

## The Will of Robert Watson (1777-1856)

Notes based on a copy of the Will held by the Norfolk Records Office  
Ref: PRDC 1/2/12. Folio 100. MF479

Will dated 8<sup>th</sup> April 1848. Robert died on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1856.  
The Will was Probated on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1856.

Interestingly there is a note written before the actual Will that says, "Testator lived and died at Martham in the County of Norfolk". The opening lines of his Will then contradict that statement.

The actual situation was that for the early part of his life Robert lived with his wife and children at Watson's Marsh Mill at Heigham Holmes on the north side of the River Thurne. Although the mill is on the north bank at Heigham Holmes and geographically is in Potter Heigham there is no land route to Potter Heigham. The nearest practical village was Martham. They needed a boat to reach either of them. In all practical ways the family would have taken a rowing boat across the river to Martham ferry and then gone up Ferrygate Lane to reach Martham village for shopping or worship needs as that was closer than Potter Heigham.

Robert's Will starts as follows:-

"The last will and testament  
of me Robert Watson of Potter Heigham  
in the County of Norfolk, farmer, I  
appoint Hannah, my wife, and  
sons George Watson and Robert Watson  
Executrix and Executors of this my  
will and I direct that all my just  
debts and my funeral and testamentary<sup>(1)</sup>  
expenses shall be paid and satisfied  
as soon as conveniently can be after  
my death."

The following is a summary of the rest of his will:-

He left all his personal estate to his wife for the rest of her life she being responsible for paying interest on a mortgage he had.

He left a house, outhouses, pasture, marshland, garden, yard and appurtenances amounting to one and a half acres in Martham to his son James Watson that were occupied at the time by John Conyard and had previously been owned by Robert's father William Watson (1742-1818). John Conyard (1825-1902) was the husband of Mary Watson (1810-1892) who was Robert's niece.

He also left James (after his mother's death) his six best chairs and a mahogany dining table plus his own, James', bed. (James never married. His mother Hannah died in 1862).

Robert left a double cottage and barn plus outbuildings, yard and about three acres of arable land known as Burnt Yard to his sons George and Robert Watson. Robert had purchased this from the widow Sarah Deary (nee Whitaker) and at time of writing his will it was occupied by his son John Watson and John Holt. (John Holt was the nephew of sisters Judith & Susannah Holt who had both married into the Watson family). The legacy was subject to the property being sold after the death of Robert's wife and the proceeds being split equally between their other children who were:

Daughter, Mary Ann Haylett, nee Watson (1808-1876)

Son, George Watson (1810-1851)

Son, Benjamin Watson (1812-1896)

Son, Robert Watson (1815-1871)

Son, John Watson (1817-1887)

Daughter, Harriet Piggin, nee Watson (1823-1879)

Son, William Watson (1826-1909)

And, if any of them died before him their share was to be divided equally between their children. His will was dated 1848 so his son George did die before his father and that share would have gone to George's daughter Harriet.

The properties were duly auctioned in June 1863.

The witnesses to the Will were John Baker a solicitor from Great Yarmouth and a George William Cave.

1 = Executors to a will may receive letters testamentary, authorizing them to distribute the assets.