

Wives, Widows and Wimples Theme 2: Inheritance

Document 1

Ne D 4632: Extract from the will of Sir William Cantelowe of London (21 Feb. 1462, Latin)

Transcript and translation by Kathryn Summerwill

... Et post ipsius domine Elizabeth decessum voluit quod dictum Messuagium habitacionis sue et tenementum proximum annexum cum eorum pertinenciis ac dictas terras et tenementa in dicta parochia sancti Clementis cum pertinenciis suis integre remaneant Willielmo Cantelowe filio suo habendum et tenendum sibi ac heredibus de corpore sue legitime procreate Et pro defectu huiusmodi heredis tunc Remanere inde henrico Cantelowe filio sue et heredibus de corpore suo legitime procreate Et pro defectu huiusmodi heredis tunc Remanere inde filiabus suis Anne Johanne et Katherine ac heredibus de earum corporibus legitime procreate Et pro defectu alicuius huiusmodi heredis de earum corporibus legitime procreate Tunc Remanere inde Thome Cantelowe filio suo...

... And after the death of the same Dame Elizabeth he wishes that the same messuage of his habitation and the annexed tenement nearby, with all their appurtenances, and the said lands and tenements in the said parish of St Clements with their appurtenances, should remain together to William Cantelowe his son, to have and to hold to him and the heirs of his body lawfully procreated. And in case of the default of such heirs, to remain to Henry Cantelowe his son, and the heirs of his body lawfully procreated. And in case of the default of such heirs, to remain to his daughters Anne, Joan and Katherine and the heirs of their body lawfully procreated. And in case of the default of such heirs of their bodies, to remain to Thomas Cantelowe his son...

Document 2

Pa L 2: Extract from bill of complaint of Elizabeth Whitfield, née Swillington (second half of 15th century [after 1456], English)

Transcript by Kathryn Summerwill. Translation by Kathryn Summerwill and Gavin Cole

The Compleintz heme of þe full gret Iniuries and of þe vnconciently demenyng of Elizabeth Whitfeld after þe [-] of Margaret late Wiffe to sir John Gra knyght, auncestre to þe same Elizabeth in þe fourme specified [-] herto annexed, caused by Rauffe late lord Cromwell, to þe gret disheriticoun and hurt of hir and hir heirs for [-] without your gode gracez conciently shewed to your said besechers, folowe hereafter

¶ First þe same lord . sent oon Herry of Twhayts and other with hym . with wepons of werr vnto Drifeld on Yorkis wold . þe Friday next after lawe sonday . and ther and þan forcibly toke þe

The complaints of the full great injuries and of the unconsciously demeaning of Elizabeth Whitfield after the [death] of Margaret, late wife of Sir John Gra, knight, ancestor of the same Elizabeth, in the form specified [and] hereto annexed, caused by Ralph, late Lord Cromwell, to the great dis inheriting and hurt of her and her heirs for [ever], without your good graces consciously showed to your said besechers, follow hereafter.

First, the same lord sent one Harry of Twhayts and others with him, with weapons of war, to Driffild on the Yorkshire Wolds on the Friday after Low Sunday [the Sunday after Easter]. And there and then they forcibly took the same Elizabeth, and carried her from there

same Elizabeth and fro thens
hir caried agayn hir will, by nyght **and**
brought hir vn to Lincoln afore þe same
lorde ~~who þen called his~~ who þen calling hir
his ky[-]
and þat he wold help hir to recouer hir
Inheritaunce þat **with** wrong was holden
fro hir.

¶ And þen þe same lord Cromwell sent þe
same Elizabeth vnto þe Castell of Tatesale,
where she was
straungely demeaned **and** gouerned . and
for faute of socour and help by þe sekness
of mygrayne she þere by **pro**cesse of
tyme lost hir eye . and enblemysshid for
euer . for faut of help **and** leechcraft.

¶ Att þe furst commyng of þe said lorde to
þe saide Castell he somdele comforted hir .
to þe þentent to haue hir livelode a
within þe same weke sent to hir . John
Fulneby John Kighhley John Tailbois and
William Stanlowe [-]
þey with gentill langage meoved **and**
counsailed hir to be reuled **after** þentent of
þe same lorde and to [-]
hir right of hir Inheritaunce of þe manour
landez **and** tenementz in a bill herto
annexed . specified . Vnto hym [-]
she shuld haue good Inogh

against her will by night, and brought her
to Lincoln before the same lord, who then
calling her his kin, [said that] he would
help her to recover her inheritance that
was wrongly held from her.

And then Lord Cromwell sent Elizabeth to
the castle of Tattershall, where she was
remarkably demeaned and governed and
for want of succour and help, by the
sickness of migraine, she there by process
of time lost her eye and was blemished for
ever, because she had no help or
leechcraft [medical attention].

When the lord first came to the castle he
somewhat comforted her, intending to
have her livelihood, and within the week
sent to her John Fulneby, John Kighhley,
John Tailbois and William Stanlowe. With
gentle language they moved and
counselled her to be ruled according to the
intentions of the same lord, and to [grant]
him her right of her inheritance of the
manors, lands and tenements in a bill
hereto annexed, [and said] she should
have good enough [in return].

Document 3

Special Collection JN147.T4 : Extract from Magna Carta (1215, Latin)
From Richard Thomson, *An historical essay on the Magna charta of King John ...*
(London : Printed for John Major ... and Robert Jennings ..., 1829), 68-69

No transcript or translation, as the original is in English and is printed

Document 4

WLC/LM/6, f. 1: Heldris de Cornuälle, 'Le Roman de Silence', lines 308-326
(early 13th century, French)
Transcript by Kathryn Summerwill. Translation by Theresa Tyers

Or a lirois ebayns **grant** ire
Ahi . ahi . fait il chaeies
Quel duel **por** .ii. orphenes pucieles
Que mes barons en ai **per**dus
Jen sui certes **moult** **esper**dus
Mais **par** lefoi **que** doi saint pere
Ja feme niert mais iretere
Ens el roiamе dengletiere
Por tant **com** iaie a tenir tiere

Now King Ebain was overcome with anger
and fury.
Ah! Ah! he cried in Heaven's name -
what grief for two orphaned girls
(that has caused) my barons to have been
lost to me.
I am, truly, distraught.
But here, by the faith, with which I am
bound to Saint Peter¹

Et cen iert ore la ueniance
Deceste **nostre** mes estance
Laise fait a tols iurer
Por bien lesairement durer
Alquant lefont ireement
Et liplusor **moult** liement
Qui nen donroient une tille
Mais cil **qui** na mais une fille
Et a ballier **grant** teneure
Cuidies **quil** nait alcuer **rancure**

(I swear) that never again will a woman
inherit
in the Kingdom of England.
Therefore, for as much as I do hold this
land,
And, as I have now adjudged, from now on
this will be the retribution
for this, our loss, and our plight.
All were summoned (as was the custom) to
swear to uphold
that the pronouncement that the King had
made that day would remain in force.
Some did it very angrily
But most did it quite gladly.
for (of course) in having nothing to give
they would (gladly) give an axe.
But for those who had no more than a
daughter
and who held great estates from the King
Who would say that their hearts were not
filled with bitterness?

1. Swearing by St Peter would probably be a solemn oath in the presence of witnesses, with hand laid on relics or on a manuscript of the Gospel

Document 5

WLC/LM/6, f. 222v: Heldris de Cornuälle, 'Le Roman de Silence', lines 6633-6646 (early 13th century, French)

Transcript by Gavin Cole. Translation by Theresa Tyers

Li rois a dit . iii . mos roials
Silence **moult** estes loials
Miols ualt certes ta loialtes
Que ne face ma roialtes
Il nest si **preciose** gemme
Netels tresors com bone feme
Nus hom ne poroit **esproisier**
Feme **qui** na soig **de** boisier
Silences ses **quas** recoure
Por cho **que** tu as si oure
Amer te uoelent manaidier
Sire cho me puet bien aidier
Ses **que** io ferai por tamor
Que iamais nen oras clamor
Femes raront lor iretage

The king made a declaration -
'Silence you are very loyal,
Indeed the value of your loyalty
Is more than equal to my royalty.
There is no more precious jewel,
No treasure equal to that of a virtuous
woman.
No man could put a price on
A woman who does not practice deceit.
Silence, know that you have saved yourself
Because of your loyal deeds.
I wish to befriend you and protect you'.
'Sire, you can indeed help me'.
'Know (now) what I will do for your loyalty
and fidelity¹,
And in this way you will never have cause
for appeal -
Women will (once more) have their
inheritance.

1. The word *t'amor* means 'love' but also has a wide range of platonic meanings. It can also have the sense of loyalty.