

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the last will and testament, dated 22 December 1608 and proved 10 February 1609, of Thomas Combe (buried 11 January 1609) of Stratford upon Avon, whose wife was related by marriage to Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, and whose son was left a sword by William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

The testator was the son of John Combe (d.1588), who is said to have married four times. The testator was the son of his father's first marriage to Joyce Blount, the daughter of Edward Blount of Kidderminster (see Bellew, *infra*, p. 368) and granddaughter of Sir Thomas Blount. See Lewis, B. Roland, *The Shakespeare Documents*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1941), Vol. II, pp. 325-36.

The testator had three brothers and a sister:

-**Edward Combe**, who married Anne Hales and died in 1597, leaving issue.

-**John Combe** (buried 12 July 1614) of Welcombe, a bachelor, who sold land to William Shakespeare of Stratford and left him £5 in his will. See his will, TNA PROB 11/126/415, and SBTRO ER 27/1.

-**George Combe**, who married and left issue (see Lewis, *supra*).

-**Elizabeth Combe**.

MARRIAGE AND ISSUE

The testator married Mary Bonner (d. 5 April 1617), daughter of Anthony Bonner (d.1580) and Bridget Savage (d.1608x11), sister of Francis Savage (c.1524 - 19 August 1557). See Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. III, pp. 493-4, and Vol. IV, p. 387; the will of Francis Savage dated 17 August 1557 and proved 4 July 1558, TNA PROB 11/40/349; the will of Anthony Bonner, dated 16 November 1579 and proved 2 November 1580, TNA PROB 11/62/452; and the will of Bridget (nee Savage) Bonner (d.1608x11), dated 16 January 1608 and proved 3 June 1611, TNA PROB 11/118/12.

At the time of her marriage to the testator, Mary Bonner (d. 5 April 1617) was the widow of William Yonge (d. December 1583), gentleman, of Caynton (in Edgmond), Shropshire, by whom she had an only daughter:

(1) **Bridget Yonge** (d. 1629).

Prior to his marriage to Mary Bonner (d. 5 April 1617), William Yonge (d. December 1583) had earlier been married to Anne Sneyd, by whom he had five sons, William, Giles, Thomas, John, another John, and six daughters Elizabeth, Margaret, Anne, Mary, Frances and Hester.

Anne Sneyd was the daughter of Sir William Sneyd (d. 6 June 1571), maternal grandfather of Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham (d.1612/3). For the will of Sir William Sneyd, see TNA PROB 11/54/430.

Mary Bonner's stepson, Giles Yonge, was thus a first cousin of Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham (c.1612/3). He acted as Elizabeth Trentham's trustee when she purchased King's Place in Hackney in 1597 (see TNA C 66/1476, m. 19).

After William Yonge's death in 1583, Mary (nee Bonner) Yonge (d. 5 April 1617) married, secondly, on 10 January 1586, the testator, Thomas Combe. According to the will below, they had two sons and two daughters:

* **William Combe** (1586-1667).

* **Thomas Combe** (1589-1657), to whom William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon left a sword in his will.

* **Mary Combe.**

* **Joyce Combe.**

Mary (nee Bonner) Yonge Combe survived the testator, and died at Stratford upon Avon on 5 April 1617.

Mentioned in the will below are the testator's uncle, William Combe; the testator's two brothers, John Combe and George Combe; the testator's wife, Mary (nee Bonner) Yonge Combe (d. 5 April 1617); the testator's two sons, William Combe (1586-1667) and Thomas Combe (1589-1657); the testator's two daughters, Mary Combe and Joyce Combe; and the testator's stepdaughter, Bridget Yonge (d. 1629), the daughter of the testator's wife by her first marriage to William Yonge (d. December 1583).

For further details of the relationship between the Trentham, Combe and Savage families see the will of Ralph Sheldon of Beoley, TNA PROB 11/121/345; Lewis, *supra*, pp. 325-36; and Pogue, Kate Emery, *Shakespeare's Friends*, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2006), pp. 27-30 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=Oy29eyCMNycC&pg=PA28>

In the will below the testator states that he is jointly seised of certain property with 'my uncle, William Combe, and my brother, John Combe, of Stratford'. The latter are the

William Combe and John Combe from whom William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon purchased 107 acres of land in 1602. See SBTRO ER 27/1.

It has been suggested that the testator was the translator of *The Theatre of Fine Devices Containing an Hundred Moral Emblems*, entered in the Stationers' Register on 9 May 1593, and printed by Richard Field. See Stopes, Charlotte Carmichael, *Shakespeare's Warwickshire Contemporaries*, (Stratford upon Avon: Shakespeare Head Press, 1907), p. 221.

For the testator's burial, see Savage, Richard, *The Registers of Stratford-on-Avon*, (London: Parish Register Society, 1905) p. 77 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/registersofstrat55stra#page/76/mode/2up>

The will of Thomas Combe the elder of Old Stratford, esquire, made in the presence of Henry Rainsford, knight, William Barnes, esquire, John Combe, gentleman, Francis Collyns, gentleman, and others the 22nd day of December 1608 Annoq{ue} regni Regis Iacobj Sexto et quadragesimo

RM: T{estamentum} Thome Combe

My will and meaning is and my desire at the hands of my uncle, William Combe, and my brother, John Combe, of Stratford is that whereas I with them two stand jointly seised unto us for the lives of my two sons, William and Thomas, and for the life of my brother, John Combe the younger, of and in the rectory or parsonage of South Cerney in the county of Gloucester with all houses, glebe-lands, tithes, oblations and other appurtenances to the said rectory or parsonage belonging, but in true intent and meaning to mine own use, and in trust, and to be disposed at my will and pleasure, that my said son, Thomas, is to have and may and ought to have by the intent of this my will to be assured unto him forth of the same premises one annuity or yearly rent of thirty pounds per annum to be paid by half yearly payments, viz., at the feasts of th' Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Michael th' Archangel or within fourteen days after by equal portions, the first payment thereof to begin at such of those two feasts which shall happen next after my decease or within fourteen days next after such feasts, the same rent to endure only so long as until one customary messuage and tenement with th' appurtenances parcel of the manor of Alvechurch in the county of Worcester known by the name of Byttell alias Bythell copyhold shall by and according to the custom of the said manor of Alvechurch and by virtue of one grant thereof heretofore made in reversion by copy of court roll to Thomas Warren, esquire, and the said Thomas Combe and William Combe, my sons, successively, and of one deed made by my said uncle, William Combe, bearing date the tenth day of May or of any of them or of any surrender or other act of the said Thomas Warren shall or ought to come in actual possession of my said son, Thomas;

And my meaning is that the said thirty pounds yearly rent shall upon the death of the said Thomas, my son, cease, whether the said copyhold ever come to his hands or no;

And my meaning, intent and further desire is that out of the rents and the residue of the profits to be made of the said rectory or parsonage and other the premises belonging to the same, over and above the said thirty pounds yearly rent and over and above the rent of fourteen pounds a year to be paid for the same and other reasonable charges, shall be for the further levying, making and raising of so much of the several portions hereafter in this my will severally willed and intended unto my several daughters, Mary Combe and Joyce Combe, as may not be made of my goods and chattels according to my meaning hereafter in this my will expressed;

And my meaning is that until my said daughters' several days of their marriages there shall forth of the said profits be yearly paid to either of them at the feasts aforesaid fifteen pounds [f. 98v] apiece for their maintenance;

And to my daughter-in-law [=stepdaughter], Bridget Yonge, the yearly rent of six pounds thirteen shillings four pence to be paid to her yearly for her maintenance until the portion to her hereafter in this my will to her bequeathed shall be paid her or ought by my meaning hereafter expressed to be paid her if the estate in the said rectory or parsonage shall so long continue undetermined;

Item, I devise, give and bequeath unto my said son, Thomas, my lease lands in Alvechurch aforesaid heretofore assigned unto me by my said uncle, William Combe, to have to my said son, his executors and assigns, for fourscore and nineteen years to be accounted from the day of the making of this my will if my said son, Thomas, do not in the meantime die unmarried;

And after the same estate so to him by me devised ended and determined, I do devise, will and bequeath the same to my said son, William Combe, to have for fourscore and nineteen years to be accounted from the first day of February next if my said son, William, do not in the meantime die unmarried;

And after the same estate so to my said son, William devised ended and determined, my meaning is and I do devise, will and bequeath the same to my said daughters, Mary and Joyce, to have to them by equal moieties and in common for fourscore and nineteen years to be accounted from the twelfth day of March now next coming;

And my will, purpose, meaning and desire is that the estate of and in the said rectory or parsonage and other the premises thereunto belonging shall be assured unto my said son, William, charged nevertheless with the said rent of thirty pounds to my said son, Thomas, and other the said maintenances unto my said daughters and to and for the helpings to make up their portions if my goods according to my meaning herein shall not amount to the doing thereof and performing my other purposes in this my will declared;

Item, I will, devise and bequeath unto my said daughter, Mary, for her portion and preferment in marriage the sum of four hundred pounds of lawful money of England, the same or so much thereof as by that time may be made of the profits or rents of the said premises and my leases and goods according to my meaning to be paid unto her within one year next after the day of her marriage;

And I do also will, devise and bequeath unto my said daughter, Joyce, for her portion and preferment in marriage the sum of four hundred pounds of like lawful money of England, the same or so much thereof as by that time may be made of the profits and rents of the said premises and my leases and goods according to my meaning to be paid unto her within one year next after the day of her marriage;

And my will, intent and meaning is that if the said portions be according to my meaning hereafter expressed made before the said several days of their marriages, that then from the time of the said several portions made the same shall be put out to reasonable increase for the bettering and augmentations of their said several portions;

And if either of my said daughters, Mary or Joyce, shall depart this life before she be married, then my will, intent and meaning is that the portion of such daughter so departing this life shall be paid and go to the other of my said two daughters within one year after the marriage of such overliving daughter if the same may be so soon made and levied as herein is intended;

And withal my further will, intent and meaning is that if both my said two daughters, Mary and Joyce, shall happen to depart this life before marriage, then my will, intent and meaning is that one four hundred pounds of the said two four hundred pounds shall be paid unto my said son, Thomas, within one year after the death of the overliving daughter of my said two daughters, and that the other four hundred pounds of the said two four hundred pounds shall be paid unto my said son, William, within one year next after the decease of the overliving daughter of my said two daughters;

Item, I will, give and bequeath unto my said daughter-in-law [=stepdaughter], Bridget Yonge, in [f. 99r] satisfaction of all demands to be made by her or any other for her or to her use for or by reason of any bond heretofore made by me or otherwise howsoever, and of my bounty to her for her well-deserving at my hands the sum of two hundred and fifty pounds to be paid unto her in manner following and upon the condition hereafter expressed, namely one hundred pounds thereof to be paid within one year after my decease and the other hundred and fifty pounds residue within one year after the marriage of the said Bridget, and in the meanwhile the same hundred and fifty pounds to be let forth for the better maintenance of the said Bridget;

And my further meaning is that if my said daughter-in-law shall happen to depart this life before marriage, then I will the same legacy as touching the said hundred and fifty pounds shall cease, determine and be void as to her, and shall be and go unto my said two daughters, Mary and Joyce, to be equally divided between them;

Item, I do will, give and bequeath unto Mary, my well-beloved wife, the house I dwell in called the College house and the orchard, gardens and other appurtenances therewith to me by our late Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth demised, to have and to hold unto her for and during the term of thirty years to be accounted from the day of the date of this my last will and testament if she shall so long live sole and unmarried, committing no wilful waste;

And my meaning, will and intent is that my said wife shall have the use and occupation of all tables, bedsteads and other standards now remaining in and about the said house during her widowhood except the best bedstead which I will, give and bequeath unto my said son, William, with the best bed and best furniture thereunto belonging, to have to his own use;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my said son, Thomas, a good featherbed and furniture thereunto belonging, my silver jug with two ears, and my silver tankard with the cover thereof;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my said wife one silver cup, one silver bowl, and a gilt casting-bottle;

The residue of my plate and silver spoons I give and bequeath unto my said son, William;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my godson, Henry Rainsford, a gold ring worth forty shillings with the arms of the Rainsfords therein to be engraven;

And after the said estate to her devised determined and ended, the same house, gardens, orchard and appurtenances and use of the said tables, bedsteads and standards shall be to my said son, William, to have the same and use of the said tables, bedsteads and standards for and during the term of six and thirty years to be accounted from the twentieth day of September now last past if my said son do not in the meantime die unmarried;

And after the same estate and time of occupation of the said tables, bedsteads and standards ended, I will, devise and bequeath the same and the occupation of the said tables, bedsteads and standards unto my said son, Thomas, to have the same and use the said tables, bedsteads and standards for and during the term of six and thirty years to be accounted from the six and twentieth day of September now last past if my said son, Thomas, do not in the meantime die unmarried;

And after the same estate and time of occupation of the said tables, bedsteads and standards ended, I will, devise and bequeath the same and the occupation of the said tables, bedsteads and standards to my said two daughters, Mary and Joyce, to have the same and use the said tables, bedsteads and standards equally and in common for and during the term of six and thirty years to be accounted from the feast of Saint Michael th' Archangel now last past;

All and every other lands, tenements, tithes and other hereditaments of what nature, kind or quality soever the same are or be wherein I have any estate, right, title or interest for years I do severally give, will, devise and bequeath unto my said son, William, to have and to hold every of the same unto my said son and his executors and assigns for and during so many years and so long time within one month as are severally and respectively to come in the several respective leases thereof if my said son, William, do not in the meantime die unmarried;

And after the same several estates so devised unto my said son, William, [f. 99v] ended and determined, my meaning is and I do devise, will, give and bequeath unto my said son, Thomas, all and every the said lands, tenements, tithes and other hereditaments wherein I have any such estate, right, title or interest for years, to have unto him, my said son Thomas, and his executors and assigns for and during so many years and so long time within ten days as are severally and respectively to come in the said several respective leases thereof if my said son, Thomas, do not in the meantime die unmarried;

And after the same several estates so devised unto my said son, Thomas, ended and determined, my meaning is and I do devise, will, give and bequeath unto my said daughters, Mary and Joyce, all and every the same lands, tenements, tithes and other the said hereditaments wherein I have any such estate, right, title or interest for years, to have unto them and to their executors and assigns equally and in common for and during all the several residues of the several years therein respectively to come and unexpired;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my said uncle, William Combe, a piece of plate of five pounds' value;

And to my said brother, John Combe, a piece of plate of five pounds' value;

And I give unto my said wife one hundred pounds, to be paid unto her within one year after my decease if it may conveniently so soon [+be?] raised;

Item, I do will, require and charge my said son, William, to assure unto my brother, George Combe, for and during the natural life of my said brother one annuity or yearly rent of three pounds thirteen shillings and four pence of lawful money, to be paid by usual half yearly payments, the first payment thereof to begin at such of the feasts of Saint Michael and th' Annunciation etc. as shall first happen after my decease;

My household stuff and implements of household whereof there is no disposition before herein made, I will, give and bequeath unto my said wife;

My cattle of all sorts and all corn and grain and wool and all goods and chattels not reckoned nor accounted household stuff nor implements of household, my debts paid, legacies performed and funerals discharged, I give and bequeath unto my said son, William;

And my meaning is that out of the same and forth of the yearly rents, issues and profits of the premises wherein I have any estate or interest for years and the said rectory of South Cerney the legacies by me bequeathed may according to my true meaning aforesaid be made and raised;

Item, I give unto my servant, James, forty shillings of lawful money, and I will that the debt I owe unto him, being fifteen pounds thirteen shillings and four pence or thereabouts, be paid with convenient speed;

Item, I give to the poor of Stratford five pounds;

Item, I give to the repairs of the church six shillings eight pence;

Provided and upon condition be the aforesaid legacies and bequests [+to?] my said wife and my said daughter, Bridget, that if all the bonds by me at any time heretofore made to or for the benefit, use or behoof of them or either of them be not delivered up to my executors to be cancelled within one month after my decease, that then the several legacies by me to them before bequeathed and my bequests to them hereby made shall be utterly frustrate and void to all intents and purposes, anything in this my will contained to the contrary notwithstanding;

I ordain and make executors of this my last will and testament my said good uncle, William Combe, and my said well-beloved brother, John Combe;

Overseers of this my will I make my good friends, Sir Henry Rainsford, knight and William Barnes, esquire, reposing a special trust and confidence in them, and I give to them for their pains twenty shillings apiece;

In witness that this is my last will and that I would have it put into further form of law if need be, I have unto every sheet hereof, being five in all, put to my mark, these being witnesses, Henry Rainsford, W. Barnes, Thomas Greene, Francis Collyns.

Whereas by my last will and testament bearing date the two and twentieth day of [f. 100r] December in this sixth year of the reign of our Lord King James of England, France and Ireland I named my good uncle, William Combe, esquire, and my beloved brother, John Combe of Old Stratford, gentleman, my executors thereof, my mind and will is and I do hereby declare for considerations me sithence moving that my beloved son, William Combe, shall be sole and only executor of my said will and testament;

And I do appoint and entreat my said good uncle and my said well-beloved brother to be overseers of my said will and testament together with other the overseers in my said will named. Witnesses hereunto Thomas Greene, John Combe, Francis Collyns, John Ley.

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum apud London coram ven{er}abili viro Mag{ist}ro Will{el}mo Bird legum doctore Curie Prerogatiue Cantuariens{is} Magistro Custode siue Commissario legitime constituto Decimo die mens{is} ffebruarij Anno D{omi}ni iuxta cursum et computac{i}o{n}em Eccl{es}ie Anglicane millesimo sexcentesimo octauo Iuramento Will{el}mi Combe filij n{atu}ralis et legitimi dicti Defuncti et executoris in eodem testamento nominat{i} Cui commissa fuit Administrac{i}o bonorum Iurium et Creditorum eiusdem defuncti De bene et fideliter administrand{o} &c ad sancta Dei Evangelia Iurat{i}

[=The above-written testament was proved before the worshipful Master William Bird, Doctor of the Laws, lawfully constituted Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the tenth day of the month of February in the year of the Lord according to the course and reckoning of the English church the thousand six hundred eighth by the oath of William Combe, natural and legitimate son of the said deceased and executor named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of the goods, rights and credits of the same deceased, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer etc.]