

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated in the year 1521 and proved 25 November 1521, of John Colte (d. 22 October 1521) of the parish of Roydon, Essex, father-in-law of Sir Thomas More.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

For the testator's family background, see the Colte pedigree in Howard, Joseph Jackson, ed., *The Visitation of Suffolk*, (Lowestoft: Samuel Tymms, 1868), Vol. II, pp. 27-39 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationsuffo00howagoog#page/n44/mode/2up>

Testator's parents

The testator was the son of Thomas Colte (d. 10 August 1471), esquire, of Greys in Cavendish, Chancellor of the Exchequer to Edward IV, by Joan Trusbut, daughter and heir to John Trusbut, esquire, of Holm, Norfolk. After the death of Thomas Colte, Joan Trusbut married Sir William Parr (1434-1483). See:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Parr_\(knight\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Parr_(knight))

Testator's siblings

The testator is said to have had a brother and five sisters. According to the will below, one of the testator's sisters, Elizabeth Colte, was married to a husband surnamed Roseley, while another sister was married to Thomas Lysle.

MARRIAGES AND ISSUE

Testator's first marriage

The testator married firstly Elizabeth Elrington, the daughter of Sir John Elrington of Hackney, Middlesex, Treasurer of the Household to Edward IV, by Maud Disney, daughter of John Disney, by whom he had two sons and five daughters:

* **Sir George Colte** (d. 23 March 1578) of Long Melford, Suffolk, who married Elizabeth Mackwilliam (d.1569), the daughter of Henry Mackwilliam of Stambourne, Essex. Their daughter, Anne Colte, married Henry Breton of Essex. See the Colte pedigree in BL Add. MS 5524, f. 11, and Kimber, E. and R. Johnson, *The Baronetage of England*, (London: G. Woodfall, 1771), Vol. II, pp. 516-17 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=z6W35JBfgQAC&pg=PA517>

‘Henry Mackwilliam, gentleman’, witnessed the testator’s will below. For the will of Henry Mackwilliam, dated 6 June 1539 but not proved until 27 January 1558, witnessed by ‘George Colte, esquire, and Elizabeth, his wife’, see TNA PROB 11/40/37.

As noted above, the testator’s daughter, Anne Colte, married Henry Breton. The Breton pedigree in the 1565 Visitation of Wiltshire states that William Breton of Layer, Essex, married Anne, the daughter of ‘Denham of the North’, and that their eldest son, Henry Breton of Monkton Farleigh, Wiltshire, married Anne Colte, the daughter of George Colte of Cavendish, Suffolk, by whom he had a son and heir, George Breton, a second son, William Breton, a daughter, Margaret Breton, who married a husband surnamed Hamond of Neyland, Suffolk, and another daughter, Elizabeth Breton, unmarried. See Metcalfe, Walter C., ed., *The Visitation of Wiltshire 1565*, (Exeter: William Pollard, 1897), p. 8 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationofwilt00harvrich#page/8/mode/2up>

William Breton of Layer, Essex, who married Anne, the daughter of ‘Denham of the North’, can likely be identified with William Breton, auditor to the Priory of Monkton Farleigh in 1535 (see p. 91), whose son, Henry Breton, held a lease of the manor of Monkton Farleigh in 1548 (see p. 89). See Hobhouse, Charles, ‘Some Account of the Parish of Monkton Farleigh’, *The Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, Vol. XX, (Devizes: H.F. Bull, 1882), pp. 66-106 at:

https://books.google.ca/books?id=bYI_AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA89

For the Breton family of Monkton Farleigh, Wiltshire, see also the will, TNA PROB 11/74/301, of Ellen Beverley Ponde (d.1589), great-aunt of Henry Wriothesley (1573-1624), 3rd Earl of Southampton, to whom Shakespeare dedicated *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, whose daughter, Anne Ponde, married George Breton, likely the son of Henry Breton and grandson of William Breton mentioned above.

* **Thomas Colte** (d. 29 June 1559), who married Magdalen Middleton (d. 30 November 1591). It should be noted that according to the will below, Thomas Colte was the son of the testator’s second marriage to Mary Alne.

* **Jane Colte** (d.1514?), who married, as his first wife, Sir Thomas More (1478-1535), by whom she was the mother of Margaret More (1505-1544), Elizabeth More, Cecily More and John More. See Kimber, *supra*, and the *ODNB* entry for Sir Thomas More (1478-1535):

In January 1505 More married Jane (c.1489–1511), the daughter of Sir John Colt of Netherhall in the parish of Roydon in Essex.

* **Alice Colte**, who married Edmund or Edward Bugge [=Briggs], esquire, of Harlow, Essex.

* **Mary Colte**, who married William Kempe, esquire, of Spains Hall, Finchingfield, Essex.

* **Bridget Colte**, who married Lawrence Forster of Cambridgeshire.

* **Another daughter** who married a husband surnamed Coplelike, perhaps the testator's 'daughter Edyn' mentioned in the will below.

Testator's second marriage

The testator married secondly, Mary Alne (d. 7 September 1557), the daughter of Sir John Alne, by whom, according to the will below, he had a son:

* **Thomas Colte**, whose upbringing he entrusted to his son-in-law, Sir Thomas More.

After the testator's death, Mary Alne married secondly Richard Heigham. For the will of Richard Heigham of Roydon, Essex, proved 19 November 1546, see TNA PROB 11/31/330.

OTHER PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE WILL

The testator bequeaths £40 'to the finding of a priest to sing for the soul of William Yorke'. If £40 is not a scribal error for 40s, this is a very substantial sum. The identity of William Yorke has not been established. However it is possible that the surname 'Yorke' could refer to William Wriothesley (d.1513?), who was York Herald.

RM: T{estamentum} Ioh{ann}is Colte

In the name of God, Amen. The year of Our Lord 1521, I, John Colte of the parish of Roydon in the county of Essex, being of whole mind and memory, thanked be God, ordain and make this my testament and last will in this manner:

First I bequeath my soul to Almighty God, beseeching him of his infinite mercy to make it party-taker [=partaker] of his joyful presence with the Blessed Virgin Mary and all saints in the kingdom of heaven, my body to be buried in the parish church of Roydon beside my father without any great pomp or great cost about my vile body but within most sober manner with [-a?] certain mourners in black after the discretion of mine executors;

Item, to the said church of Roydon to the high altar there for tithes forgotten 40s;

Item, to the friars of Ware 40s, praying them to pray for me, saying 4 trentals for my soul and all Christian souls;

Item, to the Brotherhood of Jesus in Ware 20s;

Item, to a priest to sing in the church of Roydon by the space of one whole year, 10 marks;

Item, to the Prior of the Charterhouse of Sheen and his brethren to pray for me, 10s;

Item, to the church of Little Parndon 20s;

Item, 20s to be bestowed for the soul of Sir John Denton, priest;

Item, I will that Mary, my wife, have my manor of Netherhall without peachment of waste;

Item, I bequeath to my said wife all my plate and household stuff except that my son, George, shall have a basin and a ewer of silver, 2 great salts parcel gilt, a silver pot, the lesser of 2, and a dozen spoons with squirrels;

Item, I will that 10 marks be yearly paid by mine executors out of my manor of Greys to Sir Thomas More, knight, to the finding of my young son, Thomas Colte, till he come to the age of 20 years, and he to order him and bring him up in learning as he thinketh best;

And if it happen the said Sir Thomas to decease within those years, then the said 10 marks with the ordering of my said son, Thomas, to return to his mother, she to have the disposition of the said child, her son, and also of the said 10 marks during the said years;

Item, I bequeath to my daughter, Edyn, £100 to her marriage;

Item, to my sister, Elizabeth Roseley, £5;

Item, to my son [=son-in-law], Sir Thomas More, knight, one of my best colts at his own pleasure in choosing;

Item, I bequeath to my brother [=brother-in-law], Thomas Lysle, one of my best colts next my son More;

Item, to my said brother a doublet of satin and a cross-bow;

Item, to Mr Stephen Leder, vicar of Ware, th' advowson of the vicarage of Hexton, he to be mine assignee therein and to bestow it where he think best for my discharge and his own both;

Item, I will that mine executors give the benefice of Baldwin Brightwell when it shall happen to be void to Sir Hugh Swan, my chaplain;

Item, to every one of my household waiting servants [-have?] one whole year's wages beside their duty, and each one of them an horse after the discretion of mine executors;

Item, to Robert Saunders, a gown;

Item, to James Hide a gown such as my wife thinketh most convenient for them both;

Item, to Peter, my servant, such wearing gear as my wife thinketh convenient for him;

Item, to young John Colte, son to my son, George, 20s;

Item, to Henry Colte, his brother, 20s;

Item, to the finding of a priest to sing for the soul of William Yorke £40;

The residue of my goods not bequeathed I leave to Mary, my wife, and George, my son, whom I make mine executors, they to bestow them as their charity and conscience shall lead them.

These witnessing: Master Stephen Leder, vicar of Ware, Sir John Benyngton, priest, Thomas Lysle, gentleman, and Henry Mackwilliam, gentleman, overseer of this my present will.

Probatum fuit suprascriptum testamentum coram domino apud Lambith xxv die mensis Nouembris Anno domini Millesimo quingentesimo xxjo Ac approbatum Et comissa fuit administratio omnium bonorum et debitorum defuncti Georgio Colte executori in huiusmodi testamento notato De benedicta et fideliter administratio eadem Ac de pleno et fideliter Inventario etc Necnon de plano et vero compoto in ea parte reddendo ad satisfactionem dei et angelorum Iurat Reseruata potestate similem commissione faciendi alie executrici etc cum venerit Decimo die mensis decembris proximum sequentium Maria Relicta et Executrix accepterint(?) in se onus testamenti predefuncti vnacum altero executore Ad satisfactionem dei et angelorum Iurat

The above-written testament was proved before the Lord at Lambeth on the 25th day of the month of November in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred 21st, and probated, and administration was granted of all the goods and debts of the said deceased to George Colte, executor named in the same testament, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer the same and [+to prepare] a full and faithful inventory in that regard etc., and also to render a plain and true account, with power reserved for a similar grant to be made to the other executrix etc. when she shall have come. On the

tenth day of the month of December next following Mary, relict and executrix, sworn on the Holy Gospels, took upon herself the burden of the testament of the foresaid deceased together with the other executor.]