

Account of Purley on Thames

Thomas Child

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An article by Jean Debney in the series From my History Notebook article 95 published in PPN December 1990

95: Thomas Childs' Will 1690

The Register copy Will dated 1 June 1690 of Thomas Childs of Purley has now been found in the Public Record Office in London. In it he described himself as a husbandman, ie a small farmer, and not a yeoman as expected. He said he was "aged but in sound and disposing memory, praise be given to God for the same". No record of his birth or baptism have been found but he would have been at least 21 when he married in 1641 and therefore 70 years or more in 1690.

In the next section of his will Thomas made a statement of his religious beliefs, probably copied from a book of "common form". The words suggest he was a nonconformist. After resigning his "soule into the mercifull hands of Almighty God my Creator assuredly hoping through the merrits of my Blessed Saviour to obtain remission of all my sins", he went on to ask that his "body be decently buried by the discretion of my Executors", ie not in the local churchyard. But his burial was recorded in Purley Parish Register on 18 August 1690. Thomas then went on to dispose of his "worldly goods and estate the Lord in His mercy" had "lent" him.

The five main legacies are for property, mainly in Purley, held either by lease or copyhold. Four were to go to his "loveing wife Joane" during her "naturall life"

and then to their three surviving daughters and two grandchildren and the other to a son-in-law.

The first bequest concerned the "living" occupied by Thomas BUSHNELL which was to go to his daughter Mary Blagrove after the death of his wife Joane and then to Mary's son Thomas Blagrove.

The living called "BAGGLIES" was to be held by Joane only for the duration of their daughter Sarah HOLMES' life, after which it was to pass to their daughter Joane ROBERTSON and then to grandson Joseph HOLMES.

The living where NICHOLLS lived was to be held by Joane and then by their grandson Joseph HOLMES.

GOODBOYES living was to go to his son-in-law Richard HOLMES during his natural life provided he paid the "debts which are incumbered upon it". Then it was to go to his son Joseph HOLMES and his heirs for ever.

The fifth property, a "parcell of land called East Croft together with fower acres in West Wood Field in the parish of Tilehurst", also went to his wife "dureing her naturall life".

Thomas appointed his wife and son-in-law Richard HOLMES of Whitchurch to be joint Executors. They were to pay all his debts and funeral expenses and then share the residue of the estate between them. His signature at the bottom of the will was witnessed by Luke BEAULIEU, John GUTTERIDG (sic), Mary HALL (who made her mark) and Richard GUTTERIDGE.

The Inventory was written only 10 days after his burial and Probate granted on 2 September 1690 in London by an official of the Archbishop of Canterbury at the Prerogative Court. The speed with which his affairs were wound up suggest that Thomas' death was expected and some preparations had been made by the family.

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