archiep{iscop}o septimo die mensis Septembris Anno d{omi}ni millesimo quingentesimo quinquagesimo octauo Iura{ment}o Will{el}mi Gardyner et Rich{ard}i Tompkins executoru{m} in H{uius}mo{d}i Testamento no{m}i{n}atorum Quibus com{m}issa fuit administrac{i}o omniu{m} et sing{u}lorum bonoru{m} de bene et fideliter administrand{o} Ac de pleno et fideli Inventario conficiend{o} illudq{ue} exhibend{o} &c(?) ffidis(?) &c

[=The same testament was proved before the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury on the seventh day of the month of September in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred fifty-eighth by the oath of William Gardiner and Richard Tompkins, executors named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of all and singular the goods, [+sworn?] to well and faithfully administer, and to prepare a full and faithful inventory and to exhibit the same etc.(?) ffidis etc.(?)]