

appropriation did not lie with the Priory, and here the parson or laymen were witnesses except in one informative case.

Thomas Grey of Boyton called Nicholas Oxburgh, canon of Butley, to his bedside in 1529. In a footnote to the will the canon wrote, 'Master Cente I honestly recommend me to you and I pray you be good friend to this poor woman for it is the first will ever I made'. The note was probably addressed to an official at the Archdeaconry Court. The writing is the same throughout and indeed he ends by saying, 'witness hereof I Syr Nicholas Oxburgh chanon of Butteley'. There is no evidence anyone else was there at the deathbed. The preamble is entirely formulaic, and it is unlikely he could remember it exactly if it was the first will he had written. All the same he made mistakes, omitting 'and testament' after 'last will' and writing 'body' instead of 'soul'. He was probably nervous, but intent on taking great care the widow was not disadvantaged because of it. There are a few minor deletions and omissions in the body of the will, but it looks very like a 'fair copy' written when he had returned to the Priory.

After the closure of the Priory no priests witnessed wills in Butley until 1567, and literate laymen must have done the writing unless a professional scrivener lived locally. Thus it is not surprising that Augustine Brooke appears regularly as a witness until his death in 1575. A close look at his handwriting shows that he wrote wills over several years for his neighbours. His literacy must have begun at the Priory school where he and his brother Thomas, nephews of the last Prior, Thomas Manning, were attending at the closure of the Priory. He wrote Margery Fattur's will (see below p. 44) and inventory in 1571. In her case the very short will was almost certainly taken down verbatim, leaving everything to her son John, except 'a worsted kirtell, three pewter platters, a skillet pane, a lytell tynkers kettell and two candlstyckes' to Johan Whytlock. Thus it seems reasonable to believe the original premise that, except for very simple wills, notes were taken and the final version produced shortly afterwards.

Since Augustine Brooke lived through all the religious changes of the sixteenth century, this is the place to consider their effect on ordinary people. The orderly ecclesiastical life of all parishes was disturbed by the changes brought about when Edward VI came to the throne in 1547, followed six years later by the complete reversal ordered by Mary, and then a mere five years later by another change restoring much of the Edwardine reformation by Elizabeth. To these ten or so years could be added, in those parishes where had been an important monastic community, further upheavals, both ecclesiastical and social. Where churchwarden's accounts survive one can read of the cost and heartbreak connected with removing all the stone altars, the rood screens, the images of favourite saints and most of the vessels and vestments used in the Mass. However this was nothing compared with the cost of replacing them after 1553. The Edwardine commissioners had been instructed to leave in each church only a cup, a bell, a covering for the table and a surplice, so service books, vestments, processional crosses, altar coverings and additional vessels had to be purchased.

How did Butley and the other churches acquire stone for the new altars? Hastily pulled up grave-slabs, which some churchwardens had used would not do. Perhaps the authorities had to relent in counties where there was no natural suitable stone. It is unlikely the Protestant William Forth, who was Lord of the Manor, would have contributed money to purchase the required church goods, but somehow all parishes acquired what was necessary, although it took some until the eve of Elizabeth's reign to do so. Then they were removed again!