



## *The Last Testament of Bishop Walter Suffield Founder of St Giles' Hospital*



Comparatively few English wills survive from this early date, and even fewer offer such a remarkable insight into the character of the testator as does that of Bishop Suffield, the founder of St Giles's hospital. From it there emerges a picture of a remarkable man whose strong attachment to his family, friends and servants was matched, if not outdone, by a genuine desire to assist the poor. His new hospital, in particular, secured a number of generous bequests (references to it are denoted here in **bold**), but it was certainly not the only recipient of his charity.

For more information about Bishop Walter and his philanthropic activities, see the entry by Christopher Harper-Bill in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (2004), volume 53, pp. 282-3; and, by the same author, 'Above all these Charity: The Career of Walter Suffield, Bishop of Norwich, 1244-57', in P. Hoskin, C. Brooke and B. Dobson, eds, *The Foundations of Medieval Ecclesiastical History* (2005), pp. 94-110.

✠ In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen. I, Walter de Suffield, bishop of Norwich, make and ordain my testament in this wise. First of all, I commend my soul to God and the Blessed Mary and the Blessed Anne and Giles and all the saints, and my body to be buried before the altar of the Blessed Mary in the new chapel in the church [i.e. cathedral] of Norwich, where in perpetuity there shall be a monk celebrating for my soul at the altar of the same Virgin, and the name of the monk to be written every week on a board.

Item, the prior and convent shall observe my anniversary in perpetuity; and on the day of the anniversary the convent shall have twenty shillings for a pittance, and alms of twenty shillings to distribute among the poor; and, for this favour freely granted to me, I leave the same convent one hundred marks [£66. 13s 4d], which, if I have not paid in my lifetime, is to be paid by my executors.

Item, for the performance of my funeral I leave one hundred pounds; and it is to be solicitously and faithfully provided that, along whichever road my body shall be carried, substantial doles shall be made to the poor; and that wherever the body shall rest on its way to burial the poor that gather around it - the old, widows, poor children - shall each on their departure have a silver penny; and they shall frequently be replaced by others by day and by night. We also will and instruct that all our debts shall be wholly and fully paid.

Item, twenty-five chaplains shall be sought in my diocese, of that diocese, but care is to be taken that they are honest, and if it is possible they are to celebrate for a whole year for my soul, and the souls of those whose goods I have received by virtue of any usage of the church of Norwich whatsoever, and, for the souls of those whose executor I was, or whose goods came [to me] because they died intestate, or for another reason. And for the support of the said chaplains I leave one hundred marks.

Item, in recompense of all of those things which I have received in my diocese by whatsoever title, or for whatsoever reason, over which I might and ought to have a guilty conscience, I leave one hundred marks to be distributed among the poor of my diocese by the hands of my executors, according to whatever they shall deem best.

Item, I leave one hundred marks for distribution in money and clothing among the manorial poor on our manors, by the hands of William de Whitewell, Geoffrey de Loddon and William de Pakeham.

Item, for the relief of the oppressed in the jurisdiction of my diocese I leave twenty marks to be distributed by the hand of Daniel de Beccles.

Item, to my cathedral church of Norwich I leave my great cup with the handles for the reception of the body of Christ and for sacred relics if desired.

Item, to the church of Norwich the two horses which carried my body, and my chapel, as I received it from the same, with a horse. But my mitre without fur, which was given to me, and my pastoral staff, which [William de Raleigh] Lord [Bishop of] Winchester gave me, I leave to the abbey of St Gilles in Provence, together with twenty marks of silver.

Item, for the honour and favours accorded to me by the church of Norwich and for the various expenses and labours sustained with regard to my election, and so that they remember the day of my anniversary with divine offices and alms, as we have specified, I discharge them and fully release them from payment from the time of my death with regard to the annual payment of sixteen marks in which they are bound to Martin, sometime rector of the church of Denham, which rent the same Martin by his charter gave and granted during his lifetime to me, or to whoever I might wish to give or assign it.

**Item, to the hospital of St Giles of Norwich, which I built in remission of all my sins, I leave three hundred marks [£200]; and I will and instruct that it shall be deployed for the use of the same hospital on the advice of the master of the house and my executors. And I instruct my executors, and entrust to the good faith of the same, that they will take care of the aforesaid hospital and will favour the same in every way that they can with my goods; notwithstanding this, however, I do not want the hospital to bring any legal action or institute any plea against my executors.**

**Item, to the same hospital I leave my gilt cup which was the blessed Edmund [Rich, archbishop of Canterbury]’s; and I still wish that the aforesaid hospital shall have the aforesaid three hundred marks.**

Item, the lease of the land of William Maudyt which I have in Thirling, until the completion of the term, along with two ploughs, I leave to the aforesaid hospital, saving my corn in the barns.

Item, to be distributed among the poor of the diocese of Norwich for the soul of William le Enveyse, and for the satisfaction of those to whom he was bound in the same diocese, I leave twenty marks; and it is to be handed over by Dominus Roger de Tremleye, his executor; and if he dies it is to be distributed by my executors.

Item, in the same way, and among the same people of my diocese, thirty marks are to be distributed by William de Whitewell for the soul of Denis de Cottun; and if the same William dies, the same money is to be distributed by my executors among the poor of my diocese and [in the place] where the same Denis was born. Item, I leave twenty marks to be distributed among the poor of the parish of Heveningham for the soul of the same Denis.

Item, to the monks of [Horsham] St Faith one mark for the soul of the same [Denis].

Item, I leave twenty marks to the poor of Beccles and Worlingworth, and to the poor parents of Geoffrey de Beccles, to be distributed among them by Dominus Philip, our sequestrator, and Daniel de Beccles.

Item, I leave twenty marks to be distributed among the poor for the souls of Thomas de Brisewurth, knight, and Thomas de Acout by my executors in the areas of Acle and of Briseworth [at Thorndon] of my diocese.

Item, I leave twenty marks to be distributed among the poor in my diocese for the soul of Peter de Hautboys by Dominus Hamon de Calthorp, and my executors if the same Hamon dies.

Item, I leave twenty marks to be distributed for the soul of Thomas de Cressingham in the town of Creetingham, and among the poor of the neighbourhood by my executors and William de Cressingham.

Item, to the Lord King I leave a cup and a palfrey and my pack of hounds.

Item, to illuminate the altar of the Blessed Virgin in the new chapel in Norwich [cathedral] I give and assign the tithes of the demesne of Thornham in perpetuity, and twenty marks for the purchase of rents by my executors.

Item, to each house of friars preachers and friars minor in my diocese I leave five marks.

Item to the communities of friars preachers and friars minor in England thirty marks.

Item, to the poor scholars of Oxford a hundred shillings.

Item, to the repair of the church of Suffield twenty marks.

Item, to the poor of the same parish for the soul of Richard, rector of the same, twenty marks; and to other poor people of my diocese I leave twenty marks for the soul of the same Richard.

Item, I leave sixty marks to be distributed among the poor of my diocese in the manors of the same diocese where Matilda, countess Warenne, was dowered, for the soul of the same.

Item, I leave twenty marks to be distributed by my executors among the poor of my diocese for the soul of Richard de Wendover, my companion.

Item, to Lady Ela, my sister, a ring worth twenty shillings.

omnia donis de Coten. p man Wille de Whitelwell. Et si mortuus fuerit scdm Wille  
donis. Et monachis de sca fide unam marc p ana etc. Et lego paupib; de Beche  
paupib; p animab; et de Berseburgh milic. etc. de Acout p man executor meoz in  
an. etc. morat. Et lego viginti marc distribuendas p ana Thom de Cressingh  
tre altaris be unguis in noua capta Hobbie: do et assigno decimas de dominici  
uicior et minor Anglie: lego viginti marcas p paupib; scolari; Oxon. Et  
etc. viginti marc. Et lego sexaginta marcas ad distribuend. paupib; mee die  
executor meoz. Et une etc soroz mee: unu anulu p viginti solid. Et Agnet  
p unq; marcas. Et eod modo pms Wenna de Ingelburgh. Et Aliis paupib; con  
miam de sumton. quoz marc. Et paupib; pothamis meis de burgo in  
Hm. tres marc. Et paupib; parochianis de Haringes. tres marcas. Et  
ozatur frs Johis de Stamford sexaginta solid. Et fr Radulfo de Huntedon  
undecim libris. et distribuantur in uictu et uestitu. Anachorete de suffeld in  
duco firmam tre Wille gauduyt in Cherlinge: usq; ad annu meu toplecu cu

- Item, to Agnes de Therling, my sister, a ring of the same value.
- Item, to Ela, my niece, one hundred shillings to provide sustenance for her in seclusion [as an anchoress].
- Item, to the children of John de Banningham the elder who do not have a rental income five marks; and the same to the children of Henry de Ingewurth.
- Item to my other poor relatives, particularly on my mother's side, I leave twenty marks, to be distributed among those in my diocese by my executors and according to their ordinance.
- Item, to my poor parishioners of Winterton and Somerton four marks.
- Item, to my poor parishioners of Burgh in Flegg four marks.
- Item, to my poor parishioners of Burgh in Suffolk four marks, and to the chapel of St Botulph in the same parish four marks.
- Item, to the poor parishioners of Cretingham three marks.
- Item, to the poor parishioners of Snoring three marks.
- Item, to the poor recluses of my diocese ten marks.
- Item, to the nuns of Carrow five marks; and to the nuns of Campsey [Ash] five marks.
- Item, to the nuns of Blackborough two marks.
- Item, to the house where the mother of brother John de Stamford lives forty shillings.
- Item, to brother Ralph de Huntedon my small Bible which I bought on his account.

Item, to the anchorite of Thornham I leave what is specified in my charter, which he has.

Item, to my poor parishioners of Thirling, of Hoxne and of Thornham fifteen pounds; and it is to be distributed in food and clothing; to the anchorite of Suffield one mark; and to the anchorites of Stratton one mark; to the anchorites of Massingham, that is to say my niece and her companions, twenty shillings.

Item, to the hospital of St John, Lynn, five marks; **to the hospital of St Giles of Norwich the lease of the land of William Mauduyt in Thirling, until the completion of my term, with two good ploughs, with all the corn to be found in the barns there and with all the stock of cows, sheep and pigs.**

Item, to the archdeacon of Norwich, my brother, the ring that was my brother Roger's, and my great cup of maple wood, from which I drink at table.

Item, to Walter, my nephew, a cup, my *Decretum*, which was Master John de Offington's, [and] the *Summa Hugeci* [a commentary on canon law] which Master John de Atleberg has on loan from us; item, all the books of theology which I bought from the executors of Master Adam de Bromholm. Item, I leave to him my Decretals and books of philosophy, and entrust to his fidelity that, for [the salvation of] my soul, he will feed a hundred paupers every year, for as long as he lives, on the day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Item, every year for three years following my death he will have an annual celebrated; item every day for as long as he lives, when he is at home, he will have a pauper fed in his presence for my soul.

Item, to his brother, William de Calthorp, all my ironwork, that is to say armour, a handsome cup with a foot [and] an emerald ring; and, since I have done many kindnesses to him, I entrust to his fidelity that every year on the day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin [15 August], for as long as he lives, he will feed a hundred paupers for my soul. Item, every day in his presence he will have a pauper fed at luncheon, and that every week he will have a mass celebrated for my soul by his chaplain in his chapel.

Item, to my faithful and beloved William de Whitewell, the image of the Blessed Mary, which Master Roger de Raveningham gave to me; item, the picture painted by the hand of Master Peter; item, two books of sermons; item, my great belt, to be fastened about him when he grows old; item, my cup from which I drink, with the plate.

Item, to William de Pakeham a silver cup with a foot and my psalter; and, since nothing but death can separate us, he will [freely] apply himself to benefit my soul.

Item, to Geoffrey de Lodnes the marriage of the heir of Roger de Wichingham [and] my cup which is called *Godet*; item, my white maple-wood cup; item twenty marks in silver; his fidelity will prompt him sufficiently to benefit my soul.

**Item, to the hospital of St Giles the Bible which I bought from Master Simon Blund; item, the cup from which the poor children drink.**

**Item, to Dominus H[amon], warden of the said hospital of St Giles, a handsome cup with a foot, and the missal which he himself had made for me.**

Item, to the archdeacon of Colchester a ring; to Master Harvey de Fakeham a ring; to Master Hugh de Corbrig a cup with a foot, and my great Bible, handsome but counterfeit.

Item, to Giles the chaplain a mazer, a thickly furred cap, the missal which Roger de Granario gave me, a silver cup and five silver spoons.

Item, to William the clerk of the chapel forty shillings and a book of songs, which was John Bygot's.

Item, to Matthew the chaplain five marks and one of my best robes.

Item, to William de Wychingham a cup with a foot and one hundred shillings in silver; **to Hugh of the chamber all my bed, except the silk quilts, which, along with my relics, I leave to the hospital of St Giles. And I wish that, if I die a long way from my church [Norwich cathedral], my body is to be opened and my heart is to be buried in the chapel of the hospital in a cavity made in the wall next to the altar.**

Item, to H. de Caylli I remit everything that he owes me, and I leave a ring to his wife.

Item, to Ralph de Crakeford a cup; to Reginald de Refham five marks.

Item, to John the cook five marks; to Gilbert the salter a livery, that is to say sufficient and appropriate sustenance and clothing in the said hospital, and let a charter be issued to him accordingly; to Adam the groom one hundred shillings; to Coleman five marks; to Hugh the butler five marks; to Wakke four marks; to John the hosteller five marks; to Thoward one hundred shillings; to Seman of the kitchen five marks.

Item to Gille two marks; to Geoffrey de Lodne, formerly hosteller of the kitchen, two marks; to Ralph, hosteller of the chamber, three marks; to Geoffrey the baker three marks.

Item, to Nicholas the brewer twenty shillings; to Capun twenty shillings.

Item to little Simon thirty shillings; to John the carter three marks and one of the second-best robes; to Richard the carter three marks; to Dusing three shillings; to Hobbe the carter twenty shillings; to Roger the carter, who is at Hoxne, three marks.

Item, to Simon the smith three marks.

Item, to Geoffrey the watchman a mark.

Item, to Matilda the laundress twenty shillings.

Item, to Stephen the messenger two marks; to Wyndelaboys ten shillings; to William my personal messenger one hundred shillings; to Buleys ten shillings; to Peter the baker twenty shillings, and twenty shillings to his servants; to William the brewer twenty shillings, and to his boys a mark.

Item, to my two pages, Nicholas and William, three marks; to Gase ten shillings.

Item, to Sandre ten shillings; to Neve ten shillings.

Item, to Banigham, who looks after all my bedding, one mark; to the two carriers of water to the kitchen fifteen shillings each; to Martin of the kitchen one mark; to Robert who sleeps (*ki dort*) a mark.

Item, to Geoffrey the hosteller of the kitchen one mark; to Godwin of the kitchen ten shillings.

Item, to William the pelterer, to Henry the cobbler and to Richard the cobbler five shillings each.

Item to Geoffrey of the chamber twenty shillings; to Trot and Nicholas Syre and to Gwyliot five shillings each, and just as much to Warde de Hasingham; [and to] Unshod Scot (*Scot nudo*), to Cruste and the watchman's boy, three shillings each.

Item, to William de Wichingham's boy and to the boy of Hugh of the chamber half a mark each.

Item, to William de Foceston, clerk, a silver cup; to Daniel de Beccles a cup with a foot and twenty marks for the goods which he had from Master W. of Horham, accounting to me for all the expenses which I sustained with regard to the church at Grundisburgh.

Item, I owe Hugh, chaplain of Dennington twenty marks.

Item, I leave ten marks to be distributed among the poor of Burndish by my executors on the advice of the rector of the church of Dennington.

Item, to William de Pakeham the younger five marks; to Osbert Trenchefolie two marks; to Robert de Ilsington two marks; to William de Lega two marks.

Item, to Master Nigel a ring.

Item, to the hospital of St John, Oxford, twenty shillings; to the hospital of the Magdalen of Norwich twenty shillings.

Item, to the prior and convent of Bromholm I remit whatever they owe me, as they remit to me everything which I have of theirs.

Item, to the lepers of my diocese, living alone or in communities, one hundred shillings, according to the ordinance of my executors.

Item, to each leper coming to my funeral two pence.

Item, to each anchorite of Norwich on the day of my burial six pence, in addition to the communal bequest [made above].

Item, to John the carpenter three marks; to John the mason three marks.

Item, to the mason who lives at Caen a mark; to complete the work which we have begun in the feretory of the Blessed Edmund [Archbishop Rich] of Pontigny twenty marks; to brother Richard the mason's scholar three marks; **to John, the chaplain of [the hospital of] St Giles, a ring; to Robert, the chaplain of the hospital of St Giles, upkeep in the said hospital, and let a charter be issued to him.**

Item, to the repair of bridges in the diocese two marks, and one mark to the bridge of Cattawade.

Item, to the house of Weybridge two marks; to the hospital of Beck two marks; to brother Philip de Flicham two marks.

Item, to Robert the vicar of Ludham a cup with a foot; to Thomas de Bukeham a silver cup; to John de Northelmham a silver cup; to Richard de Branteston five marks; to Robert de Crakeford five marks; to William de Hevingham five marks; to William de Harpele five marks; to Geoffrey de Crakeford a ring; to Robert, the servant of Bacton, four marks; to the servant of Wykes twenty shillings; to William of England four marks; to Scot of Hoxne four marks; to Scot of Thirling five marks; to Pruet at Gaywood three marks; to William Soper one mark; to Shynnyng one mark; to Hamon de Fincham twenty shillings; to William my smith twenty shillings; to John Stuket three marks; to Walter de Grey, servant of London, twenty shillings.

Item, to Adam, my steward at Lynn, one hundred shillings; and in addition to that I assign him ten marks for every year that he remains as steward, for his expenses.

Item, to Richard, my goldsmith at Lynn, three marks.

Item, for the souls of those who served me and are dead, let two annuals be celebrated every year by my executors in my diocese.

**Item, twenty marks is to be handed to Dominus Hamon, chaplain, the master of the hospital of St Giles, towards alms-giving for my soul to places and people as he sees best.** To John the clerk, scribe of our courts, twenty shillings; to Adam de Wichingham twenty shillings; to Gotte of South Elmham three marks; to Adam, the warrener of Eccles, twenty shillings; and in common to all my warreners three marks, according to the ordinance of my executors.

Item, to each boy who receives an annual robe [a livery] from me, and who is not specifically left something, I leave half a mark.

Item to my brother [bishop] who will rule the church of Norwich after me I leave my cup of antique workmanship, and may God lead him in the way of eternal salvation; and, after the church of Norwich, **I especially commend to him the hospital of St Giles** and all of our servants who have faithfully served me and my church in all things, and for that I give them God's blessing and my own; and, if they have been found wanting in anything, I forgive them everything and, as much as I can, I absolve them from deadly sin, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.

To my sons, the monks of Norwich, I leave two marks for a pittance on the day of my burial and a cask of my best wine; **and after that one to the hospital;** one each to Geoffrey de Lodne, William de Pakeham and William de Whitewell, and likewise to each of the executors. To the convent of Stratford ten marks towards a pittance.

Item, ten marks is to be given to the master of Sempringham for the black palfrey which he sent to us.

And, to perform this my testament, I assign and leave the silver and gold, jewels and horses, sown corn and corn that is not sown, wards and farms and everything that is owed to me for the same, and whatever I have in moveable and immoveable goods

and in men, and whatever things are or ought to be, by whatever name they may be assessed. Everything, however, which is owed to me by sequestrations, and also by that sequestration [to be made] at the time of my death, I leave and assign to the same churches and poor parishioners. I appoint as the executors of my testament Walter de Calthorp, my nephew, Geoffrey de Lodne, William de Whitewell, William de Pakeham, Dominus Hamon, master of the hospital of St Giles, Master Hugh de Corbridge and William de Wichingham. Dated at Hoxne, and completed on Monday next before the feast of St John the Baptist, in the year of Our Lord one thousand two hundred and fifty-six, and the twelfth year of my pontificate [19 June 1256].

(NRO, NCR, 24B/2)

