

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 3 November 1554 and proved 14 February 1555, of Emme Webbe Cordell, mother of Sir William Cordell (1522 – 17 May 1581), Master of the Rolls, one of the five trustees appointed by Oxford in an indenture of 30 January 1575 prior to his departure on his continental tour. See ERO D/DRg2/25.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

According to the *ODNB*, the testatrix was the daughter of Henry Webb of Kimbolton, Huntingdonshire.

MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

The testatrix married John Cordell, by whom, according to the will below, she was the mother of four sons and two daughters:

* **Sir William Cordell** (1522 – 17 May 1581), Master of the Rolls, who married Mary Clopton. See his will, TNA PROB 11/63/590, the *ODNB* entry, and the History of Parliament entry at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/cordell-william-1524-81>

See also the will of his wife, Mary Clopton Cordell, TNA PROB 11/68/545.

* **Francis Cordell**. He appears to be the Francis Cordell buried at Melford on 31 November 1583. See Howard, Joseph Jackson, ed., *The Visitation of Suffolke*, (Lowestoft: Samuel Tymms, 1866), Vol. I, p. 247:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=ExI2AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA247>

However according to the History of Parliament, his brother, Edward Cordell, succeeded him in 1586, which suggests he did not die until that year.

* **John Cordell**. He may be the John Cordell buried at Melford on 7 January 1563 [=1564?]. See Howard, *supra*, p. 247. In the will below, the testatrix leaves a bequest to his wife, whose name is unknown.

* **Edward Cordell** (d. 9 December 1590), one of the Six Clerks in Chancery, who married firstly Elizabeth Harrison (d.1586) of Norfolk, and secondly Abigail Heveningham, a gentlewoman of the Privy Chamber to Queen Elizabeth. See Emerson at:

<http://www.kateemersonhistoricals.com/TudorWomenH-He.htm>

Abigail Heveningham was the daughter of Sir Anthony Heveningham (d. 22 November 1557) by Mary Shelton (d.1571), and the widow of Sir George Digby (d.1587), by whom she had three sons and a daughter. See the will of Sir George Digby, dated 1 April 1586 and proved 11 May 1587, TNA PROB 11/70/268, and the History of Parliament entry for Sir George Digby at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/digby-george-1550-87>

For Edward Cordell, see his will, dated 7 December 1590 and proved 20 January 1591, TNA PROB 11/77/25, and the History of Parliament entry at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/cordell-edward-1536-90>

* **Jane Cordell** (d.1603), who married Richard Alington, by whom she had three daughters, Mary Alington, Anne Alington and Cordell Alington. See her will, dated 15 July 1602 and proved 7 January 1604, TNA PROB 11/103/18, and the will of Richard Alington, dated 4 April and 12 June 1561 and proved 3 February 1562, TNA PROB 11/45/31.

* **Thomasine Cordell**. The testatrix refers to her in the will below as ‘Thomasine Watson, my daughter’, and bequeaths her other daughter, Jane Cordell, ‘my house on the green called Ives’ on condition she pay 20s a year towards the bringing up of Thomasine’s daughter, Anne Watson, until she reaches the age of 16. Thomasine married secondly Gilbert Gager (d.1590), by whom she was the mother of the jurist and neo-Latin poet and dramatist, William Gager (1555-1622). See the edition of Gager’s works by Dana Sutton at:

<http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/gager/>

See also Dr Sutton’s discussion of the relationship between the Gager, Alington and Cordell families at:

<http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/gager/poetry/intro.html>

See also the *ODNB* entry:

Gager, William (1555–1622), Latin playwright and poet, was born on 24 July 1555, possibly in Long Melford, Suffolk, the son of Gilbert Gager (d. 1590) and Thomasine, sister of Sir William Cordell, master of the rolls. He had a sister, Mary, who was born in 1560, and a brother, John, who died in 1630. William Gager was educated at Westminster School and from there was elected to Christ Church, Oxford, in 1574. He graduated as BA on 4 December 1577, MA on 5 June 1580, and took his BCL and DCL

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<http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/>

on 30 June 1589.

At Oxford Gager became well known both as a Latin poet and as a playwright.

OTHER PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE WILL

For the Martyn family of Long Melford, see the will, dated 6 October 1581 and proved 1 July 1583, TNA PROB 11/65/430, of Elizabeth Martyn, stepmother of Humphrey Martyn, the addressee of the *Langham Letter* which describes the Earl of Leicester's entertainment of Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth in the summer of 1575.

LM: T{estamentum} Emme Cordell

In the name of God, Amen. The third day of the month of November in the year of Our Lord God a thousand five hundred fifty and four, I, Emme Cordell of Melford in the county of Suffolk, widow, being in good and perfect mind and remembrance, thanks be to God, ordain and make this my testament and last will in manner and form following:

First I commend my soul into the hands and governance of God, our heavenly Father, trusting that he according to his infinite mercy and for his Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, will convey it to the place appointed for his elected;

And my body to be [f. 150r] buried in the church of Melford aforesaid as near the grave of my late bedfellow as it may be;

And I give unto the reparations of the said church forty shillings of lawful money of England;

Item, I give unto to the high altar of the said church in recompense of my tithes neglected three shillings and four pence;

Item, I give and bequeath to William Cordell, my eldest son, all that gold that is in my cupboard in the box as it is there, saving I will and give to my daughter [=daughter-in-law], Marie, his wife, six pounds thirteen shillings and four pence of the same;

Item, I give and bequeath to Francis Cordell, my son, twenty pounds of lawful money of England, a featherbed, a bolster, a pillow, a pair of blankets and three pair of sheets;

Item, I give and bequeath to John Cordell, my son, twenty pounds of lawful money of England over and above all other sum or sums of money that he oweth to me;

And whereas I have six pounds of his in pawn, I will that he shall have again other six pounds of mine, or else some other stuff or wares to the full value thereof;

And I give to him a featherbed, a bolster, a pillow, a pair of blankets, three pair of sheets, my beam in the hall with all the weights thereto belonging;

Item, I give and bequeath to Edward Cordell, my son, twenty pounds of lawful money of England over and besides the ten pounds that are yet unpaid to him for the legacy of his father, my late bedfellow;

And I give to him the featherbed over the parlour chamber, the bolster, two pillows, six pair of sheets, whereof one pair of two breadths and a half, two pair of fine sheets, three pair of coarse sheets, two tablecloths, six pillow-beres, half a dozen of my silver spoons and a cup of silver;

Item, I give and bequeath to my daughter, Jane Cordell, twenty pounds of lawful money of England, and also twenty pounds that her said father, my late bedfellow, bequeathed to her, whereof she hath received £10 by a letter directed from my son Cordell for the delivery of the same, which is not yet paid, which sum of forty pounds, except the foresaid ten pounds, I will it shall be paid to her in payment of gold, that is to say, in rials and angels;

And I give to my said daughter, Jane, the bed that I now lie on with all things thereunto belonging, my great pillow with two of my best pillows, my best coverlet and the coffer standing at my bed's head wherein is £13 in gold, parcel of the said £30, with all things that are in it, with all the other stuff and things that be in my said chamber except only the little featherbed, bolster and pillows that are now upon the trundle-bed;

And I give to her a garnish of my best pewter whereof part is in a tub upon the chamber, a basin and a ewer, a chafer to set by the fire, a chafing-dish, my great brass pot with long feet, a new brass pot, a broad chafer sometime Barker's, two white candlesticks, two latten candlesticks, an old great charger, and all the old poise [=measure of weight] grotes [=groats?] that are in a bag in the cupboard to make for her half a dozen of silver spoons, four of the best cushions, one of the great spits;

And further I give and bequeath to my said daughter, Jane Cordell, my house on the green called Ives with all th' appurtenances on this condition, that she or her assigns shall give every year yearly twenty shillings of lawful money of England towards the keeping and good bringing up of Anne Watson, her niece, till she come to the age of 16 years old;

And if it fortune that the said Anne Watson depart out of this life before she shall come to the said age, or if she shall accomplish the said age, then I will that the payment of the said 20s shall surcease and be no longer paid unto the said Anne, and I will that the said twenty shillings shall be distributed yearly every year forever amongst my poor godchildren and other poor people of Melford by the discretion of my executors or the executors of them;

Item, I give to Thomasine Watson, my daughter, six pounds thirteen shillings and four pence of lawful money of England, my least featherbed, a bolster, a pair of blankets, a pillow, three pair of sheets, a kettle, a long pot of brass, a gown of fine cloth edged with velvet, a round kirtle of worsted, my best petticoat, two smocks and two of my best kerchers;

Item, I give to Anne Watson ten pounds of lawful money of England to be paid to her by my executors or the executors of him [sic for 'them'?] when he [sic for 'she'?] shall come to the age of 20 years old;

The residue of all my other goods movable and unmovable I refer and put them to the good discretion and disposition of my son, William Cordell, esquire, General Solicitor to the King's and Queen's Majesties, whom I ordain and make my sole executor of this my testament and last will, trusting that he will perform the same accordingly to the pleasure of God and comfort of my soul;

These witnesses: Richard Clopton, Roger Martin, William Grimbsbie, clericus, Alan Cheueriors(?)

Memorandum: That Edward's wife must have the choice of my apparel, and Mistress Daniell to have my beads of wood with the piece of gold on them;

William to have four angels;

And John Cordell's wife two kerchers;

Mary Martyn to have an angel of gold;

Old Master Martyn to have a gown;

Young Master Martyn a gown, with his wife the like;

William Herby a gown;

William Grisley a gown;

All to be had out of one of the finest cloths not yet thicked [=fulled].

Probatum fuit suprascriptum testamentum coram mag^{ist}ro Will^{el}mo Cooke Legum doctore curie prerogative cantuar^{iensis} custode siue commissario sede archie^{pisco}pali iam vacante decimo quarto die mens^{is} ffebruarij Anno d^{omi}ni Millesimo Quingentesimo quinquagesimo quarto Iuramento xpoferi Robinson procuratoris executoris in h^{uius}mo^di testamento nominatⁱ ac approbatum et

insinuat{um} Et commissa fuit administracio o{mn}i{u}m bonor{um} etc d{i}c{t}e
def{uncte} p[re]fat{o} execut{ori} de bene etc ac de pleno Inuentar{io} etc ad sancta dei
euangelia Iurat{i}

[=The above-written testament was proved before Master William Cooke, Doctor of the
Laws, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury of the
Archiepiscopal seat now vacant on the fourteenth day of the month of February in the
year of the Lord the thousand five hundred fifty-fourth by the oath of Christopher
Robinson, proctor of the executors named in the same testament, and probated and
entered, and administration was granted of all the goods etc. of the said deceased to the
forenamed executor, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well etc., and [+to exhibit?] a full
inventory etc.]