

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the last will and testament, dated 7 November 1578 and proved 15 January 1583, 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 Isabelle, the daughter of Richard Colley of Shropshire (see *Dictionary of National Biography* entry for John Mabbe). For the will of Isabelle Mabbe, see TNA PROB 11/92, ff. 325-7.

The testator's grandson was 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 personal property. For some reason the testator's will disposing of his real property was not probated until 19 August 1587 (see TNA PROB 11/71, ff. 70-1). The latter will reveals that the testator was the owner of the Tabard Inn in Southwark (i.e. the Tabard Inn of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*). Under the terms of the will, the testator left the Tabard to his wife, Isabelle, for life, remainder to their son, Robert Mabbe. For Isabelle 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. 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 son, John Mabbe the younger, who purchased Oxford's manors of Gibcrack and Little Yeldham, see *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, 31 Elizabeth I, p. 57, no. 310.

RM: Testamentum Iohannis Mabb

In the name of God, amen. The seventh 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 sound and perfect memory, and also of good health in body without debility or trouble of sickness (praised and magnified be the name of God therefore), do make, ordain and declare this my present testament in manner and form following, that is to say:

First and principally I bequeath my soul into the hands of Almighty God, in hope and sure confidence of eternal life in his everlasting kingdom amongst his holy saints and angels, and that through th' only merits and deserts of mine alone Saviour, Jesus Christ, whereof I have certain assurance through the certificate of his only Spirit, my Comforter,

which testifieth and witnesseth the same to my soul and conscience, by means of which faith I have laid sure hold of the mercy and favour of God, three persons distinct and one only Deity, and I know that I shall enjoy the hope thereof, in which hope I commend my body to the earth, knowing that our merciful God will raise it again at the general Resurrection, when I shall enjoy his presence both in body and soul;

My funerals I leave to the discretion of the overseers of this my testament;

And as for such goods and chattels, debts, plate, money and jewels as are to me appertaining or as God hath lent me in this miserable world, I give, will and dispose the same in manner and form following, that is to say:

First I will that mine executrix, which hereafter I do name in these presents to execute and fulfil this my present testament, shall well and truly content and pay all such debts and duties as of right and conscience I shall happen to owe to any person or persons as they severally shall be due to be paid without any further delay or contradiction;

And after my debts paid and funerals discharged, I will that all and singular my goods, chattels, debts, plate, money and jewels shall be equally apportioned into three equal parts according to th' ancient custom of this City of London, one of which parts I do give and bequeath to Isabelle, my well-beloved wife, in the name of her part and reasonable portion of all my said goods, chattels and debts and of all other the premises by reason of the said custom to her to be due or belonging;

And one other part of the said three parts I do give and bequeath to and amongst my five sons and three daughters, that is to say, John, Richard, Stephen, Robert, Edward, Mary, Susan and Katherine, and to such other mo children as I shall have hereafter if it please God to send me any mo, to and amongst them equally part and part like to be divided according to the custom aforesaid, and every of their parts which at the time of my decease shall be under their full age of one and twenty years to be delivered unto them severally as they shall accomplish their several age of one and twenty years or day of marriages, so many as be daughters, and the residue which at the time of such my decease shall be of the said full age or shall be then married to have their several parts to them severally delivered within the space of one half year next after my decease;

And if it fortune any of my said children to decease before the accomplishing of the said age of one and twenty years or day of marriage, then I will that the said part of every such of my children shall remain and be equally part and part like to and among such lawful issue of their bodies begotten or to be begotten as they shall happen to leave in life behind them;

And if they leave no such issue or that leaving such issue all the same do fortune to decease within the said age and before marriage, then I will that the said part of every such of my said children so deceasing as aforesaid shall remain to and amongst the survivors or survivor of my said children towards them equally part and part like to be divided;

And if any of my said children and the said issue of their bodies do fortune to decease under the said age and before marriage as abovesaid, then I will that their said parts and portions so deceasing shall be disposed in three equal parts in form following, that is to say, one part to the mending of highways where most need shall be, one other part thereof to the marriages of poor maidens, and the third part thereof I will shall be disposed to the relief of the widow, fatherless and impotent at the discretion of my said overseers;

And the third part of all and singular my said goods, chattels, debts and other the premises I do assign, appoint, give, will and leave to my said executrix therewith well and faithfully to perform this my present testament and last will;

And first I give and bequeath to Katherine, my daughter, one hundred marks of lawful English money, and if the said Katherine, my daughter, do decease under the said age and before marriage, then I do assign, appoint, give and bequeath all the hundred marks aforesaid to and amongst all the residue of my said children surviving (except always John Mabbe, my eldest son, Richard Mabbe, my second son, and Mary, my eldest daughter, and Susan, my second daughter, which are now married already and have had more preferment of my goods than any other my children), and as for Stephen, my third son, although he be not as yet married, yet I have given him in money fifty pounds, and therefore he to be as the other four before written;

Item, I do give and bequeath to Robert and Edward, my two youngest sons, one hundred marks in money to and amongst them equally part and part like to be delivered, and if any of them do decease under th' age aforesaid, I will that his part of the said hundred marks shall remain to the survivor of the same my said two sons;

Item, I give and bequeath towards the relief of the poor children remaining in Christ's Hospital in London five pounds, which five pounds I will to be paid to the several Governors of the same Hospital, charging them to see the same charitably and faithfully bestowed according to my trust reposed in them, whereas most need shall be;

Item, I do appoint, assign and give ten pounds in money to be distributed amongst poor goldsmiths of London and poor widows of goldsmiths, such as be of honest behaviour and most poor, to be distributed at the discretion of the Wardens of the same Company;

Item, I do give and bequeath unto my brother, Nicholas Mabbe, six pounds thirteen shillings four pence in money, and I do by these presents clearly release unto him whatsoever he oweth me besides;

Item, I give and bequeath to my brother-in-law, Humphrey Collie [=Colley], five pounds;

Item, I do give and bequeath to my brother Richard Mabbe his children ten pounds in money [sic] form following, that is to say, to his son, Nicholas Mabbe, dwelling with me, five pounds, and the rest to his other children;

And more I give to my sister Margaret Mabbe her children, five pounds;

And unto my sister, Anne Mabbe her children, six pounds thirteen shillings four pence, over and besides all such money as her husband oweth me, which I clearly remit and forgive him;

And I give unto my sister Dorothy Mabbe her children, five pounds;

And unto my sister, Joan Mabbe, and to her children, five pounds;

And I will that my said several legacies above given to the said children of my said brother, Richard, and of my said sisters shall be to their several children severally divided part and part like, saving Nicholas Mabbe before expressed, and that if any of these several children do decease before the receiving of their parts of my said legacies, that then the part of them so deceasing shall remain to the survivors or survivor of the same children amongst whom such several legacy is by me bequeathed as abovesaid;

Item, I do assign, appoint and give twenty pounds in money to be distributed in the University of Cambridge amongst poor scholars applying their study towards divinity and having most need of help;

Item, I do assign, appoint and give other twenty pounds in like manner to be given and distributed amongst poor scholars applying towards the study of divinity of Oxford;

Item, I will and bequeath five pounds to [+be distributed] amongst the poor inhabitants within the parish of Chaytoun [=Clayton] in Sussex where I was born, and I do give other five pounds towards the mending of the highways in the same parish between the Downs and St. John's or thereabouts as most need shall require;

Item, I do give and bequeath to the poor prisoners abiding in the prisons of Ludgate, Newgate and the two Counters in London and in the Queen's Bench and the Marshalsea in Southwark thirty pounds, that is to say, to the prisoners of every of the same prisons five pounds to be distributed where most need shall be at the discretion of my said overseers;

Item, I do assign, appoint and give six pounds thirteen shillings four pence to be disposed amongst twenty poor widows, and other six pounds thirteen shillings four pence to be disposed to twenty poor maidens' marriages, that is to say, to every of the same widows and maidens six shillings eight pence apiece where my said overseers shall think most charitable and needful;

Item, I do give and bequeath to twelve poor men twelve gowns to be worth fifteen shillings every gown;

Also I will that my water-bearer, Edwards the cobbler, John Newton and Annys' husband (which Annys was sometime my servant) shall have four of those gowns;

Item, I do give unto twelve poor women twelve gowns to be worth thirteen shillings four pence every gown, whereof Annys, sometime my servant before-named, to be one, and water-bearer his wife for one other, and widow Loughtoun also;

Item, I do assign, appoint and give fifty pounds in money to be distributed at the discretion of my said overseers among the poor, sick, sore, lame and comfortless people inhabiting within the City of London, that is to say, to every ward one equal portion according to the bigness or smallness thereof and the necessity of the poor inhabiting, provided always and my will is that no notorious swearer, adulterer or drunkard shall have any part of this my legacy in any wise;

Item, I will that mine executrix and overseer shall provide that twelve sermons be preached by godly and learned preachers within the parish church whereof I shall happen to be a parishioner at the time of my decease, and that the preacher of every such sermon shall have six shillings eight pence of my gift, and thereunto I do give and bequeath four pounds, and my will is that three or four of these sermons (if it may conveniently be obtained) shall be preached by the Right Reverend Father in God the Bishops of London and Mr Sandys, Mr Nowell, Dean of Paul's, Doctor Matthew, Doctor Squire, and Doctor Lewes, or such other the like, as it shall please God to appoint;

Item, I do give and bequeath to every of my servants, both men and women, dwelling with me at the time of my decease thirty shillings apiece to buy them a garment of black withal;

Item, I give to my said overseers, for their pains to be taken in assisting of my executrix of this my present testament, to every of them a ring of gold with a death's-head and my name in it, and the same to be worth forty shillings apiece, and I give to every of them and to every of their wives one black gown apiece, or five pounds in money to every man and his wife to buy it withal;

Other blacks I will none to be given, and namely to the rich;

The residue of all and singular my goods, chattels, debts, plate, jewels and ready money not before by me in these presents given, willed or bequeathed, I give and bequeath unto Isabelle, my well-beloved wife, whom I make, ordain & constitute the sole and only executrix of this my present testament and last will;

And I make and ordain overseers thereof my son, John Mabbe, my son-in-law, John Dolman, my son, Richard Mabbe, and my son-in-law, William Conyars(?), desiring them to assist my said executrix with their best advice and counsel to the better performances of this my present testament, willing and charging both my said executrix and overseers that all my goods and chattels whatsoever that I shall have at the time of my decease be not valued or sold with favour or partiality, but that they be justly and truly priced as they shall be worth, that my children sustain no wrong or injury in their parts and portions to them belonging;

And also my will is, and I make my humble and hearty request to the right honourable Lord Mayor of the City of London which then shall be and to his worshipful brethren th' aldermen, that every such person or persons as shall have any part or parts of any of my said children's portions in the time of their nonage shall as well be bound with their good and sufficient sureties to give some reasonable yearly portion towards the bringing up of such child or children whose portion or portions they shall have (that such my child or children may be brought up in virtue and learning and so be made more meet to serve God and this commonwealth), as also truly to pay and satisfy every such portion and portions to such as it shall belong according to my will herein above declared and th' ancient custom of this honourable City in that behalf used;

And I do clearly renounce, revoke and make void by these presents all other former testaments, wills and legacies whatsoever heretofore by me made or declared, and I denounce, declare, ratify and establish this to be mine only last will and testament;

And in witness thereof I have hereunto subscribed my name with mine own hand and thereunto have also set my seal the day and year above-written in the presence of these witnesses whom I have desired also to subscribe their names. By me, John Mabbe.
Witness: Andrew Palmer.

Probatum fuit suprascriptum testamentum apud London coram venerabili viro magistro Willelmo Drury legum doctore curie prerogatiue Cantuariensis commissario etc Decimo quinto die mensis Ianuarij Anno Domini iuxta cursum et computacionem ecclesie Anglicane millesimo quingentesimo octogesimo secundo Iuramento Petri Johnson notarij publici procuratoris Izabelle Relicte et executricis etc Cui commissa fuit administracio bonorum etc De bene etc Iurati

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before the worshipful Master William Drury, Doctor of the Laws, Commissary etc. of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury etc., 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 by the oath of Peter Johnson, notary public, proctor of Isabelle, relict and executrix etc., to whom administration was granted of the goods etc., sworn to well etc.]