

SUMMARY: The document below is the last will and testament, dated 6 June 1544 and proved 21 April 1545, of Thomas Clere (d. 14 April 1545), esquire, servant of Oxford's uncle, Henry Howard (1516/7–1547), Earl of Surrey, and a first cousin of Queen Anne Boleyn.

The testator was the son of Sir Robert Clere (d. 10 August 1529) of Ormesby and his second wife, Alice Boleyn (d. 1 November 1538), the aunt of Henry VIII's Queen, Anne Boleyn. For the will of the testator's father, see TNA PROB 11/24/84. For the will of the testator's mother, see TNA PROB 11/27/398.

For the testator's elder brother, Sir John Clere (c. 1511-21 August 1557), see his will, TNA PROB 11/39/381.

The testator's nephew, Sir Edward Clere (15 June 1536 - 8 June 1606), purchased Oxford's manor of Weybourne in Norfolk. For the licence dated 20 April 1580 authorizing Oxford to alienate his manor of Weybourne to Sir Edward Clere, see TNA C 66/1197, mm. 15-16. For the will of Sir Edward Clere, see TNA PROB 11/108/159.

The testator was slain at the siege of Montreuil while attempting to save the life of his master, Oxford's uncle, Henry Howard (1516/7–1547), Earl of Surrey. See the *Dictionary of National Biography* entry for Surrey:

[http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Howard,\\_Henry\\_%281517%3F-1547%29\\_%28DNB00%29](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Howard,_Henry_%281517%3F-1547%29_%28DNB00%29)

*In June 1544 [Surrey] was appointed marshal of the army which was despatched to besiege Montreuil. The vanguard was commanded by Norfolk, Surrey's father, who wrote home enthusiastically of his son's bravery. On 19 Sept. Surrey was wounded in a futile attempt to storm Montreuil, and his life was only saved by the exertions of his friend Thomas Clere.*

The testator was buried in the parish church of St Mary, Lambeth, where a monumental brass formerly exhibited a tablet with an epitaph by Surrey. See 'Lambeth', *The Environs of London: Volume 1: County of Surrey* (1792), pp. 257-331 at:

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=45380>:

*On a flat stone on the north side of the chancel is the figure of a man in armour, engraved on a brass plate, with the arms of Clere; being the tomb of Thomas Clere, Esq. who died in 1545. Over it was formerly a tablet with the following epitaph, written by the celebrated Earl of Surrey:*

*"Epitaphium Thomæ Clere qui fato functus est 1545, auctore Henrico Howard comite Surriensi in cujus felicis ingenii specimen et singularis facundiæ argumentum appensa fuit hæc tabula per W. Howard, filium Thomæ nuper Ducis Norf. filii ejusdem Henrici*

*comitis Surriensis.*

*"Norfolke sprung thee, Lambeth holds thee dead,  
Clere of the count of Cleremont thou hight,  
Within the womb of Ormond's race thou bred,  
And sawest thy cosin crowned in thy sight;  
Shelton for love, Surrey for Lord thou chase,  
Aye me while life did last that league was tender,  
Tracing whose steps thou sawest Kelsall blase,  
Laundersey burnt and batter'd Bulleyn's render:  
At Muttrell gates hopeless of all recure,  
Thine Earl half dead, gave in thy hand his will,  
Which cause did thee this pining death procure;  
Ere summers four-times seven thou couldst fulfill,  
Aye, Clere, if love had booted care or cost  
Heaven had not wonne, nor earth so timely lost."*

The testator's executrix, Mary Shelton (1510x15-1570/1), with whom he was in love according to Surrey's epitaph, was the daughter of Sir John Shelton (d. 21 December 1539) of Carrow and his wife Anne Boleyn (d.1555/6), a sister of both the testator's mother, Alice Boleyn Clere, and Queen Anne Boleyn's father, Sir Thomas Boleyn (d. 12 March 1539), Earl of Wiltshire. The testator, his executrix Mary Shelton, and Queen Anne Boleyn were thus all first cousins. For Mary Shelton, see the *ODNB* entry and the entry at:

<http://www.kateemersonhistoricals.com/TudorWomenSa-Sn.htm>

For the testator's executor, Sir Edward Bellingham (d. 10 April 1550) see the *ODNB* entry, and the History of Parliament at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/bellingham-edward-1507-50>.

For the Clere family see also Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2011, Vol. I, pp. 6-7; and Bindoff, S.T., *The House of Commons 1509-1558*, Vol. I, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1982), pp. 650-2.

For the testator's manor of Broadcar, see *History and Antiquities of the County of Norfolk*, (Norwich: J. Crouse, 1881), Vol. VIII, pp. 142-3 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/historyantiquiti08norwiala#page/142/mode/2up>.

For the testator's epitaph, see also Nathan, Leonard, 'The Course of the Particular: Surrey's Epitaph on Thomas Clere and the Fifteenth Century Lyric Tradition', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Winter 1977, pp. 3-12 at:

<http://www.jstor.org/pss/450416>.

<http://sites.google.com/site/vauxhallcivicsociety/home/history/a-guided-tour-of-st-mary-at-lambeth>

See also 'The Suicidal Poetics of the Earl of Surrey', in Crewe, Jonathan, *Trials of Authorship: Anterior Forms and Poetic Reconstruction from Wyatt to Shakespeare*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 48-79 at:

<http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft92900936/>.

LM: T{estamentum} Thome Clere

[f. 192v] In the name of God, Amen. The sixth day of the month of June the year of our Lord God a thousand five hundred forty and four and in the 36<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord Henry the Eight by the grace of God King of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, and in earth of the Church of England and also of Ireland the Supreme Head, I, Thomas Clere, esquire, whole in body and of good and perfect remembrance, thanks to God, and now being ready to pass into the realm of France to serve the King, my Sovereign Lord, in his wars there, and intending to put some order for the payment of my debts and the disposition of two parts of all and singular my manors, messuages, lands, tenements, rents, reversions, advowsons and hereditaments without any fraud, covin or deceit according to the form and intent of the statutes for declaration of wills made and provided in the 32<sup>nd</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> years of the reign of our said Sovereign Lord, the King, and also to leave and suffer to descend a full third part of all my lands, tenements and hereditaments to mine heir according to the course and order of the common law, whereby the King's Majesty may have, receive and take all such(?) advantages, prerogatives and profits as to his Grace appertaineth without any diminution or abridgement of the same third part or any part thereof according to the true meaning [+and] intent of the foresaid statutes, make, ordain and declare this my last will and testament in manner and form following:

First I bequeath my soul to the mercy of Almighty God, and my body to be buried where it shall please him to appoint, not doubting but the same at the [-at the] last day of judgment through his mercy shall rise again joined with my soul to eternal life;

And further I will and devise that my trusty and well-beloved friends, Edward Bellingham, esquire, and Mary Shelton, one of the daughters of Sir John Shelton, knight, deceased, shall have, hold and enjoy from the day of my death all my manor of Broadcar Hall with th' appurtenances in the county of Norfolk, and all meses, lands, tenements, meadows, pastures, feedings, woods, underwoods, rents, reversions & services, fold-courses and liberties of fold-courses, and all other the possessions and hereditaments

whatsoever had, taken, known, used or reputed as part, parcel or member of the said manor;

And also the rectory or parsonage of Shropham in the county aforesaid, with all and singular the glebe lands, tenements, rents, oblations, tithes, obventions, profits and hereditaments with their appurtenances to the said rectory or parsonage in any wise belonging or that heretofore hath been accepted, known or taken as part, parcel or member thereof, or any part or parcel thereof;

And also [f. 193r] th' advowson, nomination, presentation and right of patronage of the vicarage of the churches of Saint Andrew and Saint Peter in Shropham aforesaid, together with all those my messuages, lands, tenements, rents, reversions, services and hereditaments whatsoever they be in Shropham, Little Hockham, Breckles, Snetterton and Hyrling [=Harling?] within the foresaid county of Norfolk, and all evidences, charters, writings, escripts and muniments concerning only the premises or any part or parcel thereof (all and singular my messuages, lands, tenements and hereditaments with their appurtenances set, lying and being in Great Hockham within the said county, and th' evidences, charters, writings and muniments concerning only the same only excepted), which said manor with th' appurtenances and all other the premises (except before excepted), been of the clear yearly value of four and twenty pounds sterling;

To have and to hold the said manor, rectory, messuages, lands, tenements, advowsons and all other the premises with all and singular their appurtenances (except before excepted), to the said Edward and Mary and to their heirs and assigns forever for the considerations and intents hereafter following, that is to say, that the said Edward and Mary, their heirs, executors or assigns, shall in discharge of my soul and conscience, and in consideration of the premises, well and truly satisfy, content and pay or cause to be contented and paid unto the right honourable and my especially good Lord and Master, my Lord of Surrey, the sum of two hundred pounds sterling, and to (blank) Abraham of London, mercer, one hundred pounds sterling, to whom I am severally indebted in the said several sums by my several deeds obligatories;

And after the said several sums of money paid, then I will that the said manor, rectory, lands, tenements and all other the premises (except before excepted) shall be to th' only use of the said Edward and Mary, their heirs and assigns, forever;

And further I will that the said Mary Shelton, as well for and in consideration of full contentation, recompense and satisfaction of divers and sundry great sums of money which I do owe unto her, as for other good causes and considerations me especially moving, shall have, hold and enjoy to her and her heirs to th' only use of the said Mary and of her heirs forever all that my manor of Frettenham with th' appurtenances in the county aforesaid, and th' advowson, nomination, presentation and patronage of the church of Frettenham with th' appurtenances in the county aforesaid, together with all messuages, lands, tenements rents, reversions, services and hereditaments with all and singular their appurtenances in Frettenham, Hainford and Pickford in the said county, together with all evidences, charters, writings, scripts and muniments concerning only the

said manor and premises last remembered, which said manor of Frettenham together with all the premises in Frettenham, Hainford and Pickford aforesaid been of the yearly value of twenty pounds sterling;

And as concerning all my said messuages, lands, tenements and hereditaments with th' appurtenances in Great Hockham aforesaid, and the residue of all other my manors, messuages, lands, tenements, rents, reversions, services, advowsons, meadows, pastures, woods, underwoods and hereditaments as well within the said county of Norfolk as elsewhere within this realm of England by this my present will not before disposed, willed or devised, fully and wholly permit, leave and suffer to descend and come to mine heirs according to the order and course of the common law of this realm, all which manors, lands, tenements and premises which I permit and leave to descend to mine heir as is aforesaid been of the yearly value of thirty pounds sterling;

And of this my present last will and testament I make and ordain the said Edward Bellingham and Mary Shelton my full executors;

And moreover I most humbly beseech the King's Majesty, my Sovereign Lord, that if it shall happen this my last will and testament concerning the disposition and devise of my said lands, tenements and hereditaments not to be in all points consonant and agreeing to the purport and effect of the said statutes, that the same be not imputed unto any malice, craft or covin on my behalf, which I nothing intended or minded in the declaration of the premises, but fully purposed and determined as much as in me was at the time of making of this my last will the true performance of the said statutes in all points;

In witness whereof I have to this my present last will and testament set to my hand and put to my seal the day and year aforesaid.

Probatum fuit suprascriptum testamentum vicesimo primo die mensis Aprilis Anno d{omi}ni mill{es}imo quingentesimo quadragesimo quinto iuramento Mr Iohan{n}is Talkarn procuratoris Marie Shelton executric{is} in h{uius}mo{d}i testament{o} no{m}i{n}at{e} Ac approbatum et insinuatu{m} Commissa{ue} fuit administracio om{n}i{um} et singulorum bonorum iuriu{m} et creditorum d{i}c{tu}m defunctum et eius testamentum quali{te}rcumq{ue} concern{entem} d{i}c{t}e executrici De bene et fidel{ite}r administrand{o} eadem Ac de plano et fideli Inuentario exhibend{o} Necnon plano comp{ot}o &c reddend{o} Ad sancta dei Euangelia iurat{i} Reseruat{a} p{otes}tate Edwardo belingham executo{ri} in h{uius}mo{d}i testamento no{m}i{n}at{o} cum venerit

[=The above-written testament was proved on the twenty-first day of the month of April in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred forty-fifth by the oath of Mr John Talkarn, proctor of Mary Shelton, executrix named in the same testament, and probated and entered, and administration was granted concerning all and singular the goods, rights and credits of the said deceased and his testament whatsoever to the said executrix, sworn

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on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer the same, and to exhibit a plain and faithful inventory, and also to render a plain account etc., with power reserved to Edward Bellingham, executor named in the same testament, when he shall have come.]