

Inventory and Probate Accounts of Thomas Ridgway of Ibstock, 1683–5

March the 18 in 1684

A true and perfect Inventory of the Goods and Chattells of Thomas Ridgway of Ibstock lately deceased, in the County of Leicester Taylor apprized by us whose names are underneath subscribed

	£	s.	d.
Imprimis his purse and Apparell valued at	1	00	00
Item in the house one Table one forme one plank valued	0	07	02
Item foure Cheaires valued at	0	03	00
Item two peales one Tubb and one Churne valued at	0	07	06
Item one pot one brass Cettell valued at	1	06	00
Item two pallengers two cups one saucer and half a dossin of spoones valued	0	03	00
Item Land Iron fire Shovall and the pot Racks at	0	08	00
all these in the house			
Item two pressing irons and three paire of sheires at	0	03	00
Item in the parlour, in the Trunk one Goune			
one wescoate and three petty coats and the Trunk valued	2	10	00
Item one hatt and one Case valued at	0	06	08
Item one Cofer valued at	0	02	00
Item one bedstead one feather bed two bouldsters			
two blankets and one Rug, one sett of Curtaines	4	00	09
and vallens valued at			
Item one box and goods in it valued at	2	00	00
Item in the farr Chamber two boxes and small Linings valued at	0	04	00
Item wooll and Jarsie in the Chamber valued at	0	06	00
Item one safeguard one pillion Cloath and three Coats at	0	06	09
Item in the Chamber over the house one blanket			
two sheetes one pillow one Chaffe bed and bedstead valued at	0	07	00
Item in the Coale house Coales valued at	0	03	00
Item hay valued at	0	06	08
Item the Cow valued at	2	00	00
Item two Sheepe valued at	0	05	00
Item goods forgotten	0	05	00
Item Desperet debts	12	07	06
	29	07	00

Thomas Padget

John Huse (his mark)

George Jackston (his mark)

ROLLR, PR/I/86/207

According to John Nichols (*History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, vol. IV, p. 751, published in 1811) Elizabeth, the wife of Thomas Ridgway, tailor of Ibstock, and daughter of [blank] Husbands was convicted at Leicester assizes for poisoning her husband, and sentenced to be burnt to death. This sentence was carried out on 24 March 1683/4. He quotes his source as a sermon by Rev. John Newton, vicar of St Martin's Leicester, which was published with a 'full Relation of the Woman's Fact, Trial, Carriage and Death'. She was said to have also poisoned her mother, a fellow servant, and an earlier 'sweetheart' before getting married and poisoning her husband.

cont'd over

Parish registers for Market Bosworth show the marriage of Thomas Ridgwith and Elizabeth Husband on 1 February 1683/4, by licence from Mr Charles Carter. Thomas was buried in Ibstock on 25 February 1683/4, little more than three weeks after the wedding. Elizabeth's burial is not recorded, as expected, as a convicted murderer would not be accorded Christian burial.

Thomas did not leave a will. His father submitted two accounts of expenses and debts which had to be paid from his son's assets. The first covers the initial costs, including the cost of prosecution [prosecutions had to be brought privately, and there was no public prosecutor to pay these]. The second shows how the residual value of the estate was spent or distributed [although there appears to be some duplication].

Probate Accounts of Thomas Ridgeway of Ibstock, 1684

The true and perfect accompt of Tho Ridgway the natural & lawful father of Tho Ridgway late of Ibstock deceased intestate made aswell of his receipts and disbursements by vertue of L[ette]res of Adm[inistrati]on to him granted of the same sub protestation etc.

This Accomptant chargeth himselfe with all the goods, credits & chatells of the deceased as they are specified in an inventory by him exhibited amounting to the sum of £29 7s. 0d.

Out of which he craveth allowances	£	s.	d.
Impremis for L[ette]res of Adm[inistrati]on charges	1	02	00
Item paid to Wm Patchett of Birmicham due by the deed	6	08	00
Item paid in p[ro]sequition of the intestates relict for poysoning the deceased who was convict thereof & suffered for the same	3	00	00
Item paid to goodwife Franke due by the deceased	0	01	00
Item paid for horse hire due by the deceased to sev[e]rall p[er]sons	0	06	00
Item for passing of this accompt under seale	<u>1</u>	<u>07</u>	<u>08</u>
Sum	7	00	08
Remaining in hand after deduction of allowances	22	07	04

13 Jan 1684[/5]

A True Account taken the 22 day of January in the year 1684 of Thomas Rigway of Ibstock in the County of Leicester being Administrator of the Good[s] of Thomas Ridgway his son deseased of the Goods taken upon the Inventory that is put in to the Court at Leicester. These sumes are paid as Followeth

	£	s.	d.
Impremis of his buriall	1	13	04
Item to Mr Thomas Padget		17	10
Item to his son William Padget	5	00	00
Item to Thomas Bilson of Dunnington		17	00
Item to John Farmer		01	06
Item to John Swinffeeld		12	00
Item to Edward Johnson		02	00
Item to Mr Dixe at Bosworth		03	00
Item to John Rigway	2	00	00

Item Cost in Prossicuting Elizbth Rigway that Poysned him	3	00	00
Item In journeys going with her to the Jusstises and the witnesses		10	00
Item Owing to Edward Johnston for Rents	1	09	00
The totall is	16	05	08

Besides the Charge of Administration and other Fees in the Court
and there is 12 pounds in the Inventory that it will not owne that we must try a shule upon [?]

ROLLR, Probate Records Accounts 1682 -1686/34

[N.B. neither the addition, nor the subtraction are correct in the first account; the second is added correctly]

A four-page pamphlet was published anonymously in 1684, entitled *A True relation of four most barbarous and cruel murders committed in Leicestershire by Elizabeth Ridgway*. Some of its 'facts' are wrong (including naming Elizabeth's husband as William Ridgway, and his father as John, when surviving contemporary records submitted to the courts, as above, confirm both were called Thomas). The other material is sensational, and even if presented at the trial may have been invented or exaggerated, to blacken her name. The pamphlet claims that Elizabeth also murdered: her mother, Mary Husbands; a young male (unnamed) servant in the house where she was working; John King, a servant to Mr Paget of Ibstock; and 'William' Ridgway, with her favoured method being the addition of 'white mercury' to their broth. Nothing was suspected until she allegedly tried to poison Richard Tilley, the younger of her two apprentices, a little more than a week later. He refused to eat the broth. Sir Beaumont Dixie, a justice of the peace at Market Bosworth, was informed of suspicions over the death of her husband, and he ordered the exhumation of the body, eight days after the burial. A common method of 'determining' guilt in the 17th century was to ask the accused to touch the body, and if it bled, the person was held to be guilty. This was done, and blood flowed from Ridgway's nose and mouth 'as fresh as if new stabbed'. She was brought to trial and found guilty. She was sentenced to be 'Burnt to Ashes at the Common place for Execution' in the county. She protested her innocence until the day of execution, when she confessed to murdering the four people named, and said she also intended to murder both her apprentices and then take her own life. She was kept in custody until late the day, in the belief she might confess to more crimes, and was compelled to watch two brothers be hanged for burglary before her own sentence was carried out.