

unproved, and therefore unrecorded, to avoid the expense of probate.

So far we have mentioned Thomas and Robert Soden as having been inhabitants of Sibford Gower in Swalcliffe parish in or before 1375, but other Sodens who have been mentioned, though having some sort of possible tie with the parish, are unproven as such, or as members of the family. It is the testament of Thomas Sowdeane or Sodene of Sibford Gower, made on 1 August 1557, which proves him to be our family's first positively recorded male ancestor. The will names his wife as Joan (Treadwell), a daughter called Alice, three sons (unnamed) and a grandson, Robert. His goods were valued at £26.12s.0d. After bequeathing his soul to God, and instructing that he was to be buried at Swalcliffe, he left small legacies to the parish church, the cathedral at Oxford, and the poor of Swalcliffe and Burdrop. Additionally he left legacies of a calf to Alice, a few sheep to his sons' three sons and his grandson Robert, and half his house to his wife during her lifetime. Alexander Treadwell was appointed as administrator. It was unnecessary for Thomas to state to whom he left his land and the remainder of his property as, by common law, his wife and eldest son would inherit. We are thus deprived of knowing the extent of his land and whether he was merely a subsistence farmer or had some other occupation. Neither do we have any details of his house, but if it was typical of the period it was probably a single storey building