



# North East Inheritance

## Wills and Local History

### Codicil of Dame Elizabeth Freville of Walworth, widow

In a codicil to her will made in 1630 Dame Elizabeth Freville orders 10s to be distributed to the poor of Heighington every fortnight for up to twelve months 'in consideration of the dearth & scarcity that is like to ensue this present yeare'. She had already created a charity for the parishes of Sedgfield and Bishop Middleham in her will: every year eighty of the poorest parishioners were to receive 2d each, and three local apprentices were to be bound, though not to weavers or any other poor trades as she is careful to stipulate. The land she directed be purchased to fund this charity, Poor Carrs (86 acres), can be traced in the Bishop Middleham 1839 Tithe Map under the ownership of The Poor of Sedgfield. Freville's charity is now administered as part of a larger fund of Relief in Need Charities for parishes in the area, and regulated by the Charity Commission. In 2007 £23,835 of the fund's £29,391 income was directed towards helping those in hardship, need or distress.



Durham Probate Records DPRI/1/1630/F9/3

Wheras I dame Elizabeth Frevile of Wallworth in the county palatyne of Durham widow did make my last will & testament dated the first daie of July 1630, I do by this present Codicill to be annexed to my will, give & bequeath to Mr Ferdinando Morecroft one of the prebendaries of Durham & vicar of Highington & to Mr Raph Richardson vicar of Acliff unto whom I have ben muche beholden in the time of my present visitacon of sicknes iii [3] <sup>li</sup> a peice. Item I give to my Nephew John Jenison as an additament to that which I have bequeathed to him by my will xxx [30] <sup>li</sup>. Also I give to my servant Ann Parkinson twenty nobles & to Ann the wife of Nicholas Petifer five poundes & two laced aprons & a band of my wearing linnen. Item I give all the residue of my wearing clothes & linnen (not disposed of) to be equally devided betwixt Mary Dighton widow & the said Ann Parkinson my servant. Item I give to Elizabeth Gifford & Francis Gifford daughters of Mr Symon Gifford twenty shillinges a peice. Item I give to Robert Bellarby my late servant fower markes. Item wheras I have placed of late my Nephew Richard Frevile at Cambridge & did give to him ten poundes a yeare hetherto for his better maintenance out of my desire of his well doing I do referr the continuance therof for three years longer to the discretion of my Nephew Sir John Calverley & my brother Thomas Jenison. Item my further will is (in consideracion of the dearth & scarcity that is like to ensue this present yeare) that my Executor shall give <every fortnight> tenn shillinges to be distributed unto the poore of Heighington parishe by Christofer Rayne & the said payment to begin [from] the time that my said Executor shall break up howse at Wallworth & to continew untill Michaelmas next following. And wheras by my said [will and] testament I did give & dispose so muche of suche howsehold stuffe as should be remainyng in my handes undisposed of which was my late h- ... .. – ference unto a Booke or Inventory bearing date the xxiiii<sup>th</sup> [24<sup>th</sup>] daie of February 1624 it more fully appeareth ... .. question, doubtes or differences be made or do arise by my Nephews George Frevile Richard Frevile Robert Frevile & Nicholas [Frevile] ... of them, touching the appraysement valuacion devisiion & distribucion of the same or anie parte therof; or question be made by th- ... of them, what were truly the goodes of my said husbandes in the said booke expressed & sett downe the decision & determinacion the ... –erred wholly to my said Nephew Sir John Calverley & my brother Thomas Jenison. And I do further declare that whatsoever ... howsehold stuff is marked onely with the lettres E F was no parte of my said husbandes goodes, but provided by my selfe ... –s death. Item I give to Mr Robert Robson of Bishopp Aucland five poundes. In witnesse wherof I have herunto sett my hand [&] seale the second daie of October in the sixt yeare of the raigne of our soveraigne Lord Charles by the grace of God Kyng [of] England Scotland France & Ireland, defendor of the faith &c. 1630.

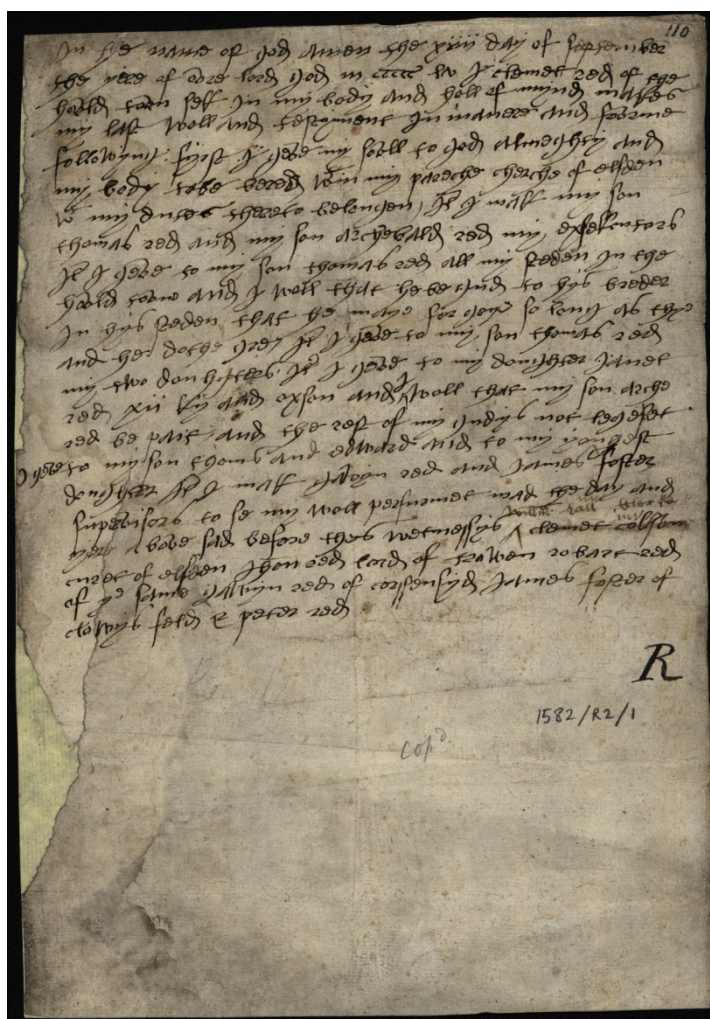
Elizabeth Frevile

**Glossary:**

<i>mark</i>	a coin worth 13 shillings and 6 pence
<i>noble</i>	a coin worth 6 shillings and 8 pence
<i>visitacion</i>	a time of sickness

## Will of Cemet Red [Clement Reed] of Elsdon

Regional dialects have largely been lost to us, though the odd local word lives on to confuse the foreigner from Durham or Newcastle. As a Reedsdale man Clement Reed spoke a version of Northern English which retained many old Scandinavian words, like bairn for example. He or his local clerk writes phonetically, and thus the speech carries to us through his words: 'I geve to my son Thomas Red all my steden [farm-house and outbuildings] in the hould toun and I woll that he be gud to hys breder [brother] in hys steden that he maye for goye [forego] so long as thye and he dothe gre [agree, 'gree-ah']'. The inventory also includes 'ky [kine]', 'stotys [young castrated oxen]' and 'nout [cattle]'. The language of this will was highlighted by James Raine in the first Surtees Society volume of transcriptions of wills and inventories published in 1835. The different dialects across the diocese – burns in the north and becks in the south for example - reflect its history of invasion and the movement of migrant industrial workers.



Durham Probate Records DPRI/1/1582/R2/1

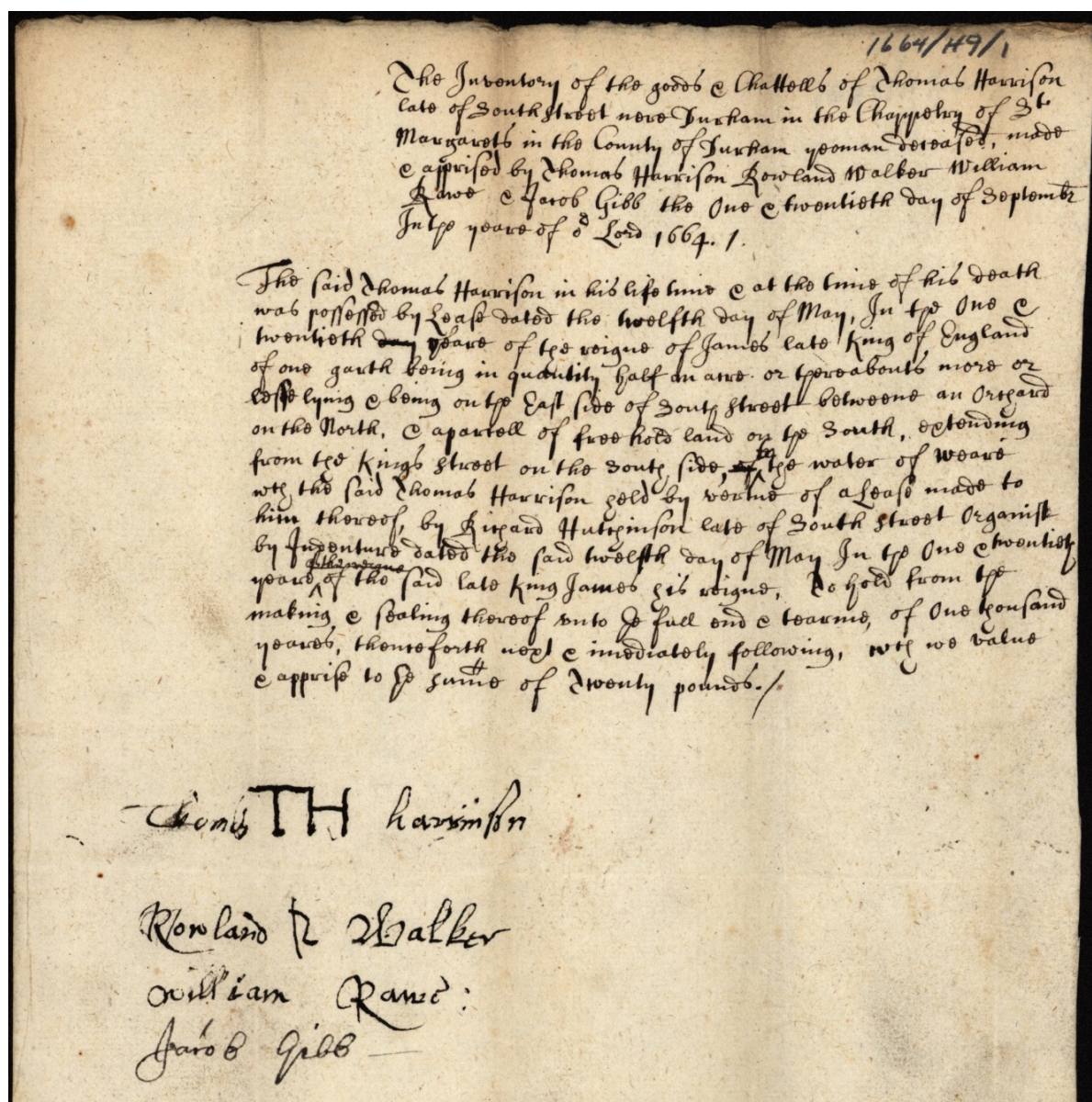
In the name of god amen the xiiii [14<sup>th</sup>] day of september  
the yere of oure lord god m ccccc lv [1555] I clemet red of the  
hould toun sek in my body and holl of mynd makes  
my last woll and testyment In manere and fourme  
followyng: fyrst I geve my soull to god almehty and  
my body to be bered within my pareche cherche of elsden  
with my dutes thereto belongen. Item I mak my son  
thomas red and my son archebald red my exsekutors  
Item I geve to my son thomas red all my steden In the  
hould toune and I woll that he be gud to his breder  
In hys steden that he maye for goye so long as thye  
and he dothe gre Item I geve to my son thomas red  
my two douhgters. Item I geve to my doughter Janet  
red xii [12] ky and oxson and <l> woll that my son arche  
red be pait, and the rest of my gudys not legeset  
I geve to my son thom[a]s and edward and to my yongest  
doughter Item I mak gawyn red and James foster  
supervisors to se my woll perfurmet mad the day and  
yere above sad before thes wetnessys <William Hall Clerke> jur[atus] [sworn]  
curet of elsden Jhon red lord of trowen [Troughend] robart red  
clowys feld & peter red

**Glossary:**

<i>for goye</i>	forego [?], with the sense of not disturbing him
<i>legeset</i>	legacied or legated [i.e. bequeathed in legacies]
<i>perfumet</i>	performed
<i>the hould toun</i>	the Old Town
<i>steden</i>	farm-house and outbuildings

## Inventory of Thomas Harrison of South Street, Durham City

Wills were also a means to devise real property, and testators are often careful to delineate the boundaries of a holding, from which a researcher can learn the names of local landmarks, streets and neighbours. In this unusual instance it is a leasehold property's bounds which are so described in Harrison's inventory: half an acre of land 'lying & being on the East side of South Street betweene an Orchard on the North, & aparcell of free hold land on the South, extending from the Kings Street on the South side to the water of Weare'. This 1,000 year lease had been purchased by Harrison in 1623 from Richard Hutchinson of South Street, the organist at Durham Cathedral. Such boundary information can be used with title deeds to map the size and nature of property holdings in an area.





The Inventory of the goods & Chattells of Thomas Harrison late of South Street nere Durham in the Chappelry of St Margarets in the County of Durham yeoman deceased, made & apprised by Thomas Harrison Rowland Walker William Rawe & Jacob Gibb the One & twentieth day of September In the yeare of our Lord 1664.

The said Thomas Harrison in his life time & at the time of his death was possessed by Lease dated the twelfth day of May, In the One & twentieth yeare of the reigne of James the late King of England of one garth being in quantity half an acre or thereabouts more or lesse lying & being on the East side of South Street betweene an Orchard on the North, & aparcell of free hold land on the South, extending from the Kings Street on the South side, to the water of Weare which the said Thomas Harrison held by vertue of a Lease made to him thereof, by Richard Hutchinson late of South Street Organist by Indenture dated the said twelfth day of May In the One & twentieth yeare of the said late King James his reigne, To hold from the making & sealing thereof unto the full end & tearme, of One thousand yeares, thenceforth next & imediately following, which we value & apprise to the summe of Twenty pounds.

Thomas Harrinson

Rowland Walker  
William Rawe  
Jacob Gibb

**Glossary:**

*garth* a small piece of enclosed ground, usually beside a house or other building, used as a yard, garden, or paddock

*indenture* a deed between two or more parties executed in two or more copies, which copies formerly having their tops or edges correspondingly indented or serrated for identification and security

**Note:**

This document, on first glance, is not in the expected form of an inventory. However, it does in fact list and value one item of the deceased's personal property, a lease of land in Durham city. Leaseholds, even with terms of 1,000 years such as this, were not classed as real property, and could thus be processed by the ecclesiastical court with the rest of the deceased's goods and chattels. While real property (freehold and copyhold land and tenements) could be devised by will, such property and any litigation surrounding its transmission fell outside of the jurisdiction of the church courts.

**Will of Charles Jackson of Newcastle upon Tyne, glass grinder**

**Will of John Clark of Heworth, labourer**

Benefit societies became a feature particularly of urban working life from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, partly replacing the by then moribund trade guilds. Members attended such clubs to socialise, promote and sometimes protect business and even to attend night classes. Like other clubs such as annuity, clothing and burial clubs, benefit societies were also a means of providing financial security to their subscribing members. Payments were made typically to the unemployed or sick, and money loaned and, upon a member's death, legacies paid. Due to their small size and insufficient actuarial expertise many clubs became unsustainable: Newcastle's Keelmen's Society, for example, was forced to close its box and cease payments in 1742. Larger, national and so more secure associations took their place, hence perhaps the 'Universal' in the title of Clark's club. The right to such legacies could be gifted or traded like a bond or share certificate, and where a family was no longer in possession of a man's certificate clubs would publish death notices of members to invite a claim. Benefit clubs were also encouraged by the upper classes and employers, partly as a means of promoting the availability and moral improvement of workers, and also of fostering their financial independence and security.

1794/51/1

In the name of God Amen I Charles Jackson of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne Glass Grinder, being of Sound Mind, Memory, and Understanding, do make my last Will and Testament in manner and form following, And I give and bequeath unto John Watson of the said Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne Cordwainer the sum of Three Pounds my Box Legacy from the Civil Society at Mr. Sobhu's in the Close And in respect to all my Effects and Furniture and other matters and things whatsoever after paying all my just Debts and Funeral Expenses, I give and bequeath the same unto the said John Watson and do also nominate and appoint him sole Executor of this my last Will and Testament, And do hereby revoke all former Will or Wills by me heretofore made I make and declare this to be and to contain my last Will and Testament In witness whereof I have hereunto set my Hand and Seal the Twelfth .. day of September in the year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety four

Charles Jackson



**In the name of God Amen** I Charles Jackson of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne Glass Grinder, being of Sound, Mind, Memory, and Understanding, do make my last Will and Testament in manner and form following, **And** I give and bequeath unto John Watson of the said Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne Cordwainer the sum of Five Pounds my Box Legacy from the Civil Society at Mr Joblins in the Close **And** in respect to all my Effects and Furniture and other matters and things whatsoever after Paying all my just debts and Funeral Expences, I give and bequeath the same unto the said John Watson and do also nominate and appoint him sole Executor of this my my last Will and Testament, **And** do hereby revoke All former Will or Wills by me heretofore made I make and declare this to be and to contain my last Will and Testament **In Witness** whereof I have hereunto set my Hand and Seal the Tenth day of September in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety Four.

Charles Jackson

**Glossary:**

*cordwainer*  
*glass grinder*

a worker in cordwain or cordovan leather; a shoemaker  
a skilled occupation grinding and polishing glass for the manufacture of mirror or plate glass, lenses for spectacles and scientific instruments, and other glass-ware

1846/C14/1

This is the last Will and Testament of me  
 John Clark late of Neworth. Thore but was an Inmate  
 in the Workhouse at Neworth in the County of Durham  
 Labourer made this thirtieth day of June in the  
 year one thousand eight hundred and Forty I  
 give and bequeath the Legacies ~~and~~ payable  
 on my death in respect of my being a free Member  
 of the Universal Friendly benefit Society of Artisans  
 held at the House of John Nicolson Dolphin Tavern  
 11 Close, Newcastle upon Tyne out of the Funds of the said  
 Society And all other my Estate and Effects whatsoever  
 unto George Murray of Neworth aforesaid Farmer  
 his Executors Administrators and Assigns Upon  
 Trust thereout to pay my Funeral Expenses and Debts  
 And I declare that all Sum or Sums of Money or  
 Relief received or to be received by me or by my late  
 Wife Margaret Clark as a pauper or paupers of the  
 Chapelry of Neworth aforesaid shall be and be considered  
 as a lawful Debt due and owing by me and chargeable on  
 2 2 my Effects And I charge the same thereon and direct my  
 Executor to pay and discharge the same as a Debt  
 accordingly And I appoint the said George Murray  
 Executor of this my Will and my Nominee to receive  
 the Legacy or Legacies payable out of the Funds of  
 the said Society on my death pursuant to the Rules  
 thereof In Witness whereof my Name hath been  
 hereunto subscribed in my presence and by my Direction  
 the Day and year first before written

John Clark

3 Signed by Thomas Sidd in the presence of the said Testator John  
 Clark and by his Direction as and for his last Will and Testament  
 in the joint presence of us who at his Request in his presence and  
 in the presence of each other have hereunto subscribed our Names  
 as Witnesses

Thos. Sidd  
 Wm. Astill

364  
 3450

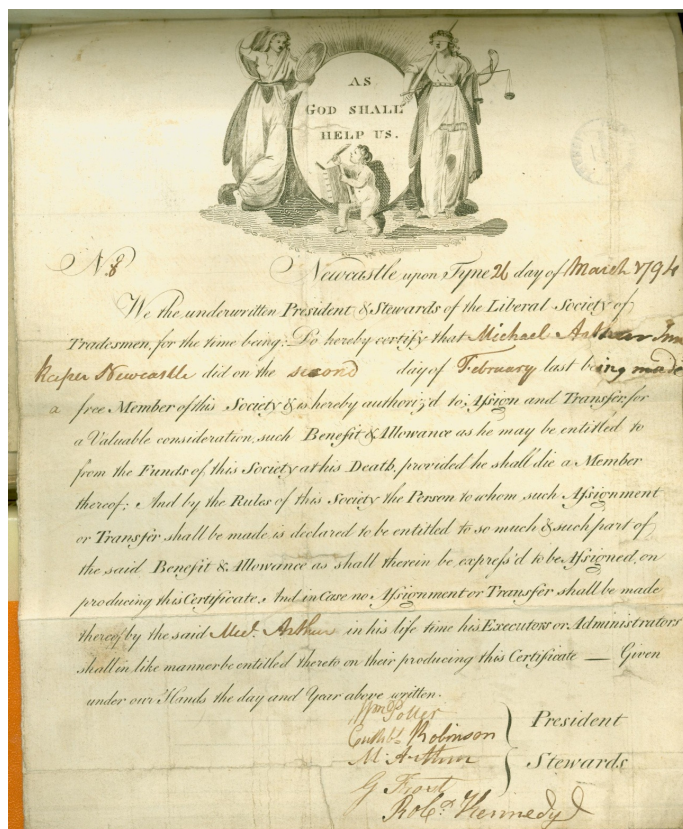
This is the last Will and Testament of me  
John Clark late of Heworth Shore but now an Inmate  
in the Workhouse at Heworth in the County of Durham  
Labourer made the thirtieth day of June in the  
year one thousand Eight Hundred and Forty I  
give and bequeath the Legacies or Sums Payable  
on my Death in respect of my being a free Member  
of the Universal Friendly benefit Society of Artisans  
held at the Houses of John Newton Dolphin Tavern  
Close, Newcastle upon Tyne out of the Funds of the said  
Society And all other my Estate and Effects whatsoever  
unto George Murray of Heworth aforesaid Farmer  
his Executors Administrators and Assigns Upon  
Trust thereout to pay my Funeral Expences and Debts  
And I declare that all Sum or Sums of Money or  
Relief received or to be received by me or by my late  
Wife Margaret Clark as a Pauper or Paupers of the  
Chapelry of Heworth aforesaid shall be and be considered  
as a lawful Debt due and owing by me and chargeable on  
my Effects And I charge the same thereon and direct my  
Executor to pay and discharge the same as a Debt  
accordingly And I appoint the said George Murray  
Executor of this my Will and my Nominee to receive  
the Legacy or Legacies Payable out of the Funds of  
the said Society on my Death Pursuant to the Rules  
thereof In Witness whereof my Name hath been  
hereunto subscribed in my Presence and by my Direction  
the Day and year first before written.

John Clark

Signed by Thomas Sill in the presence of the said Testator John  
Clark and by his Direction as and for his last Will and Testament  
in the joint presence of us who at his request in his presence and  
in the presence of each other have hereunto subscribed our Names  
as Witnesses

Thomas Winburne  
Abraham Aisbitt

## Certificate of Michael Arthur of Newcastle, innkeeper



Articles, Rules and Regulations of the Liberal Society of Tradesmen, Newcastle Libraries, Local Studies and Family History Centre.

N<sup>o</sup>.8

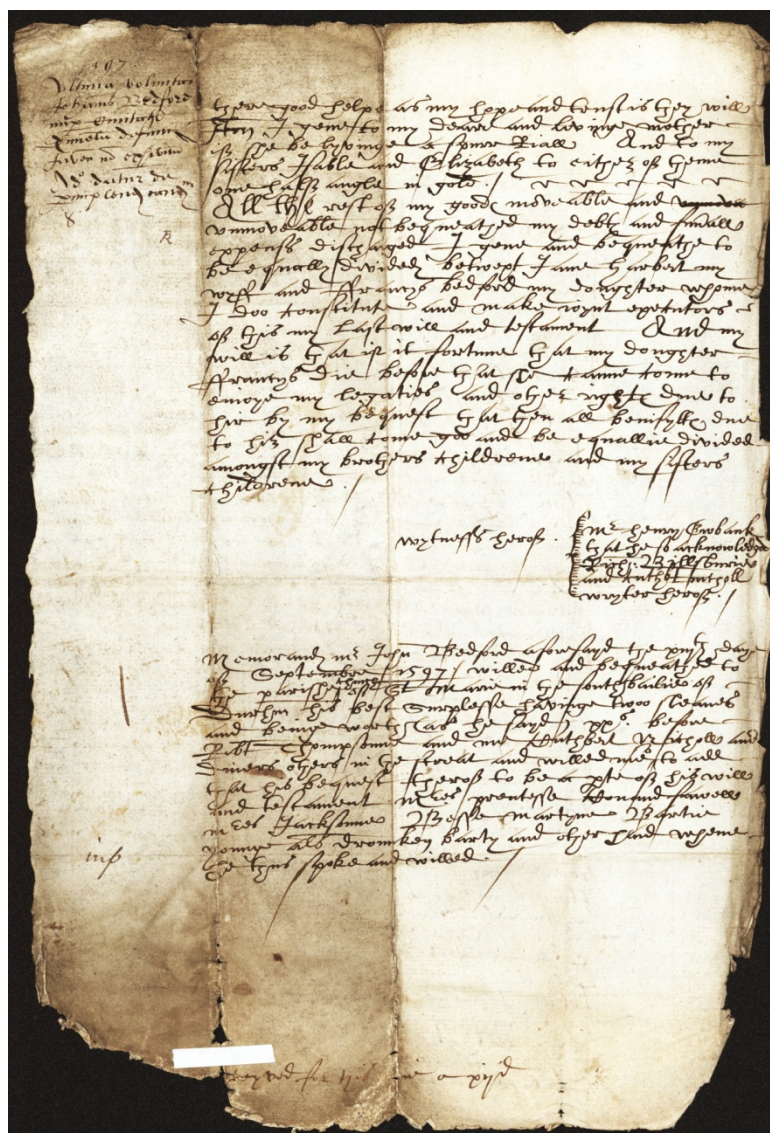
Newcastle upon Tyne 26 day of March 1794

We the underwritten President & Stewards of the Liberal Society of Tradesmen, for the time being: Do hereby certify that *Michael Arthur Inn Keeper Newcastle* did on the *second* day of *February* last *being made* a free Member of this Society & is hereby authoriz'd to Assign and Transfer for a Valuable consideration such Benefit & Allowance as he may be entitled to from the Funds of this Society at his Death, provided he die a Member thereof; And by the Rules of this Society the Person to whom such Assignment or Transfer shall be made is declared to be entitled to so much & such part of the said Benefit & Allowance as shall therein be express'd to be Assigned, on producing this Certificate. And in Case no Assignment or Transfer shall be made thereof by the said *Michael Arthur* in his life time his Executors or Administrators shall in like manner be entitled thereto on their producing this Certificate – Given under our Hands the day and Year above written.

<i>William Potter</i>	}	President
<i>Cuthbert Robinson</i>		
<i>M. Arthur</i>	}	Stewards
<i>G Frost</i>		
<i>Robert Kennedy</i>		

## Nuncupative codicil of John Bedford, minor canon of Durham Cathedral

On September 13<sup>th</sup> 1597, while in the company of Cuthbert Nicholl and Robert Thompsonne in a Durham street, Bedford clearly felt an urgent need to record the gift to his parish church of '*his best surplesse havinge twoo sleeves and beinge worth (as he sayd) xx<sup>s</sup> [20 shillings]*'. Nicholl duly added this bequest to the foot of the will, noting that Bedford's words were also heard by a party of five other persons in the street that day, namely '*Mistress Prentesse, Conand Fawell, Mistress Jacksonne, Besse Martyne and Bartie Younge alias Dronnken Barty*'. Unfortunately Mr Younge's will is not found in the probate collection. Many wills are drawn up in rather dry terms and follow standard forms, but colourful local characters do emerge from obscurity on occasion, sometimes in the form of independent minded testators and sometimes, like Dronnken Barty, strolling happily down the high street with some friends on a Tuesday in September.



Durham Probate Records DPRI/1/1597/B4/1v

1597

*Ultima voluntas  
Johannis Bedford  
nuper Civitatis  
Dunelmensis defunctus  
Inventarium non exhibitum  
Administratio datur de  
perimplendo eandem*

*[Last will  
of John Bedford  
formerly of the city  
of Durham deceased.  
Inventory not exhibited.  
Administration granted  
for fulfilling the same.]*

...there good helpe as my hope and trust is they will  
Item I geve to my deare and lovinge mother  
if she be lyvinge a spurr Riall And to my  
sisters Isable and Elizabeth to either of theme  
one half angle in gold.

All the rest of my goodes moveable and  
unmoveable not bequeathed my debtes and funerall  
expenses discharged I geve and bequeathe to  
be equally divided betwext Jane Harbert my  
wyff and Francys bedford my daughter whome  
I doo constitute and make joynt executors  
of this my last will and testament And my  
will is that if it fortune that my daughter  
Francys die before that she canne come to  
enjoye my legaties and other rightes due to  
hir by my bequest that then all benifyttes due  
to hir shall come goe and be equallie divided  
amongst my brothers childrene and my sisters  
childrene.

wytresses herof.

Mr Henry Ewbank  
that he so acknowledged  
Richard Billsburie  
and cuthbert nicholl  
wryter herof.

*in p*

Memorandum Mr John Bedford aforesayd the xiii<sup>th</sup> [13<sup>th</sup>] daye  
of Septembre 1597 willed and bequeathed to  
the parishe <church> of St Marie in the south bailie of  
Durham his best Surplesse havinge twoo sleeves  
and beinge worth (as he sayd) xx<sup>s</sup> [20<sup>s</sup>] before  
Robert Thompsonne and Mr Cuthbert Nicholl and  
divers others in the streat and willed me <so> to add  
that his bequest therof to be or parte of his will  
and testament Mistres prentesse Conand Fawell  
Mistres Jacksonne Besse Martyne Bartie  
Younge alias dronknen barty and other presand whene  
he thus spoke and willed.

[Re]ceyved for this copie

xii<sup>d</sup> [12<sup>d</sup>]

**Glossary:**

*half angle* [half-angel]

a gold coin worth, at this time, 5 shillings.

*spurr riall* [spur-royal]

a gold coin of the value of 15 shillings, chiefly coined in the reign of James I; so called from having on its reverse the form of the sun with rays, resembling a spur-rowel

*surplesse* [surplice]

a loose vestment of white linen having wide sleeves and, in its amplest form, reaching to the feet; worn by clerics over the fur garments which used to be worn in church as a protection against the cold