

THE WILL OF THOMAS HOLDEN OF
HOLDEN, 1441

IN the course of a discussion on the brass of Walter Curzon, now in Waterperry Church, Oxfordshire, Mr. J. Challenor Smith, F.S.A., introduces the following account of Thomas Holden of Holden, a Lancashire man of some note in his day.¹

In the patent rolls of 14 Henry VI we read thus: "It has been shown to the King on behalf of the prior of Holy Trinity, London, the abbot of Waltham, the prior of Twynham, the abbot of Leicester, the prior of Gisburgh, the prior of Bridlington, the prior of St. Oswald's in Nostell, the prior of Hexham and the prior of Carlisle—all of the Augustinian order—that King Henry V gave licence for all the Regular canons of that order to purchase lands without the walls of Oxford but within the franchise of the same so that all students of the order might live together, as by a letter under his signet may appear. The King therefore empowers Thomas Holden esquire and Elizabeth his wife to grant a messuage with gardens in the parishes of St. Peter le Bailly and St. Michael Northgate, valued at forty shillings a year, to the said prior of Holy Trinity, London, in the name of the whole order, in mortmain to build a college thereon for canons of the order being students."

Acting upon this authority, the said Thomas and Elizabeth provided a messuage and gardens (where is now Frewin Hall) in Oxford, and there they caused the college (St. Mary's) with its chapel to be erected. Much of the history of this college may be gathered from à Wood, who, *inter alia*, states that the founder and his wife were buried in the chapel "under a faire marble stone with their images curiously cut on brasse and an inscription

¹ Reproduced by permission of the author and the Monumental Brass Society; see its *Transactions*, vi. 420.

underneath." Thomas Holden was of the family of Holden of Holden, Lancashire; but in the account of the family that appears in the *Victoria County History of Lancashire*, vi. 429, there is only a bare allusion to him. He must have been a man of some prominence, as is shown by many contemporary allusions to him. In Surtees' *Durham*, ii. 123, it is shown that in 1410-11 he had licence to embattle the tower of his manor-house of Ludworth. He was high steward of Durham as well as an executor of Cardinal Langley. His will implies that he must have been thrice married. Elizabeth, his last wife, was of the family of Bowes of Streatlam, and he was the fourth of her five husbands, Nos. 1, 2, and 3 having been Bertram Monboucher, William de Whitchester, and Roger de Fulthorp. After Holden's death she married Sir Robert Hilton, baron of Hilton.¹ Much interesting matter is to be found in Thomas Holden's will, as is shown in the following abstract:

"My body to be buried in a chapel which is to be built and dedicated within a certain college of late begun to be built and made for Regular canons studying within the walls of the town and university of Oxford. And if it shall chance that I depart from this world before the said chapel shall be completed, I will that, for the time, my body shall be buried either in the church of St. Peter or of St. Michael until the said chapel shall be completed and consecrated by the bishop for the burials of me and of my wife. I leave to the fabric of the same chapel and of the library 'super eandem' all costs necessary for their completion together with £103, 6s. 8d., which sum is owing to me by the abbots of Leicester and St. Osyth and the prior of Gysburgh co. York under three bonds which remain in a small chest in my room at London. And I will that in the said chapel 'ordinetur unus lapis marmorius pro sepultura mea et Elizabethæ carissime consortis mee cum ymaginibus nostris et scriptura ad hoc conveniente ut canonici ibidem pro perpetuo exorent pro animabus nostris tanquam eorum fundatorum.' To the vicar of Whalley for a bell and for a glass window in the tower there £10 which I have already assigned to the said vicar by Henry Whitacre, to be levied of my lands and tenements in Lancashire. To the prior and convent of Durham a cope or other notable ornament (*jocale*) to the value of £20, and I will that they shall have all relics that are in the keeping of my wife and belonged to my lord Thomas bishop of Durham so that they shall pray for his

¹ See *Complete Peerage* by G. E. C. s.v. Hylton. She had by her first husband a son, Bertram Monboucher, and by her second a daughter, Elizabeth, who became wife of Sir John Burcester of Southwark. In Rendle's *Hist. of Southwark* it is stated that this Sir John was concerned in the Wars of the Roses.

soul, for the souls of my wives and for mine. And I will that the same prior [and convent] shall be released from payments that I have incurred on their account for the making of a mitre in London and for pearls and silver, which amount to 10 marks with fashion of the same. Also I remit the payments made for them by me in buying a piece of red velvet, 'unacum embraudacione pecie predicte, pro elargacione unius frontalis et subfrontalis ex utroque latere et utroque fine pro altari principali Dunelmensi, que ascendunt ad decem marcas.' . . . To my most gracious cardinal of York 'parvam crucem meam cum parte ligni Sancte Crucis interclausam.' To my most dear brother Thomas Hasseley a covered and gilt piece at the will of my wife. To my most dear wife, her heirs and assigns, my manor of Clayhall and the place called 'le Belhouse' in Essex. Also the manor of Cressebroke for life. The manor of Oldforde to be sold. Lands in Durham, Elvet, Heghyngton and Bysshopton. Manors of Holden and Symondston with other lands co. Lanc. and lands in Byrom co. York. My wife to have also 'quandem summam notabilem' which I gave by writing to Robert Rolleston, clerk, for her use. Also she to have all silver vessels not devised and all implements of house, with beds, apparatus of hall, parlour, rooms, chapel with vestments, books, chalices, etc. 'ut de omnibus istis ipsa sit contenta pro medietate bonorum meorum sibi pertinente, considerata prius empcione terrarum et tenementorum in Oxonia pro collegio ibidem et alijs expensis pro animabus nostris ex mocione eiusdem uxoris mee. Et volo quod ad exequias meas non fiat magnum convivium magnatibus et generosis pro pompa sed magis distribucio et cibaria pauperibus et egenis . . . ad summam xl^{li} in toto.' To poor kinsfolk male and female in Lancashire, at the discretion of Thomas Urswyk and of the vicar of Whalley, £20. . . . To John Burcester, knight, and my much loved daughter Elizabeth his wife, the remission of 14 marks which they owe me; the said daughter to have also a cup and other goods to the value of 20 marks. John Bartram, knight, to have towards the marriage of his daughter or to some other necessary purpose 50 marks and the remission of £20 that he owes to me. The executors of Ralph atte Lude, 'nuper juxta Vycombe,' esquire, are to receive £20 towards payment of said Ralph's debts, and the executors of Dame Joane Goldesburgh to have £10 for payment of her debts or to be distributed for her soul. Ten pounds is to be applied in providing for Thomas Boswell priest and 10 marks similarly for Thomas's brother Richard. Also 100s. for their (unmarried) sister Joan, 20 marks for John the elder brother of same Thomas and Richard and 5 marks for Katherine their sister. To the fabric of Caterick bridge £10 in case some sufficient person is willing to give bond to my said wife

that the said bridge shall be completed within the next four years. To the prior and convent of St. Oswald of Nostell co. York 100s. to buy a cope, and in like manner 40s. to the prior of Blyth for a cope. To the nuns of Kirkles 5 marks for the ornaments of their church at the oversight of Thomas Sayvell, knight. To the church of Thornhill, diocese of York, 5 marks for prayers for the souls of my father, of Isabel my mother, and of me. Pytyngton church 4 marks for ornaments and 40s. to the chapel of Tamfeld (*sic*). To St. Oswald's in the diocese of Durham 5 marks to buy a cope and to pray for the souls of my wives and of me. (Then follow bequests to many religious houses in the north as well as in London and Ware.) To the abbey of Waltham 100s. for the purchase of a cope and in like manner 5 marks to the abbey of Stratford. To the abess of Berkyng 'ad vitriacionem fenestrarum claustrum sui c^s.' Robert Holden of Warton 50 marks. Henry Holden and Robert Founteyns each 20 marks. John Holden of Tamfeld 20s. The wife of Geoffrey Felden 40s. . . . the prioress and convent next my mill at Cressebrok. Executors, Nich. Rysshton of London, clerk, and my wife. I beseech the Cardinal of York, William bishop of Lincoln, and Richard earl of Salisbury to help my executors. The said Nicholas Rysshton to have 100s. and a silver covered cup if he act as executor."

The will was made August 1, and was proved August 13, 1441, and is registered at folio 473 b. Chichele part i. (Lambeth).¹

Mr. Smith thinks that Holden's memorial brass has been used up again for Walter Curzon, and states his reasons in the essay referred to.

¹ Anthony à Wood gives the date of Thomas Holden's death as August 17, 1440. (*Oxford Hist. Soc.*, xvii. 230.)