

# Philippa Russell and the Wills of London's Late Medieval Singlewomen

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*Never-married women were common in the streets and lanes of late medieval London, but few of their wills survive. Philippa Russell is one of only 15 such testators recorded in London probate courts between 1450 and 1500, and her will is especially long and informative. Providing readers with a translation of Russell's will, this article examines what it reveals about Russell's piety, charity, civic-mindedness, wealth, and personal and familial relations. It also discusses the varied meanings of the new term 'singlewoman' (Russell's chosen self-identification) and compares Russell's last provisions with those of other singlewomen, maidens, puellae and virgines in late medieval London.*

## Introduction

For centuries, the quintessential female testator in London was a widow. Although many medieval and early modern widows were desperately poor, a few had sufficient assets to bequeath their real estate, cash, chattels and other goods. Widows not only sometimes had the financial wherewithal to compose a last will and testament; they also had the legal authority. Wives were deemed ineligible testators until the Married Women's Property Act of 1882, and although some married women before 1882 made wills, usually with the explicit permission of their husbands, few did. Like widows, never-married women had the legal capacity to devise goods and land, but it was not until the middle of the fifteenth century that some of their wills can be firmly differentiated from those of widows. Philippa Russell, whose extensive will from 1458 is translated and discussed here, is among the first testators in London to identify herself as a never-married woman. Singlewomen such as Philippa Russell never outnumbered widows in the registers of the various jurisdictions in which the wills of Londoners were proved, but they did speak in a distinctive voice.

The testator's voice might have been particularly important for women. As Katherine Lewis and Gail McMurray Gibson have separately suggested, will-making offered women, in Lewis's words, 'a rare opportunity for deliberate, "official" textual self-representation'.<sup>1</sup> Wills were not, of course, an occasion for unrestrained autobiography, for they followed an established form to which almost all testators — Philippa Russell included — roughly adhered: a preamble that stated the date, name, residence

and occupation (for most men and a few women) or marital status (for many women and a few men) of the testator, referred to his or her physical and mental health, and proclaimed confident trust in Christian salvation; instructions for burial; charitable bequests; personal bequests; naming of executors and overseers; testator's signature or seal; list of witnesses.<sup>2</sup> Even if a testator did not follow this general outline — scrambled bequests might especially have characterized nuncupative (or oral) wills offered to bystanders in the last moments before death — the clerk who wrote the will organized the testator's wishes into customary form. Removed from the testator's own words by both convention and composition, the texts of most wills stand a yet further step away from self-representation: they survive not as original instruments with seals and signatures intact, but as *copies* in the registers of the ecclesiastical courts in which they were proved. Thus, the will of a singlewoman such as Philippa Russell does not offer unmediated access to her thoughts, words, or writings, but does allow a glimpse of how she viewed herself, her place in her world and her hopes for remembrance after death. Because such glimpses are particularly rare for women, they are especially valuable. For many female testators in late medieval London, their will may be the sole extant document in which their name appears.

Fortunately, we know more about Philippa Russell. Her father John Russell and mother Alice were both active in the Brewers' guild of London, and in 1401 John acquired two tenements and a quay on the Thames. When they acquired a brewhouse in 1412, they had two adult sons — John the younger and Nicholas — whom they included in the deed.<sup>3</sup> Both sons were dead by 1428, when John Russell himself died. His will left the bulk of his estate (£20 in cash, a tenement in St Giles without Cripplegate, various plate and other movables, and the reversion of his wife's life-interest in a 40 shilling rent-charge from a tenement in St Mildred Bread Street) to Philippa, although he also provided a life-income for his wife Alice and devised a tenement in Petty Wales — possibly a brewhouse — to two fellow brewers.<sup>4</sup> Since Philippa was a minor — that is, she was under 21 years of age and unmarried — she was left in her mother's custody.<sup>5</sup> The chronology of the Russell family, insofar as it can be recovered from these few documents, suggests that Philippa may have been the child of her father's second or subsequent marriage. Her mother continued to brew for profit in her brief widowhood, and maintained her trade even after she married the draper, John Saykyn. When Saykyn died just a few years later (in 1430), he left two under-age children, Robert and Joan, both probably born during his first marriage; Philippa, to whom he left £20 as a marriage portion, was probably still under age.<sup>6</sup> Alice married a third time, for Philippa Russell mentions a stepfather Geoffrey Upvalter in her will, but nothing more about him or the marriage is known; both were dead by the time Philippa Russell herself died.<sup>7</sup> In short, as a child Philippa Russell inherited a substantial estate from her father and first stepfather; she reached maturity with no full siblings alive, but possibly several step- or half-siblings from her mother's Saykyn and Upvalter marriages; and when she made her will in 1458, she must have been between 30 and 50 years old. We also know that she never married, for she forthrightly identifies herself in her will as Philippa Russell of London, singlewoman.

### The emergence of 'singlewoman'

In the middle of the fifteenth century, Philippa Russell's decision to describe herself as a 'singlewoman' followed the most common form; a half-century later, 'maid' and 'maiden' would become more popular terms for never-married women, and by the seventeenth century, 'spinster' had become most common. In Philippa Russell's time, 'singlewoman' was still a new English word and although its dominant meaning was sufficiently fixed for never-married female testators to use it confidently, this meaning was blurred in two very different directions — towards widows and towards prostitutes.<sup>8</sup> On the one hand, 'singlewoman' occasionally embraced widows as well as never-married women, probably thanks to an association with the common-law category of *femme sole*.<sup>9</sup> (All widows and never-married women were *femmes soles* at common law, able to plead and answer cases on their own behalf; some wives in London and other towns could also claim *femme sole* status, if their husbands approved.<sup>10</sup>) Even in this legal context, however, the primary meaning of 'singlewoman' was being quickly restricted to the never-married. As early as 1431, English judges had differentiated 'widow' and 'singlewoman' in a ruling that both were sufficient 'additions' — that is, legally acceptable indicators of the status of a defendant or plaintiff — under the statute of 1413.<sup>11</sup> And in 1474, when the judges were asked how to describe the status of a woman who was neither a maid, nor wife, nor widow, 'singlewoman' was deemed the best option.<sup>12</sup> When Philippa Russell chose to call herself a singlewoman as she composed her will in June 1458, and then again as she made her codicil in September of that year, she was reflecting this emerging understanding that a never-married adult woman — a woman who was not a young girl, not a wife and not a widow — should best be called a 'singlewoman'.

On the other hand, in mid fifteenth-century London, 'singlewoman' could also signify a prostitute. The link between 'singlewoman' and 'prostitute' was well-established by Philippa Russell's time, for it occurred repeatedly in ordinances drawn up several decades earlier for the regulation of the brothels of Southwark, just across the Thames from the City. In these regulations, prostitutes were described as 'women that live by their bodies', 'common women' and 'single women'.<sup>13</sup> This association still endured more than a century later, for in his *Survey of London*, John Stow remembered the Southwark prostitutes as singlewomen and even described a singlewomen's churchyard reserved for their burial.<sup>14</sup> This linkage of 'singlewoman' and 'prostitute' has not been found elsewhere in England and seems to have prevailed in London alone.<sup>15</sup> Philippa Russell was clearly not a prostitute, and, indeed, in many respects her experiences were the antithesis of those that produced prostitutes: she was London-born, not a migrant to the city; she was firmly embedded in a supportive web of family, parish, guild and ward, not socially vulnerable; and she was wealthy, not poor.<sup>16</sup> When Philippa Russell made her will, was she unaware of the 'singlewoman' prostitutes across the Thames in Southwark? Or was she unconcerned that they, too, were called singlewomen? Or did the word 'singlewoman' somehow comfortably embrace both a wealthy never-married scion of an established London family and a prostitute? Ruth Karras has understood 'singlewoman' as a euphemism for 'prostitute', an appropriation of a respectable term for less-than-respectable women.<sup>17</sup> Jeremy

Goldberg has suggested that prostitutes were called 'singlewomen' in order to stress their independence from brothel-keepers who were not to compel them into debt or manual labour or even residence in the brothel.<sup>18</sup> And Cordelia Beattie has argued that the association of 'singlewoman' and 'prostitute' sought to mark out the ideal prostitute as a not-married woman, for prostitution was an unacceptable occupation for wives.<sup>19</sup> Whatever the origins of the linkage between 'singlewoman' and 'prostitute' in London English in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, one thing is clear: the linkage was not invariable. Some prostitutes were sometimes called 'singlewomen', but many never-married women who were not prostitutes were also so identified. When Philippa Russell called herself a 'singlewoman' in 1458, she, like others who also chose this appellation, must have been fully confident that no one would mistake her meaning.<sup>20</sup>

### **Philippa Russell's will**

The text of Philippa Russell's will and codicil survive in a register of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.<sup>21</sup> Written in Latin with occasional English words, it is translated here with each bequest distinguished, for ease of reference, by number. Philippa Russell reveals herself in her will as a strong-minded woman who was both closely tied to her family and separate from it. Many wills were proved within days of their composition, suggesting that most testators waited until death's door to disperse their estates. Philippa Russell planned more carefully; she made her will in June 1458, added a codicil in September, and probably did not die until January 1459, the date of probate of the surrounding wills in the register. Her extensive funeral arrangements reflect this careful planning. A parishioner of All Hallows Lombard Street, she asked to be buried near her mother in the cemetery of St Mary Bothaw (clause 1), and she stipulated that six wax torches were to be used at her funeral and afterwards distributed to parishes with which she or her parents were connected, four within London and two outside the City (6).<sup>22</sup> Most of these parishes also received separate bequests of money or alms: St Mary Bothaw, where she and her mother were buried, received forty shillings for its fabric (2), twenty shillings for its fraternity honouring the Blessed Mary (3), and one-third of a bequest of five marks (£3 6s 8d) for the support of indigent householders (4); St Michael le Querne and St Swithin, where her father John Russell and stepfather John Saykyn were respectively buried, received the other two-thirds for the same purpose (4); All Hallows Lombard Street received a conventional gift of 6s 8d to cover any tithes inadvertently unpaid (20), forty shillings for its fabric as well as an embroidered altar cloth (21), 8s 4d to maintain a light in the church (22) and, in the codicil, as if Philippa Russell later realized that she had stinted her home parish, an additional five marks (conditional on the recovery of an unpaid debt) to make an image of All Saints (codicil clause C1); St Michael le Querne received 40 shillings for its fabric (9); the church of Birling in Kent, the significance of which to Philippa Russell is unknown, received 20 shillings for its fabric (7); and the church at Littleton in Middlesex, which might have been the home parish of her father who also remembered it in his will, received 40 shillings (8). These gifts were usually accompanied by Philippa Russell's request that parishioners be called upon to pray for her soul, whose positive fate she

further sought to ensure by a separate stipulation for the celebration of 300 masses as quickly as possible after her death (5). In making these funerary arrangements, Philippa Russell sought not only to mark her death in the parishes with which she and her parents had long been connected but also to alleviate the pains of her soul in Purgatory. As Clive Burgess has illustrated so well, late medieval people hoped that their time in Purgatory — where their souls were fully cleansed of sins already repented during life — could be shortened through intercessory prayers, alms-giving and masses.<sup>23</sup> Philippa Russell made generous provisions for all three.

She also provided amply for the poor and distressed of London. Requesting in each case that recipients pray for the salvation of her soul, Philippa Russell offered funds to alleviate the plight of poor prisoners and the sick in various institutions in or near London (10), to aid the marriages of poor maidens in the two city wards — Langbourn and Walbrook — in which she lived and would be buried (11 and 12), and to support the fraternities of the drapers and brewers, the guilds of her stepfather John Saykyn and her parents, respectively (13 and 14).<sup>24</sup> She also gave to a fraternity of 60 chaplains devoted to the Holy Trinity an heirloom that she had received from her father 30 years before — a richly decorated goblet bearing her father's initials (15).<sup>25</sup> She provided coal (possibly charcoal) to be distributed among the poor of Walbrook Ward for seven years after her death (23). And she even looked beyond London, leaving 20 shillings for the maintenance of the bridge which linked Chertsey in Surrey (31) with the Middlesex parish of Littleton to whose fabric she had given 40 shillings (8).<sup>26</sup> In all these respects, Philippa Russell's civic bequests were generous but conventional; other Londoners in the fifteenth century also bequeathed funds to support fraternities, improve bridges and roads, and alleviate the plight of hapless prisoners, modest maidens and poor householders.<sup>27</sup>

Having endowed both churches and charities, Philippa Russell turned her attention to long-term remembrances for her soul and the souls of her parents, stepfathers and maternal kin. To the parish of St Mary Bothaw, she left 20 marks (£13 6s 8d) for 40 years of services, specifying in precise detail how they should be conducted and her money spent (18 and 19). She instructed her executors to purchase a chest to contain the money, which was to be kept in the church under the control of the churchwardens. Until it had been exhausted — and it would reduce by only 6s 8d for each year's service — the money was to be available to provide loans for needy parishioners or advance them funds against the pledge of silver plate or other goods. Loan-chests of this sort were not unknown in London, but their most visible use was at the two universities, where impecunious students regularly pledged books to the many available loan-chests.<sup>28</sup> Although Philippa Russell's foundation at a small city parish was on a much more modest scale than those established at Oxford by prelates, judges, noblemen and noblewomen, its intention was identical, as was its financial plan: her will uses the same term — *cautio* — employed by the university chests to describe the pledges against which loans were advanced.<sup>29</sup>

Personal bequests occupy much of the rest of the will. Philippa Russell specified that each of her godchildren, whom she did not trouble to name, should receive 3s 4d (16), and she left money and specific goods to seven individuals, including a former lodger, the scrivener Peter Bonauntre (who probably wrote the will), and her

servant Margaret Warde, who inherited half of Russell's household goods (24–29, 34).<sup>30</sup> Russell's last stipulation sought to resolve a long-term grievance; she ordered her executors to do their utmost to recover an unpaid debt of £120 that she had loaned 'in great trust' to John Spencer, tailor, if she failed to recover it during her lifetime by an action of debt which she had already begun in the court of Common Pleas (31).<sup>31</sup> The importance of this attempt is signalled by the funds appropriated for the effort: each executor was to receive 10 marks for recovering the debt, more than twice the £3 they were allowed for administering the rest of the will (33). Philippa Russell concluded her bequests by ordering that any residual assets be expended in works of charity and piety on behalf of her soul and the souls of her parents and other kin, and she named two executors, Robert Miller, a draper and Thomas Moore, a member of Gray's Inn who had practised as an attorney in London since 1446.<sup>32</sup>

A few months later, Philippa Russell revisited the disposition of her estate with a codicil that increased her generosity to her home parish of All Hallows by providing five marks for the creation of an eponymous image, contingent on recovery of the £120 debt from John Spencer (C1); decreased her gifts to St Mary Bothaw, the parish of her burial, by redirecting 10 marks (£6 13s 4d) to support the university education of one Master Richard Williams, who was permitted to fulfil the obligation to pray for the souls of Philippa Russell and her parents 'wherever and in whatever place he shall be' (C2); and left small bequests to three more individuals (C3–C5).<sup>33</sup>

All told, Philippa Russell possessed an estate worth more than £220: she distributed more than £100 in cash bequests; she had £120 invested in a loan; and a variety of other legacies — of coal, plate and household goods — were unvalued in her will but doubtless valuable. She seems, however, to have liquidated the real estate bequeathed her by her father; her will contained no references to tenements, or quit-rents, or other landed properties, and her estate consisted exclusively of cash, goods and investments. When she distributed this estate, Philippa Russell thought in terms of institutions central to London life in the fifteenth century — parishes, wards, fraternities and households — and many of her bequests were conventional among wealthy Londoners. When she thought of salvation, she made provisions primarily for her own soul but also for the souls of her progenitors, both biological (parents and maternal grandparents) and social (stepfathers). Her devotion to these ancestors ran deep enough for her to remember parishes and places that were more a part of her parental past than her personal present. But Russell's devotion to family seems to have been deep rather than broad; her will mentions no step- or half-siblings, no cousins, no living kin at all, suggesting that although she was devoted to family memories, she had few, if any, living relatives to whom she felt attached. To judge by persons mentioned in her will, the only living link between Philippa Russell and her family was William Gladwyn, a former apprentice of her stepfather John Saykyn, to whom she left 26s 8d.<sup>34</sup>

### **The wills of other never-married women**

As an early example of the last wishes of a never-married woman, the will of Philippa Russell is of intrinsic interest. She was not, however, the only singlewoman in late medieval London to leave a will. Never-married women are hard to find among

London's earliest testators. Several 'daughters' left wills enrolled in the city's Court of Husting as early as the 1290s;<sup>35</sup> dozens of women identified by name alone — that is, identified as neither widow nor wife and therefore possibly never-married — had their wills filed among the earliest extant from the Archdeaconry Court between 1393 and 1414;<sup>36</sup> and in the Commissary Court, the first never-married testator was possibly Philippa, daughter of Hamo de Felton, knight (1390).<sup>37</sup> But ascribing never-married status to such women is a tricky business, for at least some 'daughters' and some women identified by name alone were, in fact, married or widowed. For example, Margaret Lucombe identified herself as the daughter of John Lucombe when she made her will in 1409, but she then noted her marriage to Robert Kempe.<sup>38</sup> Of the five main jurisdictions in which we can today trace the wills of medieval Londoners, only two boast female testators who identified themselves as never-married: the Commissary Court, which proved the wills of relatively modest estates within the London diocese, and the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, in which were proved wills of estates in more than one diocese or valued at more than £10.<sup>39</sup> As Table 1 shows, in these two jurisdictions after 1450, a few women in each decade explicitly noted that they were never-married when they formulated their wills.

These fifteen testators represent a tiny fraction of the singlewomen who lived in late fifteenth-century London, for never-married women were commonplace in the streets and tenements of England's metropolis. Firm estimates are impossible before the advent of parish registers in 1538, but the poll tax of 1371 suggests that about 30 per cent of Englishwomen aged 14 or older were then never-married.<sup>40</sup> Singlewomen were particularly prevalent in towns, thanks to the in-migration of young countrywomen, so the proportion of never-married women in London was probably higher than this. Some of these were *lifecycle* singlewomen, who lived as never-married adults for only a decade or so between childhood and marriage; Isabel Crane, whose will in 1480 left only one bequest, designating her father as recipient of the 10 marks she had earlier inherited from her grandfather, might have eventually married, had early death not intervened.<sup>41</sup> Others were *lifelong* singlewomen, for whom the single state was both permanent and long-enduring; Philippa Russell fell into this group. Just as women married for many reasons, so, too, did women remain unmarried for many reasons. Some, like Emma Hopwood, who left most of her estate to her common-law husband, formed irregular relationships with men; others, like Emma Compton who left bequests to 10 separate religious institutions and possessed a 'boke of the lyf of Crist', may have been most drawn to celibacy by religious piety; others, like Elizabeth Bolde who spoke of 'my infirmity' in her will, may have avoided marriage because of illness or incapacity; and others, like Philippa Russell, were wealthy enough to be able to live well without a husband.<sup>42</sup> For these and other reasons, many women in late medieval England either delayed marriage into their twenties or eschewed it altogether.<sup>43</sup>

As an example of the singlewomen of late medieval London, Philippa Russell was both usual and unusual. She stands out as the sole testator in this list whose will was proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, and the rarity of such probates among never-married women continued well into the next century. Only one other will of a never-married female Londoner was proved in the Prerogative Court before 1550. Unlike Philippa Russell, Margery Wymond, who identified herself as a maiden when

TABLE 1  
Singlewomen as testators in late medieval London

Name	Ascribed status	Date	Court of Probate	Request for Burial	Comments
Margaret Putto (Pottow)	Singlewoman	1450	Commissary	Holy Trinity Priory, Algdgate, near mother	Her parish was St Katherine Cree
Joan Bylton	<i>Virgo sive puella</i>	1456	Commissary	St Paul's, near father	Her parish was St Michael le Querne
Philippa Russell	Singlewoman	1458-9	Prerogative Court of Canterbury	St Mary Bothaw, near mother	Her parish was All Hallows, Lombard Street; will dated 1458, proved 1459
Joan Jeffrey	Singlewoman	1463	Commissary	St John Zachary	Will in English
Margaret Galett	Singlewoman	1467	Commissary	St Katherine Coleman, near father	Her parish was All Hallows Barking
Isabel Norris	Singlewoman	1467	Commissary	St Margaret Pattens	
Elizabeth Bolde	Singlewoman	1469	Commissary	Cemetery near St Paul's	Her parish was St Botolph Billingsgate
Joan Isham	Singlewoman	1469	Commissary	St Martin Vintry, near Margery Nicoll (no relationship stated)	
Emma Compton	Singlewoman	1479	Commissary	St Mary Aldermary	Will in English
Isabella Crane	Maiden	1479-80	Commissary	St Magnus the Martyr	Will in English, dated 1479, proved 1480
Beatrice Shipton	Singlewoman	1479-81	Commissary	St Stephen Walbrook	Will in English, dated 1479, proved 1481
Beatrice Ellis	Maiden	1485	Commissary	All Hallows the Great, near father and mother	Will in English
Emma Hopwood	Singlewoman	1492	Commissary	Whitefriars in Fleet Street, before image of Our Blessed Lady	Her parish was St Dunstan in the West; will in English
Emma Rayner	Singlewoman	1493	Commissary	St Michael le Querne, against the font	Will in English
Agnes Bofford	<i>Puella</i>	1493-5	Commissary	St Mary Woolchurch, near parents	Will dated 1483, proved 1495

Sources: full archival references to these wills can be found in M. Fitch (ed.), *Testamentary Records in the Commissary Court of London*, vol. 1 (1374-1488) and vol. 2 (1489-1570), British Record Society, Index Library, 82 (1969) and 86 (1974). For ease of reference, the surnames given in this table match the surname headings given in those volumes; forenames have been modernized. The ascribed status is taken directly from the registers and differs, in some cases, from that given in the index. In addition to the never-married women listed here, the Commissary Act Books include administrations for a woman identified as *puella* in 1499 (Elizabeth, with no surname given) and another *puella* in 1500 (no name given): GL, Ms 9168/1, ff. 124 and 159. These wills are among those discussed in J.W. Tze-Yan, 'Medieval Single Women in London' (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of London, 2001), but many of our findings differ. Judith Bennett thanks Jessie Woo Tze-Yan for providing her with a copy of this thesis.

she made her will in 1519, seems to have died young, for she was still in the process of retrieving from the city authorities 100 marks (£66 13s 4d) owed on reaching her majority, and she bequeathed almost half of her estate to her fiancé 'for the great love between us had in the way of marriage'.<sup>44</sup> Aside from these two London singlewomen, only two other women explicitly identified as never-married — Agnes Chapman, maiden of Boston in 1521 and Joan Blakytt, singlewoman of Tring in 1523 — made wills brought to the Prerogative Court before 1550.<sup>45</sup> The reason for this scarcity of singlewomen is simple enough: the wills of never-married women usually concerned estates too modest to require probate in this court.

Quite how modest is impossible to say, because singlewomen, like most testators, did not value the goods — silver spoons, clothing, linens and the like — that they bequeathed.<sup>46</sup> The one quantifiable standard is ready money, since most testators, including all the singlewomen in the table above, dispensed some cash, either as outright gifts or for specified purchases. Russell had more than £100 in hand when she dispersed her estate, but she seems to have been almost in an economic league of her own. One other singlewoman had as much as £58 in ready money, but most others possessed only a few pounds sterling or less; the median was about £1, and some had much less money in hand — 6s 8d, 5s 0d, 3s 4d and even just a shilling. Russell's wealth distinguished her not only from other singlewomen but also from other wealthy Londoners. Harry Miskimin found that the average cash bequest of Londoners whose wills were enrolled in the Court of Husting between 1259 and 1330 was £59 10s.<sup>47</sup> Philippa Russell's cash bequests were more than half as much again, suggesting that she was relatively rich both for a singlewoman and for a Londoner.

But her assets were of a certain sort, and in this respect, Philippa Russell was more like other singlewomen than other wealthy Londoners: all her resources lay in goods, cash and investments. John Russell had left his daughter a tenement in the parish of St Giles without Cripplegate, and he had also stipulated that she was to receive a rent-charge of 40 shillings from a tenement in the parish of St Mildred Bread Street after her mother died; neither of these properties seems to have been in Philippa Russell's possession in 1458, and she must have disposed of them at an earlier date. Miskimin noted that male testators in London in the years around 1300 devised almost twice as much property as did female testators, in part because widows usually enjoyed only a life-interest in tenements inherited from their husbands; such was the case, for example, for Philippa Russell's mother, who received only term-limited properties from both John Russell (a 40 shilling rent-charge for life) and John Saykyn (the marital home for 12 years).<sup>48</sup> Philippa Russell suffered no such time limits on the properties she held, nor did other singlewomen who inherited or purchased tenements or land. But few singlewomen seem to have been eager property-owners. None of the London singlewomen in the table above bequeathed any real property and much the same was true of their counterparts in York, where only two of 22 singlewomen who left wills between 1391 and 1491 bequeathed tenements or land.<sup>49</sup> In late medieval towns, singlewomen were sometimes wealthy, but they were rarely property-owners. As Amy Froide has shown, civic hostility to female property-holding contributed to this trend, although it eased over time so that by the eighteenth century, many singlewomen possessed urban real estate.<sup>50</sup> Of course, comfortable accommodation was not

dependent on property-ownership; Philippa Russell had no real estate to bequeath, but she lived in a substantial dwelling that included a chamber, hall, buttery, and kitchen, with a well-filled plate chest and at least one servant to wait upon her.

More than half of Philippa Russell's estate was invested in a single uncollected (and possibly uncollectable) loan of £120 to John Spencer. No other London singlewoman in the fifteenth century indicated past involvement in money-lending in their wills, but Philippa Russell's investment in a loan instrument was to become typical of singlewomen in early modern towns. Froide found that between 42 and 45 per cent of single female testators in early modern Southampton, Bristol, Oxford and York had money out on loan when they died, and they often invested large portions of their wealth in loans, just as Philippa Russell had done. By loaning money, singlewomen took advantage of a profitable but relatively passive form of capital investment; they also enhanced their social networks by extending charity and deepening friendships through loans; and they even proved themselves good citizens, for in early modern Southampton and perhaps elsewhere, singlewomen were major municipal creditors.<sup>51</sup>

Philippa Russell's request to be buried near her mother was not uncommon for singlewomen, for they often sought a final resting place near their parents; five others in the table above did just that. The absence of family members in her bequests might also have been common; six of the other single testators in the table also made no bequests to family or kin. Jacqueline Murray has noted of singlewomen whose wills were proved in London's Consistory Court between 1514 and 1548 that they did 'not appear to have had strong family ties', but had instead built strong social networks based on household, friends and neighbourhood.<sup>52</sup> This would overstate the case for late fifteenth-century singlewomen testators in the more humble Commissary Court, for half of them (seven of 14) remembered brothers, sisters, parents, nieces and even generic 'cousins' in their wills, and one other singlewoman recognized family of a very different sort: Emma Hopwood left the bulk of her estate in 1492 to her 'well-beloved husband afore God', Humphrey Stanshawe, gentleman.<sup>53</sup> But other singlewomen in late fifteenth-century London seem to have built their lives, as did Philippa Russell, somewhat apart from family and kin. Elizabeth Bolde remembered two female servants, a widow who had cared for her in her illness and three others (one woman and two men) of unspecified relation to her.<sup>54</sup> Emma Rayner left bequests to her three female servants and to members of three other households — William and Anne, the children of Thomas Steed, gentleman; the son, daughter and wife of William Wiley, tailor; and Thomas Baat, haberdasher — whose blood relation, if any, to her was unstated.<sup>55</sup> And, not surprisingly, many singlewomen remembered both family and friends: Margaret Pottow left gifts to her sisters and brother, but she seems to have been especially attached to the household of Roger Richard, to whose wife, servant and kinswoman she left clothing.<sup>56</sup> In one respect, however, Philippa Russell's social network was distinct from that of other singlewomen, for most of them left most of their bequests to women, whether servants, friends, sisters, or nieces.<sup>57</sup> Philippa Russell was more even-handed, leaving personal bequests to six men and four women.

In its mixture of piety and personal remembrances, Philippa Russell's will is typical of medieval testaments in general, and in its tendency towards the practical relief of poverty rather than entirely pious bequests, it displays a down-to-earth

approach to salvation typical of fifteenth-century Londoners, male and female alike. Her decision to establish a loan-chest in order to make the money bequeathed for her memorial masses work for the good of her less prosperous neighbours suggests a particularly astute financial acumen. But above all, Philippa Russell's will speaks to us about a hitherto almost hidden segment of the society of late medieval London — those women who, for whatever reason, completed their lives without ever entering into the bonds of matrimony. Philippa Russell was richer than most singlewomen, but in her disposal of entirely movable assets and her reliance on friends as well as family, she had much in common with other women who, for whatever reasons, ended their lives as singlewomen, maidens, *puellae* or *virgines*.

#### APPENDIX

This translation omits some repetitive phrasing but otherwise follows closely the Latin (and occasional English) of the original. Individual bequests are numbered in parentheses to facilitate reference. Words or phrases taken directly from the original appear in italics.<sup>58</sup>

#### Philippa Russell's will and codicil

In the name of God, Amen. On 9 June 1458, the 36th year of the reign of King Henry VI, I *Philippa Russel of London*, *senglewoman*, sound of mind and being of good memory, thinking on last things (*de extremis*) and realising that, because nothing is more certain than death and nothing more uncertain than its hour, and so having God before my eyes, and wishing and desiring, for the praise of God and the salvation of my soul, to anticipate the last day of my life more attentively with works of mercy and devotion, make this my present testament in this manner. (1) First I leave my soul to almighty God, my creator, and the Blessed Mary his mother<sup>59</sup> and all his saints, and my body to be buried in the 'parlour' (*parlura*)<sup>60</sup> of the cemetery of the parish church of the Blessed Mary Bothaw by Candlewick Street, London, that is, in the tomb or sepulchre where the body of Alice Saykyn my mother rests buried. (2) Also I leave 40 shillings sterling to the fabric of the body of the same church to have my burial there, and that my soul may be especially recommended in the pulpit every Sunday to the prayers of the parishioners there. (3) Also I leave 20 shillings sterling to the upkeep of the fraternity of the Blessed Mary called *le Ship*, founded in the same church of the Blessed Mary of Bothaw.<sup>61</sup> (4) Also I leave five marks sterling (£3 6s 8d) to be distributed in alms according to the sound discretion of my underwritten executors among the poor *housholders* who are the most needy living in the parishes of the Blessed Mary of Bothaw aforesaid, of St Swithin in Candlewick Street aforesaid and of St Michael le Querne (*ad Bladum*) in the said city of London to pray especially for my soul. (5) Also I wish that my underwritten executors should cause three hundred masses to be celebrated for my soul with all possible speed after my death. (6) Also I wish that I should have at my burial six torches of wax with others of wax serving them as is fitting, to burn round my body throughout my funeral service, and after the service and other mortuary services which are to be performed for me are held and completed, then I

leave the aforesaid six torches as follows: one torch to the said church of the Blessed Mary of Bothaw, one torch to the said church of St Swithin, another torch to the church of All Hallows in Lombard Street, London, and another torch to the said church of St Michael le Querne, and another torch to the church of Birling in the county of Kent, and another torch to the church of Littleton in the county of Middlesex, with the intention that the said six torches may burn in the aforesaid churches at the time of the elevation of the body of Christ as long as the said six torches can last in that use. (7) Also I leave 20 shillings to the fabric of the body of the said church of Birling so that the parishioners there might devotedly pray for my soul. (8) Also I leave 40 shillings sterling to the fabric of the body of the said church of Littleton, so that my soul may be especially recommended in the pulpit every Sunday to the prayers of the parishioners there. (9) Also I leave 40 shillings sterling in the same form to the fabric of the body of the church of St Michael le Querne. (10) Also I leave 20 marks sterling (£13 6s 8d) to be distributed<sup>62</sup> by the sound discretion of my underwritten executors among the poor prisoners in the prisons of Newgate, Ludgate, Fleet, Marshalsea, the King's Bench and the Abbot of Westminster's [prison] of convicted clerks, and also among the sick and other weak and poor people in hospitals within and outside the city of London, namely those of the Blessed Mary without Bishopsgate, the Blessed Mary of Bethlem, the Blessed Mary of Elsing Spital, St Bartholomew in West Smithfield and St Thomas the Martyr in Southwark, to pray especially for my soul. (11) Also I leave ten pounds sterling to be given and distributed by my executors in marriage-portions for ten poor girls of good repute and honest behaviour (*conversatio*) living in Walbrook ward, London, and marrying there after my death, namely 20 shillings sterling to each girl, to pray for my soul. (12) Also I leave five pounds sterling in the same form to be given and distributed in marriage-portions for ten poor girls of good repute and honest behaviour living in Langbourn ward, London, and marrying there after my death, namely ten shillings sterling to each of them. (13) Also I leave 26s 8d to the support of the almsgiving of the fraternity of the Blessed Mary of the craft of drapers in London to pray for my soul. (14) Also I leave 40 shillings sterling to the support of the almsgiving of the fraternity of the craft of brewers of London. (15) Also I leave to the support of the fraternity of Holy Trinity of sixty chaplains within the city of London my great *murra*, in English *maser*, with an impression (*prente*) in the middle *enameled* with blue, with a J and an R marked together on the same *prente*, with a silver-gilt cover belonging to the same with the image of St John the Baptist standing on it. (16) Also I leave 3s 4d sterling to each of my godsons and goddaughters who are living on the day of my death. (17) Also I leave 20 marks sterling (£13 6s 8d) for the anniversary of me, the said Philippa, to be held and caused to be said and observed solemnly and devoutly from year to year for the forty years next following my death, in the said parish church of the Blessed Mary Bothaw by the rector, chaplains and clerks of the said church, together with *placebo* and *dirige* with music by night and a requiem mass with music on the following day, and with the ringing of the bells, and other offices which relate and belong to an anniversary of this sort, for my soul and the souls of John Russell, my father, and Alice, my mother, and of John Saykyn and Geoffrey Upvalter, late her husbands, and for the souls of John, her father, Joan, her mother, Margaret, her sister, and for the souls of all the faithful departed, wishing that my same anniversary be always held from year to

year on the same day of the month when I chance to die. (18) And I wish that there be spent on my behalf on each anniversary of mine when it is held and happens as aforesaid during the said forty years 6s 8d sterling every year according to the good discretion of my underwritten executors for as long as my same executors live, or one of them lives, and after their death by the good discretion of the then rector and wardens of the goods and work of the said church of the Blessed Mary Bothaw, until the aforesaid 20 marks shall be completely and fully spent on the said anniversaries in those forty years in annual payment of the said 6s 8d sterling, in the following manner and form, namely in paying and distributing on each of my said anniversaries, from the said annual sums of 6s 8d, 8d to the rector of the same church of the Blessed Mary Bothaw taking part there each year, and 4d to each of the chaplains of the same church, and 6d to the parish clerk there for the ringing of the bells and for his other duties which are to be done in this respect for an anniversary of this sort, and whatever is left over and remains unspent from the said 6s 8d, I wish to be disposed each year both in the hiring of candles for the said anniversary and in bread and drink for holding a refreshment for the rector and chaplains and other officials and the parishioners of the same church of the Blessed Mary Bothaw who come for this reason, as well as for distributing among the most needy poor people of the same parish. (19) Also I wish that immediately after my death my underwritten executors shall from my goods arrange for a locked chest with two keys, and that the same chest should be safely and securely placed and held with an iron chain in the said church of the Blessed Mary Bothaw. And I wish that the said 20 marks should be placed in the said chest immediately after my death, there to remain in the safe custody and care of the wardens of the said church and of my underwritten executors as long as the same executors shall live or one of them shall live. And after the death of the same executors it should be in the care of the then rector of the said church of the Blessed Mary Bothaw and the wardens of the same church, both for the use of my said anniversary, in the annual payment of the said 6s 8d during the said terms of forty years, as well as for the use and relief of the parishioners of the same church, in manner and form following and arranged. Of which chest I wish that the then wardens of the said church of the Blessed Mary Bothaw should have one key and that my underwritten executors should have the other key as long as they are alive, or one of them is alive, and after the death of my executors I wish that the then rector of the said church of the Blessed Mary Bothaw should have the other key, and I do not wish that there should be any removal in any manner of the chest or the said money outside the said church by the said rector and wardens or any of them during the said forty years. Moreover I wish that immediately after my death, after custody of the said 20 marks in the said chest, as aforesaid, comes into the hands and possession of my said executors and the said wardens of the said church, for their keeping, I wish and especially charge and require, and for my greatest will dispose and appoint, that the poor parishioners of the said church of the Blessed Mary Bothaw and no others are to have help and relief out of the said sum of 20 marks by way of a loan to them during the said term of forty years in the form following, namely that if any of the aforesaid parishioners, compelled by necessity, within the said forty years should need a portion of the said sum of 20 marks advanced to them either by loan or pledge, and shows and certifies their need to my said executors as long as they live or one of them as long as he lives, and after their death to the said

rector and wardens, asking that help should be given to them in this respect, then I wish and especially charge and require that my said executors as well as the then rector and wardens of the said church, as far as they might be asked to relieve any such need, should deliver or cause to be delivered to each poor parishioner such and as great a sum of money as the same parishioner then needs, upon giving a sufficient guarantee (*cautio*) or pledge called *silver plate* to my said executors as long as they live or one of them as long as he lives, and after their deaths to the then rector and wardens of the church of the Blessed Mary Bothaw, or otherwise by finding and binding upon sufficient security from persons of substance (*habilibus in bonis eis*), so that such guarantee, pledge or security being found from substantial persons in this respect is to be placed and kept within the aforesaid chest. And I wish also that the sum of money lent to each poor parishioner shall in no way exceed 20 shillings and that each sum of 20 shillings lent in the form aforesaid shall likewise not extend beyond one year and one day from the time of its handing over until its repayment is received. Provided always that my said anniversary should be always observed and kept from year to year with the said 6s 8d from the said sum of 20 marks during the aforesaid forty years. (20) Also I leave 6s 8d sterling to the high altar of the church of All Hallows aforesaid where I am now a parishioner for my tithes forgotten or carelessly withheld, as well as for praying for my soul. (21) Also I leave to the fabric of the body of the same church of All Hallows 40 shillings sterling and a cloth worked with roses to make altar-cloths from, for the altar of the same church of All Hallows, so that my soul should be especially recommended in the pulpit there to the prayers of the parishioners. (22) Also I leave 13s 4d to the upkeep of a light called *le Braunche* before the image of the Blessed Mary on the altar of St Eloi in the said church of All Hallows. (23) Also I wish that my underwritten executors or their executors should distribute twelve quarters of coals among the most needy poor people living in Walbrook ward, London, each year for seven years next following after my death. (24) Also I leave to John Sperlyng recently living with me 40 shillings sterling, six silver spoons with knobs (*cum acris*) and a flat piece of silver. (25) Also I leave 20 shillings sterling to Eleanor, wife of John Batte, citizen and *powchmaker* of London. (26) Also I leave 26s 8d sterling to William Gladwyn, citizen and draper of London. (27) Also I leave 20 shillings sterling to Peter Bonauntre, citizen and scrivener of London. (28) Also I leave to Margaret Warde my servant to pray for my soul ten pounds sterling, my beaker (*biquere*) of silver standing on three silver-gilt angels with the cover belonging to the same beaker, a maser of mine with the cover belonging to it, with the eagle (*le Egle*) above the said cover, a dozen silver spoons with square knobs (*les square knoppes*) and half of all my *houshold*, namely from my chamber, hall, buttery and kitchen, of the best, and to pray for the aforesaid souls. (29) Also I leave to Isabel Sperlyng, widow, to pray for my soul and the aforesaid souls, 13s 4d sterling, a *coverlite* and a pair of sheets. (30) Also I leave 20 shillings sterling towards the upkeep or repair of the bridge of Chertsey in the county of Middlesex. (31) And further I charge and require my said executors as they will answer before the Supreme Judge that immediately after my death they shall sue in law as swiftly as they can John Spencer, citizen and tailor of London, for £120 sterling which I handed over to him in great trust, if I cannot recover them in my life; and that my executors shall pursue the said John Spencer at my expense and on recovery of the said £120 or as much as they can recover, that they

shall take for themselves for their labour, to each of them ten marks sterling (£6 13s 4d). (32) The residue of each and every one of my goods and debts whatsoever after my debts are paid, my burial made, and the completion of this my testament, I give and leave in its entirety to my underwritten executors to be distributed faithfully for my soul and the souls aforesaid in works of charity, and in celebrating masses, of distributions for marriage-portions of poor girls of honest behaviour, the repair of weak bridges and of highways and other works of piety and mercy as by their sound discretion they see as best pleasing to God and to benefit more the salvation of my soul and the souls aforesaid. (33) I appoint as my faithful executors of this testament Robert Miller, citizen and draper of London, and Thomas Moore of London, *gentilman*, and I leave three pounds sterling to each of them, the same Robert and Thomas, for their labour. In witness whereof I have set my seal on this my present testament. Given at London on the day and year aforesaid. (34) Also I leave 6s 8d to John Langley, citizen and draper of London, to pray for my soul and the souls aforesaid.

In the name of God, Amen. On the second day of September 1458 and the 37th year of the reign of King Henry VI, I Philippa Russell of London, *senglewoman*, being of sound mind and good memory, make this present codicil annexed to my testament containing my last will in this manner. Beside my legacies specified in my present testament and beside my last will specified and charged in my will, (C1) first I wish by this my codicil to leave five marks sterling (£3 6s 8d) towards the making of an image of All Hallows in the church of All Hallows where I am now a parishioner in the event that my executors named in my aforesaid testament shall be able to recover that which John Spencer, citizen and tailor of London, owes me. (C2) Also where it is laid down in my last will that my executors after my death should find a suitable and honest chaplain to celebrate mass for my soul and the souls specified in my said last will in the church of the Blessed Mary of Bothaw for the space of ten years after my death, I now wish and charge and require by this my present codicil that they will give and provide [this] to master Richard William each year towards his maintenance at the schools, and that he shall have ten marks sterling every year to celebrate mass and pray for my soul and the souls of my parents wherever and in whatever place he shall be. (C3) Also I leave 40 shillings to Alice, daughter of Luke Batte, citizen and *powchemaker* of London to pray for my soul. (C4) Also I leave 20 shillings to John Wycherley to pray for my soul. (C5) Also I leave 20 shillings to John Whetenhale to pray for my soul. In witness whereof I have set my seal to this present testament or codicil attached. Given at London on the day and year aforesaid.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> K.J. Lewis, 'Women, Testamentary Discourse and Life-Writing in Later Medieval England,' in N.J. Menuge (ed.), *Medieval Women and the Law* (Woodbridge, 2000), 57–76, at 60. G.McM.

- Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1989), 71–72.
- <sup>2</sup> For the most current introduction, see K. Grannum and N. Taylor, *Wills and Other Probate Records* (Kew, 2004).
- <sup>3</sup> Husting Rolls 130 (70 and 71), 140 (33): London Metropolitan Archives (hereafter LMA), CLA/023/DW/01/130, items 70–71, 140, item 33. The sons are not mentioned in the volume of Brewers' guild records that runs from 1418 to 1439: Guildhall Library (hereafter GL), Ms 5440. But both parents are listed therein as paying quarterage, and after John's death, Alice paid on her own, sometimes identified as John Russell's widow and sometimes (after her remarriage) as Alice Saykyn.
- <sup>4</sup> The National Archives (hereafter TNA): PROB 11/3, f. 65.
- <sup>5</sup> On rules of majority in London, see B.A. Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History* (New York, 1993), 202.
- <sup>6</sup> TNA: PROB 11/3, f. 98. Both John Saykyn and his son Robert can be found in the earliest rolls of the Drapers' Company: A.H. Johnson, *The History of the Worshipful Company of the Drapers of London*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1914).
- <sup>7</sup> Probably a variant of the Welsh patronymic *ap Walter*. It is possible that he had been Alice's first husband, rather than her last.
- <sup>8</sup> The varied meanings of the term, Cordelia Beattie, *Medieval Single Women: The Politics of Social Classification in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 2007).
- <sup>9</sup> For some discussion of the use of the term *singlewoman* from a legal perspective, see J.H. Baker, 'Male and Married Spinsters', *American Journal of Legal History*, 21 (1977), 255–9.
- <sup>10</sup> M. McIntosh, 'The Benefits and Drawbacks of Femme Sole Status in England, 1300–1630', *Journal of British Studies*, 44:3 (2005), 410–38.
- <sup>11</sup> *La premiere part des ans du Roy Henry le VI* (1679), Michaelmas term, 10 Henry VI, page 21, plea 70; Statute 1H5, c5: *Statutes of the Realm* (Record Commissioners, 1810–1828), 2, 171.
- <sup>12</sup> *Les reports des cases en ley que furent argues en temps du roy Edward le Quart* (1680), Trinity term, 14 Edward IV, page 7, plea 12.
- <sup>13</sup> J.B. Post, 'A Fifteenth-century Customary of the Southwark Stews', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 5 (1977), 418–428. Prostitutes are also described in these ordinances as simply 'women'.
- <sup>14</sup> J. Stow, *A Survey of London*, C.L. Kingsford (ed.) (Oxford, 1908), vol. 2, 54–55. The burials of singlewomen and their children can be found in the earliest years of the parish register of St Saviour, Southwark: LMA, P92/SAV/356a. For other references to prostitutes as singlewomen in London records, see R.M. Karras, 'Sex and the Singlewoman', in J.M. Bennett and A.M. Froide (eds.), *Singlewomen in the European Past* (Philadelphia, 1999), and C. Beattie, 'Governing Bodies: Law Courts, Male Householders, and Single Women in Late Medieval England', in C. Beattie, A. Maslakovic and S. Rees Jones (eds.), *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe, c.850–c.1550: Managing Power, Wealth and the Body* (Turnhout, 2003), 199–220.
- <sup>15</sup> Interestingly, in the seventeenth century, as 'spinster' lost its connection with the work of spinning and began to indicate female celibacy, it also acquired an association with prostitution: E. Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, ed. P. Beale, 8th edn (1984), 1126.
- <sup>16</sup> For the social circumstances of medieval prostitution, see R.M. Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (New York, 1996).
- <sup>17</sup> Karras, *Common Women*, 52.
- <sup>18</sup> Goldberg in 'Pigs and Prostitutes: Streetwalking in Comparative Perspective', in K.J. Lewis, N.J. Menuge and K.M. Phillips (eds.), *Young Medieval Women* (New York, 1999), 172–194, at 185.
- <sup>19</sup> Beattie, 'Governing Bodies', 213–19.
- <sup>20</sup> Although the appellation 'maiden' predominates among the wills of never-married women proved in the Commissary Court between 1500 and 1550, 'singlewoman' does not disappear, making it unlikely that the shift grew from an aversion to the link between 'singlewoman' and prostitute.
- <sup>21</sup> The copy of Philippa Russell's will in the register (TNA: PROB 11/4, f. 114) does not include a note of probate.

- <sup>22</sup> Other Londoners also used the distribution of torches as a 'conscientious recognition of all of the churches connected' with the testator. See M. Connolly, 'Another Medieval London Widow: The Story of Beatrice Cornburgh', *Ricardian*, 13 (2003), 148–158, at 152.
- <sup>23</sup> See especially C. Burgess, "'By Quick and by Dead": Wills and Pious Provision in Late Medieval Bristol', *The English Historical Review*, 405 (1987), 837–858, and "'Longing to be prayed for": Death and Commemoration in an English Parish in the Later Middle Ages', in B. Gordon and P. Marshall (eds.), *The Place of the Dead* (Cambridge, 2000), 44–65.
- <sup>24</sup> For the boundaries of the wards of Langbourn (incorporating the parish of All Hallows Lombard Street) and Walbrook (which included the parish of St Mary Bothaw), see R. Hyde (ed.), *Ward Maps of the City of London*, London Topographical Society, 154 (1999), 68–9 (Langbourn) and 80–1 (Walbrook).
- <sup>25</sup> For an account of the fraternity, see W. Page (ed.), *Victoria County History of London*, vol. 1 (1909), 578. Its properties were valued at £7 10s 0d a year in the 1549 chantry certificates; see C.J. Kitching (ed.), *London and Middlesex Chantry Certificates, 1548*, London Record Society, 16 (1980), 39.
- <sup>26</sup> The neighbouring parishes of Chertsey in Surrey and Littleton and Shepperton in Middlesex had all been given bequests in the will of Philippa's father in 1428.
- <sup>27</sup> J.M. Jennings, 'The Distribution of Landed Wealth in the Wills of London Merchants 1400–1450', *Mediaeval Studies*, 39 (1977), 261–80. J.A.F. Thomson, 'Piety and Charity in Late Medieval London', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 16 (1965), 178–95.
- <sup>28</sup> For London, see C.M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2004), 178; W.K. Jordan, *The Charities of London 1480–1660* (1960), 172–77.
- <sup>29</sup> J.I. Catto (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford*, 1 (Oxford, 1984), 274–87 and plate 7; J.I. Catto and T.A.R. Evans (eds.), *The History of the University of Oxford*, 2 (Oxford, 1992), 451–2; G. Pollard, 'Mediaeval Loan Chests at Cambridge', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 17 (1939–40), 113–29.
- <sup>30</sup> Bonauntre had been admitted to the Scriveners' Company in June 1434: F.W. Steer (ed.), *Scriveners' Company Common Paper 1357–1628*, London Record Society, 4 (1968), 21.
- <sup>31</sup> On 22 June 1467, John Spencer, citizen and tailor of London, obtained a pardon of the outlawry he had incurred for failing to answer Philippa Russell's suit: *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1467–77*, 4. That Spencer bothered to secure this pardon almost a decade after Russell's death indicates that her executors had pursued the case, perhaps to a compromise. This John Spencer was probably the man of that name who had served as warden of the Merchant Taylors' Company in 1451, or possibly his son. For the elder John Spencer, see R.R. Sharpe (ed.), *Calendar of Letter-Books of the City of London, Letter-Book K* (1911), 337–8. For his son John Spencer, see M. Davies (ed.), *The Merchant Taylors' Company of London: Court Minutes, 1486–1493* (Stamford, 2000), 301.
- <sup>32</sup> Moore is described in the will as *gentilman*. For his career, see J.H. Baker, *Readers and Readings in the Inns of Court and Chancery*, Selden Society Supplementary Series, 13 (2000), 23. For his will, with the same appellation, proved on 5 December 1465, see TNA: PROB, 11/5 f. 85v.
- <sup>33</sup> This money was to be diverted from a bequest for masses on behalf of Philippa Russell in the church for 10 years after her death, but this bequest does not specifically appear in the text of the registered will. Russell was likely thinking of her bequest for 40 years of masses, funded from monies deposited in a loan-chest. It is not inconceivable that Master Richard Williams had been the source of Philippa Russell's idea to establish a loan-chest.
- <sup>34</sup> Gladwyn had also received a bequest in Saykyn's will: TNA: PROB 11/3, f. 98.
- <sup>35</sup> See R.R. Sharpe (ed.), *Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London, A.D. 1258–A.D. 1688* (1959), vol. 1. In his study of Husting wills between 1259 and 1330, Harry Miskimin counted 170 female and 1,248 male testators. While noting that 'less than half of the females can be positively known to have married', he stressed that many of the others likely had once been married, as they had surviving children. H.A. Miskimin, 'The Legacies of London: 1259–1330', in H.A. Miskimin, D. Herlihy, and A.L. Udovitch (eds.), *The Medieval City* (New Haven, 1977), 209–27, quote at 219.

- <sup>36</sup> M. Fitch (ed.), *Index to Testamentary Records in the Archdeaconry Court of London Now Preserved in the Guildhall Library vol. 1: (1363)–1649*, British Record Society, Index Library, 89 (1979).
- <sup>37</sup> GL, Ms 9171/1, f. 220v.
- <sup>38</sup> GL, Ms 9051/1, f. 210v. As was often the case when married women were identified primarily as daughters, this will devised property that Margaret had inherited from her father.
- <sup>39</sup> The five are: (a) the Court of Husting (from 1258); (b) The Commissary Court (records extant from 1374); (c) the Archdeaconry Court (records from 1393 to 1414, with a gap thereafter until 1524); (d) the Consistory Court (records from 1492); (e) the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (records from 1383).
- <sup>40</sup> M. Kowaleski, 'Singlewomen in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: The Demographic Perspective', in Bennett and Froide (eds.), *Singlewomen*, 38–81.
- <sup>41</sup> GL, Ms 9171/6, f. 283v.
- <sup>42</sup> For Hopwood, see GL, Ms 9171/8, f. 34v; for Compton, see GL, Ms 9171/6, ff. 272v–273v; for Bolde, see GL, Ms 9171/6, f. 45v.
- <sup>43</sup> For the motivations and circumstances of singleness, see J.M. Bennett and A.M. Froide, 'A Singular Past', in Bennett and Froide (eds.), *Singlewomen*, 1–37, esp. 21–23.
- <sup>44</sup> TNA: PROB 11/19, f. 118v. In the Commissary Court, the following never-married women left wills between 1500 and 1550 (the surnames given here conform to the headings used in the printed index): Katherine Reynolds, maiden, 1502; Joan [blank], *puella*, 1513; Bridget Pett, maiden, 1526; Joan Young, maiden, 1529; Jane Chambers, maiden, 1534; Joan Bournbye, maid-servant, 1536; Joan Lysphe, maiden, 1540; Agnes Dickson, singlewoman, 1548. No wills of women explicitly described as never-married were found in the records of the Husting, Archdeaconry, or Consistory courts.
- <sup>45</sup> TNA: PROB 11/20, f. 127v, and PROB 11/21, f. 12v.
- <sup>46</sup> No inventories, which value the goods of testators, survive for the estates of London singlewomen before 1500.
- <sup>47</sup> Miskimin, 'Legacies of London', 223.
- <sup>48</sup> Miskimin, 'Legacies of London', 224–6.
- <sup>49</sup> K. Phillips, 'Four Virgins' Tales: Sex and Power in Medieval Law', in A. Bernau, R. Evans, and S. Salih (eds.), *Medieval Virginites* (Toronto, 2003), 80–101, at 94. A few of the wills contain a residuary bequest of 'all mobile and immobile goods', but this is a matter of form rather than substance.
- <sup>50</sup> A.M. Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2005), 121–28.
- <sup>51</sup> Froide, *Never Married*, 128–41. See also J. Spicksley, 'A Dynamic Model of Social Relations: Celibacy, Credit and the Identity of the "Spinster" in Seventeenth-Century England', in H. French and J. Barry (eds.), *Identity and Agency in England, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke, 2004), 106–46. Amy Louise Erickson has recently suggested that capital investment by widows and singlewomen might be an unappreciated factor in the early development of English capitalism; see her 'Coverture and Capitalism', *History Workshop Journal*, 59 (2005), 1–16.
- <sup>52</sup> J. Murray, 'Kinship and Friendship: The Perception of Family by Clergy and Laity in Late Medieval London', *Albion*, 20 (1988), 369–85, at 378.
- <sup>53</sup> GL, Ms 9171/8, f. 34v. This irregular marriage does not seem to have marginalized Emma Hopwood, for her will was made in the presence of her confessor Thomas Hutton, a member of the Whitefriars in Fleet Street. This might be the Thomas Hutton, a master in Chancery, whose entry appears in A.B. Emden (ed.), *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500* (Oxford, 1958), 991.
- <sup>54</sup> GL, Ms 9171/6, f. 45v.
- <sup>55</sup> GL, Ms 9171/8, ff. 66v–67. Rayner named a woman — Alison Wiley, wife of William Wiley — as one of her two executors.
- <sup>56</sup> GL, Ms 9171/5, f. 15v.
- <sup>57</sup> Froide has noted that early modern singlewomen 'were particularly woman-identified in their relationships'; *Never Married*, 71.
- <sup>58</sup> TNA: PROB 11/4, f. 114.

- <sup>59</sup> It is noticeable that whereas contemporary English wills talk of *St Mary*, the Latin ones hardly ever used the word *Sancta*; it was always *Beata*.
- <sup>60</sup> *Parlura*, literally a talking place, presumably refers to the small cloister where John Stow noted in the late sixteenth century 'diverse noblemen and persons of worship have been buried': Stow, *Survey*, vol. 1, 229.
- <sup>61</sup> Stow's suggestion that the church took its name from a shipbuilding yard or *boat haw* (Stow, *Survey*, vol 1, 229) is almost certainly erroneous. The first element of the name is most likely to be the Old English personal name Botta, hence 'Botta's enclosure'; see D. Parsons and T. Styles, *The Vocabulary of English Place-Names*, vol. 1 (Nottingham, 1997), 131.
- <sup>62</sup> *inter* written at this point, but redundant.

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