

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 24 February and 26 May 1613 and proved 2 August 1613, of Thomas Bedingfield, whose translation of *Cardanus' Comfort* was dedicated to Oxford (see STC 4607 on this website).

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

Thomas Bedingfield (early 1540s?–1613), translator, was born probably in the early 1540s at Oxburgh Hall, Oxburgh, Norfolk, the second of the five sons of Sir Henry Bedingfeld (1509x11–1583), administrator, and his wife, Katherine (d. 1581), daughter of Sir Roger Townshend of Raynham, Norfolk, and his wife, Amy, daughter of Sir Thomas Brewse of Wenham. Thomas Bedingfield is often confused with his nephew who died in 1595. The Bedingfields figure prominently in the recusant rolls of Norfolk and Suffolk; however the absence of Thomas and his brother Nicholas from any recusant roll suggests they conformed quite early, which may explain why Catherine Bedingfield states that Sir Henry had only three sons.

*On going to London, probably in the late 1560s, Bedingfield came under the notice of Edward de Vere, the earl of Oxford, to whom he dedicated *Cardanus Comforte, Translated into English* (1573), his translation of the social and spiritual handbook by Girolamo Cardano, the Italian mathematician. According to the dedication (dated 1572) de Vere commissioned the translation despite Bedingfield's doubts over 'my long discontinuance of study' (Cardano, sig. A2r). In a printed reply to this dedication de Vere was pleased that the book showed how 'it ornifyeth a gentleman to be furnished in mynde wyth glittering virtues' (ibid., sig. A3v). It may have been about this time that Queen Elizabeth made Bedingfield a gentleman pensioner, as this is how he was addressed by de Vere. Joseph Gillow claims she was recognizing his literary achievements: certainly his translations form part of the courtesy literature translated from Italian. But she may have been repaying a debt of gratitude to his father for easing her imprisonment under Queen Mary. As the cordial tone of a letter Elizabeth wrote to Sir Henry early in her reign shows, they were still on good terms.*

RM: Thomae Bedingfeilde

In the name of God, Amen. I, Thomas Bedingfield of the parish of St James at Clerkenwell in the county of Middlesex, esquire, being at this present sick in body but yet, praise be to God, of perfect mind and remembrance, do make and ordain this my last will and testament in manner and form following, that is to say:

First and principally I commend my soul into the hands of Almighty God, hoping by the merits and passion of Jesus Christ, my Saviour, to have remission of my sins and to be saved, and my body I commit to the earth from whence it came, to be interred decently in

the chapel within the parish church of St James aforesaid where I usually sit at divine service;

And as touching that substance which it hath pleased God to endue me withal, I do will and bequeath the same in manner and form following, that is to say:

Item, I give, will and bequeath unto my brother, Nicholas, all my books, printed and written;

Item, I give, will and bequeath unto Mrs Precilla Skillicorne, my daughter-in-law, the inheritance of my house where I now remain at Clerkenwell aforesaid forever to her and her heirs, she and they paying only yearly for the same to the use of the poor people of the said parish the sum of forty shillings of English money according to the true meaning of a deed by me already thereof made;

Item, I give unto my godson, Anthony Hudson, ten pounds of English money;

Item, I give unto my old neighbour, William Unwyn, my four black lances;

Item, I give unto the poor people inhabiting within the parish of St James at Clerkenwell aforesaid ten pounds of English money;

Item, I give, will and bequeath unto Thomas Jefford, esquire, the sum of forty pounds of lawful money of England if he, the said Thomas Jefford, shall at the time of my decease be naturally living;

All the rest and residue of my goods, lands, cattles, chattels, leases, plate, jewels, ready money and estate whatsoever of mine not by me before given or bequeathed, my debts paid, funeral expenses discharged and legacies satisfied, I do for the love, zeal and affection which I have and do bear unto my wife's son-in-law, Mr John Skillicorne, and for the great charges and trouble which he hath been at with me, wholly and absolutely give, will and bequeath unto the said Mr John Skillicorne, his heirs and assigns, forever, whom I only make sole executor of this my last will and testament, utterly revoking all former wills, gifts, legacies, bequests, executors and overseers by me at any time heretofore made, named, given, willed and bequeathed, and this and none other nor otherwise to stand, remain and be for and as my present last will and testament;

In witness whereof I, the said Thomas Bedingfield, have hereunto set my hand and seal dated the four and twentieth day of February one thousand six hundred and twelve and in the tenth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord James by the grace of God King of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith etc., and of Scotland the six & fortieth.
Thomas Bedingfield.

Signed, sealed and published by the within-named Thomas Bedingfield to be his last will in the presence of us. Per me Thomam Thomson, apprentice(?), Richard Howe, Sir Anthony Hudson, Cuthbert Hutton, Hugh Jones, Oliver Cake. The six and twentieth of

May Anno Domini one thousand six hundred and thirteen the within-written Thomas Bedingfield did declare and publish this to be his last will and testament, and prayed me to witness the same. Ralph Wormelaughton.

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum apud London coram Magistro Edmundo Pope legum Doctore Surrogato venerabilis viri domini Iohannis Benet militis legum etiam Doctoris Curie Prerogatiue Cantuariensis Magistri Custodis siue Commissarij legitime constituti secundo die mensis Augusti Anno Domini Millesimo sexcentesimo decimo tertio Iuramento Iohannis Skillicorne executoris in huiusmodi testamento nominati Cui commissa fuit administracio omnium et singulorum bonorum Iurium et creditorum dicti defuncti De bene et fideliter administrando &c Iurati Examinatum

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before Master Edmund Pope, Doctor of the Laws, Surrogate of the worshipful Sir John Bennet, knight, also Doctor of the Laws, lawfully constituted Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the second day of the month of August in the year of the Lord the thousand six hundred thirteenth by the oath of John Skillicorne, executor named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of all and singular the goods, rights and credits of the said deceased, sworn to well and faithfully administer etc. Examined.]