

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 10 November 1559 and proved 31 December 1559 of William Watson, father of the poet, Thomas Watson (d.1592), who dedicated *Ekatompathia* to Oxford in 1582 (see STC 25118a), and served as a tutor to the son of Sir William Cornwallis (c.1551-1611), who purchased the lease of Oxford's manor of Fisher's Folly in the parish of St. Botolph's in Bishopsgate.

According to the online edition of *The Dictionary of National Biography*:

*Watson, Thomas (1555/6–1592), poet and translator, has been identified as the boy who entered Winchester College in 1567, aged eleven (Eccles, Brief Lives, 130). This Thomas Watson was born in the city of London parish of St Helen, Bishopsgate, according to the school admissions register. It is not known who his parents were; several Watson families lived in London at the time.*

The will below indicates that the testator, William Watson, had a son named Thomas Watson by his third wife, Anne Lee, the daughter of Thomas Lee (d.1527) and Elizabeth Rolleston (d.1556), the daughter of Thomas Rolleston of Swarkestone in Derbyshire (see Chambers, E.K., *Sir Henry Lee; An Elizabethan Portrait* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), p. 256).

As a younger son by his father's third marriage, this Thomas Watson would have had to make his own way in the world, as did the poet Thomas Watson. He was the right age, and of the right social and economic status, to have been the poet, and could have had yet another connection to Oxford through the marriage of his stepsister, Blanche Watson (d.1593) to the London mercer, alderman and eventual Lord Mayor, Thomas Skinner (d.1596), whose financial connections to Oxford are well documented.

Information concerning members of the poet Thomas Watson's family is found in an interconnected series of wills which includes those of his father, William Watson (see below), his mother, Anne (nee Lee) Watson, his maternal uncle, Thomas Lee, his maternal grandmother, Elizabeth (nee Rolleston) and her four husbands: William Whitelocke, Thomas Lee, Robert Wade and John Onley. For the will of the poet Thomas Watson's mother, Anne Watson (d.1561), see TNA PROB 11/44, f. 132. For the will of Anne Watson's brother, the poet Thomas Watson's maternal uncle, Thomas Lee of Clattercote (d.1572), see TNA PROB 11/54, ff. 172-4. For the will of the poet Thomas Watson's maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Rolleston, who died on 2 August 1556, see TNA PROB 11/38, ff. 71-3. For the will of Elizabeth Rolleston's first husband, William Whitelocke (d.1520), see TNA PROB 11/19, f. 247. For the will of Elizabeth Rolleston's second husband, Thomas Lee (d.1527), see TNA PROB 11/22, f. 174. For the will of Elizabeth Rolleston's third husband, Robert Wade (d.1529), see TNA PROB 11/23, ff. 63-4. For the will of Elizabeth Rolleston's stepson by this marriage, Guy Wade (d.1557), see TNA PROB 11/39, f. 303. For the will of Elizabeth Rolleston's fourth husband, John Onley (d.1537 or 1538), see TNA PROB 11/27, ff. 132-3.

The testator, William Watson, states that he was born in Shropshire, and leaves a bequest to his father, John Watson. Nothing is known of the testator's first wife, the mother of his daughter, Barbara, the wife of Thomas Haselfoote. However the testator states that his second wife, Jane (nee Stanney), was the mother of his son, John Watson, and his daughters, Blanche Watson and Anne Watson. Dame Blanche Forman (nee Stanney), also mentioned in the will, was born in Oswestry, and was the sister of the testator's second wife, Jane Stanney. For the will of Dame Blanche Forman, who died 8 August 1563, see TNA PROB 11/47, ff. 31-4. The testator's third wife was Anne (nee Lee), the mother of his remaining children, Elizabeth Watson, Mawdelin Watson, William Watson, Thomas Watson, Mary Watson, and Elizabeth Watson the younger. The testator appoints his third wife, Anne, as his sole executrix, and his brother-in-law, Thomas Lee (d.1572) and Robert Rolfe, clothier of Hadleigh in Suffolk, as his overseers.

For additional information on the background of the Watson family, see Alhiyari, Ibrahim, 'Thomas Watson: New Biographical Evidence and his Translation of Antigone', PhD Dissertation, Texas State University, May 2006, available online at: <http://etd.lib.ttu.edu/theses/available/etd-04122006-154851/>

For a Chancery suit by the testator's son, William Watson, against the widow of the latter's uncle, Thomas Lee (d.1572), see TNA C 2/Eliz/W14/29.

For a discussion of the poet Thomas Watson's involvement in a Star Chamber suit resulting from his tenure in the household of Sir William Cornwallis (c.1551-1611), see Chatterley, Albert, 'Two Sixteenth-Century East Anglian Families at the Court of Star Chamber', *Norfolk Archaeology*, Vol. 44, Part 1, (Hunstanton: Witley Press, 2002), pp. 119-128.

RM: Testamentum Willelmi Watson

In the name of God, Amen. The tenth day of November in the year of Our Lord God after the course and reckoning of the Church of England 1559 and in the second year of our Sovereign Lady Elizabeth by the grace of God Queen of England, France and Ireland, of the Faith immediately under God of this Church of England and Ireland the Supreme Governor, I, William Watson, citizen and draper of London, being visited through the grace and mercy of Almighty God of sickness, nevertheless being in perfect remembrance, laud & praise be given to Almighty God, do make and ordain this my present testament containing herein my last will in manner and form following, that is to say:

First and principally and above all earthly things I give, bequeath and recommend my soul unto Almighty God, my Maker, Saviour and Redeemer, by the merits of whose bitter and painful death and passion I faithfully trust and steadfastly do believe to be saved, and to be partaker of his most blessed and glorious kingdom of heaven, and my body to be buried where it shall please Almighty God to appoint for the same;

And after my body buried, I will and devise by this my present testament and last will that all and singular such debts, duties and sums of money which of right I do owe to every person or persons shall be first well and truly contented and paid or set in good order to be paid;

And after my debts paid or set in order to be paid, I will that all and singular my goods, chattels, plate, jewels, ready money and debts, after my debts paid, shall be equally and indifferently divided into 3 equal and indifferent parts, whereof I do give and bequeath one third part to my entirely beloved wife, Anne Watson;

And one other third part thereof I do give and bequeath to & amongst my children, that is to say, my daughter Barbara, now the wife of Thomas Hasillfoote, Blanche Watson, John Watson, Anne Watson, Elizabeth Watson, Mawdelin Watson, William Watson, Thomas Watson, Mary Watson, Elizabeth Watson the younger, to be equally and indifferently divided amongst them;

And the third part thereof I do reserve to perform this my present testament and last will and the legacies and bequests herein contained as followeth;

And if it happen any of my said children to die or decease out of this present world before they shall be married or accomplish their full age of 21 years, then my will is and I do devise by this my present testament and last will that the parties [=parts] and portions of him, her or them so deceasing shall fully and wholly remain to him, her or them overliving, equally and indifferently amongst them to be divided, and if it happen or fortune all my said children to die or decease out of this present world before they shall be married or before their full age of 21 years, then I will and do devise by this my last will that all their parts and portions by me to them given and bequeathed shall fully remain to the said Anne Watson, my wife, and the children of my said daughter, Barbara, equally between them to be divided;

Item, I bequeath to my entirely beloved father, John Watson, £21 current money of England;

Item, I give and bequeath to my sister, Elizabeth, the wife of Richard Mawdeley, ten pounds and a black gown;

Item, I give to my Lady Forman a black gown;

To the said Thomas Haselfelde [sic?], and Barbara, my daughter, his wife, to every of them a black gown;

To Richard Pelter and his wife, to every of them a black gown;

To John Dymocke and his wife, to every of them a black gown;

To John Scotte and his wife, to Mr Holland, salter, and his wife, to every of them a black gown;

To Thomas Floyde and his wife, to every of them a black gown;

To Robert Roffe [=Rolf?] and his wife, to every of them a black gown;

Item, I bequeath and my will is that there shall be distributed and given shortly after my decease £6 13s 4d amongst the poor maidens within the county of Shropshire where I was born towards their marriage by 10s apiece or more at the discretion of my executors and overseers hereunder named;

Item, I give to every of my servants, young and old, that shall happen to dwell in my service at the time of my decease 40s apiece;

Item, I give and bequeath towards the relief of the poor, impotent and diseased persons within the new hospital within London £10;

Item, I give to and amongst the Livery of the Drapers in London whereof I am a member for a repast to be had amongst them £6 13s 4d;

Item, I give and bequeath to and amongst the prisoners of Newgate, the King's Bench and Marshalsea, to redeem such as lie for their fees and otherwise to their reliefs, £10, the same to be bestowed and distributed by the discretion of my executors and overseers;

Item, my will and mind is that upon the day of my decease and burial or soon after as conveniently may be dealt and distributed amongst the poor, aged and impotent persons dwelling within the parish of Saint Olave nigh the Tower Hill of London and elsewhere as most need shall be by the discretion of my executors £6 13s 4d;

And where I stand seised in reversion after the decease of Dame Blanche Forman, widow, of all that messuage or mansion place with th' appurtenances set and being besides the Stocks wherein Sir William Gerrard, knight, alderman of London, which hath been mayor of the same city of London, as appeareth by a deed thereof made from the said Dame Blanche unto me and Jane, sometime my wife, and to the heirs of our bodies lawfully begotten, by whom I had issue the said John Watson, my son, and my said 2 daughters, Blanche and Anne, to whom also the same is entailed, as by the same deed enrolled of record in the Hustings of London more plainly may appear, my mind is that the same shall remain after the decease of the said Dame Blanche to my said son, John Watson, and to the heirs of his body lawfully begotten, and for lack of issue of his body, the same to remain to his said sister according to the tenor, preport & effect of the said deed;

Item, I give to Anne Watson, my wife, all such plate of silver as came unto me and her by the decease of her mother, Elizabeth Onley, widow, amounting by estimation to the number of 516 ounces;

The residue of all and singular my goods, chattels and debts, after my debts paid, my funerals done, and this my present testament in all things accomplished, I give and bequeath to the said Anne, my wife, whom of this my testament and last will I ordain and make my sole executrix;

And for my overseers, Mr Thomas Lee, and Robert Rofe [=Rolve?], cloth-maker of the county of Suffolk dwelling within the parish of Hadleigh, I do ordain and make to th' end that everything contained in this my testament and last will be performed according to the mind and true meaning of me, the said William Watson, to whom I give every of them twenty nobles for their painstaking;

And of this my last will being witnesses these person hereunder named which have themselves subscribed and written their own names. Per me William Watson, draper of London. Per me J Dymoke. Per me Baldwinum Mason, scrivener ac testem. Per me Thomam Pratt. By me, Austen Porter [ ]. Per me Thomam Lee.

Probatum fuit huiusmodi Testamentum coram magistro Waltero Haddon Legum Doctore Curie prerogatiue Cantuariensis Custode siue Commissario apud London vltimo die mensis Decembris Anno Domini millesimo quingentesimo quinquagesimo nono Iuramento Iustinian Kidd procuratoris Anne Relicte et executricis in huiusmodi testamento nominate Cui commissa fuit Administracio &c de bene &c Ac de pleno Inventario Necnon de vero et et [sic] plano Computo reddendo Ad sancta Dei Evangelia Iurati

[=The same testament was proved before Master Walter Haddon, Doctor of the Laws, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, at London on the last day of the month of December in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred fifty-ninth by the oath of Justinian Kidd, proctor of Anne, relict and executrix named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted etc., sworn on the Holy Gospels to well etc., and [+to prepare] a full inventory and also to render a true and and [sic] plain account.]