

John Paris, pewterer of London: The Logge Register

The 1480s were exciting times for the Worshipful Company of Pewterers. They had obtained their first Charter from Edward IV in 1474 and were now well on their way to obtaining their own hall. Pewter was doing well and many members of the company were substantial men. The mid-80s were, however, challenging times, for Edward IV had died on 9th April 1483, his brother, Richard, had taken the throne and, on 21st August 1485, Henry VII had won the Battle of Bosworth.

Welsh's history of the Pewterers' Company (the Modernised Version by Major GS Johnson, second edition by William Grant) contains entries, on pages 45 to 47, (some of which are reproduced below) referring to one John Paris, "pewterer of London".

An entry (p 45) records his death on 26 April "*in the first year of the reign of King Richard III*", that is, 1483; also the fact that his obit was kept on 26th April yearly; and that 5p was paid for bread and ale, and 12p to a priest, at his burial.

John Paris was the senior member of the Company and Master at the time of his death. He had been Master several times, in 1467, 1476 and 1480. He is recorded as having left money to the Company to be spent on purchasing a pall or hearse cloth of Cloth of Gold; and also money for the Hall.

Interestingly, last year Michael Sutcliffe found copies of two relevant entries of Wills in the *Logge Register*, a register of 15th century wills.

The first was of the will of John Paris himself, "pewterer of London". He made his Will on 14 April 1485 and it was proved on 11 May that year. This provides evidence from the other end so to speak, of the bequest of the hearse cloth, the gift of money for the Hall, and much other interesting information.

However, John Paris could not have died in 1483, yet made his last will and testament on 14th April 1485. The entry in Welch must be wrong; and must have intended to refer to the last year of Richard's reign or, more likely, the first year of Henry VII's reign. We are talking of his death in 1485.

As was the custom of the time, John Paris left money for the saying of Requiem Masses for his soul.

He clearly trusted his wife, Agnes, for he appointed her his sole executrix.

He was also, not surprisingly, a man of some substance, since he left Agnes, amongst other things, all his "*londis and tenements with ther appurtenances around Algate aswele in Grenewich as elsewhere in the countie of Kent*", together with his "*brewhous in Holborne callid the Swane*". This gift was conditional upon her not remarrying, and if she did remarry, the property was to go to their daughter, also called Agnes.

After a gift of 20 shillings to each of the prisons at "*Ludgate, Newgate, the Flete, the Kinges Bench and the Marchalsy*" for the provision of "*brede among the poure prisoners ther*", comes the bequest to the Company of £10 "*for a cloth of gold to serve for the buryelles of the brethren of the craft of peautrers in London*", the money only to be paid once the Company had, within five years, acquired the cloth itself! As the entry in Welch records, the cloth was obtained that same year.

He also left £10 towards the "*purchessing of an hall for the seid craftte*" provided that the hall was bought within five years! There is an interesting story surrounding the acquisition of the Company's first Hall (in Lime Street) and that can be found related in Welch (pp 45 & 46). Welch also records the receipt of the money in 1486, paid over by Robert Lytton; so the Company must have acquired title to the Hall by then.

(There must have been a building on the land, but the Great Hall for feasts etc was not completed for nearly another decade.)

The purchase price of the land for the Hall was £120, so John Paris' contribution was substantial.

Not surprisingly, the connection with pewter continues. Amongst John Paris's many other bequests was one of £20 to William Marchall "*my servaunt so that he pay for iij blokkes of tyn which he hadde of me and for C weight of saltsalors and for certeyn tole which he hade of me as it apperith in my book and beside that make and gyf unto my seid wif a true accompt and rekenyng of all such money and goodes as I have putt in his handes of trust*".

William, it appears, was (one of) his apprentice(s). There is, however, no record of the apprenticeship being transferred (as was the custom, following an apprenticeship master's death) to another pewterer, so maybe William had qualified and been made free of the Company by this time; or maybe he was just as described, '*a servaunt*' who handled some of his master's business.

The second will is that of John Paris' wife, Agnes, herself. She did not live long to enjoy her inheritance. She made her will on 25 February 1485/6 "*the first yere of the reigne of King Henry the vijth*", and it was proved on 27 April 1486. In her will, she described herself as: the "*late the wiff of John Parys dede, citezin while he levid and peautre of London*".

She appointed, as her executors, her new husband and her daughter by her first husband, also by now called Agnes Lytton (it seems she had taken her

mother's second husband's name, unless she had in the meantime married a Lytton son! But if the latter, her mother did not mention him in her will).

She wished to be buried in the parish church of St Botolfe, Billingsgate and she desired her executors to dispose of her assets in the manner that her first husband had required of his estate.

Of William Marchal there is no further record; and there were no sons of the family.

Robert Lytton

He was Agnes' second husband and, with her daughter by John Paris, also executor of Agnes senior's will.

The Logge Register

The Richard III Society has been instrumental in the production of the Logge Register.

All 379 wills and testaments in the register of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury for the years 1479 to 1486 have been 'translated' and reproduced into two volumes. The name of the *Register* comes from the first will in the collection, that of John Logge, a woodmonger of London.

Some of the wills are in English, some are in Latin, with translations. Much can be learned from the wills of the famous, but those of ordinary people make fascinating reading.

Welch's History of the Pewterers' Company, Modernised Version, Second Edition: published by The Worshipful Company of Pewterers, 2003. ISBN 0 9500012 2 8

With thanks to Michael Sutcliffe, Past Master of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers for finding the Wills; and to William Grant, Past Master and also the Company Historian, for his helpful comments. I have to make it clear, however, that responsibility for the article remains firmly mine!

Alan Williams

The Logge Register: Lesley Boatwright, Moira Habberjam, Peter Hammond (eds.), The Logge Register of PCC Wills, 1479 to 1486, Richard III Society, Knaphill (UK), 2008. ISBN 978-0-904893-18-2

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