

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the last will and testament, dated 8 January 1621 and proved 21 June 1621, of William Leveson, one of two trustees used by William Kempe, Thomas Pope (d.1603), Augustine Phillips (d.1605), John Heminges (bap. 1566, d. 1630) and William Shakespeare (1564-1616) of Stratford upon Avon to allocate shareholdings in the Globe Theatre in 1599. See Corrigan, Brian Jay, *Playhouse Law in Shakespeare's World* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2004), pp. 64-71 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=5FoVUIYGXdgC&pg=PA64>

FAMILY BACKGROUND

For the testator's family background, see Sutton, Anne F., 'Lady Joan Bradbury (d.1530)', in Barron, Caroline M. and Anne F. Sutton, eds., *Medieval London Widows 1300-1500*, (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 208-38 at p. 211:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=uc3RLXFANoMC&pg=PA211>

See also the Leveson documents on the Staffordshire County Council website at:

<http://www.search.sutherlandcollection.org.uk/engine/theme/default.asp?theme=97&originator=%2Fengine%2Ftheme%2Fdefault.asp&page=2&records=18&direction=1&pointer=914&text=0>

Testator's great-grandparents

The testator was the great-grandson of Thomas Bodley (d.1492) and Joan (nee) Leche Bodley Bradbury (c.1450-1530). For the will of Thomas Bodley, see TNA PROB 11/9/374. After Thomas Bodley's death, Joan Leche married Sir Thomas Bradbury (d.1510), who was Lord Mayor of London in 1509. For his will, see TNA PROB 11/9/374. For Joan Leche, see her will, TNA PROB 11/23/272, and the Wikipedia article created by the author of this website at:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joan_Leche

Testator's grandparents

The testator was the grandson of Nicholas Leveson (d.1539) and Dionyse (nee Bodley) Leveson (d.1560). For the will of Nicholas Leveson (d.1539), see TNA PROB 11/27/552. For the will of Dionyse (nee Bodley) Leveson (d.1560), see TNA PROB 11/43/645.

Nicholas Leveson's brother, James Leveson (c.1500-1547), purchased Trentham Priory in Staffordshire. For the will of James Leveson (c.1500-1547), see TNA PROB 11/31/655. James Leveson was the father of Sir Richard Leveson (d.1560), for whose will see TNA PROB 11/43/621. Sir Richard Leveson married Mary Fitton (d.1591), by whom he was the father of Sir Walter Leveson (1551-1602), who married Anne Corbet, the daughter of Sir Andrew Corbet (d.1578), and died in debt in prison. Their son was the admiral, Sir Richard Leveson (1570-1605).

Sir Walter Leveson's sister, Elizabeth Leveson, married William Sheldon (d.1587), the younger brother of Ralph Sheldon (d.1612/3) of Beoley. William Sheldon (d.1587) was the uncle of Oxford's sister-in-law, Katherine Trentham. William Sheldon's first wife was Elizabeth Leveson, a second cousin of the testator. For the will of William Sheldon (d.1587), see TNA PROB 11/71/283. William Sheldon's wife, Elizabeth Leveson, predeceased him. At the time of his death in 1587 he was married to a second wife named Jane.

Testator's parents

The testator was the second son of Thomas Leveson (1532-1576) and his wife, Ursula Gresham (1534-1574). For the will of Thomas Leveson (1532-1576), see TNA PROB 11/58/397.

Testator's siblings

The testator had an elder brother, Sir John Leveson (1555-1615), for whom see the *ODNB* entry and his will, TNA PROB 11/126/409.

The testator also had nine sisters, Dionyse, Mary, Elizabeth, Frances, Ursula, Anne, Grissell, Mary (again), and Nazareth.

The testator's sister, Dionyse Leveson, married Robert Spring, son of Robert Spring (1502 – 3 or 20 April 1549?) of Lavenham, Suffolk, whose father, Thomas Spring (d.1523), and John de Vere (1442-1513), 13th Earl of Oxford, were major benefactors of the Church of St Peter and St Paul in Lavenham. See:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/church_gallery_03.shtml

For the marriage of Robert Spring and Dionyse Leveson, see Corder, Joan, ed., *The Visitation of Suffolk, 1561*, Part I, (London: Harleian Society, 1981), p. 33.

For the Leveson family, see also Keen, Alan & Roger Lubbock, *The Annotator*, (London: Putnam, 1954), pp. 115-18; Hotson, Leslie, *I, William Shakespeare* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), pp. 160-1; and the pedigrees of Gresham and Leveson in Howard, Joseph

Jackson and George John Armytage, eds., *The Visitation of London in the Year 1568* (London: Harleian Society, 1869), pp. 15, 18, available online.

See also the wills of Robert Chapman (d.1574), TNA PROB 11/57/46; and Anne (nee Chapman) Carew (d.1599), TNA PROB 11/93/220.

The testator was related by marriage to Anne (nee Chapman) Carew, daughter of Robert Chapman (d.1574), and the mother of Thomasine (nee Carew) Amyce Vere (d.1639), who married, firstly, Oxford's servant Israel Amyce, and, secondly, Oxford's first cousin, John Vere (d.1624) of Kirby Hall. In a codicil to his will dated 24 October 1572, Robert Chapman (d.1574), refers to my 'son-in-law, William Leveson, citizen and mercer of London', referring to the testator's uncle, William Leveson (d.1593).

MARRIAGE AND ISSUE

The testator married Mary Robotham, the daughter of Robert Robotham and Grace Paget. For Robert Robotham, a court official under Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I, and a 'close associate' of Lord Burghley's father, Richard Cecil, see his will, TNA PROB 11/53/552; and the History of Parliament entry at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/robotham-robert-1522-71>

The testator's mother-in-law, Grace (nee Paget) Bull Fanshawe, was the daughter of Lady Anne Yorke (d.1575) by her first marriage. Oxford stayed at Lady Anne Yorke's house in Walbrook before departing without the Queen's licence for the continent in 1574. For the will of Lady Anne Yorke, in which she refers to her daughter, Grace, as 'my daughter Fanshawe, see TNA PROB 11/57/581. Sir John Yorke (d.1569), Lord Mayor of London, which contains a bequest to 'my brother Robotham', see TNA PROB 11/51/58. For the three marriages of the testator's mother-in-law, Grace (nee Paget) Bull Robotham Fanshawe, see the will of Robert Robotham, *supra*.

By Mary Robotham, the testator had two sons named in the will below:

* **Thomas Leveson.**

* **James Leveson.**

The testator was heir to his uncle, William Leveson (d.1593), who died without surviving issue, making the testator one of his residuary legatees, and bequeathing him his interest as a freeman of the Muscovy Company. For the will of William Leveson (d.1593), see TNA PROB 11/82/143.

For the testator's involvement with the Virginia Company, see Kingsbury, Susan Myra, ed., *The Records of the Virginia Company of London*, (Washington: Government Printing

Office, 1906), pp. 28, 31, 93, 124 at:

<http://archive.org/stream/recordsofvirgini01virg#page/30/mode/2up>

According to Honigmann, in the mid-1590s Oxford's brother-in-law, Sir Robert Cecil, began to use Leveson as the recipient of letters from foreign informants. Letters intended for Cecil were addressed to 'Mr William Lewson, merchant, at London'. Honigmann suggests that Leveson perhaps came to Cecil's attention at this time through Leveson's cousin, William Waad, Clerk of the Privy Council. See Honigmann, E.A.J., *Shakespeare: The 'Lost Years'*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 87–9.

See also the Wikipedia article on the testator edited by the author of this summary.

LM: T{estamentum} Will{el}mi Leveson

In the name of God, Amen. The eight day of January Anno D{omi}ni stilo Anglie 1620 and in the eighteenth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King James over England etc., and over Scotland the four and fiftieth, I, William Leveson, citizen and mercer of London, being sick in body but of perfect mind and remembrance, thanks be given to Almighty God, do make this my present testament declaring herein my last will as followeth:

First I commend my soul into the hands of Almighty God, steadfastly believing by the alone sufficient merits and death of his Son and my Saviour, Jesus Christ, to obtain remission and pardon of all my sins and to be made an heir with him in the kingdom of heaven, and my body, when it shall please God to call me out of this mortal life, I commit to the earth whereof it was made;

And for such worldly goods as it hath pleased Almighty God to bestow upon me, I give, will and bequeath the same in manner and form following, viz.:

First I give and bequeath to the parson and churchwardens of the parish of Aldermanbury where I was sometime an inhabitant, for and towards the augmentation of the stock belonging unto the said parish, sometimes in my hand, wherein I might be mistaken, the sum of four pounds of lawful money of England;

Item, I give to the poor of the parish of St. Alphage wherein I dwell twenty shillings, to be distributed amongst them by my executrix hereafter named;

Item, I give to Susan Hall ten shillings;

And I do give to Robert Harrys ten shillings, and do forgive him all debts that he doth owe me;

Item, I do give to my servant, Anne Curlis(?), ten shillings;

Item, I owe to Robert Hall four pound for soliciting my business, which I will my executrix to pay him, and I give him a cloak cloth of four nobles;

These sums aforesaid I will to be paid out of one third part of such estate as shall be due to me at my death according to the custom of the city of London;

And the residue thereof I give to Mary, my loving wife, together also with one whole third part more of my said estate which I leave to her according to the custom of the city of London;

And thother third part of my said estate I give and leave to and amongst my sons, Thomas and James;

And my will is that my debts be paid and funeral expenses out of my whole estate before any division be made of the same;

And I do make Mary Leveson, my loving wife, sole executrix of this my last will and testament, not doubting but she will see the same faithfully performed;

In witness whereof I have hereto set my hand and seal, given the day and year first above-written. William Leveson. Sealed and published by the within-named William Leveson to be his last will in the presence of us, James(?) Stonehouse, Richard Chapman, servant to Charles Bostock, scrivener, Robert Hall, Thomas Stockwood.

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum apud London coram Magistro Hugone Barker legum doctore Surrogato venerabilis viri Domini Iohannis Bennett militis legum etiam doctoris Curie Prerogatiue Cantuariensis magistri Custodis siue Commissarij legitime Constituti vicesimo primo die mensis Iunij Anno Domini Millesimo Sexcentesimo vicesimo primo Iuramento Marie Leveson relicte dicti defuncti et executricis in huiusmodi testamento nominat{e} Cui Commissa fuit administratio bonorum iurium et creditorum dicti defuncti De bene et fideliter administrand{o} &c Ad sancta Dei Evangelia Iurat{e}

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before Master Hugh Barker, Doctor of the Laws, surrogate of the worshipful Sir John Bennet, knight, also Doctor of the Laws, lawfully constituted Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the twenty-first day of the month of June in the year of the Lord the thousand six hundred twenty-first by the oath of Mary Leveson, relict of the said deceased and executrix named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of the goods, rights and credits of the said deceased, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer etc.]