

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the last will and testament, dated 20 November 1578 and proved 19 August 1587, of the London goldsmith John Mabbe (c.1515-1582) the elder, father of John Mabbe the younger, purchaser of the 17th Earl of Oxford's manors of Gibcrack and Little Yeldham (see TNA C 66/1206, m. 30, TNA C 54/1118, Part 22, TNA CP 25/2/131/1683/23/4ELIZIMICH, Item 54, and TNA CP 2/25/132/1694/26ELIZITRIN, Item 26).

The testator was the eldest son of John Mabbe of Clayton in Sussex and Joan Goble, and married Isabel Colley, the daughter of Richard Colley of Shropshire (see the *ODNB* entry for John Mabbe). For the will of Isabel Mabbe, see TNA PROB 11/92/424.

The testator's grandson was the translator James Mabbe (1571/2-1642?) who wrote commendatory verses for the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays in 1623.

The will below disposes of the testator's real property. It was not proved until 19 August 1587, although the will by which the testator disposed of his personal property had been proved on 15 January 1583 (see TNA PROB 11/65/10). In the will the testator leaves his lands to his five sons, John, Richard, Stephen, Robert and Edward after the death of his wife, Isabel, and his house in Old Fish Street to the Goldsmiths' Company, again after the death of Isabel. The testator was the owner of the Tabard Inn in Southwark (i.e. the Tabard Inn of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*). A description of a deed sold on e-bay indicates that John Mabbe purchased the Tabard on 10 April 1565 from Sir Thomas Kempe of Olantigh (d.1591):

<http://www.durtnall.org.uk/DEEDS/Kent%20605-700.htm>

An attractive Elizabethan vellum document being a feoffment relating to the sale of lands in Southwark, London, between Sir Thomas Kempe of Olantigh or Ollantigh in the parish of Wye, Kent, Knight, and John Mabbe of London. Dated 10th April in the 7th year of the reign of Elizabeth I [1565]. Substantial part of a red wax seal showing the Kempe family arms. Property: All that messuage, stables, cellar, gardens, etc, called le Tabbard in the parish of St Margarets in Southwark or St Salvatorio commonly known as St Saviours alias St Mary Overy, Southwark. In the tenure or occupation of William Butter of Southwark. Medium: Handwritten in Latin on vellum. Condition: Heavy creasing, patchy stains and several small holes. One large slit in vellum near seal tag repaired. All text is readable. Seal has about one third missing, but impression of arms is intact. Document size: 52 by 38 cm.

In his will, the testator leaves the Tabard Inn to his wife, Isabel, for life, remainder to their son, Robert Mabbe. For Isabel and Robert's financial difficulties concerning the Tabard, see TNA C 2/Eliz/M8/53, and Rendle, William and Philip Norman, *The Inns of Old Southwark and their Associations* (London: Longmans, 1888), pp. 185-7 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/cu31924032404950#page/n219/mode/2up>.

For the attempt to serve a writ of outlawry for debt on Robert Mabbe on 10 June 1599, see CP 70/91. For the outlawry for debt by 4 March 1589 of the testator's eldest son and heir, John Mabbe the younger, who purchased the Earl of Oxford's manors of Gibcrack and Little Yeldham and was the father of the translator, James Mabbe (1571/2-1642?), see *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, 31 Elizabeth I, p. 57, no. 310.

For an article on the association of members of the King's Men with The Tabard, see Carlin, Martha, 'The Bard at the Tabard', *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 September 2014:

<http://www.the-tls.co.uk/tls/public/article1462934.ece>.

T{estamentum} Iohannis Mabbe

In the name of God, amen. The twentieth day of November in the year of our Lord God one thousand five hundred threescore and eighteen and in the twenty year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Elizabeth by the grace of God Queen of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith etc., I, John Mabbe, th' elder, citizen and goldsmith of London, being of good health of body and of good and perfect memory (thanks be to God therefore), make, ordain, devise and declare this my last will touching the disposition of all and singular my manors, messuages, lands, tenements, rents, reversions and hereditaments whatsoever within the realm of England in manner and form as followeth, that is to say:

First, I will, give and devise by these presents unto Isabel, my loving wife, all my lands aforesaid during the natural life of the said Isabel, my wife;

Item, I will, devise and give by these presents unto John Mabbe, my eldest son, and to his heirs all that my messuage, lands, tenements and hereditaments with their appurtenances in Totteridge or elsewhere in the county of Hertford which I lately purchased of John Clerke [=Clarke?] of London, goldsmith, and also one other tenement with the appurtenances thereunto belonging called Clerkes lately purchased also;

Item, I do give, will and devise by these presents unto Richard Mabbe, my second son, and his heirs forever my lands in Sussex called or known by the name of Wilsham, and all and singular curtilages, orchards, gardens, lands, tenements, meadows, leasows, feedings, woods, underwoods and other hereditaments whatsoever to the said messuage or tenement belonging or appertaining, situate, lying and being in the parish of Ashburnham in the county of Sussex and containing by estimation one hundred and twenty acres, be it more or less, and one quit-rent thereto belonging of thirteen shillings four pence by year or fourteen shillings;

Item, I will, devise and give by these presents unto Stephen Mabbe, my third son, and his heirs forever my lands in Sussex called Smithe lands, Horslande and Penborns, situate, lying and being in the parishes of Wartling alias Wootling, Herstmonceux and Warbleton in the said county of Sussex, and also all that marsh ground called Wallers marsh situate, lying and being in the said parish of Wartling alias Wrotling, and also my land called the Ford in the parish of Ashburnham;

Item, I do give, will and devise by these presents unto Robert Mabbe, my fourth son, and to his heirs all that messuage or inn with th' appurtenances in the borough of Southwark in the county of Surrey called the Tabard, and one garden thereunto belonging, and all that messuage with th' appurtenances called th' Abbot's Lodging joining to the backside of the said inn called the Tabard, and one garden to the same messuage called th' Abbot's Lodging belonging, with all and singular their appurtenances and the reversions and reversion thereof, to have and to hold the said two messuages and two gardens with their appurtenances and the reversion and reversions thereof to the said Robert Mabbe, his heirs and assigns, forever, to and for th' only use of the same Robert and of his heirs [-and];

Item, I give, will and devise by these presents unto Edward Mabbe, my fifth son, and to his heirs all those my six messuages or tenements with their appurtenances lying in the borough of Southwark aforesaid, whereof one is situate on the north side of the said inn called the Tabard and now is or lately was in the occupation of Edward Chappell, and the other five are situate on the south side of the said inn called the Tabard and now are or of lately were in the several tenures or occupations of John Savage, Thomas Jeninges, William Morrye(?) and of Widow Joye or of their assigns, together also with the reversion and reversions of the premises and all those six gardens to the same six messuages belonging and therewith now or lately used and occupied and the reversion and reversions thereof, to have and to hold all the said six messuages and tenements and the said six gardens with their appurtenances and the reversion and the reversions thereof to the said Edward Mabbe and to his heirs and assigns forever to and for th' only use of the same Edward and of his heirs and assigns forever;

Item, be it always provided, and by these presents I do provide and my will is that all my said messuages, lands and tenements devised, given and willed severally to my said five sons, John, Richard, Stephen, Robert and Edward and to their heirs shall come to them accordingly from and after the decease of the said Isabel, my wife, and not before in any wise, anything herein abovesaid to the contrary thereof in any wise notwithstanding;

Item, I give, will and devise by these presents unto the Wardens and Commonalty of the Art or Mystery of Goldsmiths of the City of London and to the Body and Corporation of the Goldsmiths of the same City and to their successors forever, by whatsoever name or names they are called, all that my messuage or tenement with th' appurtenances situate in Old Fish Street in London, to the intent the said Wardens and Commonalty and their successors forever shall yearly yield and give to one poor man of the same Company eight pence a week weekly forever, and to one poor widow woman eight pence a week weekly forever, provided always that the said poor man and poor widow be poor indeed,

and such as have great need indeed, and be of honest behaviour and good conversation, and no drunkard nor swearer, to have and to hold the said message or tenement with th' appurtenances to the said Wardens and Commonalty and their successors from the decease of the said Isabel, my wife, for and to th' use intent and purpose aforesaid forever, and I will and appoint that the said poor man and poor woman which shall receive the said exhibition from time to time shall be and called the almsman and almswoman of John Mabbe;

In witness whereof hereunto I have subscribed my name and set my seal with mine own hand the twentieth day of November 1578, and in the one and twenty year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Elizabeth by the grace of God Queen of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith etc. By me, John Mabbe of London, goldsmith.

Item, my will is that if any of my foresaid sons at any time after my decease shall be minded to sell or alienate the lands, tenements or annuity aforesaid or any part thereof which I have above devised to him and his heirs, that then he shall first make offer of the same unto John Mabbe, my eldest son, and so in order to all his brethren and shall sell the same to such of them as will give him most therefore, so as any of them will give him as much as any other will do (bona fide) without fraud or covin. By me, John Mabbe etc. Witness: Andrew Palmer.

Decimo nono die mens{is} Augusti Anno D{omi}ni Millesimo Quingentesimo Octogesimo Septimo Mag{iste}r Will{el}mus Babham Notarius publicus procurator Izabelle Mabbe Relicte et executricis testamenti supranominati Ioh{ann}is Mabb defunct{i} exhibuit quatuor papiri folia simul consuta manuq{ue} propria dicti Ioh{ann}is Mabb defuncti (vt asseruit) total{ite}r scripta quarum verus tenor suprascibitur et continetur tanquam partem et parcellam testamenti dicti defuncti al{ia}s in comuni forma auc{torita}te huius curie decimo quinto die mens{is} Ianuarij Anno D{omi}ni iuxta cursum et computac{i}o{n}em eccl{es}ie Anglicane Mill{es}imo Quingentesimo Octogesimo Secundo probati approbati et insinuati Vnde ad eius petic{i}o{n}em ex caus{is} in actu in ea p{ar}te expedit express{e}(?) decret{um}(?) fuit contenta(?) in dictis folijs tunc exhibitis non solum inscribend{o}(?) et regrand{o}(?) fore in Reg{ist}ro huius curie tanquam partem et parcellam testamenti [RM: et vltime voluntatis d{i}c{t}i def{uncti} vernuletiam(?) annectend{o}(?) fore testamento] eiusdem defuncti in comuni forma vt premititur probat{um}(?) et per dictum Babham tunc exhibitum prout ex actu predicto liquet. Ex{aminatus}

[=On the nineteenth day of the month of August in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred eighty-seventh Master William Babham, notary public, proctor of Isabel Mabbe, relict and executrix of the above-named testament of John Mabbe, deceased, exhibited four folios of paper stitched on(?) and entirely written at the same time by the proper hand of the said John Mabbe, deceased, as he asserted, of which the true tenor is written above and contained as part and parcel of the testament of the said deceased otherwise in common form proved, probated and entered by the authority of this court on the fifteenth

day of the month of January in the year of the Lord according to the course and reckoning of the English church the thousand five hundred eighty-second, whereof to his petition, for causes in the act in that part provided(?), it was expressly decreed the contents in the said folios then exhibited not only to be inscribed and entered(?) in the register of this court as part and parcel of the testament and last will of the said deceased, but also to be [] annexed to the testament of the same deceased proved in common form as is before mentioned and by the said Babham then exhibited, as by the act aforesaid appears. Examined.]