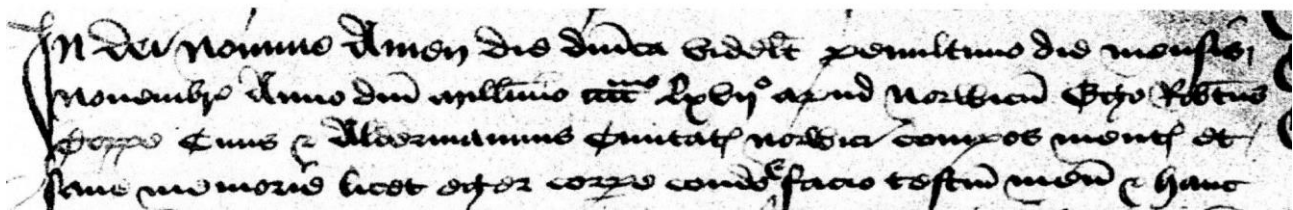


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The Dragon Hall Heritage Volunteers work in partnership with Writers' Centre Norwich, the current tenants of Dragon Hall. Details of how to contact Dragon Hall Heritage Volunteers and of their activities, including talks, walks and performances, can be found on our website: dragonhallnorwich.org.uk

ROBERT TOPPES' WILL

(Translated from the original Latin and transcribed by May Wallace, c.1980)
NRO NCC. WILLS 1468 97 Jekkys M.F.82



The first four lines of Robert Toppes' will, in Latin. His name is at the end of line 2 and the beginning of line 3

TESTAMENT OF ROBERT TOPPE, citizen and Alderman of the city of Norwich.

In the name of God Amen. On Sunday the penultimate day of the month of November, in the year of our lord 1467 at Norwich, I, Robert Toppe, citizen and Alderman of the city of Norwich, being in sound and healthy memory despite sickness of body, compose and make my testament and this my last will in this fashion.

First I leave my soul to almighty God, the blessed virgin Mary, the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul and all the saints, and my body to be buried in the Church of St. Peter of Mancroft, in the Chapel of St. John the Baptist on the north part of the aforesaid Church. Item I leave to the high altar in recompense for tithes forgotten xx marks.

Item I leave to every parish church of the aforesaid city iiis.iiiiid. Item I leave to every poor and decrepit man and woman in the aforesaid city iiiid. Item on the day of y attainment I leave to every chaplain present at my funeral service, and, on the day after, at the mass to pray for my soul iiiid. And in similar fashion to every clerk iid. And as well, I will to every man, woman and child who comes on that day to pray for my soul id. Item I leave to each order of Friars of the aforesaid city to pray especially for my soul xls.

Item I leave to every nun of Carhowe and recluse there to pray for my soul xiid. Item I leave to every full sister of the house of Normannys iiiid. and to every half sister there iid. Item I leave to every poor man of the Hospital of St. Giles in Norwich iid. Item I leave to every prisoner in the Guihalde of Norwich and to every prisoner in the castle of Norwich iid. Item I leave to every leper dwelling outside the gates of Norwich iid.

Item I leave to the repair of the church of Causton xxs. and vis.viiiid. to be distributed amongst the poor of the same town. Item I leave to the repair of the church of Salle iiis.iiiid. and iiis.iiiid. to be distributed amongst the poor of the same town. Item I leave to the repair of the church of Aylesham iiis. iiiid. and iiis. iiiid. to be distributed amongst the poor of the same town. Item I leave to the repair of the church at Wursted iiis.iiiid. and iiis.iiiid. to be distributed amongst the poor of the same town. Item I leave to the repair of the church at Northwalsham iiis. iiiid. and iiis.iiiid. to be distributed amongst the poor of the same town. Item I leave to the church of Upton iiis.iiiid. and iiis.iiiid. to be distributed amongst the poor of the same town. Item I leave to the repair of the church at Obyll (?Oby or E. Byllney) iiis. iiiid. and iiis.iiiid. to be distributed amongst the poor of the same town. Item I leave to the church of St. Nicholas in the town of Great Jernemuth vis.viiiid. And to be distributed amongst the poor of the same town xxs. Item I leave to the repair of the church of Bungay iiis.iiiid. and to be distributed amongst the poor of the same town iiis.iiiid. And to every nun there to pray for my soul xiid. Item I leave to the repair of the church of Beccles in the County of Suffolk iiisiiiid. And to be distributed amongst the poor of the same town vis.viiiid. Item I leave to the repair of the church of Wymundham visviiiid. And to be distributed amongst the poor of the same town vis.viiiid. Item I leave to the repair of the church of Hyngham vis.viiiid. And to be distributed amongst the poor of the same town iiis.iiiid. Item I leave to the repair of the church of East Derham iiis.iiiid. And to be distributed amongst the poor of the same town iiis.iiiid. Item I leave to the repair of the church of Betele iiisiiiid. and to be distributed amongst the poor of the same town iiis.iiiid.

Item I leave to the churchwardens or the custodians of the church of St Mary of Great Melton one chalice value xls. Item to the repair of the church xiiis.iiiid. Item to the repair of the church of All Saints there iiis.iiiid. And for distribution amongst the poor of the same town visviiiid. Item I leave to the repair of the church of the town of Hetirstet iiis.iiiid. and to be distributed amongst the poor of the same town iiis.iiiid.

Item I will that my messuage called Mendhamstathe and also another messuage of mine called Splytts be sold by my executors and with the money coming therefrom they maintain two chaplains to celebrate mass in the church of St. Peter of Mancroft for my soul and the souls of William Ffen and of Agnes, his wife, and the souls of my wives, parents and benefactors as long as the sum received for the same messuages, land and tenements shall be fully spent in celebrating mass for the aforesaid. Except that from the sum so received they give to the poor citizens and women of the said city in the nearest and in the said year ten marks in cash by the hands of my executors to pray for my soul.

Item I will that Joan, my wife, have my capital messuage and inn called le Aungel at Towmelond with the messuage called ffurbisshours with other tenements and rented premises there for herself and her assigns for the rest of her life without any rude interference and that after the death of the said Joan the inn, messuages, tenement and rented premises shall remain to Godfrey, my son, and the heirs of his body lawfully issuing. And if there be no heir of his body then the said inn messuages, tenements and rented premises remain to Margaret, my daughter, and the heirs of her body lawfully issuing. And if there be no heir of the body of the said Margaret, then the aforesaid inn, messuages, tenements and rented premises remain to Alice, my daughter, and her heirs of her body lawfully issuing. And if there be no heir of the body of the said Alice then the aforesaid inn, messuages, tenements and rented premises remain to Elena my daughter, and the heirs of her body lawfully issuing. And if there be no heir of the body of the said Elena then the aforesaid in, messuage, tenements and rented premises shall remain to Anne, my daughter, and the heirs of her body lawfully issuing. And if there be no heirs of the body of the said Anne then I

will that the aforesaid inn, messuages, tenements and rented premises be sold by the advice of the greater part of my executors for the maintenance of two chaplains to celebrate mass for the soul of me, the aforesaid Robert Toppe, the souls of my wives, parents and friends and benefactors in the church of St. Peter of Mancroft aforesaid, each of the aforesaid to receive the sum of two hundred marks fully paid and the rest to be spent in paying for the taxes and tallage of the poor of the city aforesaid, and all the other things within the city assessed or to be assessed on them. And also, to make bridges and roads there where there shall be greatest need and also in the relief of the poor by my executors.

Moreover I will that Joan, my wife, have my capital messuage in which I dwell, late Trowsys, and also the messuage on the corner, late Genneys corner, with appurtenances in the parish of St Peter of Mancroft aforesaid for the rest of her life without impeachment of waste in the maintenance of the son and daughters until each of them shall have reached full estate. And in the event that she herself should die before our aforesaid son and daughters have reached full estate then I will that the executors of my testament have my aforesaid messuage with its appurtenances in the parish aforesaid be sold for the maintenance of my said children, each of them until they have attained full estate.

And I will that then the aforesaid Godfrey, my son, have all and singular my messuage with appurtenances in the parish of St Peter aforesaid, for himself and the heirs of his body lawfully begotten. And if there be no heirs of the body of the said Godfrey I will that the said messuage in the said parish be sold by my executors or their executors and the money coming from the sale of the same be disposed and divided equally amongst Margaret, Alice, Elena and Anne, my daughters, if they then survive. And if all my aforesaid daughters should die before the partition and payment of the aforesaid money then I will that the said money from the sale of the aforesaid messuage with appurtenances should be disposed in pious uses by my executors or their executors.

Item I will that Margaret, my daughter, have my messuage late Mowfelours with five tenements attached to the same in the parish of St Gregory in Norwich. Item I will that Alice, my daughter, have my messuage in Trowes with all lands and meadows pertaining to it. Item I leave to Elaine, my daughter, £100 on her marriage. Item I leave to Anne, my daughter, £100 on her marriage. And in the event that any of my aforesaid daughters die in the meantime then I will that those who survive shall have the residue divided amongst them.

Item I will that the same Joan, my wife, have half of all my silver and gilt vessels of whatsoever kind being within my Kitchen and my buttery and that she should have entirely all my table linen. Item I will that the same Joan, my wife, have all the adornment of all the decorated Hall and my chambers with all trestell tables and le Cupborde there. Moreover I will that the other half of the silver and gilt vessels and the vessels of the kitchen and the buttery be equally divided between Godfrey, my son, and Margaret, Alice, Elena and Anne and in the event that any of the aforesaid son and daughters should die before their marriage then the residue of the aforesaid silver and gilt vessels remain to those who survive.

Item I will that all my messuages, lands and tenements within the city of Norwich, the county of Norfolk and the county of Suffolk not bequeathed above in this testament and thus not sold, be sold by my executors to celebrate mass, relieve the poor and in other charitable works as seem to my executors to profit most the salvation of my soul.

Item I will that Robert, my son, have my manor called Hakonys in Great Melton with all lands and

tenements pertaining to the same manor and purchased by me. So that he should in no way impede or disturb this my last will.

Item I will that William Toppe, my brother, living in London, should have from my moveable goods xx li sterlyng and also my chief gown with my best hood. And that my sister, his wife, have i flat piece of silver which once belonged to my mother. Item I leave to Andrew Kytmay xiiisiiid. Item to John Umfrey iisiiid. Item I leave to each of my counsellors, men and women, iis. iiiiid.

Item I will that my anniversary mass be faithfully observed after my death in the church of St Peter aforesaid every year for the following xx years for my soul. and for the souls of Alice, my wife, and all my children, of William ffen and Agnes his wife, of my father and mother, and also the souls of John Byskeley and his wife and the souls of all my deceased friends and benefactors, and that any priest whatsoever who is present there in surplice at my burial service and at mass the following day to pray for my soul and the aforesaid souls shall have iiiiid and on the same day they shall be given in alms by my executors to those in greatest need iis. iiiiid. Item I will that if I am proved to have done wrong of any kind to any other person let him seek that restitution be made to the same person form my goods and let the same be enjoined to pray for my soul.

Item I leave to the upkeep of the roads between Norwich and Gippewich and between Wymundham and Hetyrsete (blank) Item I will that every man and woman serving in my household and being in my service, for devoted service to me, be rewarded according to the judgement and discretion of my executors. The true residue of all my goods, moveable and immoveable, together with the debts which are owed to me I give and bequeath to my executors to pay for my funeral etc. in doing charitable works as seem to them to be more pleasing to God and to profit my soul.

Therefore I ordain, make and constitute my executors, that is Joan, my wife, William Knyvett esquire, Godfrey Joye, William Sweyne, citizen and Alderman of Norwich and John Whittearet, chaplain, by whom the powers due in this my last testament are to be paid in the manner below, and I ordain and constitute Supervisors of this testament and my last will, that is Master William Yelverton, Knight and Justice of the Bench of our lord king, and John Heydon Expert in Law, and I request them, in consideration of charity that they should prove to my executors good and healthy value according to their discretion, and I will that the same Supervisors for their labours and good counsel be remunerated for their expenses, subject to the discretion of my executors. Item I bequeath to each of my executors for his labour 100s.

Witnessed by these present Master William Sherborne, chaplain, John Traynell, Margaret Swayne, Alice London, Elianore Warde, John Bricham, James Baxster smyth, Clement Nobill and others.
Dated the day, year and place aforesaid.

Item I will that Joan, my wife, in the future should wish to sell the aforesaid inn called the Aungell and messuage called Ffurbisshours with the other tenements and rented premises aforesaid, all the said messuages, tenements and rented premises be sold for as good a price as possible and with the money received from the sale of the said messuages, tenements and rented premises be bought and acquired as much land and as many tenements in one manor, not exceeding in value the total amount coming from the sale of the aforesaid messuages, tenements and rented premises, to have and to hold the aforesaid Joan, my wife, for the rest of her life without any rude interference. And after the death of the same I will that the aforesaid land and tenements remain to Godfrey, my son, Margaret, Alice, Eleanor and Anne, my daughters, and the heirs of their bodies

lawfully issuing, in fee tail as said above regarding the aforesaid inn, messuage, tenements and rented premises.

Note

For a retrospective re-enactment of Toppes' life, beginning with the reading of his will, see the film 'Robert Toppes – A Life Remembered' on YouTube at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCcCjAh5eITqHq4z-JM7KrA>