

The Will of John Morton – an introduction

In the late spring of 2016, Dr Betty Knott, a retired Latinist from Glasgow University, graciously agreed to participate in The Missing Princes Project and offer her expertise. As the information gathering for the modern investigation into the disappearance of the sons of King Edward IV continued apace, it was becoming increasingly clear that the enquiry had to consider all potential sources of information. With John Morton's role in the key period of investigation (1483–6), coupled with Dr Knott's academic neutrality, revealing Morton's will in full in English for the first time would not only be consistent with the aims and ambition of the project, but might offer new connections and insight into this important figure. Previously, only an epitome of Morton's will was available in English translation.* With thanks to Marie Barnfield whose meticulous and informed transcript and decipherment of the very difficult hand of the original manuscript considerably expedited Dr Knott's own reading of the original text, and author Isolde Martyn, whose investigations into John Morton instigated this complete English translation of his will.

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* C. Everleigh Woodruff, Kent Archaeological Society, 1914, vol 3, *Sede Vacante Wills: Canterbury*, pp 91–3. Complete Latin text pp 95–91.

THE WILL OF JOHN MORTON, archbishop of Canterbury, c. 1420–1500

BETTY I. KNOTT

This article, on behalf of The Missing Princes Project, is based on the original Latin text of the will of John Morton (c. 1420–1500), archbishop of Canterbury 1486–1500, and cardinal (1496). The full Latin text of the will and a complete English translation are available via the Society's Papers Library, online at The Missing Princes Project website, www.revealingrichardiii.com/langley.html, and also on the Society's website www.richardiii.net. Numerical references in what follows refer to line numbers in that translation. The will was made 15 July 1500, proved 22 October 1500. It is interesting in that many of its provisions relate to incidents in Morton's life, illuminate his relations with various contemporaries and may also allow some inferences to be drawn as to the character of the man himself.

Brief biography of John Morton

John Morton was a member of a large family of considerable local standing in the area around Bere (Regis) and Milborne St Andrew in Dorset. He was one of four sons born to Richard Morton of Milborne St Andrew, and was born (c. 1420) either in Bere or in Milborne. It is possible that his mother was Elizabeth Turberville of Bere. He received his early education at the Benedictine Abbey at nearby Cerne Abbas, and from there went to Oxford, probably to Balliol College, where he steadily advanced in legal studies – by 1448 BCL, by 1451 BCn and CL, and in 1452 DCL – and was appointed to various university administrative posts.¹

His life coincided with tumultuous times and the reigns of several kings of England with whom his fortunes were bound up. In the conflicts between the Yorkists and Lancastrians, he was a committed supporter of Henry VI (king 1422–61) and of the Lancastrian cause. During this period he comes to notice as a lawyer and administrator and first had a career in the Court of Arches in London, an ecclesiastical court covering the province of Canterbury, which provided an apprenticeship for many civic and ecclesiastical administrators. Morton became adviser to the king, and chancellor to the young Prince Edward.²

His eminence in civil administration led to ecclesiastical preferment. In January 1453 he received his first recorded benefice (Shellingford in Berkshire); in 1458 he became canon of Sarum and in 1460 he was appointed as archdeacon of Norwich. This initial civil and ecclesiastical advancement may have been due to the notice of Thomas Bouchier, who had been Chancellor of Oxford University from 1434 to 1437, and was archbishop of Canterbury from 1454 to 1486 (he was Morton's immediate predecessor in that office).

Henry VI was deposed in 1461 by the Yorkist Edward IV (king 1461–83). Morton was attainted and put in the Tower, but he escaped, and eventually joined Margaret of Anjou, Henry's queen, in exile in Brittany from 1461 to 1470. He was involved in the earl of Warwick's short-lived attempt to restore Henry VI in 1470–1, but nonetheless after the final defeat of the Lancastrian cause at the battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury, in 1471, he was able to make his peace with the Yorkist Edward IV and received a royal pardon as part of Edward's policy of reconciliation. His earlier career had shown him to be an efficient and astute administrator and he was soon advanced again to important civil administrative positions, as councillor, and Master of the Rolls (1472–9). His negotiating skills were used by

the king in diplomatic missions, for example to Hungary in 1474, and he was present during the 1475 invasion of France, where he helped negotiate the Treaty of Picquigny. This resulted in King Louis XI's considerable financial 'tribute' to Edward IV, the ransoming of Henry's widow, the French Queen Margaret (imprisoned in the Tower after the battle of Tewkesbury) and the establishment of substantial (French) pensions to many of Edward's court, including Morton himself.

In the later part of the will where he is settling the disposition of his property (see 129 ff), he mentions lands near Maidstone in Kent, which he had acquired from Lord Rivers and the marquis of Dorset (his nephew). This was the third earl Rivers, the two previous earls (Richard and Antony) having been executed in 1469 and 1483 (by the earls of Warwick and Northumberland respectively). Morton acquired the property in 1488.³ The earls Rivers were members of the the Woodville family, the powerful relations of Edward's queen, Elizabeth Woodville, and the acquisition indicates an alignment on Morton's part with members of this family, established at this time and continuing into the reign of Henry VII.

Morton had already been appointed archdeacon of Norwich in 1460, and after his return to royal service became successively archdeacon of Winchester, 1474, Berkshire, 1476, and Norfolk, 1477, combining these ecclesiastical administrative posts with the king's service, and in 1478 was promoted to the see of Ely on the death of the previous incumbent, William Grey.

With the accession of Richard III (king 1483–5), his fortunes changed again. He had been a supporter of the young prince (Edward V), Elizabeth Woodville's son, and he may have been involved in a plot organised by Lord Hastings to reinstate him. After Richard's summary execution of Hastings in 1483, Morton, already under suspicion, was attainted (again) and given into the custody of the duke of Buckingham (in Wales), who at this stage was apparently supporting Richard; but Buckingham, in furtherance of his own ambitions, switched his allegiance to the young Edward V, and Morton supported the so-called 'Buckingham's rebellion', which purportedly aimed to restore Edward to the throne. This rebellion was put down in October 1483 and Morton fled ignominiously across the Fens to Flanders. Buckingham was beheaded in the November. (Richard III described him as 'the most untrue creature living'.) Before that, however, a new plan, perhaps put together by Morton, had emerged to put Henry Tudor on the throne, the young princes having dropped out of sight. Buckingham had already written to Henry, and Morton, while in Flanders, continued in communication with Henry, by this time hiding in Brittany, passing on information which he received from England and warning him of a plot to deliver him to Richard.⁴ In spite of all this, Richard offered him a pardon, but instead of

accepting it Morton went to Rome to apprise the Pope of the political and military situation and to prepare his mind for the accession of Henry Tudor and a projected marriage of Henry with Elizabeth of York. He did not return to England until after the defeat of Richard at Bosworth in 1485 and the accession of Henry (king 1485–1509). Morton's manipulative abilities were immediately put to use by the new regime. In recognition of the major part he had played in bringing Henry Tudor to the throne, he was very quickly, in 1486, appointed both Chancellor and archbishop of Canterbury, becoming principal adviser to the king and one of the most powerful and richest men in England. In 1496, after persistent requests from the king to the Pope, he was appointed cardinal. He was one of the witnesses to the king's will.

Morton's will

This close relationship with Henry VII is signified by bequests in the will to the king himself, the Queen Elizabeth and the Lady Margaret Beaufort, the king's mother. These members of the royal family are naturally named first among the lay recipients of bequests. The items are carefully chosen – not ostentatious (his best portuary [a small personal breviary], his best psalter and a round image of the Virgin made of gold), but valuable

John Morton's tomb in the Chapel of Our Lady in the Crypt of Canterbury Cathedral. © photorasa.com



enough to be appropriate for royalty and with the personal link of devotional significance. Alone among the king's children, the 11-year-old Princess Margaret, who in 1502 would become the wife of James IV of Scotland, receives a very large monetary bequest and a gold bowl (a small sum would in this case be unthinkable) but she is singled out as Morton's goddaughter, another sign of his close relationship with the family, and perhaps he is genuinely fond of her and surmises she is likely soon to be married. The two princes Arthur and Henry and the young Princess Mary are not mentioned.

Next after the royal family, Morton names Lord Giles Daubeney (first baron Daubeney, 1451–1508), to whom he leaves a gold goblet, the most valuable of the gifts to non-royal persons. Daubeney held various important posts and was the king's Chamberlain (59) from 1495, and the two men must have had a close working relationship as Chamberlain and Chancellor, but the value of the gift suggests more than that, possibly a recognition of their alliance over many years in shared aims and interests (supporters successively of the Lancastrian cause, Margaret Beaufort, Buckingham's rebellion and Henry Tudor), but it more likely acknowledges some signal service.

Another person belonging to this period of Morton's life is the Lord of Ormond, from whom Morton had recently (i.e. shortly before the date of the will) acquired some property. (See 148ff, again in the section of the will where Morton is disposing of his real estate.) This man could be Thomas Butler, the seventh earl of Ormond (1426–1515), youngest son of the fourth earl, his two brothers, the fifth and sixth earls having died without male issue. The earls of Ormond were peers of Ireland and held a large patrimony in the south-west of the country. The fifth earl had been created earl of Wiltshire in 1449. Thomas and his brothers had been attainted and declared traitors for their support of Henry VI by statutes of Edward IV (the fifth earl was actually executed), but these statutes were repealed by Henry VII and the earldom restored. Thomas was summoned to the Parliament of 1488 and made a member of the Privy Council. He became Henry's friend and one of his richest subjects. He owned 72 manors in England and the property named here is Swyre in Dorset. It is reasonably close to Cerne Abbas and Bere, the scenes of Morton's youth, and possibly this was one of the reasons why Morton bought it, adding to his several existing properties in that whole area (148).

Like most persons of any substance at the time, Morton early in his will makes provision for the salvation of his soul⁵ and as he was an extremely wealthy man this must have been a matter of concern and possibly of guilt to him. As he says in his preamble (7), making his will gives him an opportunity to unburden his conscience, so in the matter of money he salves his conscience, like others who could afford it, by



Ely Cathedral. John Morton was bishop of Ely from 1479 to 1486.
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allocating a very considerable sum to the distribution of alms and other charitable purposes (see 32 ff.), in this case 3,000 marks, (i.e. about £2,000 at the time). In the distribution of these alms he specifically forbids any ostentatious ceremony (32). He also rejects the posthumous glory of a splendid tomb (15), electing instead for simple interment under a plain marble slab. This was nonetheless to be in a privileged position in 'his' cathedral, before the image of the Virgin, who, he might well hope, would intercede for him. Were these last two things genuine hopeful gestures of repentance and humility, or intended to contribute to his posthumous reputation, or did this careful amasser of money think such outward show wasteful? In the matter of burial, his wishes were followed, but others made sure that such an important and powerful figure should have a worthy memorial elsewhere in the cathedral.

Again, like others, he entreats mercy for his soul through the intercession of apostles and saints and among the saints whose intercession he entreats (12) we find St Etheldreda, the Anglo-Saxon patron saint of Ely Cathedral (born at nearby Exning), whose shrine at Ely became a major centre of pilgrimage and made the cathedral one of the richest in England. Morton must have felt he had a special affinity with her, perhaps even

a special claim on her as a previous bishop of Ely, and no doubt he remembered with satisfaction and even happiness his time there. He was very active and efficient during his brief bishopric, among other things financing the cutting of a long drainage channel through the Fens, Morton's Leam, which is still to be seen, and he also rebuilt the episcopal palace at Hatfield. Likewise, he feels he can call upon St Katherine (of Alexandria), who was the patron saint of his college (Balliol), and lastly he entreats St Mary Magdalene, the archetype of the penitent sinner.

He wishes to return to Ely his mitre and his best silver-gilt cross which were passed on to him from the executors of his predecessor there, William Grey. (36) He must have taken these with him on his translation to Canterbury, and one wonders whether he had a guilty conscience about this too and wanted to put it right. It depends whether he was left them personally, or received them from the executors merely as the bishop's successor. (There seems to be no particular personal connection between Grey and Morton: Grey was a man of very different character, a scholar and a book-lover.) Similarly, he takes the opportunity of his will to re-establish the chantry at Holy Sepulchre Priory near Canterbury, which seems to have lapsed (129ff). Again, is this something which he should have dealt with earlier?

Ely, however, does not get the bequest entirely as a free gift. Morton stipulates that, in return, every day for

20 years a member of the monastic community is to offer requiem masses for his soul (and the souls of his parents [or relations], benefactors and friends), without further remuneration. This establishment of commemorative masses for oneself, and usually for one's family too, is again an early provision in the wills of those who could afford it. Morton can afford to set up in addition a very detailed and comprehensive timetable of commemorative masses, again for 20 years, to be offered in 'his own' Canterbury Cathedral by two members of that community (18) and also in the church of Bere (Regis) in Dorset, the home of his family. (See 45, where he speaks of his forebears buried there.) The celebrants in these last two cases are to receive remuneration for what seems a quite onerous requirement. The priest at Bere who has to fulfil these demanding duties possibly single-handed (he has to travel to nearby Wudebury on Saturdays) receives in fairness more than the others – a generous £6 per annum.

Generally speaking, the establishment of such commemorative masses was a valuable asset to the clergy of small churches, but Bere, though a country church, was not a small one and was no doubt well endowed. The two leading families were the Turbervilles and the Mortons, who had memorial chapels each side of the main altar, and memorial windows in the church. The church building was considerably enlarged with Turberville money in the

St John the Baptist, Bere Regis, Dorset. © David Hawgood and licensed for reuse under the Creative Commons Licence



fourteenth century and again, probably by Morton, in the fifteenth. In 1485/6 he endowed the church with a spectacular wooden roof. The ceiling bosses portray Morton himself and his coat of arms, also symbols commemorating the significant union of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, which Morton had long proposed and eventually negotiated.⁶ He must have considered it his highest achievement.

Ely and Canterbury and particularly Bere are places with which he feels specially connected, (and he must have had happy childhood memories of Bere), places where he expects to be remembered and where meaningful prayer might be offered for his soul. He is indeed remembered in Bere to this day.

While making these devotional dispositions, Morton takes the opportunity of leaving sums of money to members of the religious communities of Canterbury, and also of Ely, some of whom he must still have known personally, the size of the bequest being, as usual, strictly determined by the seniority and status of the person concerned, e.g. at Ely, £3 6s 8d to the prior, 13s 4d to the sub-prior, to monks who were ordained priests 6s 8d, to those not ordained priests 3s 4d (29–30, 43).

After these ‘religious’ bequests come the secular ones. The bequests to members of the royal family and the court have been discussed (see above). There follows a list of bequests to friends and relations (60–68).

First in order (and size of legacy) comes Robert Turberville (60), who receives an exceptional and generous £20, and also the remission of his outstanding debt – which has not been forgotten! The Turbervilles and the Mortons were probably related by marriage. Morton’s parents were Richard Morton of Milborne St. Andrew and possibly Elizabeth Turberville of Bere Regis, and his brother Richard Morton married Edith, who could also have been a Turberville (Coker by her second marriage). So this Robert is likely to be a relative, possibly a cousin in some degree and someone close enough to call on Morton for a loan. One wonders what situation is indicated by the provision of the loan and the size of the legacy, more than that received by anyone else. Is one to see an unwonted spark of wry humour in the wording of the legacy, or is this, as is more likely, the meticulous settling of yet another piece of outstanding business, ensuring that there is no misunderstanding?

Then comes a list of lesser monetary bequests to friends and to relations, of varying value (see 60–68). Morton seems to think £10, which is left to six people, a generous enough lump sum and £3 6s 8d (a third of £10), left to three people, a decent sum, and several get £2 or £1, though it is difficult to estimate what these sums meant in real terms, and one wonders whether the legatees were happy with it, considering how rich Morton was. Three of the six who receive the maximum of £10 can definitely be identified as family: Edith Coker, widow of brother Richard, nephew Thomas Morton and great-nephew Robert Morton (66–8).



Above: St John the Baptist, Bere Regis. The carved and painted oak roof given by Cardinal John Morton in about 1485. © Mike Searle and licensed for re-use under the Creative Commons Licence
Below: Image of (possibly) John Morton from the roof boss in Bere Regis Church, Dorset. Reproduced by kind permission of Michael Day



Others in the list may be unidentified relations. He mentions unspecified ‘poor relations’ at 114, and commits them to the discretion of his executors.

It is at first sight surprising that so few Mortons are listed, as John Morton came of a large family, but it seems that many of his closest relations are dead, brother Richard obviously, as it is his widow who receives a bequest (and later on in the will, it is his sons John and William, Morton’s nephews, who receive

property, see 148, 170). Presumably his eldest brother William Morton is also deceased, as it is his son, another nephew, Thomas Morton of Lechlade (born c. 1427) who receives £10 (and property, see 129). Another of Morton's brothers, Thomas Morton, archdeacon of Ely, died in 1496. The third recipient of £10 is his great-nephew, Robert Morton, son of Robert Morton, son of William Morton, presumably the William Morton named in the previous clause (67). Robert presumably receives £10 in lieu of his father (died 1497), who was the fourth of Morton's nephews. It is typical of Morton to allocate a precise sum to each person individually, whatever his reasons, rather than make any general provision.

The Robert Morton senior, son of brother William, appears to be the Robert Morton (1435–97) who became bishop of Worcester. He was an MA of Oxford in 1458 and was thereafter appointed to the living of All Saints, Huntingdon, a substantial church with presumably a good income. Little is known of his life at this period, as he was not advanced to administrative or high ecclesiastical office, remaining in comparative obscurity possibly because of his (married?) situation, also not having high enough degrees. In 1477 he was granted a papal dispensation (his uncle being archdeacon of Norfolk) and thereafter his career took off, always following in the wake of his uncle's. The dispensation could have legitimised any children – he may have had three. One has the impression that the son Robert receives rather grudging acknowledgement where he is mentioned in the will, but that Morton feels he must give him his due as family. Under Edward IV, the elder Robert became successively prebendary of St Paul's, Salisbury (where his uncle had been canon), Beverley and Wherwell Abbey (near Andover), then archdeacon of Gloucester and of Winchester (where Morton had been appointed archdeacon in 1474). He succeeded his uncle as Master of the Rolls in 1479, and in 1480 was awarded an honorary LLD (being only an MA at this time) in honour of his uncle, who was now bishop of Ely. He was involved in his uncle's downfall under Richard III and lost his position as Master of the Rolls, but he was reinstated by Henry VII, and in that capacity attended Morton's installation as archbishop of Canterbury. He was consecrated as bishop of Worcester in 1487, his uncle, newly archbishop of Canterbury, being the chief consecrator.

After these personal dispositions, Morton makes decent provision for all those of his household, lay and clerical, who will be unemployed, and possibly homeless, after his decease, allocating money for the clergy, and a year's wages, beds and bedding for the

servants. Again, what these last get depends partly on their status: a yeoman receives a mattress with bedding, a gentleman a feather bed with bedding. All his servants are to receive a black gown as soon as possible, presumably mourning garb (69–75).

At first sight this all seems carefully considered and fair enough. Even in total, however, and including the bequests to the monks of Ely and Canterbury and the remuneration for the celebrants of the masses, these sums represent only a very small proportion of his very considerable monetary assets. Rather than leaving money to people, his priority seems to be giving to charity and caring for his soul. He has already allocated a large amount of money to alms, and now (76 ff), he provides a comparable sum to enable the establishment of exhibitions for poor scholars at Oxford and Cambridge, the scheme to run for 20 years. The grant for each non-resident student, £4 per annum (81), seems to be reasonably generous. (Students at Balliol received 8d a week, i.e. £4 16s 0d a year, in 1266.)⁷ The two monk exhibitioners from 'his own' cathedral of Canterbury, studying at Oxford, are given preferential treatment, with £6 13s 4d per annum. The recipients would no doubt be told they had a 'Morton Exhibition', so this would help to keep his name alive as a good and

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generous man. It was common practice for bishops (and archbishops), especially if they had also been Chancellor, to use their wealth⁸ in the establishment of colleges and for other educational purposes, so these legacies would be seen at the time as quite normal, and not a cause of surprise or resentment on the part of those who did not receive particularly large monetary legacies.

Conclusions

This essay attempts to trace signs of the real person behind the provisions of this will. On the whole, it seems very much the kind of will one might expect from a rich man of his time but one who is also a lawyer and a wily, hard-headed administrator; he was after all, allegedly, the originator of 'Morton's Fork', a principle for the ruthless exaction of taxes, and even if that was a later invention, his reputation was such that people believed it of him. It is remarkably detailed and comprehensive, well thought out, efficient, leaving no uncertainties, loopholes or ambiguities, ensuring that all obligations are fulfilled, and that everyone gets what Morton thinks is his fair due. Such detailed provision is remarkable; most testators with anything worthwhile to leave, after caring for their souls, left details to the discretion of the family or assumed that convention would be followed.⁹ Of course, few people had as much to leave as Morton, but this detailed provision casts light on his character. It

is a firm, rigorous will, but more importantly it is the will of a man who likes to have everything done as it ought to be done with no concessions or scope for evasion.

Every contingency is foreseen and dealt with. In the matter of the exhibitions, detailed instructions are given concerning both the choice of candidates and the composition of the appointing committees, and alternative arrangements made to cover the (probable) death of the original committee members (90) and a ruling given for settling potential disagreements (88, 90). He allows for the cash running out and again makes alternative arrangements, and precludes any argument by the legatees over the resulting settlement (106).

With an administrator's cynical eye, he foresees and excludes any potential self-interested or dishonest interpretations of his dispositions. The Chapter of Canterbury are not to include his two monk exhibitioners among the six scholars they are already committed to maintain (81), which would save them money. Nor is anyone who already has an adequate income to hold an exhibition, which is intended for poor scholars; nor shall anyone hold an exhibition for the full 20 years of the scheme, but for 12 years at the most (104). Is this last intended to prevent someone comfortably cruising along as a 'perpetual student'? Twelve years should be long enough to cover the normal progression for most people from undergraduate to MA (seven years), then on to either Bachelor of Theology (five years) or to a degree in civil law (four years). He has already, with good reason, provided for the exclusion of the lazy, dissolute or academically unsuited student. (University statutes often tried, rather vainly, to provide for such eventualities.)¹⁰

At all stages, Morton is careful to provide what he considers appropriate remuneration to various persons in return for their services. This is a complicated and demanding will with an ongoing commitment, and Morton accordingly awards his five executors the appropriately large sum of £40 (111), but again he

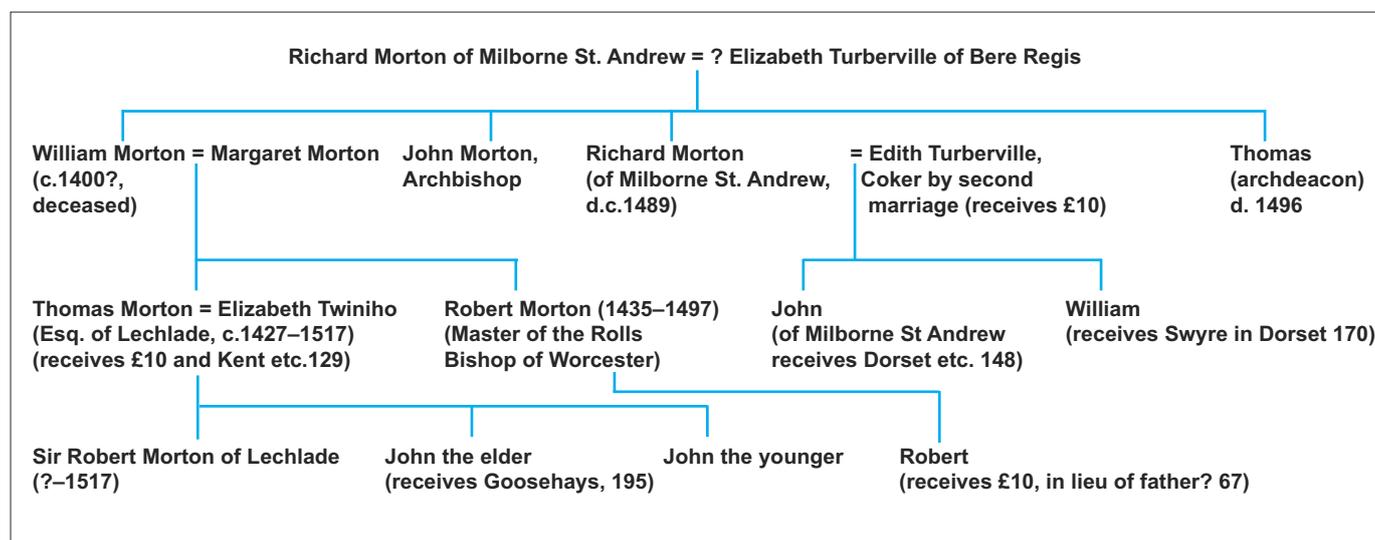
prescribes that any executor who reneges on his commitment shall receive only £13 6s 8d, i.e. one-third of the original sum (114).

While he makes detailed provision for the disposition of personal items of value, his fortune and his considerable landed property (see below), he gives no details regarding his general goods and chattels, but entrusts the disposal of these to the discretion of his executors, to sell off and raise money to be used for various purposes: to meet unforeseen obligations, to pay their own fees, and for minor charitable dispensations (see 106, 111, 114). It is here that we hear of unspecified 'poor relations' and other poor dependents. It is typical of the man however that he has made 'an inventory in [his] own hand' in which everything is appraised and priced (106), and he enjoins that no executor is to 'acquire' on the way any of Morton's possessions unless he pays its full market value. It may throw further light on his character that he appears to have no interest in the fate of any books he had.

There are a number of interesting similarities between Morton's career and will and the career and will of Thomas Langton, designated as Morton's successor as archbishop of Canterbury. See Susan L. Troxell in the *Bulletin*, December 2017, pp 45–53, and March 2018, pp 33–39. By comparison with Langton's dispositions, Morton's bequests might seem slightly on the generous side, supporting the impression that the will is, for all its rigorous control, fundamentally fair and even-handed, and not mean.

In the second part of his will (129–215), Morton disposes of his landed property, and this section shows the same obsessive concern for detailed prescription as the first part. He divides his estates into four groups to match his four chosen beneficiaries, and in each case establishes not only a main beneficiary but a network of successive residuary legatees, to cover the possibility that each legatee may in turn die without legitimate

The family of John Morton



male issue. Each person is carefully identified (as 'x, son of y, son of z'; or; 'x, brother of y') in mind-numbing detail, as the same seven names keep recurring in different combinations.

Morton leaves his property in the first instance to descendants of his two eldest brothers William and Richard, i.e. to three nephews and one great-nephew (see the family tree on the previous page). A close examination of the detailed dispositions reveals that Morton has been careful to allocate the properties to the beneficiaries and the residuary legatees in order of seniority and value of property: e.g. the most valuable property to (1) eldest son of eldest brother, (2) eldest son of second eldest brother, (3) second son of second eldest brother, (4) grandson of eldest brother (129–146), and so on, so that everyone in the group of seven eventually gets a turn somewhere, though the prospect of actually inheriting must have seemed remote in some cases. Reasonably enough, the properties in Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire are left to sons of the second eldest brother, the Dorset branch of the family (148).

It is surprising that Robert (Sir Robert Morton of Lechlade, d. 1517?), eldest son of his nephew Thomas and grandson of his eldest brother William, is not left anything in the first place, whereas Thomas's younger brother, John the elder, does receive a bequest. In some genealogies this John the elder appears as brother, not son, of nephew Thomas, which would solve this and another slightly puzzling thing in the will (John the elder and John the younger, apparently brothers, though this duplication of names does occur), but the wording of the will explicitly names him in every case as John the elder, son of Thomas, son of William. Perhaps Morton left nothing in the first place to Sir Robert on the assumption that he would before long inherit substantial property from his father, Thomas. This John the elder, being far down in the list, receives the smallest property (Goosehays, 195), and after him, his brother, John the younger.

Yet again, it seems that Morton cannot refrain from organising something down to the last detail, covering every eventuality, and making sure that all will be done properly long after his demise.

For a more detailed account of Morton's life, see Christopher Harper-Bill, 'Morton, John (d. 1500)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004

Notes

1. See A. B. Emden, *Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, 1, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1957, pp 57–9.
2. See John Ashdown-Hill, *The Wars of the Roses*, Stroud, Amberley Publishing, 2015, pp 100, 106.
3. Morton bought 'the manor of Shoford otherwise called the Mote . . . in the parish of Maidstone' from Rivers on 4

October 1488. See *Materials Illustrative of the History of the Reign of Henry VII (4 Henry VII)*, ed. Revd William Campbell, 1873–7.

4. See Ashdown-Hill, pp 179, 186.
5. See C. Burgess, 'Late Medieval Wills and Pious Conventions: testamentary evidence reconsidered', in M. Hicks (ed.), *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Late Medieval England*, Gloucester, Sutton, 1990, 14–33.
6. See Ashdown-Hill, plate 17, and www.bereregis.org/photographs/church.
7. See H. Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, rev. and ed. by F. M. Powicke and A. B. Emden, Oxford University Press, 1936, vol. III, p. 180 and n.4.
8. See Rashdall, p. 229.
9. See Burgess, p. 15.
10. See Rashdall, pp 425–6.

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The full Latin text and a complete English translation of John Morton's will is available from the Society's Papers Library and can be found on The Missing Princes Project website:
www.revealingrichardiii.com/langley.html
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