

SUMMARY: The document below is the will, dated 17 November 1600 and proved 16 January 1601, of Oxford's servant and officer, Nicholas Bleake. For a debt of £54 6s 2d acknowledged by Oxford to Nicholas Bleake in the schedule of debts attached to Oxford's indenture of 30 January 1575, see ERO D/DRg 2/25. For Oxford's lease of a cottage at Castle Hedingham to Nicholas Bleake on 1 April 1580, see Lancashire Record Office DDK/1404/20. For the fine in the Court of Common Pleas dated 18 November 1584 by which clear title to a messuage and other property in Sible Hedingham and Gosfield passed from Oxford to Nicholas Bleake, see TNA CP 25/2/132/1695/26/7ELIZIMICH, Item 41. For a recognizance in the amount of £400 acknowledged by Oxford to Nicholas Bleake on 16 November 1584 in connection with that sale, see TNA C 54/1196, Part 23. For Nicholas Bleake's deposition sworn 23 April 1594 in Oxford's lawsuit against Roger Harlakenden for fraud in the sale of Colne Priory, in which he is described as 'Nicholas Bleake of Ware in the county of Hertford, yeoman, of the age of 53 years or thereabouts', see TNA C 24/239/46. For Nicholas Bleake's deposition sworn 1 February 1599 in a lawsuit brought by Judith Ruswell against Oxford in which he is described as 'Nicholas Bleake of Ware in the county of Hertfordshire, yeoman, of the age of 57 years or thereabouts', see TNA C 24/269, Part 1, No. 68. For a lawsuit brought by Roger Harlakenden (d.1603) against Nicholas Bleake with respect to an alleged lease of Great Chiffin, see TNA C 3/273/36. For a lawsuit brought by Oxford alleging that Roger Harlakenden had in his possession evidences belonging to Oxford in which Oxford included Nicholas Bleake and some of his other former servants as defendants, apparently in order to obtain their testimony as witnesses, see TNA C 24/277, Part 1, Piece 35.

The testator's son-in-law, Simon Ive, mentioned in the will below, was also personally known to Oxford. In his deposition sworn 6 May 1594 in the lawsuit involving Roger Harlakenden's fraudulent sale of Colne Priory, he is described as 'Simon Ive of Earls Colne in the county of Essex, gentleman, of the age of 30 years & upwards'. Simon Ive was also a witness to Oxford's revocation, dated 3 December 1593, of the commission Oxford had earlier granted to Roger Harlakenden and others concerning Earls Colne grammar school (see Merson, A.D., *Earls Colne Grammar School, Essex* (Colchester: Benham, 1975), p. 20). It seems likely that the musician Simon Ive (d. 1662), who was born at Ware in Hertfordshire and baptized on 20 July 1600, was the testator's grandson, referred to in the will below as 'Simon Ive the younger'.

At the time of his death, the testator was host of the White Hart Inn, which he appears to have held by lease from his late aunt, Alice Abbott. The Inn is mentioned in the *Victoria County History* as dating from at least 1511:

There are still a great number of inns in Ware surviving from the time when the main road brought many travellers through the town. The 'White Hart,' mentioned in 1511

The White Hart is also mentioned in an indenture of feoffment of 20 March 1612:

13. The White Hart Estate.—The indenture of 1612 further recites that a donor unknown gave a messuage or inn called the 'White Hart' with appurtenances. The 'White Hart' was

pulled down many years ago, and the property now consists of two shops in High Street, Ware, producing £88 yearly and a slaughter-house producing £20 yearly.

See 'Parishes: Ware', *A History of the County of Hertford, Volume 3* (1912), pp. 380-397, available online.

RM: Testamentum Nicholaij Bleake

In the name of God, Amen. The seventeenth of November one thousand six hundred in the three and forty 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, Nicholas Bleake of Ware in the county of Hertford, yeoman, being sick in body but of a good mind and perfect remembrance (thanks be unto Almighty God therefore), I do here make my last will and testament in manner and form following:

First, I bequeath my soul unto Almighty God and to my only Saviour & Redeemer, Jesus Christ, by whose death and bloodshedding I hope steadfastly in faith to receive pardon, remission and forgiveness of all my sins, and to enjoy his everlasting kingdom;

Secondly, I do bequeath my body to the earth to be buried at the discretion of my executors;

Item, I will and bequeath to Eleanor Bleake, my well-beloved wife, the lease of the house wherein I now dwell called or known by the name of the White Hart in Ware, with all the household whatsoever, with all other goods, chattels and cattle, plate, jewels and other implements (except hereafter excepted) whatsoever they be, to have and hold to her own proper use during her natural life, and after her decease of this mortal life my will is that the said lease, chattels, cattle, goods, plate, jewels and all other implements, whatsoever the same be, to be praised to the use of my sons and daughters Nicholas Bleake, Richard Bleake, with my daughters Anne Ive and Julyan Crosse, by my four overseers, they taking to them two more whom they shall think meet, and I will that their charges be borne during the praisement thereof;

And the said praisement so [=to be] made, I will and bequeath to Nicholas Bleake, my son, the one half thereof; the third part thereof I give & bequeath to Richard Bleake, my younger son; and the fourth part thereof to Julyan Crosse with young John Crosse, her son, or any other such child or children as God may bless her hereafter, out of which said four parts I will that all such debts be paid in some part as hereafter is expressed or nominated, and all such legacies in some part hereafter named;

First, I owe unto one Mr Lochard of Blackfriars, London, haberdasher and feather-maker, the sum of forty-four pounds, to be paid the three and twentieth day of November one thousand six hundred and one;

And to Mr Morgan Thomas of Bedlam [=Bethlehem], merchant tailor, four pounds eight shillings nine pence;

To John Grave of Ware, beer-brewer, upon two several bills, thirty-four pounds;

To William Cocke, my head ostler, ten pounds;

And to William Armstrong of Ware, beer-brewer, upon a bill of five pounds, three pounds; thother forty shillings is my aunt's debt;

Item, to one Mr Watson of London for the debt of my aunt for one Francis Birchley [=Berkeley?], eleven pounds;

Item, to Christopher Hudson of Ware, baker, eight pounds;

And to John Squire of Ware, baker, four pounds;

To the children of Anthony Thorpe as my aunt's gift, ten pounds;

To Nicholas and Katherine Bircheley [=Berkeley?] as my aunt's gift, five pounds;

To John Haggard as part of his wife's legacy, thirty-four shillings ten pence;

Provided always that no sum of the said debts and legacies to be paid until such time as one bond of forty pounds be procured out or from the hands of Mr Thomas Fanshawe of Ware, esquire, from the forty shillings of William Armstrong of Ware downwards, for wood and hay praised at thirty pounds by an outlawry brought down after her decease at the suit of one Thomas Banckes [=Banks?], late her chamberlain, for a sum of fourteen pounds which he was paid the most part, which outlawry is of no force nor effect for the error therein committed in the original, which is 'Alice Albott' for 'Alice Abbott';

Item, I give and bequeath to Nicholas Bleake my ring of gold graven with a fish called a bleak;

And to Richard Bleake my ring of gold graven with a fish called a bream lately given me by my cousin, Dorothy Breame, late of Fleet Street, London, deceased;

And to my daughter, Julyan Crosse, one ring of gold set with a ruby and a blue sapphire;

To my daughter, Anne Ive, my silver boat that I use at the court;

Provided always and my will is that out of the said four parts that thirty pounds be deducted out, to and for the use of my daughter, Anne Ive, the said sum to be delivered into the hands of my overseers to be paid monthly by six shillings eight pence towards her maintenance, and all other such debts before nominated (except before excepted);

Item, I give and bequeath to my sister, Anne Massinger, five pounds of current money to be paid within one year after my decease and my wife's, if she live, and for all other sums of money whatsoever that she oweth, I do freely forgive it her;

Item, I give to Augustine Jordan, her son, forty shillings;

To my cousin, Katherine Thorney, forty shillings;

To my sister, Susan Bleake, forty shillings;

To Michael Bleake's daughter, twenty shillings;

To Harry Bleake's two daughters, ten shillings apiece;

To Elizabeth Comberliche, ten shillings;

All which said sums I will to be paid within one year next after my decease and the decease of Eleanor Bleake, my wife, and that my son, Nicholas, after our departure of this mortal life shall have time for the term of nine months to make the best of the said lease and goods etc;

Item, I give and bequeath to Anne Ive, my daughter, all that my lease that my father, one Edward Chapman of Whaddon in the county of Cambridge, now dwelleth in, which I lately bought of the right worshipful Mr William Moore of Haddon within the county of Oxenford, with this condition, that the said Simon Ive nor Anne Ive disturb my father-in-law during his natural life, neither extort any excessive rent of the poor woman his wife if she chance to outlive him, but if she dwell not in the house, that the said Simon Ive, with one surety with him, to be bound to her to answer to her use thirty shillings a year for her better maintenance, which lease, with a poll deed under my hand and seal, I will that they be sealed up in a bag and delivered over to the hands of my overseers to be kept in the church chest of Ware only to the use of my said daughter, Anne Ive, and her sons Robert Ive, Nicholas Ive, John Ive, and Simon Ive the younger;

And towards the payment of those my debts and legacies, I give and bequeath such debt as is at this time owing, if they may be recovered, which is to say:

Of my Lord Cromwell, late of Emeswell in the county of Norfolk, threescore ten pounds, for the which I have a single bond of one hundred pounds;

And of my Lady Heydon of Norfolk for divers victuals with all her horses lying here two terms, sixteen pounds ten shillings, of which sum she left a nag or horse at my house praised at twenty-six shillings eight pence, which is to be deducted;

And of Sir Theophilus Finch of Norfolk, knight, six pounds;

Item, I give to the poor of Ware, to be given after my decease, forty shillings, to be paid twenty shillings a year if I do not give that sum or more in my lifetime;

Item, for the house in Mill Lane lately purchased of my late uncle Thomas Birch, and confirmed by my cousin, James Birch, as joint purchaser with him, if therefore the said James Birch will have the said house again, repaying the said sum I paid and for such reparations there lately done, I will he shall have the same again, or else my executors to sell it for their best use or benefit towards the payment of such debts and legacies as is before mentioned;

Provided always that if any one of my sons, Nicholas Bleake or Richard Bleake, shall at any time after my decease or departure of this life shall at any time hereafter seem to disturb, molest or otherwise by any other ways or means, either by word or deed, law or any other controversy whatsoever, my wife during her natural life, that then I do will and bequeath to the said Nicholas Bleake but six shillings in money, to be paid twelve pence a year till the said sum be run out, and also to Richard Bleake I give and bequeath but three shillings, to be paid by sixpence the year, and three parts of that so given to them I give to the use of my daughters' children, Anne Ive, and Julyan Crosse's son, John Crosse, or any other such child or children as God may hereafter bless her withal;

And furthermore if any of my two sons shall happen to depart this mortal life before the decease of Eleanor, my wife, then I will that his part be equally divided to the use of those my children as shall then be living;

And for the fourth part yet ungiven if my sons tempt law, if any such thing chance to be, I will that then such part be taken into the hands of my overseers, and be employed to a stock for the use of the poor of the town of Ware;

Item, my will is also that upon the praisement of those goods that my elder son shall have & possess, that he shall enter into bond to my overseers in the sum of three hundred pounds that he never become surety for no person nor persons above the sum of forty shillings, except it be for his brother, Richard Bleake, and not for him neither above the sum of twenty pounds;

Item, I give to Father Tanner alias Harbard of Ware my styltes [stilts?] lately bought at London;

And to this my last will & testament I do make Eleanor Bleake and Nicholas Bleake, my eldest son, my full and sole executors;

And I do make for my overseers of this my will my loving cousin, Thomas Birch, Edward Browne of Ware, butcher, and Thomas Swynesed [=Swineshead?] of Ware, postmaster, and John Cason, woollen-draper, and twenty shillings in like manner I give unto Edward Haggard for his pains, the which my will is that they shall have for their pains of any of the goods first to be sold, twenty shillings apiece for their pains;

Item, I give to Richard, my younger son, my chest barred with iron standing in the parlour betwixt the gates, with my liver-coloured fustian suit, my white satin doublet and the lace bound in the russet satin to make him a pair of hose;

I give also my two great instruments for surveying of land, with my portmanteau and the box of instruments with all other things there, all those to be kept by his mother and my overseers till he be one and twenty years of age;

And to this my last will & testament, revoking all other wills heretofore made, I have set to my hand and seal the day and year first above-written;

Postscript: I give Simon Ive my theodolite, the smallest instrument to survey land withal;

Per me, N. Bleake. Sealed and delivered in the presence of us, Thomas Colly, James Birch, the mark of William Cocke, the mark of William Crostewoodd.

Probatum fuit Testamentum suprascriptum apud London coram venerabili viro magistro Iohanne Gibson legum Doctore Curie Prerogatiue Cantuariensis magistro Custode siue Comissario legitime constituto decimo sexto die mensis Ianuarij Anno domini iuxta cursum et computacionem Ecclesie Anglicane millesimo Sexcentesimo Iuramento Mr Iohannis Robinson notarij publici procuratoris Elinore Bleake Relicte et Nicholaij Bleake filij dicti defuncti et Executorum in huiusmodi Testamento nominatorum Quibus commissa fuit Administratio bonorum Iurium et Creditorum eiusdem defuncti de bene et fideliter administrando &c Ad sancta Dei Evangelia Iurati Examinatus

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before the worshipful Master John Gibson, Doctor of the Laws, lawfully constituted Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the sixteenth day of the month of January in the year of the Lord according to the course and reckoning of the English Church the thousand six hundredth, by the oath of Mr John Robinson, notary public, proctor of Eleanor Bleake, relict, and Nicholas Bleake, son of the said deceased and executors named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of the goods, rights and credits of the same deceased, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer etc. Examined]