

UNTIL DEATH DO US PART: THE LAST WILLS AND TESTAMENTS OF A HUSBAND AND WIFE IN EARLY 16TH CENTURY PEMBROKESHIRE

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UNTIL DEATH DO US PART: THE LAST WILLS AND TESTAMENTS OF A HUSBAND AND WIFE IN EARLY SIXTEENTH-CENTURY PEMBROKESHIRE

By Roger Turvey

“What is a Gentleman without the true Faith of Christ in his heart, and the holy fruits thereof in his life, but a mere Gentilman without Christ, an alien from the common-wealth of Israel, and a stranger from the Covenant of promise, without hope and without God.”¹

Probate records are a key source for historians of the late medieval and early modern period and can be used to shed light upon a wide range of economic, social and religious issues. Indeed, in some respects wills and testaments are the most complex and interesting of all local records since they combine information about individuals and their families, their wealth, property, religion, literacy, interpersonal relationships and a number of other related topics. The aim of this paper is to investigate significant aspects of the lives and deaths of two of the most prominent members of Pembrokeshire's landowning elite, namely, Sir William Perrot and his wife Joanna Wogan. This study will focus on their wills and testaments, printed here for the first time since 1867, which while not unique they do have some unique features that are worthy of note. ² Perhaps the most important feature of the documents printed here is the fact that they are original wills and not enrolled copies from a court register. The vast majority of the wills that survive today are copies made by clerks working either in the local consistory or bishop's court of the diocese in which the testators lived or, if they owned property in more than one diocese, in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. The survival of wills drawn up and lodged in a family's private archive is quite rare the more so in these two instances since the enrolled copies have been lost. ³ That these wills were drawn up by a husband and wife who died less than eighteen months apart is also unusual as is the fact that they employed the services of separate household priests.

Background

Originally the will and testament were separate legal documents which gradually merged so that by the early sixteenth century the terms 'will' and 'testament' had become interchangeable. Strictly speaking, the will was simply a written statement by dying property-owners in which they expressed their wishes about the disposition of land and property subject to the precepts of the common law. A testament was often drawn up beforehand in order to dispose of personal goods, deal with debts and, of course, burial. The executor, appointed by the testator, was given the responsibility of carrying out the provisions made in the will/testament. As soon as possible after the death of the testator the will had to be verified in a church court as being the genuine last wishes of the deceased before the executor could carry out the provisions of the will. If someone died without a will a letter of administration had to be obtained. Once the will was proved the original copy was filed and a probate copy given to the executors, which noted where and when probate was approved and to whom probate was given. The original will was signed and/or a wax seal appended by the testator and witnessed by family, neighbours or friends. It was then submitted to the appropriate ecclesiastical court with the power to grant probate where the witnesses to the will testified that it was a true reflection of the deceased's intention. Once the will was accepted as valid it was copied into the court's will-register, annotated as proved before the court and filed with the court's other records.

It is important to remember that only a minority of persons left wills, mainly those with sufficient property and wealth to bequeath. The will maker had to be over the age of 14 if male and 12 if female but there were restrictions imposed on the latter. The very poor rarely had anything of value to leave their kin and whole classes of people were excluded from making legally valid wills, including children, lunatics, prisoners, married women, traitors and heretics. Married women could only make a will with their husband's permission, otherwise it was void: a wife's property belonging to her husband. Widows and spinsters could make wills but these make up only a fraction of the testamentary records still extant.

If today the will is mainly concerned with the inheritance of property such as the family home this was not the case in the early sixteenth century. Strict rules governed the inheritance of land so that a clear distinction was made between real and personal property. Personal property consisted of moveable goods and chattels both animate and inanimate, and might include remaining years on any outstanding leaseholds. Real property or realty (real estate) consisted of freehold or copyhold land and buildings. Wills, will making and probate were governed by church law but the descent, transmission and inheritance of land came within the jurisdiction of common law and manorial custom. The church authorities had no power to regulate the bestowal of property let alone resolve any disputes that might arise as a result. This is not to suggest that canon law had no interest in the will beyond proving its veracity, on the contrary, since wills had to be proved in the ecclesiastical court they were looked at very closely to ensure that the church got its full entitlement. Among the fees charged by the church courts were for validating, copying and preserving wills and probate inventories, and also for mortuaries. It is not known how much the church charged the executors of Sir William Perrot and Joanna Wogan but by an act of 1529 the fees were fixed at 3s. 6d. for goods valued at between £5 and £40 and for personal estates worth over £40 it was 5s.: 4 the Perrots fell into the latter category. The mortuary fees were set according to a sliding scale and were determined by the value of the testator's moveable goods after the cost of his or her debts had been deducted.

Under the law property usually descended to the eldest son or his assigns and a will was only likely to be made if the testator wished to provide for his wife, younger children, relatives and friends. Indeed, the writing of a will was never essential for anyone who wanted to dispose of real estate according to the prevailing property laws. Various means were therefore found to get around the strict codes of law. This was usually achieved by enfeoffment, i.e. the testator enfeoffed his land to feoffees, who were entrusted to use the lands as the testator wished. Common law regarded the feoffees as the beneficial owners but they were unable to use the land for their own purposes. Enfeoffment could take place months or even years before a landowner's death and once deceased the land would be granted to the testator's heir. This legal device had become widely used during the fifteenth century with the Perrots very much in the vanguard in Pembrokeshire.

It is sometimes easy to lose sight of the fact that besides being a legal document concerned with property and possessions, the will and testament was also a personal and spiritual record of a person's last thoughts and wishes. In an age of faith religious belief, concerns about mortality and the destination of the soul were, for many testators, matters of great moment. The fact that wills and testaments almost invariably began with a religious preamble in which the testator's soul was committed to God, followed by the invoking of various saints before stating where, and sometimes why, the body was to be bequeathed for burial has been held up as evidence of deep-seated religious faith. However, where once it was considered to be a straightforward process to infer the depth and sincerity of a testator's religious faith from will preambles, it is no longer the case. The fact that the majority of wills follow a standard format has caused some historians to question their value as evidence of widespread and deep-seated piety. Some historians have gone so far as to deny they possess any meaning at all but this is not shared by the majority who give them at least qualified credence. Whether these pious preambles are 'more dependent on the choices made by the cleric or scribe drafting a deathbed document than on the personal views of the testator', is open to question.⁵ True a 'man lying on his death bed must have been much in the hands of the scribe writing his will'⁶ but what cannot easily be disputed is the fact that documents that displayed no religious content whatsoever were extremely rare which suggests that, at the very least, the average testator would have

expressed some concern if their scribes had omitted the preamble altogether. With regard to the motive that lay behind the making of wills the late Sir Glanmor Williams expressed his opinion thus

If it would be invincibly cynical to doubt that sincere devotion was a primary and compelling force, it would be blissfully unsuspecting to suppose it was the only one.⁷

If the preamble is under attack so too is the display of charity and generous giving that lay at the heart of the majority of wills. This generosity was usually expressed in the form of cash-donations for specific purposes such as repairing the fabric of a church, or it might be given in kind such as in garments for the priest or food for the poor. Some testators went further by endowing schools and financing community projects such as bridge building or even an almshouse. However, many historians share Sir Glanmor Williams's opinion that 'When men left money for the churches in their wills they were moved by fear as well as fervour, by pride no less than piety'.⁸ As men of means and as a way to underline their status and premier position in society there was an expectation that they would use their wealth to enrich and endow. Contemporary commentators no less than modern historians were 'not without misgivings about the "pomp and pride of this world", which impelled men to spend lavishly on churches'.⁹ One might argue that the generosity displayed in wills is more likely to yield information about the personality of the testator than his or her piety.

In the final analysis it is probably best to steer a middle course between these competing schools of historical thought and regard the will preamble, no less than the testamentary dispositions, as 'an idiosyncratic mixture of formula and personal expression'.¹⁰ The truth is that without additional evidence to root out a testator's personal beliefs we are left to ponder the truth in a vacuum of ignorance. Fortunately, as will become clear, there is sufficient circumstantial evidence available to at least suggest whether Sir William and Joanna were conventionally or since rely religious.

The Testators

The Husband: Sir William Perrot (d.1503) of Haroldston ¹¹

William was born, according to best estimates, sometime in the mid to late 1440s probably at Eastington. He was the son of Thomas Perrot esquire (d.1474) and grandson of the first of the family to be knighted, Sir Thomas (d.1461). The latter had been a participant in and casualty of the so-called Wars of the Roses, dying in Bristol from wounds sustained two months earlier in the battle of Mortimer's Cross (February 1461).¹² His son wisely kept out of the conflict as did William being more concerned with running the family estates. William succeeded his father in July 1474 and in so doing inherited a considerably larger estate than that enjoyed by his grandfather. By virtue of his father's activity in the land market which included purchases, leases and exchanges, the Perrot estates had grown to such an extent that there were few parishes in the county that could claim no interest in the family's fortunes. The centre of the Perrot estates was Haroldston, the family seat, and a manor house of some antiquity dating back to the late thirteenth century. There is evidence to suggest that William was actively involved in refurbishing the house and was quite possibly the man responsible for building the so-called Steward's Tower (Fig I). By cementing the family's landholdings William was securing a place in the

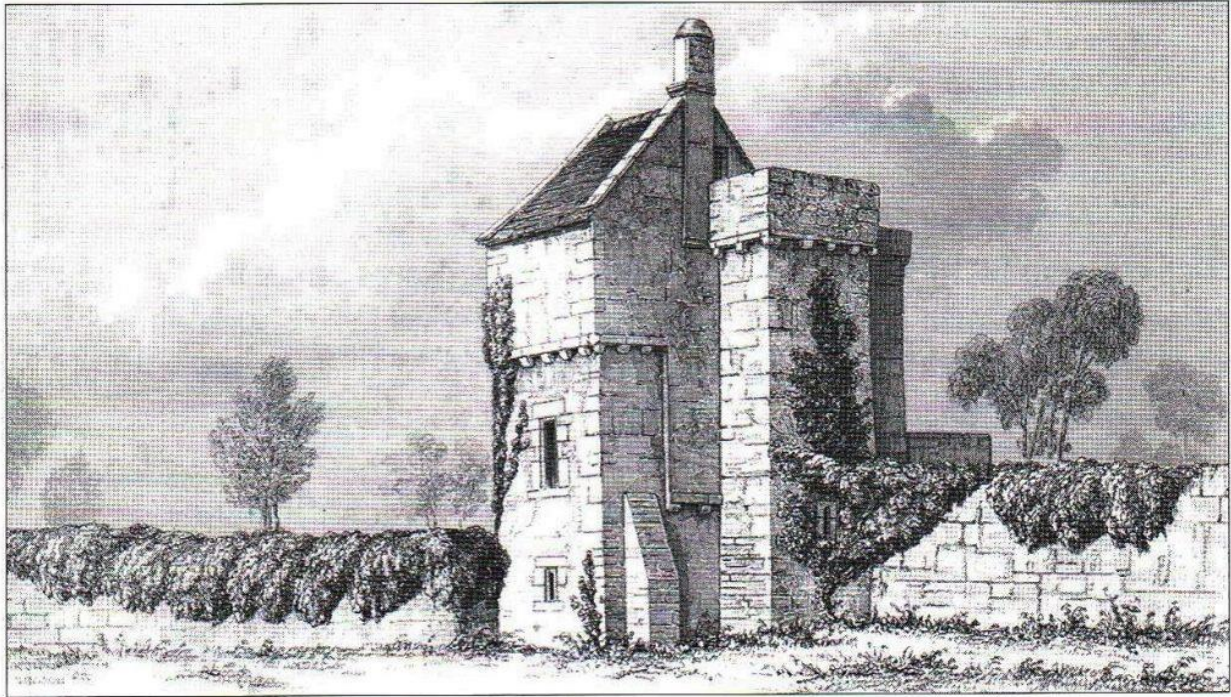


Fig. 1: The Steward's Tower, Haroldston House. Drawn in 1860 and published in Barnwell's Perrot Notes (1867).

county's social and political elite. This was underlined by his marriage to Joanna, the daughter of Sir Henry Wogan of Wiston. Wogan was undoubtedly one of the most powerful men in Pembrokeshire at that time and his kinship through marriage with William Herbert, earl of Pembroke, is a good indication of how high he had risen both socially and politically.

William Perrot was only marginally less active in the local administration than he was in the land market. His first known appointment was recorded in September 1475 when he served an annual term as bailiff of the town of Pembroke. This was followed in April 1496 by his appointment for life as sheriff of the town and county of Haverford. This office may have provided William with his entrée into the ruling council of the earldom, a position his grandfather, Sir Thomas, had enjoyed under Jasper Tudor. Appointed in the name of the five-year old Prince Henry (later to become Henry VIII), who had been given the earldom of Pembroke and lordship of Haverford on the death of his uncle, Jasper Tudor, in December 1495, William had evidently caught the eye of some powerful men. These men moved in royal circles and prominent among them, and the man most likely responsible for William's appointment, was Sir Rhys ap Thomas of Dinefwr.

Unlike Sir Rhys, a prominent participant at the battle of Bosworth, William appears to have resisted the temptation to pursue a life in the military. He does not appear to have been among those Pembrokeshire gentlemen, who were few in number, who personally welcomed Henry Tudor as he landed at Dale in August 1485. Whether William declared his support for the Tudor pretender to the throne as he swept in and out of Haverfordwest in a day is not certainly known. He did not oppose the Tudor-led invasion nor did he join the rebel force as it made its way through mid-Wales and on to Bosworth Field in Leicestershire. On the other hand, what is certain is that William was no Yorkist nor did he actively support King Richard III, and his apparent indifference to the Lancastrian cause, for whom his grandfather had died in 1461, did not harm his prospects of employment in the royal service once Henry Tudor was crowned king.

Succeeding Jasper Tudor in almost all his offices, Sir Rhys became the Tudor Crown's viceroy in south Wales. As a Pembrokeshire landowner, by virtue of his possession of the lordships of Carew and Narberth, Sir Rhys was probably well acquainted with William Perrot. It is perhaps no coincidence that when the marriage of Prince Arthur to Katherine of Aragon took place in SL

Paul's Cathedral in November 1501, William was among the 3000 invited guests. Although one among many, to be invited to attend the marriage of the king's eldest son and heir was a conspicuous honour made more significant by his knighting. Sir William was one among a select group of three Pembrokeshire gentry knighted at the ceremony, the other two being his brother-in-law, John Wogan of Wiston, and James ab Owen of Pentre Ifan. As age sought to overtake him, Sir William was mindful of the fact that certain preparations had to be undertaken in order to ensure the smooth transmission of his properties to his son and heir. Consequently, in March 1501 he was busy enfeoffing his brother-in-law, John Wogan, and his son-in-law, William Adams, with property in and around Tenby. In the event of his death they were entrusted with the task of passing on these properties to Owen, Sir William's eldest son and heir. The series of enfeoffments that were arranged at this time, indeed, some as early as the 1480s, is indicative of the fact that when Sir William came to make his last will and testament his properties had already been disposed of.

The Wife: Joanna Wogan (d.1504) of Wiston 13

Joanna was the daughter of Sir Henry Wogan of Wiston 14 and Margaret, the daughter of Sir William ap Thomas of Raglan Castle in Gwent. Joanna came from wealthy and influential stock; her father and brother, Sir John, were men of consequence in Pembrokeshire while her uncle, the Yorkist William Herbert, earl of Pembroke, was perhaps the most powerful man in south Wales during the 1460s. 15 The ties that bound the Wogans and the Herberts together were close and strong. While Herbert devoted himself to the rulership of much of mid and south Wales – among the more important of the many offices he held were the justiciarship and chamberlainship of the Principality of South Wales – he depended on men like Sir Henry Wogan to govern Pembrokeshire on his behalf.

Working alongside Wogan was the earl's illegitimate brother, also called William Herbert, who was appointed treasurer of the earldom of Pembroke. In a distinguished career lasting over forty years Wogan had served both kings and earls of Pembroke in both peace and war. He had certainly come to the attention of the Welsh poets who praised his achievements and celebrated his longevity with the epithet *Hir Hen*. Following his war service in France under Henry V, Wogan moved into local administration serving as deputy-justiciar of the Principality of South Wales for periods in the 1440s and 50s, as well as steward of the lordships of Pembroke, Haverford and Pebidiog. Unfortunately, kinship and war were to claim his son and heir, Sir John, who died fighting in support of his uncle Earl William. The earl and his younger brother, Sir Richard Herbert, were executed following their defeat at the battle of Edgecote in 1469, another of the battles that marked the continuation of the Wars of the Roses, and among their companions in death was a cousin of Sir William Perrot, namely, Jankyn Perrot of Scotsborough near Tenby.

That the Perrots drew closer to the Wogans is no surprise given the latter's political pre-eminence in the county but the fact that their overtures of friendship were reciprocated and cemented in marriage is perhaps evidence of the Perrot family's increasing prominence and growing economic strength. The marriage between William and Joanna was most likely arranged sometime in the 1460s by Thomas Perrot esquire and Sir Henry Wogan, when the latter's power was at its height. Wogan was a realist and political pragmatist who served, prior to the Wars of the Roses, Duke Humphrey of Gloucester's regime as earl, and after the conflict began both Lancastrian (Jasper Tudor) as well as Yorkist (William Herbert) earls of Pembroke. However, if his tomb effigy is taken as evidence of his true loyalty during the Wars of the Roses then he was a Yorkist at heart. He died on 24 May 1475 and was buried alongside his wife in Slebech church in a finely carved tomb sporting their sculptured effigies. Close examination of Sir Henry's effigy reveals a Collar of the Order of Sun and Roses carved around its neck, an order established by the Yorkist king Edward IV (Fig. 2).¹⁶

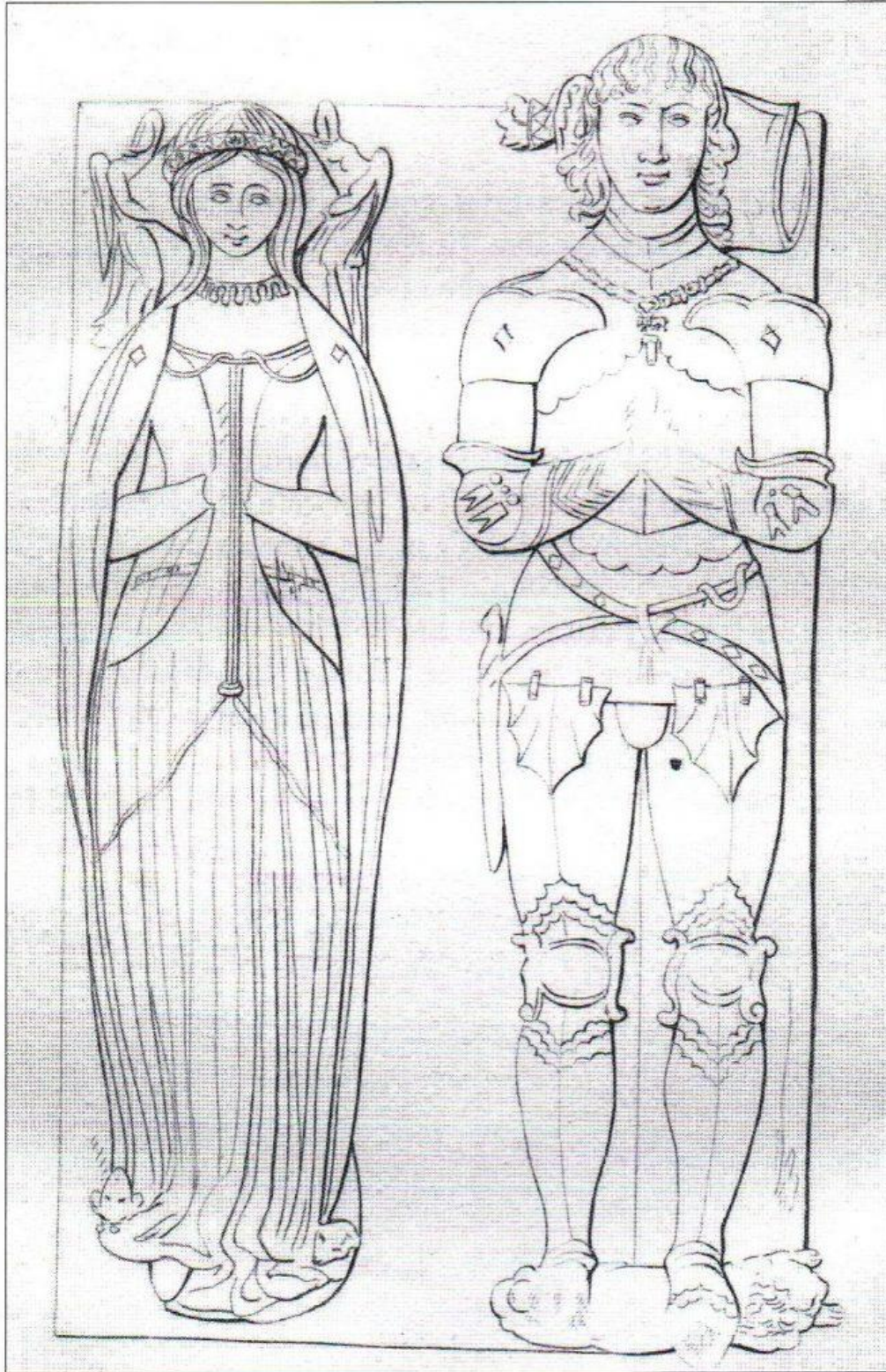


Fig. 2: The tomb effigies of Sir Henry Wogan and his wife Margaret in Slebech Church. The effigies were drawn in November 1809 and published in Fenton's Tour through Pembrokeshire, facing page 294.

Sadly, apart from her will and brief notices in one or two genealogies, there is no evidence to suggest that Sir Henry's daughter, Joanna, had ever existed. Only in death it seems did she make her mark on recorded history. Unlike her father she has no prominent tomb let alone an effigy to appreciate since it, alongside that of her husband, has been lost. The wills make clear that both husband and wife wished to be buried beside each other in the chancel of Haverfordwest priory before the image or statue of Saint Salvator. The fact that at least four generations of Perrots, and their wives, chose to be buried in the Priory of St. Thomas the Martyr, suggests that a family mausoleum had been established within the monastery (Fig. 3). Unfortunately for the Perrots, and Sir William and Joanna in particular, the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s witnessed the closure of the priory. So thorough had the destruction and plunder of the priory church been that, even after extensive excavation by archaeologists, no trace of their burial, let alone any stone sarcophagi, has ever been found.¹⁷

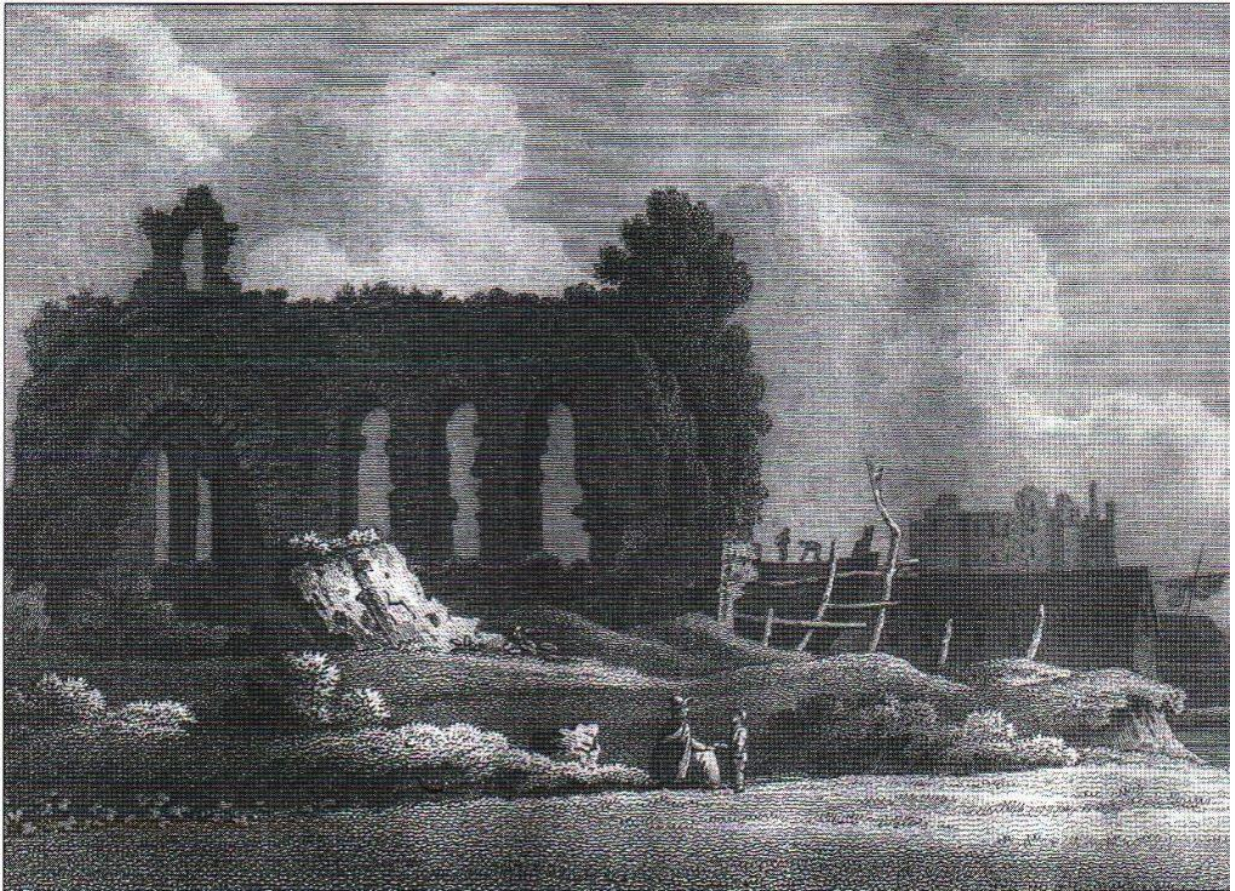


Fig. 3: The Priory of St. Thomas the Martyr, Haverfordwest. The ruins are depicted in a drawing by Sir Richard Colt Hoare and published in Fenton's Tour through Pembrokeshire, facing page 207.

The best that can be done in relation to uncovering the living, breathing Joanna is to infer from the limited evidence available. For example, the Wogans were subject to the attention of the native bards who addressed poetry in their honour. This suggests that they may have been patrons of the bardic order and, if so, Welsh-speaking.¹⁸ It is instructive that for the first time in the history of the Perrot family the male children of Sir William and Joanna sported distinctly Welsh Christian names; Owen and Jankyn. This, in turn, suggests that Joanna may well have exercised considerable influence within the household, and thus, was a strong character. Indeed, few women made wills in the late fifteenth and first quarter of the sixteenth century but the fact

that Joanna is prominent among them is further evidence of her individuality. It is fortunate for us that she expressed such a strong desire to make her wishes known because we would have no knowledge of the fact that she had her own priest, Thomas Harry, in addition to the household chaplain employed by her husband's family, namely John Arnold.¹⁹ Tentative though the evidence is it is sufficient to suggest that Joanna Wogan, a mother of nine children and mistress of a large household, was likely a remarkable woman.

The Wills and Testaments

The number of surviving wills in Wales, and in Pembrokeshire in particular, may represent only a fraction of those that were drawn up during the sixteenth century. Many have been lost, mainly through neglect but also on account of accidents such as fire, which may explain why some Welsh counties have much higher ratios of wills to population than do others. Tudor Pembrokeshire can boast well over five hundred surviving wills of persons residing or owning property in the county between 1485 and 1603. The vast majority of these testamentary records are housed in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, with the remainder lodged in the National Archives in Kew, London.²⁰ For the most part the latter represent the wills of the very wealthy, the landowning elite who, because they owned property in more than one diocese, were required to seek probate in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. For the vast majority of landowners, both gentry and non-gentry including the two testators referred to in this article, whose property was located within the diocese in which they lived, the bishop's consistory court would have been sufficient to meet their needs. The only test demanded by the church court was that they have either goods or income to the value of £5 per annum in which case they were classed as *bona notabilia*.

The consistory court was the chief court in the diocese and was almost always located and fixed within the cathedral church itself, or if not, then certainly within its precincts. It transacted most of the business of the diocese and represented the power of the bishop dealing with such matters as the discipline of the clergy, the licensing of teachers and preachers, the non-payment of tithes, matrimonial disputes, sexual misconduct and, of course, the proving of wills. Pembrokeshire lay at the heart of the diocese of St. David's, the largest and most important see in Wales. Due to its size and for administrative convenience the diocese was sub-divided into four archdeaconries, namely, Pembroke, Cardigan, Carmarthen and Brecon. Each archdeaconry was served by its own court, the lowest level of ecclesiastical court, with jurisdictions approximately the size of counties. In Pembrokeshire, as in a number of other sees in both Wales and England, the archdeacon's court was peripatetic meeting in various parish churches throughout the shire such as in Dale, Pembroke, Tenby, Fishguard and Haverfordwest. These courts would not normally be invested with the power to grant probate unless delegated to do so by the bishop, but given the sheer size of the diocese it seems that in St. David's at least, this was the norm and not the exception. Consequently, whereas Sir William's will was proved in the consistory court in St. David's his wife's will appears to have been proved in a court held in St. Mary's church, Haverfordwest, before the bishop's vicar-general Phillip Hywel.²¹ Unfortunately, the probate records of the bishop's consistory court dealing with Pembrokeshire, have largely been lost for the period before the mid sixteenth century.

According to the terms of an act of parliament passed in 1529 testators were obliged to satisfy the law in four key respects: they were required to ensure the 'payment of their debts', the 'necessary and convenient finding of their wives', the 'virtuous bringing up and advancement of their children to marriage', and 'charitable deeds ... for the health of their souls'.²² Prior to the passing of this act custom and clerical advice, not to mention a degree of common sense, were the only guides available to the majority of testators in the construction of their wills. For the most part the wills of Sir William and Joanna would easily have satisfied the precepts of the law as defined in one of the first statutes enacted in Henry VIII's so-called Reformation Parliament.

Sir William and his wife were typical testators in the sense that both were ill and in imminent fear of death when they made their wills. Indeed, the majority of testators drew up wills when they were, to use the standard phrase 'sick in body', and often well within a month of their deaths. However, the testator was always careful to include a reference to the fact he or she was, to quote Sir William, of *sanus mente ac bone memorie* [sound mind and good memory] when the will was

drawn up otherwise it could either be challenged or declared invalid. Besides close family perhaps the most important person attending the deathbed was the priest whose job it was to offer comfort and to see to the dying testator's spiritual welfare. Equally important was the priest's role as the scribe charged with the task of drawing up the will to the testator's satisfaction. Curiously, although John Arnold was employed as the family's household chaplain it seems that the cleric most likely responsible for drafting Sir William's will was Thomas Withe, Prior of the mile-distant monastery of St. Thomas the Martyr. Arnold figures quite prominently in Joanna's will he being one of the witnesses and gifted 6s. 8d. for the saying of prayers for her soul.

In addition to the household chaplain some families erected private chapels within their homes so that they could attend services without having to attend the local church. There is no evidence to suggest that Haroldston possessed such a chapel especially given the fact that the local parish church lay less than a mile south of the house.²³ Nevertheless, it is clear that the family took its spiritual welfare seriously since Joanna had her own personal household priest, *patri meo spirituali*, a man called Thomas Harry who was most likely entrusted with the task of drawing up her will. In fact of the seven witnesses listed in the respective wills, the law required at least two witnesses, all but two are identified as men of the cloth. Interestingly, only one person, David John Litt, appeared as a witness for both husband and wife.

It was customary for testators to make bequests to the church and in this respect Sir William and Joanna were especially generous. Indeed, patronage of church buildings was regarded by the more consequential gentry as one of the obligations of rank. Between them, Sir William and his wife left 16s. 8d. to repair the fabric of the cathedral church of St. David's and £11 to the prior and priory of St. Thomas the Martyr. The latter sum represented about a tenth of the priory's normal annual income.²⁴ Generally speaking, it was only those gentry with wealth to spare or who opted to be buried within the walls of a monastery that left money to the monks. Out of 153 Welsh wills examined in the period before the dissolution (ie pre- 1536) only nineteen contain legacies for monasteries. Given the existence of a Perrot family chapel within the priory the generosity shown by Sir William and Joanna is understandable. The testators were rather less generous to the Dominican Friary of St. Saviours located in the town of Haverfordwest to whom they bequeathed a combined sum of 10s. No doubt the preaching friars did not complain being grateful for anything the local gentry might leave them. Their most generous patron proved to be Sir Rhys ap Thomas who left them the princely sum of 40s. in his will of February 1525.²⁵

Interestingly, neither Sir William nor his wife left money for charity, make any bequests to the poor or to the community at large. So if, as has been suggested, evidence of ostentatious piety and generosity on the death bed 'reveals as much about guilt for a misspent life as about spiritual intensity',²⁶ it is reasonably safe to assume that the Perrots were likely inclined towards the latter. It must be remembered that wills reflect the most pious sentiments their makers could muster in the face of death so that their testamentary dispositions reveal what was important to them at that point in time. Certainly, Sir William was mindful of the fact that he may well have forgotten to pay his tithe hence his bequest to the parish priest of Haroldston St. Issels 6s. 8d. along with his best velvet gown. Joanna too left the same priest 6s. 8d. but unlike her husband, who apparently was content to die without either mass or prayers being said for his soul, she left instructions to the effect that the monks of the priory in which she was to be buried, were to be paid the considerable sum of 30s. for a month's worth of prayers. Evidently, between the prayers of the half dozen monks and those of John Arnold, Joanna hoped to avoid purgatory and speed her soul to heaven.

One gains the impression that of the two Joanna was far more inclined towards sincere religion than her husband. Sir William was a pragmatist and, above all, a businessman. Sir William and others of his class were in the business of wealth creation and in this respect his relationship with the church was as much commercial as spiritual. Even before the Reformation the church had been subject to the increasing encroachment of secular authority and secular interests. As far as the gentry were concerned those interests extended into the ecclesiastical property market in which benefices were traded and patronage transacted. Sir William was typical of his class in having the patronage or advowson of Pembrokeshire churches within his control. Certainly the churches of Castlebythe, Robeston West and quite possibly Walwyn's Castle, together with their

attendant glebes and other property, were in the hands of the Perrot family by the second half of the fifteenth century.²⁷

Lay impropriation was rife in Pembrokeshire as it was elsewhere in Wales. For example, of the one hundred and fifty parishes that existed in Pembrokeshire at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the bishop of St. David's held the advowson of no more than twenty-six. As the virtual owners of two, possibly three churches, Sir William had the legal right to appoint priests to these livings, a fact that even the bishop had to accept. Cases where the bishop refused to induct a priest presented to a particular benefice was quite rare, and the Perrots certainly suffered no such injury to their pride and power. In fact, one of the witnesses to Sir William's will was a priest, Robert Welshman, he had appointed to Robeston West church as recently as January 1503.²⁸ Thus, Sir William appears to have been utterly conventional in his piety, in his attitude to the church and in his exploitation of it. If he was inclined to be a little more cynical than his wife then his dealings with the church and its clerics, some of whom he employed, may have been responsible for it. One might even be tempted to go so far as to claim that if religious piety interfered with secular interest, then secular interest would win.²⁹

Those secular interests manifest themselves in Sir William's will in which he made careful provision for his presumably, and as yet, unmarried daughters. Indeed, in the opinion of Judith Jones, 'one of the main reasons for making a will was to provide dowries for unmarried daughters'.³⁰ If this is so then Sir William was not found wanting, since he bequeathed a grand total of £160, a considerable sum but one that was intended to attract the very best suitors. The variation in the amounts given to each daughter – Alicia received £60, Margaret £50, Isabelle £40 and Anne £10 – was a reflection of their different ages and potential for marriage. Having already settled cash sums on his eldest daughters, Maud, Jane and Joyce, all of whom were married by the time of their father's death, it is perhaps not surprising to learn that the payment of dowries could put a strain on a testator's resources. As far as his youngest son, Jankyn, was concerned it seems he had been enfeoffed with property in northern Pembrokeshire centering on the manor of Caerforiog situated roughly half way between Brawdy and St. David's. Sir William and Joanna left no legacies to either friend or servant an omission that was a little unusual but not overly so. Faithful retainers were often rewarded with money or clothes, sometimes even with a plot of land, but the Perrots evidently felt disinclined to be so generous. On the other hand, their friends and servants may have received their reward personally from the testators prior to the making of any will. The fact that both wills are relatively short suggest that the testators were quite ill when they were made and so had little time with which to deal with matters of small moment.

Once they had drawn up their wills the task of discharging their provisions as requested by the testators was left to the executor[s]. It was the duty of the executor to see to the testator's burial, distribute his goods, pay and collect his debts, and, if necessary, to be responsible for the upbringing of any children. Sir William did not depart from custom here when he appointed his son and heir, Owen, and his widow, Joanna, as executors. Eighteen months later Owen was again called upon to be the executor of his mother's will. Ironically, Owen's will, and that of his wife Katherine Poyntz, has been lost so we have no way of knowing how he disposed of the family's wealth and possessions. From the will of his son and heir, Thomas, we know that Owen requested to be buried in the family mausoleum in Haverfordwest prior y. Thomas too was buried there, next to his father and grandfather, when he passed away in October 1531.³¹ Thomas was the last head of the family to be buried in the priory before its dissolution in 1536.

In 1540 the government enacted the Statute of Wills which stated that, henceforth, real and personal goods and property, moveable and unmoveable, could be devised in one legal document entitled the 'will and testament'. This had the effect of bringing together all the dispositions made by the testator which, had it been the law at the time of Sir William's death would have yielded valuable information on the nature, extent and location of the family's landholdings. For this information prior to 1540 historians must turn to the Inquisitions Post Mortem, which unfortunately for Sir William, have been lost.³²

Wills are undoubtedly a rich historical source that can yield significant amounts of information if used carefully and in conjunction with other evidence. Their survival is largely down to chance

but with the general increase in record keeping from the mid-sixteenth century greater numbers of wills have been preserved. Pembrokeshire is fortunate in that so many have survived post-1550 so that it should be possible to do what Judith Jones has done for Monmouthshire by calendaring, printing and editing for publication the 154 wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury that have survived for that county between 1560 and 1601. It is a mammoth task but one well worth the effort.

Appendix

The Last Will and Testament of Sir William Perrot. TNA, E.211/397.

Drawn up: 20 May 1503.

Probate granted: 8 June 1503.

In Dei nomine Amen. Vicesimo die mensis Maii anno Domini millesimo quingentesimo tertio. Ego Willielmus Perrot de Haroldiston miles Men evensis dioceses sanus mente ac bone memorie videns periculum mortis meae mihi imminere condo testamentum meum in hunc modum. In primis do et lego animam meam deo patri omnipotenti ac corpus meum ad sePELLIENDUM in Ecclesia Prioratus Sancti Thomae Martyris Haverford coram ymagine Sancti Salvatoris ibidem in cancello. Item do et lego fabricae Ecclesiae Cathedralis Menevensis decem solidos. Item do et lego Priori et Conventui Domus et Ecclesiae Sancti Thomae Martyris Haverford *xli*. Item do et lego parochiali Ecclesiae meae Sancti Ismaelis juxta Haverford meam optimam togam de velvet. Item do et lego fratribus Praedicatoribus Domus et Ecclesiae Sancti Salvatoris Haverford praedicti *vs*. Item do et lego rectori meo Ecclesiae Sancti Ismaelis praedictae pro decimis meis oblates *vis. vii*. Item do et lego Anne filiae meae *xli*. Item

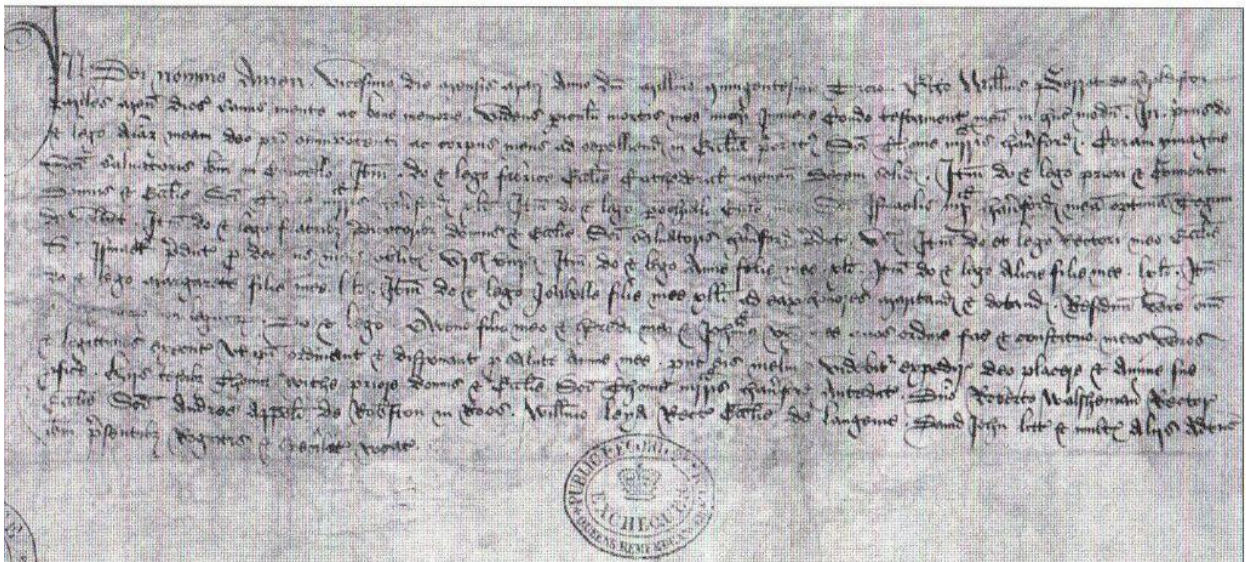


Fig . 4: A photograph of Sir William Perrot's will.

(Crown Copyright: The National Archives).

do et lego Aliciae filiae meae *lxli*. Item do et lego Margarete filiae meae *li*. Item do et lego Isabelle filiae meae *xlvi*. Ad earum honores maritandas et dotandas. Residuum vero omnium bonorum meorum non legatorum do et lego Oweno filio meo et heredi meo et Joanne uxori meae quos ordino facio et constituo meos veros et legitimos executores ut ipsi ordinant et disponant pro salute animae meae proficere. Hiis testibus Thoma With Priore Domus et Ecclesiae Sancti Thomae Martyris Haverford antedicti, Domino Roberto Walsheman rectore Ecclesiae Sancti Andrea Apostoli de Roberston in Roos, Willielmo Leya rectore Ecclesiae de Langeme, David John Litt, et multis aliis ad tune ibidem praesentibus rogatis et specialiter vocatis.

Probatum fuit infra scriptum testamentum coram nobis Johanne per missione divina Menevensis in Episcopo ac per nos approbatum insumatum ac legitime pronunciatum pro valore eiusdem administrationem omnium et singulorum bonorum debitorum et catallorum retrospectum testatorem et eius testamentum concernentium executoribus infranominatis in forma jusisjurati commisimus per praesentes. Datum sub nos tro magno sigillo viii die mensis Junii anno Domini millesimo quingentesimo tertio et nostrae consecrationis anno septimo.

The Last Will and Testament of Joanna Perrot (nee Wogan) TNA, E.211/395.33

Drawn up: 11 November 1504 .

Probate granted: 4 December 1504 .

In Dei Nomine Amen. Anno Domini millesimo quingentesimo quarto undecimo vero die mensis Novembris. Ego Johanna Wogan de Haroldis ton prope Haverford compos mentis tamen aeger in corpore videns periculum mortis meae mihi imminere condo testamentum meum in hunc modum. In primis do et lego animam meam Deo patri omnipotenti ac corpus meum ad sepeliendum in Ecclesia Prioratus Sancti Thomae Martiris Haverford coram ymagine Sancti Salvatoris ibidem in cancello. Item do et lego fabricae ecclesiae Cathedralis Menevensis vi s. et octo denarios. Item do et lego parochiali ecclesiae meae Sancti Ismaelis juxta Haverford praedictum vi s. et octo denarios. Item do et lego Priori et Conventui Domus et Ecclesiae Sancti Thomae Martiris Haverford praedicti viginti solidos. Item do et lego fratribus praedicatoribus Domus et Ecclesiae Sancti Salvatoris Haverford praedicti quinque solidos . Item do et lego canonicis Domus et Ecclesiae Sancti Thomae Martiris Haverford praedicti ad custodiendum placebo et dirige pro anima mea per spatium unius mensis triginta solidos. Item do et lego Johanni Arnold de Haroldiston praedicto capellano ad orandum pro anima mea sex solidos et octo denarios. Residuum vero omnium bonorum meorum non legatorum do et lego Oweno Perrot Armigero filio meo quem ordino, facio et constituo meum verum executorem ut ipse ordinat et disponet pro salute animae meae prout ei melius videbitur expedire Deo placere et animae suae proficere. Hiis testibus Domino Thoma Harry patri meo spirituli Domino Johanne Arnold, Rollando Tanner, David John Litt et multis aliis ad tunc ibidem praesentibus rogatis et specialiter vocatis.

Probatum approbatum et insumatum fuit presens testamentum coram nobis Philippo Howell in legibus bacallario vicario generali ac custode spiritu alium Episcopatus Menevensis quarto videlicet die mensis Decembris anno Domini millesimo quingentesimo iii pro tribunali ibidem sedente in ecclesia Beatae Mariae Virginis Haverford ipsoque testamento pro legitimo demonstrato et pronuntiato ejusdem testamenti executio fuit commissa executori infra scripto in forma jurisjurati examinato diligenter et per nos admissio. In cuius rei testimonium sigillum nostri officii apposuimus die mensis et anno Domini ut supra. Postea venit et computavit cum officario et ab omni ulteriori compoto seu ratiocinio salvo jure cuiuscumque dimisus est.

Notes

1. William Hinde, A Faithfull Remonstrance of the Holy Life and Happy Death of John Bruen (1641), 4-5.
2. E. L. Barnwell, Perrot Notes (London, 1867), 146, 152-3 . I
3. The documents that make up the Perrot family archive lie scattered among different classes of records held in the National Archives, London. The archive also contains an hitherto unknown original will drawn up by Henry Perrot (d.1491), uncle to Sir William . T[he] N[ational] A[rchives] , E.210/ 5025 .
4. 21 Henry VIII, c.5: Act concerning fines and sums of money to be taken by the ministers of bishops and other ordinaries of Holy Church for the probate of Testaments (1529).
5. Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, The Gentry in England and Wales 1500 – /700 (London, 1994), 350.
6. Tom Arkell et al. (eds.), When Death Do Us Part. Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England (Oxford, 2000), . 146.
7. Glanmor Williams, The Welsh Church From Conquest to Reformation (Rev. ed n., Cardiff, 1976), 461.
8. Ibid ., 461.
9. Ibid., 462.
10. Arkell et al. (eds.), When Death Do Us Part, 55.
11. For information on Sir William and the Perrot Family refer to Roger Turvey, ' The Perrot Family and their Circle in South-West Wales During the Later Middle Ages' (University of Wales, Swansea, Ph.D. Thesis, 1988).
12. The civil war known as the Wars of the Roses was a dynastic struggle between the noble

houses of Lancaster and York. It consisted of a sequence of plots, rebellions and battles that took place in England and Wales between 1455 and 1485/7. Generally speaking the conflict did not have a significant impact on the lives of the ordinary people but landowning families such as the Perrots and Wogans found themselves pressurized into supporting either one side or the other.

13. For the most complete history of the Wogan family, see Francis Green, 'The Wogans of Pembrokeshire', *Welsh Historical Records*, VI, 169-232; VII, 1-26.

14. For the most recent and detailed account of Wogan's life and career, see R. A. Griffiths, *The Principality of Wales in the Later Middle Ages*, I, South Wales, 1277-1536 (Cardiff, 1972), 150-1.

15. For the Herberts, see R. A. Griffiths, *ibid.*, 155-6, 186.

16. Richard Fenton, *A Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire* (London, 1810). Had the Perrot tombs survived the dissolution one wonders how they might have compared to the finely carved tomb-effigies of Sir Henry Wogan and his wife Margaret (wrongly ascribed by Fenton to Roger Barlow and his wife).

17. Sian Rees, 'The Augustinian Priory', in Dillwyn Miles (ed.), *A History of the Town and County of Haverfordwest* (Landysul, 1999), 55-78.

18. For the Wogan family's relationship with the Welsh bards, see E. J. Evans, 'Noddwyr y Beirdd yn Sir Benfro' (University of Wales, Aberystwyth, M.A. Thesis, 1972), xiii-xviii.

19. Arnold was admitted to the priesthood as a novice in 1490. His reward for faithful service was his presentation to the parish of Castlebythe in which he was still incumbent as late as 1535.

Francis Green and T. W. Barker, 'Pembrokeshire Parsons', *WWHR*, II, 266.

20. A full list of the St. David's Probate Records, 1556-1858, can be found in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. The records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury are stored in the National Archives in Kew, London and can be consulted and purchased online.

21. Phillip Hywel may be identified as the same man who was listed as vicar of Brawdy in 1503 (as Phillip ap Hywel) and rector of Narberth in 1511. Green and Barker, 'Pembrokeshire Parsons', *WWHR*, I, 250; III, 212.

22. Arkell et al. (eds.), *When Death Do Us Part*, 24.

23. In May 1450 a cousin of Sir William, John Perrot of Warren, successfully petitioned the Papal Curia for a portable altar. *Calendar of the Papal Registers*, 1447-55, 488.

24. The priory's regular annual income was said to be £133 in 1535 so there is every reason to believe that it may have been a little less thirty years earlier at the time of Sir William's death.

25. Glanmor Williams, *The Welsh Church*, 566.

26. Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, 352.

27. Roger Turvey, 'Priest and Patron: A Study of a Gentry Family's Patronage of the Church in south-west Wales in the later middle ages', *Journal of Welsh Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 8 (1991), 7-19.

28. Green and Barker, 'Pembrokeshire Parsons', *WWHR*, II, 261.

29. It is possible that I have done Sir William Perrot a disservice here given his possession and regular use of the so-called Haroldston Calendar. Described as a book containing prayers, written in Latin on expensive vellum, to God, the Virgin Mary, and the Saints, followed by the penitential Psalms and Litany, the calendar is more than simply a prayer book. It combines the attributes of a book of hours, a religious calendar and a family bible. The prayers are ornamented with rough coloured drawings, some of which are later additions, of saints and of scenes from the life of Christ. Much of the writing is in Sir William's own hand and it is clear the Haroldston Calendar was a much treasured possession. I am currently working on an edition of the Calendar which is housed in the British Library, Add. MSS 22720.

30. Judith Jones, *Monmouthshire Wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 1560-1601* (Cardiff, 1997), 27.

31. It is interesting to note that Thomas Harry also acted as a witness to, and may have been the scribe responsible for, the will of Thomas Perrot in 1531. His service in the Wogan and Perrot households extended over a period of at least thirty years. TNA, Prob. 11/24/8.

32. The IPM of Sir Owen Perrot (d.1521) and that of his son Thomas (d.1531) are still extant.

33. Unfortunately, the will of Joanna Wogan is currently listed as 'missing'. Apparently, this happens occasionally especially if documents have been returned to the wrong place or put with

another document. I should like to thank Vanessa Smith of the Record Copying Department at Kew for her efforts to locate the document on my behalf.

Comments are closed.