

CHARLTON KINGS WILLS 1547-1553: SOME CONCLUSIONS.

by M.J. Greet.

One of the best sources of local and social history in the early modern period is the wills of local people. This is true of Charlton Kings (near Cheltenham) no less than elsewhere. The following conclusions are drawn from a study of the nine wills of Charlton people who died between 1547 and 1553 (seven men and two women), which are deposited in the Gloucestershire Record Office (1). All nine wills had preambles in the non-traditional form (2). One of the witnesses to the will was normally the local priest (3).

As in the reign of Henry VIII the content of the wills reflects the very great importance of agriculture in Charlton at this time. The inheritance of a son or daughter (apart from any land) was essentially agricultural, e.g. a cow and hog (young, unshorn) sheep; a heifer; a weaning calf; a corn wain (cart) and 'all that belongeth to him' etc. Other legatees could receive, for example, a dung wain, or a 'heifer to his marriage.' God-children often received a sheep each. It is apparent that while some men raised cattle, others raised sheep (Richard Wele, husbandman, left 20 or more sheep; Richard Lynet, gentlemen, left at least 50), while others had mixed livestock.

Since the social status of the testators varied, the amount of property varied also. Most testators held copyhold land which had to pass to the customary heir (the youngest son) (4), and thus generally only personal property, livestock or agricultural implements are specified. Wills usually contain a clause leaving all other goods not bequeathed to a residuary legatee and thus complete details of all property held by the testator are not available. It is thus difficult to draw firm conclusions about individual wealth. For illustration details are given in the Appendix of two pairs of wills listing details of property left (a) by a husband to his wife, and by the wife when she died three years later, (b) to a daughter by her father, and by the daughter in turn when she died a year later.

As in the previous reign bequests were made to:

- a) 'the poor men's box' (in the parish church) of amounts from 2d. (husbandman) to 12d. (gentleman), or a bushel of barley. Sometimes 13s. 4d. or 20s. was also left by the more wealthy for distribution at discretion of the overseers or the family among the poor
- b) 'the high altar' of a bushel of barley or 4d. for tithes forgotten
- c) the repair of roads (in one instance). This did not become a parish responsibility until 1555.

At this period the more wealthy often expected burial inside the church (e.g. Robert Grevyle, 'before the blessed sacrament'), while ordinary people had to be content with the churchyard.

Another difference was that the wealthy had servants; three or four were mentioned in Alice Lynet's will. One was left 'four sheep and a yearling calf to breed an ox.' Elizabeth, wife of John Hays was to receive 'a gown of mine own wearing.' One shepherd received one sheep.

In this group of wills almost no information is given about houses except in the case of Thomas Lynet. His house had:

- a hall: with a great table board
- a solar (upper room): with a great chest and feather-bed
- a court: with a well and 'cestorne' (cistern)

Little information either can be deduced about the state of the less well

off, though one husbandman owed 55s. 4d. at his death.

Appendix

(a) Wills of husband and wife

Thomas Lynet (d. 1548)

To poor men's box: 12d.

To poor of Charlton Kings at wife's  
and friends' discretion: 20s.

To wife Alys: 1) all base tenure land  
in Cheltenham hundred  
(for 12 years after  
his death)  
2) residue of estate.

To daughters:

Elizabeth: Sanford Mill, Cheltenham  
(after wife's death)

Agnes(wife  
of Nicholas

Rogers): 1) lands at Kings Stanley  
and elsewhere.  
2) reversion of lands left  
to Richard Stewe.

Richard Stewe

(son of daughter

Joys): various lands (after death  
of wife)

50 sheep,  
best cow and calf.

Great table board in hall,  
great chest in solar,  
feather bed and  
appurtenances in solar,  
cistern in court

Alice Lynet (d. 1551)

To poor of Cheltenham and Charlton  
at executors' discretion: 13s. 4d.

Nicholas Rogers: iron-bound  
corn wain.

William Pats: iron-bound dung  
wain.

To daughters

Agnes and

Elizabeth: flock bed, canvas,  
bolster, pair of  
blankets and 2 pairs  
of sheets to each.

Richard Stewe: all lands/goods left  
by husband.

50 sheep,  
cow and calf.

dung and corn wains  
(iron-bound),  
2 harrows, 2 oxen,  
2 yokes, plough,  
plough strings.

latten chafing dish,  
best brass pot save one,  
best brass pan save one,  
2 cushions,  
2 silver spoons,  
4 platters,  
2 pottingers(porringers)  
2 saucers,  
salt cellar,  
feather bed and 2  
feather bolsters,  
a banker(a covering for  
a bench or chair),  
2 towels,  
flock bed,  
2 double canvas,  
2 candlesticks,  
2 says(say: fine serge  
material),

2 bolsters,  
4 pairs of sheets,

To  
 Richard Stewe: 2 pair andirons,  
 continued.... a broche (spit),  
 dripping pan,  
 great chair,  
 folding stool,  
 cauldron,  
 possenet (small cooking  
 pot),  
 Alice Machyn: 6 sheep  
 John Whitorne  
 (Godson): 2 sheep  
 William Corior  
 (servant): 4 sheep  
 yearling calf to breed  
 an ox.  
 Elizabeth Hays: gown of own wearing  
 3 servants ) : one sheep each  
 1 shepherd )

(b) Wills of father and daughter

Richard Aleruge (d. 1552)

To son John: cow, horse,  
 broche, pair andirons,  
 best coverlet,  
 2 tableboards,  
 pair of trestles, a  
 form, 2 flitches of  
 bacon, (one of the best,  
 one of the second(best))

Son's wife: best colander

Daughter Jane: his own bed, bolster,  
 coverlet, pair of sheets,  
 canvas, best brass pot,  
 best coffer, 3 pieces  
 of pewter, store pig,  
 ? a ring, andiron,  
 a broche.

Daughter

Elizabeth: cow, brass pot, 3  
 pieces of pewter, pair  
 of sheets, canvas,  
 coffer.

Daughter Agnes: brass pot, 3 pieces  
 of pewter, 2 sheets,  
 canvas, kettle, coffer.

The will also lists  
 various debts owed to  
 and by the testator.

Jane Aleruge, singlewoman (d. 1553)

Thomas Goslyng: cow, brass pot,  
 (The younger coffer, broche,  
 son of John andiron, 3 pieces  
 Goslyng) of pewter, salt  
 cellar, red  
 petticoat.

Margaret Goslyng  
 junior: flock bed, bolster,  
 pair of sheets,  
 canvas,  
 coverlet,  
 a flannyn (flannel)  
 petticoat,

Elizabeth Balynger  
 (the elder): lockram (linen)  
 kerchief,  
 a violet cape.

Elizabeth and  
 Masy Balynger : 2 corner- kerchiefs

Old Alice: lockram kerchief

John Goslyng  
 (uncle): store pig

Jane Goslyng  
 (aunt): residue of linen.

## Sources

### Gloucester Diocesan wills:

#### Glos. R.O. reference:

1547/180  
1548/76  
1548/84  
1548/94  
1549/187  
1549/198  
1551/7  
1552/85  
1553/40

#### Name:

William Gale  
Robert Grevyle (gentleman)  
Richard Wele (husbandman)  
Thomas Lynet (gentleman)  
Robert Regedale  
Thomas Hewes  
Alice Lynet (wife of Thomas)  
Richard Aleruge  
Jane Aleruge (single woman)

## Articles

1. M.J. Greet: 'Early wills from Charlton Kings' (1537-1547)  
Bulletin no. 4, Charlton Kings Local History Society (1980), pp. 5-16
2. M.J. Greet: 'A dispute over the will of Alice Lynet, widow, 1551-3'  
Bulletin no. 5, Charlton Kings Local History Society (1981), pp. 7-10

## Notes

1. For details of the format of wills see article 1 cited above.
2. Compared with a split between traditional (Catholic) and non-traditional forms of 3/2 (1537) and 4/4 (1542-7), see article 1.
3. Richard Elborow was described as curate on 6th December 1547 and 7th February 1548. William Hill, former chantry priest at Charlton was described as curate in another will of 1st February 1548, and from then regularly to 1st March 1553.
4. Though the widow had a right to her husband's land for her lifetime, and 12 years after.