

SUMMARY: The document below is the report of the coroner's inquest taken on 24 July 1567 at St. Martin's in the Fields after Thomas Brinknell, in an intoxicated condition, fatally wounded himself on the evening of 23 July 1567 by running onto Oxford's fencing sword, likely severing his femoral artery, while Oxford and Edward Baynham were practicing fencing with foils in the back yard of Cecil House in the Strand. Brinknell's action is explained by the usual legal formula of the time that he did not have God before his eyes and was inspired by the devil. On a more practical level, it is possible that Brinknell, in his intoxicated condition, believed that the two men were fighting in earnest, and dashed in to try to push them apart, thereby sustaining an accidental and fatal injury since severance of the femoral artery can result in death within minutes.

Inquisition indented taken at St. Martin's in the Fields in the county of Middlesex on the 24th day of July in the ninth year [=24 July 1567] of the reign of Elizabeth by the grace of God of England, France & Ireland Queen, Defender of the Faith etc. before Richard Vale, one of the coroners of the said Lady Queen in the county aforesaid, upon a view of the body of Thomas Brinknell, late of the city of Westminster in the county aforesaid, yeoman, there lying dead, by the oath of John Martyn, William Waters, Anthony Harris, John Whitehead, William Boseley, Humphrey Mote, John Tother, John Bates, William Fletcher, Randolph Holinshed, John Bagleyne, Thomas Sedon, George Hodges, James Seward, William Wakefield, James Parkes, & Robert Bottell, good & law-worthy men of the county aforesaid;

Who say upon their oath that where on the twenty-third day of July in the ninth year abovesaid, between the seventh & eighth hours after noon of the same day, Edward, Earl of Oxenford, and a certain Edward Baynham of the city aforesaid, tailor, were together in a certain place called le backyard within the mansion house of William Cecil, knight, at St. Clement Danes in the county aforesaid, not intending nor having in mind injury of any person then and there being, and either of them having a sword of iron & steel called foils, with the same swords called foils either of them with the other then & there played at the science of defence;

The foresaid Thomas Brinknell came there to the place aforesaid, and the same Thomas then & there, being drunk, & not having God before his eyes, but moved & deceived by diabolic instigation, he desperately ran & fell upon the point of the foresaid sword called a foil to the value of 12d which the foresaid Edward, Earl of Oxenford, then & there had & held in his right hand with the said intention to play, as mentioned previously, by reason of which the forenamed Thomas with the same sword called a foil in the front part of his left thigh then & there feloniously pierced & stabbed himself, & he then & there gave himself with the sword aforesaid one fatal stroke of the depth of four inches & the breadth of one inch, of which certain fatal stroke the said Thomas then & there instantly died;

And thus the jurors aforesaid say upon their oath that the foresaid Thomas Brinknell at St. Clement Danes aforesaid in the county aforesaid on the said twenty-third day of July in the ninth year abovesaid in manner & form aforesaid feloniously & wilfully slew & killed himself against the peace of the said Lady Queen, her crown & dignity;

And thus the same Thomas Brinknell came to his death, & not otherwise nor by any other manner than as is abovesaid;

In testimony of which thing so the foresaid coroner as the jurors aforesaid to this inquisition alternatively have affixed their seals on the day & year first abovesaid.

By me, Richard Vale, coroner.

Endorsed. By the hand of the within-written coroner on the Friday next after the quindene of Saint Martin [=28 November 1567] in this same term before the Lady Queen at Westminster this record was delivered here in the court to be determined etc.

1 Inquisicio Indentata capta apud St Martynes in Campis in Comitatu Middlesexie xxiiijto die Iulij anno regni Elizabethe dei gracia Anglie ffrancie & Hibernie

2 Regine fidei defensoris &c Nono Coram Richardo Vale vno Coronariorum dicte Domine Regine in Comitatu predicto super visum Corporis Thome Brinckenell nuper de Ciuitate

3 Westmonasterij in Comitatu predicto yomani ibidem iacentis mortui per sacramentum Iohannis Martyne Willelmi Waters Anthonii Harrys Iohannis Whitehedd Willelmi Boseley Humfridi Mote

4 Iohannis Tother Iohannis Bates Willelmi ffletcher Randolphi Holynshedd Iohannis Bagleyne Thome Sedon Georgij Hodges Iacobi Seward Willelmi

5 Wakeffeld Iacobi Parkes & Robberti Bottell proborum & legalium hominum de Comitatu predicto Qui dicunt super sacramentum suum quod vbi vicesimo tercio die Iulij anno

6 nono supradicto inter horas septimam & octauam post meridiem eiusdem diei Edwardus Comes Oxonie Et quidam Edwardus Baynam de Ciuitate

7 predicta Taylor fuerunt insimul in quodam loco vocato le Backe yarde infra domum Mansionalem Willelmi Cecyll Militis apud St Clementes Danes

8 in Comitatu predicto non intendentes nec in animo habentes dampnum alicuius persone tunc et ibidem existente Et vterque eorum habens gladium de ferro & Calibe

9 vocatum ffoyles cum eisdem gladijs vocatis ffoyles alter eorum cum altero tunc & ibidem luserunt ad scienciam defensionis Ibi venit predictus Thomas

10 Brinckenell ad locum predictum Et idem Thomas tunc & ibidem ebrius existens & deum pre oculis suis non habens set instigacione diabolica

11 motus & seductus desperanter ipse incurrebat & cecidit super punctum predicti gladij vocati a ffoyle ad valentem xijd quem predictus Edwardus Comes

12 Oxonie in manu sua dextra tunc & ibidem habuit & tenuit ea intencione ad ludendum vt prefertur Ratione cuius prefatus Thomas cum eodem

13 gladio vocato a ffoyle in anteriore parte sui ipsius sinistri femoris tunc & ibidem felonice seipsum percussit & pupugit & sibi ipsi [sic?] dedit tunc

14 & ibidem cum gladio predicto vnam plagam mortalem profunditatis quatuor polliciorum & latitudinis vnus pollicij de qua quidem plaga mortali

15 dictus Thomas tunc & ibidem instanter obiit Et sic Iuratores predicti dicunt super sacramentum suum quod predictus Thomas Brinckenell apud St

16 Clementes Danes predictam in Comitatu predicto dicto vicesimo tercio die Iulij anno nono Supradicto modo & forma predictis felonice & voluntarie

17 seipsum interfecit & occidit contra pacem dicte domine Regine Coronam & dignitatem suas Et sic idem Thomas Brinckenell ad mortem suam

18 deuenit & non aliter neque aliquo alio modo quam vt Supradictum est In Cuius Rei Testimonium tam predictus Coronarius quam Iuratores predicti huic inquisicioni

19 Sigilla sua alternatio apposuerunt Dato die & anno primis supradictis.

Per me Richardum Vale Coronarium

(Endorsed)

Per manus Coronarij infrascripti die veneris proxime post xvam Sancti Martini isto eodem termino coram domina Regina apud Westmonasterium deliberatum fuerit hoc recordum hic in Curia terminandum &c