

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 7 December 1590 and proved 20 January 1591, of Edward Cordell (d. 9 December 1590), one of the Six Clerks in Chancery, a younger brother 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

The testator was a younger son of John Cordell and Emme Webbe. For the will of the testator's mother, dated 3 November 1554 and proved 14 February 1555, see TNA PROB 11/37/366.

According to his mother's will, the testator had three brothers and two sisters:

* **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 may have been 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 at:

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

However according to the History of Parliament, the testator 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 her will, the testator's mother leaves a bequest to his wife, whose name is unknown.

* **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.** In her will, the testator's mother refers to her as 'Thomasine Watson, my daughter', and bequeaths to 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 reached the age of 16.

Thomasine married secondly Gilbert Gager (d.1590), by whom she was the mother of the 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 on 30 June 1589.

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

For litigation brought by the executors of Sir William Cordell against Thomasine Gager and Peter Crisell and his wife Mary concerning Sir William Cordell's estate, see TNA C 2/Eliz/C15/60.

MARRIAGES AND CHILDREN

The testator married firstly Elizabeth Harrison (d.1586) of Norfolk.

The testator married secondly Abigail Heveningham, the daughter of Sir Anthony Heveningham (d. 22 November 1557) and Mary Shelton (d.1571). The testator's second wife was a Gentlewoman of the Privy Chamber to Queen Elizabeth. See Emerson at:

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

The testator's second wife was the widow of Sir George Digby (1550-1587), the son of John Digby of Coleshill, Warwickshire, by Anne Throckmorton, the daughter of Sir George Throckmorton (d.1552). By George Digby she had three sons, Sir Robert Digby

(1574-1618), Philip Digby and John Digby (1580-1653), 1st Earl of Bristol, and a daughter, Elizabeth Digby. See the will of Sir George Throckmorton, TNA PROB 11/36/298; 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>

See also the History of Parliament entry for Sir Robert Digby (1574-1618) at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/digby-sir-robert-1574-1618>

For an arbitration award dated 5 October 1591 involving the Bailiff and Burgesses of Stratford-upon-Avon, the testator's widow, Abigail Heveningham Digby Cordell, and the executors of the will of Sir John Huband (d. 24 December 1583), see Shakespeare Birthplace Trust ER 2/22.

For the Heveningham family, see the inquisitions post mortem taken after the death of Sir Anthony Heveningham (d. 22 November 1557), TNA C 142/115/26, TNA C 142/116/71 and TNA C E 150/652/23, and:

http://www.bigenealogy.com/suffolk/heveningham_parish.htm

See also Hunter, Joseph, 'The History and Topography of Ketteringham in the County of Norfolk', *Norfolk Archaeology*, Vol. III, (Norwich: Charles Muskett, 1852), pp. 245-314 at p. 288:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=GwAVAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA288>

See also 'The Manor of Ketteringham' at:

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~heveningham/page18.html>

For the testator, see also the History of Parliament entry at:

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

Septimo Decembris Anno Regni Elizabethhe Regine etc xxxijtis 1590

LM: T {estamentum} Edwardi Cordell ar {migeri}

In dei nomine Amen. I, Edward Cordell, esquire, one of the Six Clerks of the Chancery, do make this my last will and testament, being at this present in good and perfect memory, but greatly fearing myself hereafter lest I should grow weaker, do thus declare in brief my will and mind concerning my worldly matters whatsoever, both lands and goods, which I do dispose in form following, viz.:

And first for the disposition of all my freehold and customary or copyhold lands and tenements as well in possession as in remainder, reversion or otherwise within the parishes, hamlets or towns of Lavenham, Shimpling, Acton, Melford alias Long Melford, Alpheton [+and?] Borley within the said several counties of Suffolk and Essex or elsewhere within the realm of England, with all my right of patronage, presentations and advowsons of churches or chapels whatsoever, and also all that my aerie of swans or swan-marks lying and being in Cambridgeshire, my mind and will is that my dear and well-beloved wife, Dame Abigail, shall have and [+I?] do give the same to her and to her heirs forever;

And although for brevity's sake she shall and do lack the ordinary and usual conveyance and assurance thereof or of any part or parcel thereof in due form according to the several customs and usages(?) of the said several manors or any of them, yet my full mind and will is and I do hereby give and bestow all the same upon her as aforesaid, and do heartily require and desire that she may enjoy the same and be admitted accordingly, for if God spare my life to do and accomplish the same, I will undoubtedly perform it with speed and effect;

Nevertheless, if God do otherwise dispose of me, then I require my servants and friends at th' execution hereof to be witnesses of my full will and mind therein;

And if at any time she shall be molested or disturbed of the quiet enjoying thereof in form aforesaid by my sister Gager or any her children after her death, or by herself in her lifetime, that then I will that all the legacies hereafter given unto them, the said children, by this my said will shall remain to my said wife, and that they shall receive no part of those my said legacies by this my will given unto them until their said mother have released and done all manner of acts for confirmation of my said wife's estate as shall be devised by the counsel of my said wife;

Item, I give unto my said wife my house in Fleet Street with the garden and commodities there to her and her heirs forever;

Item, I give unto my now wife's children the sum of (blank) to be disposed by my executors;

Item, I give to and amongst my servants now in household the sum of (blank) also to be disposed at the discretion of my executors;

Item, I give unto the poor within the parish poor [sic?] parishes of Melford where I was born and St Dunstan's where now I do dwell the sum of (blank) to be likewise disposed by my executors;

Item, I give my part and all my freehold lands within the several county [sic] of Lincoln and York unto my now dear wife, Dame Abigail Digby, and her heirs forever;

Also forasmuch as my good brother, Sir William Cordell, knight, late Master of the Rolls, founded and erected an almshouse at Long Melford in Suffolk aforesaid, and appointed the same upon trust to divers personages of honour and worship for the more assured continuance thereof ever to remain accordingly as is limited in and by the last will and testament of the said Sir William Cordell, I therefore, because some remissness or slackness hath happened by reason the said honourable and worshipful personages have not hitherto accomplished the same trust, do now most heartily and humbly desire and require further the right worshipful Sir Gilbert Gerard, knight, Master of the Rolls, John [f. 28r] Puckering, one of her Majesty's Sergeants at Law, and my well-beloved brother-in-law, Sir Arthur Heveningham, knight, to take hold and proceed for the effecting and establishing of the said almshouse according to the true intent and meaning of my said brother Sir William Cordell's will, which I do allow and confirm in all points touching the same as much as in me lieth, and now the disposition of the said almshouse and the lands thereto belonging being by inheritance laid upon me by law, as by counsel I am advised;

Item, I give unto my sister Gager's children the sum of (blank) to be disposed by my executors;

Item, I do ordain, constitute and make my said well-beloved wife my executor to see this my will and mind accordingly performed;

In witness whereof I have put to my hand and seal the day and year above-written. Edward Cordell. These being witnesses: Alice Digby, William Gerard, John Hall, Peter Robinson, John Whiteheade.

Memorandum: That my master at the execution hereof being desired to remember my Lady's children for some legacy to them made answer, 'What need I give them anything whenas I have given my wife all?'. William Gerard.

Probatum fuit Testamentum suprascriptum apud London coram ven{er}abili viro m{agist}ro Will{el}mo Lewyn Legum doctore ad exercendum officium Mag{ist}ri Custodis siue Com{m}isarij Curie Prerogatiue Cant{uariensis} L{egi}time deputat{o} vicesimo die mens{is} Ianuarij Anno D{omi}ni iuxta cursum et computac{i}o{n}em eccl{es}ie Anglicane Mill{es}imo Quingentesimo Nonagesimo Iuramento m{agis}tri Thome Lovell notarij publici procur{ator}is d{omi}ne Abigalle Digby relicte dicti

defunct{i} et executric{is} in h{uius}mo{d}i testamento no{m}i{n}at{e} Cui
com{m}issa fuit administrac{i}o De bene et fidel{ite}r administrand{o} etc Iurat{i}

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before the worshipful Master William Lewin, Doctor of the Laws, lawfully deputed to exercise the office of Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the twentieth 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 ninetieth by the oath of Master Thomas Lovell, notary public, proctor of Lady Abigail Digby, relict of the said deceased and executrix named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted, sworn to well and faithfully administer etc.]