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Note

Henry Condell and His London Relatives

DAVID KATHMAN

HENRY CONDELL HAS LONG BEEN WELL KNOWN to theater historians as a friend and colleague of William Shakespeare, and as co-editor (with John Heminges) of the 1623 First Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays. He first appears in the theatrical record in 1598 as a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, performing in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humor*. His life in London after that is well documented until his death in 1627. However, very little has been known of his life before 1598. Mark Eccles did discover the record of his marriage to Elizabeth Smart in St. Lawrence Pountney on 24 October 1596, but for many years virtually nothing was known for certain about his origins, or about how he might have become involved with the professional stage.¹

In 1985, David Honeyman provided some potential answers by identifying the actor with the Henry Condell baptized on 5 September 1576 at St. Peter Mancroft, Norwich, the son of Robert Condell.² This identification was far more plausible than any that had been proposed before, but it still left some room for doubt, such that Mary Edmond was unwilling to accept it unreservedly in her *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry on Condell.³ A number of newly discovered documents, several of which mention Henry Condell by name, show beyond a reasonable doubt that the Condell born in 1576 was indeed the actor, while providing much interesting new information about his family connections and correcting some mistakes of interpretation by Honeyman.

This note could not have been written without William Ingram and Alan Nelson, who originally looked up most of these documents for me in London, and provided invaluable help in transcribing and interpreting them.

¹ Mark Eccles, "Elizabethan Actors I: A–D," *Notes and Queries* 236 (1991), 44. Eccles describes several post-1596 lawsuits involving Condell, but he was unaware of Honeyman's article (cited below), only mentioning it later in *Notes and Queries* 236 (1991): 461. The details of Condell's post-1598 theatrical career are summarized in Edwin Nungezer, *A Dictionary of Actors and of Other Persons Associated with the Public Representation of Plays in England before 1642* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1929), 98–101.

² David Honeyman, "The Family Origins of Henry Condell," *Notes and Queries* 230 (1985): 467–68.

³ Mary Edmond, "Condell, Henry (bap. 1576?, d. 1627)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004; online edition, 2008), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6055> (accessed 27 March 2011).

Honeyman based his identification on three main lines of evidence, which together provide a solid circumstantial case (though not an airtight one) for identifying Henry Condell, the London actor, with the child of that name baptized in Norwich in 1576.

(1) Honeyman constructed a family tree in which the 1576 Henry Condell was the son of Robert Condell and Joan Yeomans Condell, who had been married on 17 October 1569 in New Buckenham, Norfolk, a small village twelve miles southwest of Norwich. There is no further record of either of them in New Buckenham, but Robert Condell, "*maritus*" (married man), was buried in St. Stephen, Norwich, on 19 October 1591, and Joan Condell was buried in the same parish on 18 July 1603.

(2) An Ann Yeomans married William Gilder in New Buckenham on 3 September 1573 and had a son named William baptized there on 23 October 1575. Honeyman reasonably suggested that Joan Yeomans and Ann Yeomans were sisters, and that the latter's son William Gilder was the first cousin of Joan's son Henry Condell. The actor Henry Condell mentioned "my Cosen Gilder late of newe Buckenham in the County of Norffolk deceased" in his will, providing good evidence for this identification.⁴

(3) Finally, Honeyman noted an entry in an *Index Library* volume for "the administration of the goods of Humphrey Yeomans of St Ethelburga's Parish, granted to his kinsman, Henry Condell 1603/5." This shows a London-based Henry Condell (presumably the actor) with a Yeomans relative, connecting him to the Norfolk family of that name.⁵ Honeyman suggested that Henry Condell lived with this kinsman in St. Ethelburga when he first came to London.

The first new evidence to consider involves two brothers named Yeomans, living not in St. Ethelburga, but in St. Bride's Fleet Street, just outside the city wall west of St. Paul's. William Yeomans was buried in St. Bride's on 11 October 1589, and his undated will was proved in the Commissary Court of London a week later on 18 October.⁶ In that will, he describes himself as a blacksmith

⁴ E. A. J. Honigmann and Susan Brock, *Playhouse Wills 1558–1642: An Edition of Wills by Shakespeare and His Contemporaries in the London Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1994), 159, transcribing the National Archives, Kew (TNA), PROB 10/457.

⁵ Honeyman cited "*Index Library*, LXXXIX (1979), i.423"; this is Marc Fitch, ed., *Index to Testamentary Records in the Archdeaconry Court of London, Volume I (1363)–1649* (London: British Record Society, 1979). Honeyman's apparent quotation is actually a paraphrase of the relevant entry in the index volume.

⁶ William Yeomans's burial is recorded in the St. Bride's parish register; see London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) P69/BRI/A/003/MS06535, formerly Guildhall Library, London (GL) MS 6535. Yeomans's will is LMA DL/C/B/004/MS09171/017 f.240v (formerly GL MS 9171/17). The final probate record, dated 18 April 1590 (LMA DL/C/B/004/MS09168/014, fol.190v, formerly GL MS 9168/14), shows that letters of administration were later granted to one of William's creditors, John Simpson.

of St. Bride's and makes his widow Joan executrix. After minor bequests to Humphrey Armitage and "my prentice" Richard Hastlock, Yeomans leaves to the children of his sister Annis (Anne) £20, "that is five pounds a peice to hir fowre Children." To his sister "Eals" (Alice) he leaves £10, specifying that Mr. "Hearmetage" is to receive this £10 legacy and employ it to the use of Alice's children, or to her use if she wants it. Finally, Yeomans leaves to his "wellbeloved brother Humfrey Yeomans" a gown welted with velvet, a featherbed, a blanket, and two stools embroidered with silk.

That brother, Humphrey Yeomans, made his own will on 1 September 1593. He also described himself as a citizen and blacksmith of St. Bride's parish, and was buried in St. Bride's on 17 May 1594. His will was proved on 5 June 1594 and contains much useful information.⁷ Humphrey's main legatees were his wife Elizabeth and son Humphrey, who had been baptized in St. Bride's on 19 October 1589.⁸ A significant part of the will concerns a house in St. Bride's where Humphrey was dwelling, which he had purchased from John Pope, his wife Katherine, Paul Pope, and his wife.⁹ The house was to go to Elizabeth during Humphrey junior's minority and then to Humphrey junior once he turned twenty-one. If both Elizabeth and Humphrey died, the house would go to "my thre sisters Agnes Gilder Joane Cundall and Allice Gorney equallye to be devided amongst them theyr heyres and assignes forever." Here we have proof that Joan Condell and Anne/Agnes Gilder were indeed sisters, and we have the married name of the third Yeomans sister, Alice Gorney. Thus, the Humphrey Yeomans of this will was Henry Condell's uncle, Humphrey junior was Condell's cousin, and Anne Gilder and Alice Gorney were his aunts. From William Yeomans's will we know that Anne Gilder had four children, and that Alice Gorney had several children, one of whom, "ffraunces Gorny my sisteres daughter," is named in Humphrey Yeomans's will. "Suzan Turner my wifes sister" and "my cosin John Hill" also received bequests from Humphrey.

Because Humphrey Yeomans was a freeman of London, the custom of the city provided that one-third of his estate should go to his widow, one-third

⁷ Humphrey Yeomans's burial is in the St. Bride's parish register, cited in n. 6 above; his will is LMA DL/C/B/004/MS09171/018, fol. 186 (formerly GL MS 9171/18), and the probate record is LMA DL/C/B/004/MS09168/015, fol. 29 (formerly GL MS 9168/15). The burial record describes him as a cutler, but this is not inconsistent with his being a citizen and blacksmith, since the custom of London provided that a man who was a freeman of a livery company (such as the Blacksmiths) was free to practice any trade he chose.

⁸ LMA P69/BRI/A/001/MS06536 (formerly GL MS 6536).

⁹ It is tempting to wonder whether John and Paul Pope were related to Henry Condell's future acting colleague Thomas Pope, who mentioned brothers John and William Pope in his 1603 will. However, I have not found any connection, and the surname was extremely common.

should go to his children, and one-third could be disposed of as he saw fit through a will. Since his only child was a minor, that one-third “orphan’s portion” would need to be put into a trust so that it could be claimed by the child when he turned twenty-one; to determine the size of that portion, the Common Serjeant of London took an inventory of the goods of every freeman who died with minor children. The original inventory of Humphrey Yeomans’s goods does not survive (almost no London orphans’ inventories survive from before 1665), but we do have the Common Serjeant’s book recording the results of all the inventories taken between 1586 and 1614. It shows that Yeomans’s estate was worth £378 15s 5d when he died; after subtracting debts of £44 17s and funeral expenses of £10, the net value of his estate was £323 18s 5d, and Humphrey junior’s portion was one-third of that, or £107 19s 5.5d.¹⁰ Humphrey senior had left £100 to his son in the will, but because the actual portion was more than that, four trustees had to sign bonds promising to make sure Humphrey junior received his full portion when he came of age.

Alas, Humphrey Yeomans junior never came of age. His mother must have died within a few years (I have been unable to find the exact place or date, but she was not buried in St. Bride’s), and Humphrey himself died at the age of thirteen in January 1603, while living in St. Ethelburga’s parish. On 20 January 1603, Henry Condell went to the Archdeaconry Court of London and was granted letters of administration for the estate of his young cousin.¹¹ The grant was recorded in the court’s Act Book in the following words:

*Administratio bonorum iurium et Creditorum Humfridi Yeomans
nuper dum vixit Parochie sancti Ethelburgi prope Bysshypsgat
Civitatis et Archideaconatus Londoniensis (ab intestatio vt dicitur)
defuncti vicesimo die mense et anni predicti per Dominum
Officialem Predictum Commissi fuit Henrico Cundall proximo
Consanguineo dicti defuncti*

(Administration of the goods, rights, and credits of Humphrey Yeomans, formerly living in the parish of St. Ethelburga within Bishopsgate in the city and archdeaconry of London, deceased [intestate, it is said], was granted on the twentieth day of the month and year aforesaid, by the Lord Official of the said Commission, to Henry Cundall, next of kin of the said deceased.)¹²

¹⁰ LMA CLA/002/01/001, fol. 68v.

¹¹ This is the record referred to in the Index Library entry noted by Honneyman, but Honneyman did not look up the original record and thus mistakenly believed that this Humphrey Yeomans was an adult relative with whom Condell lived when he first came to London.

¹² LMA DL/AL/C/001/MS09050/003, fol. 172 (formerly GL MS 9050/3). This transcription omits some legal boilerplate language at the end; italics represent expanded contractions, as elsewhere in this paper. I am grateful to William Ingram for originally photographing this entry

Letters of administration gave someone the legal power to settle the estate of a person who had died intestate, that is, without a will. They were not typically needed for minor children with no estate to settle, but on rare occasions they might be granted on behalf of a child who was due to inherit property when he or she came of age.¹³ In this case, Humphrey junior's "estate" consisted of the orphan's portion being held by trustees, and since both of his parents were dead, somebody needed to determine where that money would now go. Henry Condell took on that job, probably enticed by the fact that, as the child's next of kin, he was likely to receive the money himself. If he did get the money, it is possible that he used this unexpected windfall to buy a share in the Lord Chamberlain's Men, although of course this is speculation. When the company became the King's Men by royal patent on 19 May 1603, almost exactly four months after the above document was written, "Henrie Condell" was sixth in the list of sharers.¹⁴

On 3 February 1603, two weeks after being granted letters of administration, Condell went to the London Guildhall and appeared before the Court of Orphans, consisting of the aldermen and Lord Mayor. There, he officially closed the books on the orphan's portion of Humphrey Yeomans junior.¹⁵ The record of his appearance confirms that the letters of administration were for Humphrey junior, and provides some additional details about the trustees.

Item Henry Cundall gent' Administrator of all and singuler the goodes and chattells rightes & credittes which late were Humfrey yeomans sonne and Orphan of Humfrey Yeomans Blacksmithe deceased present in this Courte acknowledged himself to be fullie satisfied & payed of all suche parte and portion of the Orphanage of the sayd Humfrey to him due by reason of his death within the age of xxj yeres by vertue of one recognizance wherein Thomas White Grocer and others with him stand bound for payment of C li. And thereof he did clerely acquite & discharg this Courte & the said Recognizance bound for the same.¹⁶

for me and to Alan Nelson for helping with the transcription and translation. Incidentally, this Act Book entry was written by Humphrey Dyson, a scrivener with many theatrical connections who later drew up the indentures when Condell bought property in Gloucestershire in 1617; see E. A. B. Barnard, *New Links with Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1930), 74–88.

¹³ For example, in 1606 the Archdeaonry Court of London granted administration of the goods of Robert Phillips, infant, of St. Mary Magdalen Old Fish Street, to Elizabeth Clarke, widow, his mother. See LMA DL/AL/C/001/MS09050/004, fol. 309v (formerly GL MS 9050/4).

¹⁴ E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of the Facts and Problems*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), 2:72.

¹⁵ Actually, Condell made one more appearance at the Archdeaonry Court of London two years later on 7 June 1605 to officially render his account of Humphrey Yeomans's estate, but the brief record of that appearance (see LMA DL/AL/C/001/MS09050/004, fol. 290v [formerly GL MS 9050/4]) includes no new information.

¹⁶ London Repertory 26, part 1, fol. 96 (LMA, microfilm X109/151).

The day before this appearance was Candlemas, the final day of the Christmas season, when the Lord Chamberlain's Men had performed before Queen Elizabeth at Richmond.¹⁷ If Condell was with his company—and it seems likely that he was, given the importance of the occasion—he must have returned to London immediately after the performance, most likely by boat on the Thames.

With Elizabeth Yeomans and Humphrey Yeomans junior now dead, the house that Humphrey senior had owned in St. Bride's Fleet Street passed to his three sisters—Anne Gilder, Joan Condell, and Alice Gorney—in accordance with his will. But Joan Condell died just six months later and was buried in Norwich on 18 July 1603, after which her one-third share of the house would have passed to her only child, Henry.¹⁸ Over the next several years, Henry Condell consolidated his interest in the house on at least two occasions by buying shares from his cousins, and the records of these sales provide valuable information about his family.

The first purchase took place in Michaelmas Term 1604 (thus between 9 October and 28 November), when Henry Condell, gentleman, bought a third part, plus a quarter part of another third part, of a messuage in St. Bridget's alias St. Bride's parish.¹⁹ The foot of fine recording the sale does not identify the property further, but the context (especially in conjunction with the later sale described below) makes it clear that it is the Yeomans house. The sellers were William "Gyldard" and Agnes his wife, Thomas "Gyldard," and George Gourney. This must be the cousin William Gilder who was born in New Buckenham in 1575, plus (presumably) William's brother, and another relative from the Gorney branch of the family, probably Alice Gorney's son. In this transaction, Condell was buying the Gilder share of the house from William and Thomas (perhaps the two survivors out of the four children mentioned by William Yeomans in 1589), and one-quarter of the Gorney share from George. The Gorney share had been subdivided into four parts, probably one for each of Alice Gorney's children.²⁰

The second document is an indenture dated 13 October 1609, by which Henry Condell of London, gentleman, paid £20 for a fourth part of a third part of a messuage or tenement "commonlie called or knowne by the name and signe of the Queenes Heade in the parishe of St. Brides alias Bridgett in fleetestreete of London sometymes in the tenure or occupation of one Humfrey Yeomans late Cittizen and Blacksmythe of London deceased And nowe in the posses-

¹⁷ Chambers, 2:328.

¹⁸ Honneyman, 467.

¹⁹ See TNA CP25/2/321/2JASIMICH. Eccles (44) mentions this record but mistakenly gives its date as Michaelmas 1602 and only mentions William Gyldard as a seller.

²⁰ Such provisions would have been made in the will of Alice Gorney or her husband George, but I have been unable to find a will for either of them. I have been unable to find a will for Anne Gilder or her husband William.

sion of the saide Henry Condell or his Assignes." The sellers were described as "Thomas Huls Citizen and Goldsmythe of London and ffrances his wiefe one of the daughters of George Gurney late of Tackleneston in the Countie of Norffolk Clarcke and of Allis his wiefe deceased which Alis was one of the daughters of one William Yeomans deceased."²¹

Seventeenth-century property records do not get much more explicit than this one, which confirms that Alice Gorney's one-third share had been subdivided into four parts, and shows that Condell was now buying another of those parts, this one from his cousin Frances Gorney Hulse, who had been mentioned in Humphrey Yeomans's will. The description tells us that Alice Gorney's husband (and Frances's father) was named George, and it allows us to identify him with the George Gorney, clerk parson of Tacolnston, Norfolk, who pursued two lawsuits in the Court of Requests. In one of these suits, his coplaintiffs were his sons William and John Gorney, giving us the names of two more of Henry Condell's cousins.²² We also learn that the patriarch of the Yeomans family was named William, suggesting that the William Yeomans who died in 1589 was the eldest son. Finally, this indenture shows that the house Humphrey Yeomans had bequeathed to his sisters was actually a tavern called the Queen's Head, which was located on the south side of Fleet Street between the gates of the Inner and Middle Temple.²³

Any doubts that we have been dealing with the correct Henry Condell can be dispelled by examining the actor's will.²⁴ Henry Condell of the King's Men bequeathed his freehold property "scituate lying and being in the parrishe of St Bride *alias* Bridgett neere fleetestrete London" to his son William, his wife Elizabeth holding it until William completed his term of apprenticeship. In addition to bequeathing £5 apiece to "such and soe manie of the daughters of my Cosen Gilder late of newe Buckenham in the County of Norffolk deceased as shalbe lyveing att the tyme of my decease," he gave £5 to "my Cosen ffrances Gurney *alias* Hulse my Auntes daughter" and another £5 to Frances's daughter.

With this identification confirmed, it is possible to say quite a bit about Henry Condell's family tree and to add some judicious speculation about his

²¹ Hustings Roll 286/17 (LMA CLA/023/DW/01/285).

²² The two suits are TNA REQ 2/92/37 (in which William and John Gorney were coplaintiffs) and REQ 2/98/8. The first of these consists only of an undated bill of complaint that mentions an indenture dated 11 July 1594, and so must be later than that; the second suit includes a bill of complaint dated 27 January 1601 and an answer dated 11 February 1601.

²³ Henry Harben, *A Dictionary of London* (London, 1918), 494, citing *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1862–1910), 11:556.

²⁴ Honigmann and Brock, 156–60, esp. 157, 159.

early life. He was baptized on 5 September 1576 in St. Peter Mancroft, Norwich, the son of Robert Condell and Joan Yeomans Condell, as Honneyman correctly surmised. His mother was one of five children of William Yeomans. Two of these were Condell's uncles, William and Humphrey Yeomans, both of whom moved to London, became citizens and blacksmiths, and died in St. Bride's Fleet Street in 1589 and 1594, respectively. William was married but childless, while Humphrey had a son named Humphrey who died at the age of thirteen. Condell also had two maternal aunts, Anne (or Agnes) Gilder and Alice Gorney. Anne married William Gilder in New Buckenham and had four children, of whom at least two, sons named William and Thomas, survived to 1604. Alice married George Gorney of Tacolneston, Norfolk, and had four children, including sons William, John, and (probably) George, and a daughter Frances, who married a citizen and goldsmith of London named Thomas Hulse.

Robert Condell died just after Henry turned fifteen and was buried in St. Stephen, Norfolk, on 19 October 1591. It is tempting to think that this is when Henry went to London, perhaps to be apprenticed to his uncle Humphrey Yeomans, since fifteen was a common age for new apprentices. If this is what happened, then Henry would have arrived in St. Bride's Fleet Street when the same parish's Bel Savage Inn was a popular playhouse, immediately exposing him to the professional theater.²⁵ He could have met the players who performed at the Inner Temple and Middle Temple, since his uncle's tavern was located between the Temple gates.²⁶ If young Henry was apprenticed to his uncle Humphrey, he presumably left after Humphrey's death in May 1594, and certainly before his own marriage on 24 October 1596.²⁷ The Lord Chamberlain's Men was formed within weeks of Humphrey Yeomans's death, and it is pleasant to imagine young Henry Condell going directly from his uncle's household to the acting company that would be his professional home for the rest of his life. Even without indulging in such flights of fancy, we can be grateful to have a clearer picture of who Henry Condell was and where he came from.

²⁵ Herbert Berry, "The Bell Savage Inn and Playhouse," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 19 (2006): 121–43.

²⁶ Alan H. Nelson and John R. Elliott Jr., eds., *Records of Early English Drama: Inns of Court*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011).

²⁷ Honneyman, 467; and Eccles, 44.