

SUMMARY: The document below is the British Library copy of the will, dated 24 February 1597, of William Brooke (1527 – 6 March 1597), 10th Baron Cobham, Lord Chamberlain of the Household and patron of the Lord Chamberlain's Men in 1596/7.

The modern spelling transcript below was made from the transcript of the original by W.A. Scott Robertson in 'Six Wills Relating to Cobham Hall', *Kentish Archaeology*, (London: Mitchell and Hughes, 1877), Vol. II, pp. 18-35.

The testator was the eldest surviving son and heir of George Brooke (c.1497 – 29 September 1558), 9th Baron Cobham, and Anne Bray (c.1510–1558), eldest daughter of Edmund, Lord Bray, and his wife, Jane Halighwell, daughter of Sir Richard Halighwell.

For the testator's nine brothers and four sisters, see the will of his father, dated 13 January 1558 and proved 6 December 1560, TNA PROB 11/43/628.

See also McKeen, David, *A Memory of Honour; The Life of William Brooke, Lord Cobham*, (Salzburg: Universitat Salzburg, 1986), pp. 700-702; Cokayne, G.E., *The Complete Peerage*, (London: St Catherine Press, 1913), Vol. III, pp. 347-9; the *ODNB* entries for the testator and his father; and the History of Parliament entry for the testator at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/brooke-william-1527-97>.

The testator married firstly, Dorothy Neville (d. 22 September 1559), one of the five daughter of George Neville (c.1469–1535), 3rd Baron Abergavenny, by his third wife, Mary Stafford, youngest daughter of Edward Stafford (1478-1521), 3rd Duke of Buckingham, by whom he had an only daughter, Frances Brooke (1549-c.1598), who married firstly Thomas Coppinger (1546 – 21 March 1580), and secondly, on 5 October 1580, Edward Becher (c.1545-c.1603). See McKeen, *supra*, p. 700; and Emerson at:

<http://www.kateemersonhistoricals.com/TudorWomenBrooke-Bu.htm>.

Through his marriage to Dorothy Neville the testator had four sisters-in-law:

* Ursula Neville (d.1575), who married Sir Warham St Leger, and was the mother of Anne St Leger, who married firstly Thomas Digges (c.1546 – 24 August 1595), and secondly Thomas Russell, the overseer of the will of William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon. See the will of Thomas Digges, TNA PROB 11/86/204; the will of Thomas Russell, TNA PROB 11/165/424; and Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. II, p. 82, and Vol. III, p. 482.

* Mary Neville (d.1576?), who was present at the christening of the testator's eldest son and heir, Maximillian Brooke; see McKeen, *supra*, p. 149. She married Thomas Fiennes (c.1516 – 29 June 1541), 9th Baron Dacre, executed for his part in a murder which

occurred while he and friends were poaching on the estate of Sir Nicholas Pelham at Laughton, Sussex. Also executed for his part in the incident was Lord Dacres' brother-in-law, John Mantell, the eldest son and heir of Sir Walter Mantell and Margaret (nee Wood). See the *ODNB* article for Lord Dacre; the will of Sir Walter Mantell, dated 31 August 1523 and proved 4 August 1529, TNA PROB 11/23/158; and:

<http://theesotericcuriosa.blogspot.ca/2010/06/of-reckless-youth-thomas-fiennes-9th.html>.

The testator's sister-in-law, Mary Neville, married secondly, before 1546, John Wotton of North Tuddenham, Norfolk, and thirdly Francis Thursby of Congham, Norfolk. She is depicted in two well-known portraits which for many years were wrongly identified. See:

<http://www.somegreymatter.com/wrestparkportrait.htm>.

See also:

<http://www.cvma.ac.uk/publications/digital/norfolk/sites/northtuddenham/history.html>.

* Margaret Neville, who married firstly John Cheyney, slain at the siege of Montreuil in 1544, son of Sir Thomas Cheyney (c.1485-1558). See the will of Sir Thomas Cheyney, dated 6 December 1558 and proved 25 April 1559, TNA PROB 11/42B/105. She married secondly Henry Pole or Poole, esquire, of London. She was the Margaret Poole who, together with Sir William More of Loseley (1520-1600), leased property in the Blackfriars to the fence-master, Rocco Bonetti (d.1587), alluded to by Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet* as 'the very butcher of a silk button'. See Folger MS L.b.352, and Feuillerat, Albert, *Blackfriars Records*, (Oxford University Press: Malone Society, 1913), pp. 55-60.

* Katherine Neville, who married Sir John St Leger (c.1516-1593x6); their daughter, Mary St Leger, married the naval commander, Sir Richard Grenville (1542-1591). See the *ODNB* article for Sir Richard Grenville, and the History of Parliament entry for Sir John St Leger at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/st-leger-%28sellenger%29-sir-john-1516-9396>.

* Joan Neville.

The testator married secondly Frances Newton (d. 17 October 1592), the daughter of Sir John Newton (d.1568) of Hanham, Gloucestershire, and his first wife, Margaret Poyntz, the daughter of Sir Anthony Poyntz. The testator's second wife was one of Queen Elizabeth's longest-serving gentlewomen and closest friends. By his second wife the testator had four sons and three daughters:

* Maximilian Brooke (1560-1583), who died without issue.

* Henry Brooke (22 November 1564 – 24 January 1619), 11th Baron Cobham, who married, by contract dated 27 May 1601, Frances Fitzgerald (1566-1628), widow of Henry, Earl of Kildare, and daughter of Charles Howard (1536–1624), 1st Earl of Nottingham, but had no issue. Henry Brooke was attainted in 1604 and condemned to death, although his execution was not carried out.

* Sir William Brooke (1565-1597),

* George Brooke (1568–1603), who in 1599 married Elizabeth Burgh (died c.1637), eldest daughter and coheir of Lord Burgh (d.1602), and was executed 5 December 1603 for his part in the so-called Bye Plot. His widow married secondly Francis Reade.

* Elizabeth Brooke (1562-1597), who married Oxford's brother-in-law, Robert Cecil (1563–1612), 1st Earl of Salisbury.

* Frances Brooke (b.1562), who married firstly John (1553-1588), Lord Stourton, and secondly, Sir Edward More (d.1623). See the will of Sir Edward More, dated 24 April 1623 and proved 19 May 1623, TNA PROB 11/141/530.

* Margaret Brooke (1563-1621), who married Sir Thomas Sondes (1544-1593) of Throwley, Kent, and at some time during her marriage went mad. She had a daughter, Frances Sondes (1592–c.1634), whom Sir Thomas Sondes refused to acknowledge as his child. Frances Sondes married Sir John Leveson (d.1613), the son of the testator's executor, Sir John Leveson (1555–1615). See McKeen, *supra*, pp. 424-9.

The testator appointed four executors, his 'cousin', Edward Wotton (1548–1628), 1st Baron Wotton, Sir John Leveson (1555–1615), Sir Thomas Fane (d.1607), and the antiquary and lawyer, William Lambarde (1536–1601). See the *ODNB* articles for Wotton, Leveson and Lambarde, and for Fane's brother of the same name, Sir Thomas Fane (d.1589).

The testator appointed as overseers his close friend, William Cecil (1521-1598), 1st Baron Burghley, and Burghley's son, Sir Robert Cecil (1563–1612), the testator's son-in-law.

In the name of God, Amen. The four and twentieth day of February in the nine and thirtieth year of the reign of our most gracious Sovereign Lady Elizabeth by the grace of God Queen of England, France & Ireland, Defender of the Faith etc., I, William Brooke of the most noble Order of the Garter knight, Lord Cobham, and by the benignity of her most excellent Majesty Lord Warden of the Five Ports, Lord Chamberlain of her Highness' Household, and one of her Majesty's most honourable Privy Council, being of perfect mind & memory, thanks be given to Almighty God, do ordain & declare this my last will & testament in manner & form following:

First I commend & commit my soul into the hands of the Almighty God, and, as every good Christian ought to do, I trust and assuredly hope (my sins & offences for Christ his sake being clearly forgiven) wholly & only by the merits of his death and passion to come unto & have salvation & joy everlasting;

And if by the providence of Almighty God it shall happen me being within the realm of England to depart out of this mortal life, I will that by the discretion of mine executors my body be buried after a laudable sort without vain pomp in the parish church of Cobham in the county of Kent where mine ancestors are buried;

Also I will that first and principally all & every the debts which I owe shall be satisfied and paid out of my movable goods & chattels other than such as in this my present last will & testament or in any codicil which I shall make to be added to this my said will & testament now be or hereafter shall be otherwise devised, willed or disposed by me;

Also I will that my whole families both at Cobham Hall in Kent and at the Blackfriars, London, be continued & kept together with allowance of meat, drink and lodging until the full end of ten days next after the accomplishment of my funeral solemnities, within the which time I will that there be given & paid to every of my servants then being in the check-roll of my household as well the whole of his or her wages of that quarter of the year in which it shall happen me to die as also one whole half year's wages after the rate of his or her covenant of service;

And I will that immediately after the end of the said ten days my said houses at Cobham and Blackfriars be delivered into the hands of mine eldest son & heir apparent, Henry Brooke, together with all such implements, utensils of household & other goods movable as I do in this my present last will & testament specially appoint to & for him;

Also I will that for the performance of my said funerals & payment of my debts & legacies & for & towards the making of moneys as well for the continual maintenance of poor people at Cobham as for some other purpose which I have declared to Sir John Leveson, knight, and William Lambarde of Halling in Kent, gentleman, all which I require them faithfully to accomplish according to that special and secret trust which I have reposed in them, they, the said Sir John Leveson & William Lambarde or the survivor of them shall sell all & every my jewels, ornaments, plate of gold and silver of whatsoever sort, except one cup of gold given to me by my late deceased servant, John Taylor, gentleman, to remain as an heirloom to such as shall from time to time be Lord Cobham, the which also I do leave to my said son, Henry, and except also all such my said jewels, ornaments & plate as in & by this my last will & testament shall be otherwise disposed by me;

And I give to my said son, Henry, all & singular the implements [+&?] utensils of household that shall be at the time of my death remaining in or about my said houses at Cobham & Blackfriars or any of them except always [+such?] jewels, ornaments, plate & money & all & singular such trunks, chests, coffers, caskets & boxes, together with all manner of things in every of them contained, as his good mother, my late wife, usually in

her lifetime had and kept, and except all those few pieces of hangings which I myself do usually occupy at her Majesty's court whilst I do attend there, and except also all such damask linen & diaper linen as I have in any my said houses or at the Palace in Canterbury;

Also I give to my said son, Henry, all mine armours, guns, weapons & furnitures for the war whatsoever, together with these my horses & their proper furnitures, viz., Quasto, mine eldest horse, my youngest horse, also called Grey Canterbury, Grey Mott, and Bay Mott;

And to my said son, Henry, I will and give my basin and ewer of silver that is second in price or value, together with twelve of my best dishes of silver vessel;

Also I give to my second son, Sir William Brooke, knight, my basin and ewer of silver that is the third in price or value, together with twelve of my dishes of silver vessel that shall be next in price or value to the former twelve, and together with all or every my implements and utensils of household which at the time of my death shall be at the said Palace at Canterbury, together with all the before-excepted damask & diaper linen, & together with these my horses & their proper furnitures, viz., Bay Gainsford, Bay Sheppey, and Grey Penbrock [=Pembroke?];

Also I give to my youngest son, George Brooke, my basin & ewer of silver that is the fourth in price or value, together with twelve of my dishes of silver vessel next in price and worth to those former four & twenty that I have before given to his brothers;

And to him I also give all and singular my books, writings and papers of whatsoever learning written or imprinted in whatsoever language, not meaning to include or comprehend in this my gift any evidences, charters, muniments, bonds, plots or drafts concerning any my lands or leases not assured or bequeathed to him, nor any books, rolls or papers concerning any my accounts, receipts or reckonings;

And to him I also give those pieces of hangings before excepted which I do use at the court;

And whereas for some portion of living in lands to be had to my said son, George, I have already by act executed in my lifetime conveyed to his use in writing under my hand & seal all my lands, tenements & hereditaments wherein I had any estate of inheritance lying within the Isle of Grain in the county of Kent, yet nevertheless for the increase of his said portion I will & give to him all those my several leases, interests and terms for years which I have of or in any lands, tenements or hereditaments within the said Isle or [sic] Grain together with the several deeds, leases & writings concerning every of the same;

Also I will & give to the said George, my son, & to his assigns one annuity or yearly rent of threescore and five pounds thirteen shillings & four pence of lawful money of England to be issuing & going out of all & singular my manors, lands, tenements & hereditaments

whatsoever within the realm of England, to have, hold, levy and take the said annuity or yearly rent during the life natural of my said son, George, in the feasts of th' Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Nativity of St John the Baptist, St Michael the Archangel & the Nativity of Our Lord God by four equal portions yearly to be paid, and the first payment thereof to begin & to be made at & upon such one of the four feasts as shall first happen next after my decease;

And if it shall happen the said annuity or annual rent of threescore & five pounds thirteen shillings and four pence or any part or parcel thereof to be behind & unpaid at any of the said feasts in which it ought to be paid by the space of twenty & eight days being in the meantime lawfully demanded at my said dwelling-house called Cobham Hall in the said county of Kent, that then for every such default of payment my said heir at the common law & his heirs shall forfeit unto my said son, George Brooke, & his assigns the sum of six pounds thirteen shillings & four pence for and in the name of a pain, and that then also and at all times after it shall be lawful to & for my said son, George Brooke, & his assigns into all & singular the said manors, lands, tenements & hereditaments or into any part or parcel thereof to enter and distrain, and the distress so taken to lead, drive, carry away, impound, detain or keep until the said annuity or annual rent so being behind or the arrearages of the same, in any shall happen to be, and also the said pain or penalty of six pounds thirteen shillings and four pence or every part thereof be to the said George Brooke or his assigns fully satisfied, contented and paid;

And if it shall happen my said son, Henry, to die without issue male of his body lawfully begotten in the lifetime of my said son, Sir William Brooke, I will that then my said son, George, & his assigns shall have one other annuity or yearly rent of threescore and six pounds thirteen shillings and four pence of lawful money of England to issue out of all & singular my said lands and tenements, to be paid at the like quarterly days upon the like forfeiture & with like power to distrain as for the said former annuity is before provided & appointed, and the first payment of this latter annuity to begin at the one of those said feasts that shall first happen after the decease of my said son, Henry, without such issue male of his body in the lifetime of my said son, Sir William Brooke;

Nevertheless I will and give both the said annuities or yearly rents of the several threescore & six pounds thirteen shillings and four pence & pains & distresses to my said son, George, & his assigns upon this condition following, viz., that if the said George Brooke or his heirs or assigns shall by the custom of gavelkind demand or take any part of the manors, lands, tenements & hereditaments whereof I, the said William, Lord Cobham, have been or shall be seised in possession or reversion at any time before or at my decease, or if the said George Brooke shall not within one year next after he shall be by Henry Brooke, mine eldest son & heir apparent, or by such mine heir male as for that time being shall be Lord Cobham thereunto reasonably required, make unto the said Henry & to his heirs or to such mine heir male or to his heirs as is last aforesaid at his or their proper costs & charges so requiring the same such good & sufficient release and assurance with warranty only against him, the said George, & his heirs & assigns of all the right, title, interest & demand that he, the said George Brooke, his heirs or assigns shall have in or to the said manors, lands, tenements & hereditaments of me, the said

William, Lord Cobham, or in or to any part or parcel thereof by virtue or colour of the said custom, except always the said several yearly rents of threescore and six pounds thirteen shillings & four pence devised or given to the said George Brooke by this my present will & testament and the pains for non-payment & the distresses therein limited, as by the learned counsel in the law of the said Henry or of such heir male as is last aforesaid or of his heirs shall be reasonably devised or advised, that then the said several annuities or annual rents, payments & distresses so as is aforesaid devised to the said George Brooke, my son, shall from thenceforth cease & be utterly void & of none effect;

Also I will & give to the said Sir John Leveson, knight, Thomas Fane, esquire, my Lieutenant of Dover Castle, & the said William Lambarde & to their heirs forever all those edifices, ruins, buildings and soil & ground with th' appurtenances lying in Cobham aforesaid which sometime were the site of the College of Cobham and which do lie on the south or south-east part of the parish church of Cobham aforesaid, together with all that close of pasture ground with th' appurtenances containing by estimation three acres adjoining on the south and southeast of the said edifices and ruined buildings, to th' end that they or the survivors or survivor of them shall re-edify & make there one college for poor people to inhabit, continue & be relieved & maintained there forever which I will to be called the New College at Cobham, the said poor to be in such number, so elected, weekly relieved & by such rules or ordinances to be governed, corrected & expelled as I intend, if God give me life, to prescribe in writing, and in default of such prescript then to be in such number, so elected, weekly relieved & by such rules & ordinances governed, corrected and expelled from time to time as by the good discretion and good conscience of the said Sir John Leveson, Thomas Fane & William Lambarde or the survivor or survivors of them shall be in writing set down & appointed, so always that if I shall so prescribe in my life, then they or some of them shall perform & finish the same within three years next after my decease, and if I shall not so prescribe, that then they or some of them [+to?] perform & finish the same within four years next after my decease, as my special desire & trust is that they will do;

And to that end I give unto them one hundred thousand of such burned bricks as shall be within my park or about my house at Cobham Hall aforesaid, & forty tons of timber to be taken in any my lands within the county of Kent, the parks at Cobham & Cooling only excepted;

Also I will & give to the said Sir John Leveson, Thomas Fane & William Lambarde & to their assigns forever all & singular my leases, interests & terms of or for any years whatsoever which I have of or in the Palace, park & lands at Canterbury, of or in any the manors or tenements or lands of or at Denton, Chalk, Ickham, Islingham & Stonclarke or any of them, of or in the parsonage of Cobham, the prebend of Cobhambury in the said county of Kent, or of or in the farm called Brookes farm within the county of Sussex upon this trust & confidence foll[ow]ing, viz., that if my said son, Henry, shall quietly & without disturbance, let, molestation, contradiction or impeachment permit & suffer th' executors of this my last will & testament to execute the same my will & meaning in all points, as well according to the express meaning thereof as according to such secret & special trust & confidence as I have reposed in the said Sir John Leveson, Thomas Fane

& William Lambarde, and shall & will also within one year next after my decease upon reasonable request thereof ratify or assure by such good conveyance in law as shall be advised & required to his said brothers, Sir William Brooke & George, and to the said Sir John Leveson, Thomas Fane & William Lambarde, all & every the edifices, buildings, lands, leases & yearly rents which I have either heretofore by any writing or in & by this my last will & testament given and appointed severally unto them or any of them according to such several estates & interests & such several conditions & limitations as I have annexed to every of them, then they, the said Sir John Leveson, Thomas Fane and William Lambarde or the survivors or survivor of them shall within one month next after such ratification & assurances so by him, my said son, Henry, to be made, assign & set over to him & his assigns all & singular my said interests, terms & leases for years so to them given, as is aforesaid, upon good security & bond to be made or given by him unto them that immediately after his decease the said interests and terms for years & every of them shall come & be to such as shall be from time to time Lord Cobham, & to none other;

And of this my last will and testament I ordain my cousin, Sir Edward Wotton, knight, the said Sir John Leveson, Thomas Fane & William Lambarde to be th' executors, giving to every of them that shall take pains either in th' execution of this my will or in or about the College aforesaid the sum of forty pounds in money, together with allowance of all their reasonable charges & expenses in that behalf;

And I desire my most honourable friend the Baron of Burghley, Lord High Treasurer of England, and mine honourable son-in-law, Sir Robert Cecil, knight, to be overseers of the same my will, & to assist & countenance th' execution of the same & of all my said confidences with their honourable counsel or authority, to which my said good Lord I give fifty pounds of money in gold to make him a cup of gold, & to the said Sir Robert I give the best one of all my silver basins & ewers;

In witness whereof I, the said Lord Cobham, to this my present last will have put my hand & seal the day & year first above-written. W. Cobham.