

SUMMARY: The document below is the will, dated 25 November 1612 and proved 15 February 1613, of Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth (nee Trentham) de Vere, Dowager Countess of Oxford. For a letter written on 6 January 1613 by Sir Thomas Lake (bap. 1561, d. 1630) to Sir Dudley Carleton (1574-1632), then the English ambassador in Venice, advising of the Countess' recent death, see TNA SP 99/12, ff. 18-19:

The Countess of Oxford is lately dead, and the Countess of Bedford dangerously sick.

In her will the Countess requests that she be buried as near Oxford as possible in the church at Hackney, and that a tomb be erected for them fitting their degree. She leaves jewels, household stuff, and the reversionary interest in her properties to her son, Henry de Vere (1593-1625), 18th Earl of Oxford, and makes generous bequests to close family members, friends, servants, the poor of Hackney and Castle Hedingham, and various London prisons and hospitals. She appoints as executors her brother, Francis Trentham (d.1626), and her friends Sir Edward More (d.1623) and John Wright of Gray's Inn, reciting that by two indentures dated 1 November 1612 she has sold them certain parks at Castle Hedingham, the site and precinct of the late Hedingham Priory, and the rectory of Walter Belchamp in trust for the term of 20 years, the profits to be used for payment of her debts and funeral expenses, the performance of her will, and the benefit of her son, Henry de Vere (1593-1625), 18th Earl of Oxford.

The Countess's friend and executor, Sir Edward More (d.1623) of Odiham, was, by his first marriage, a brother-in-law of Sir George More (1553-1632) of Loseley, whose sister Anne, Lady Mainwaring, wife of Sir George Mainwaring of Ightfield in Shropshire, is also mentioned in the will. The 'Lady Waller' to whom a bequest is made in the will was also likely a member of this family. Margaret (Lennard) Waller was the wife of Sir Thomas Waller, whose sister Frances Lennard married Sir Robert More (1581-1626), the son of Sir George More (1553-1632). By his second marriage to Lord Cobham's daughter, Frances Brooke, the testatrix' friend and executor, Sir Edward More, was also a brother-in-law to Robert Cecil (1563-1612), 1st Earl of Salisbury, the brother of Oxford's first wife, Anne Cecil (d.1588).

The Countess's friend and executor John Wright of Gray's Inn was John Wright of Wrightbridge, Essex, Clerk of the House of Commons. He was admitted to Gray's Inn on 24 January 1587/8, and called to the rank of ancient in 1608. On 12 March 1611 he acted on behalf of the Countess in a matter concerning the manor of Prayors in Sible Hedingham (see ERO T/A 225/33). In association with William Hawkeridge of Staple Inn (a witness to the will below), he purchased the manor of Easthouse on 29 May 1613 from Sir Edward Cooke of Gidea Hall (see ERO D/DMY/15M50/450-60). He is said to have married, firstly, Martha, the daughter of Robert Castell of East Hatley, Cambridgeshire, and secondly, Fortune, the daughter of Sir William Garraway and widow of Edward (or William?) Blount (see Prest, Wilfrid R., *The Rise of the Barristers: A Social History of the English Bar, 1590-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 406 and Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 2005), p. 813).

As mentioned above, the Countess states in the will that on 1 November 1612 she had sold certain lands to her executors in trust for 20 years, with the reversionary interest to go to her son Henry and his heirs. The Countess reinforces the latter provision by an entail in the will by which she bequeaths the site and precinct of the priory of Hedingham and the rectory of Walter Belchamp and any other property in Essex which she owns in fee simple to her son and his issue, and in default of such issue to her brother Francis Trentham and his heirs. She also directs that the farm of Plaistow and the tithes which had formed part of the subject matter of Oxford's earlier lawsuit against Roger Harlakenden be sold, and the proceeds used towards the payment of her debts and legacies 'by such persons as are now estated therein by force of an Act of Parliament in that behalf made' (for the private Act of Parliament of 1609/10, see HL/PO/PB/1/1609/7J1n33RO).

The will was probated 15 February 1613, at which time administration was granted to the three executors named by the Countess, and earlier letters of administration taken out by her son, Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford, on 13 January 1613 were revoked. Although Henry de Vere disputed the revocation, it was confirmed on 26 June 1613 (see TNA PROB 11/121, ff. 435-6).

RM: Testamentum Elizabethe nuper Comitisse Dowager Oxonie

RM: Confirmatur per [] 1613

In the name of God, Amen. The 25th day of November in the year of our Lord God one thousand six hundred and twelve, I, the Lady Elizabeth Vere, Countess Dowager of Oxenford, late wife of Edward de Vere, late Earl of Oxenford, do make and ordain this my last will and testament in manner and form following:

First and principally I commend my soul into the hands of Almighty God, assuredly believing that as he first gave it to me, so he will likewise receive it whensoever it shall please him to separate and part the same from my body, and that being washed from all my sins in the precious blood of my only Saviour and Redeemer, Christ Jesus, he will make me both in soul and body partaker of those heavenly joys which are both unspeakable and endless, in which hope and full assurance of a joyful resurrection at the last day I joyfully commit my body to the earth from whence it was taken, desiring to be buried in the Church of Hackney within the County of Middlesex as near unto the body of my said late dear and noble lord and husband as may be, and that to be done as privately and with as little pomp and ceremony as possible may be, only I will that there be in the said church erected for us a tomb fitting our degree, and of such charge as shall seem good to mine executors hereafter named;

And whereas I stand indebted in divers sums of money, as namely unto my brother Francis Trentham of Rocester within the county of Stafford, esquire, in four hundred pounds, unto Mr Ferne in two hundred pounds principal debt, beside the use, and to Mr

Prescott, goldsmith in Cheapside, upon pawn of part of my plate now remaining with him, in two hundred and odd pounds, I desire that all these debts may be carefully discharged, and likewise all such other as to my executors hereafter named shall appear to be due and owing by me, if any such shall happen to be, with allowance to be made to every of them for the forbearance thereof after the rate of ten pounds for every hundred pounds for one year until such time as my said executors can raise money and make payment of my said debts out of such estate and means as I shall leave unto them for that purpose;

Item, I give unto my dear and loving son, Henry de Vere, Earl of Oxenford, to be kept by him as a remembrance of my motherly love unto him, my rope of great pearl, my new jewel, my thirteen diamond buttons, and all those rich garments, cloaks, bedding, and household stuff, fine diaper and damask linen which are now in my cousin John Vere's house, all which jewels and other things I will shall be delivered to my said son within six months after the day of his marriage, or at his age of six and twenty years, which shall first happen;

And my will and meaning is that if my said son shall happen to depart this life before either of the said times before limited for delivery of the said jewels and other things unto him, then I will the same unto the eldest son of the body of my said son lawfully to be begotten which shall be living or begotten at such death of my said son; and for default of such son, to the daughter or daughters of the body of my said son lawfully to be begotten; and if he have no son or daughter lawfully begotten, then I will the same jewels and other things shall remain unto mine executors;

Item, I give unto my dear and loving mother my silver caudle-cup, my little gilt bell, my silver fruit dish with the foot, and my black satin gown cut and laced;

And whereas I have had of my said brother Trentham the sum of four hundred pounds for divers years past and have given him no allowance for the same, I do therefore in recompense thereof give unto him two hundred marks of lawful English money, and also the sum of two hundred pounds more for a legacy;

Item, I give to my loving sister, the Lady Stanhope, my fifteen new pieces of silver vessel, my black velvet gown laced, my black satin gown, my black taffeta gown with silver lace, my black and silver camlet gown, my crimson velvet petticoat, and my kirtle of white cloth of silver, and [] colour cloth of silver;

Item, I give unto my sister Trentham my borders of rubies and diamonds, my white satin gown, my plain black satin gown, my petticoat of cloth of gold, and my kirtle of white satin with gold lace;

Item, I give unto Vere Trentham, my god-daughter, my jewel enamelled with red, and diamonds in it;

Also, I give and bequeath unto Marie Trentham (whom I intend, if God give me life, to educate and train up) five hundred pounds towards her preferment in marriage, the same to be paid after my debts and all my other legacies be satisfied and paid, and the charges of my funeral and tomb be discharged;

Also I give unto my loving kinswoman and tried friend, the Lady Mainwaring, wife unto Sir George Mainwaring, knight, my gilt standing cup with a cover;

Item, I give unto my worthy good friend, Sir Edward More, knight, my long silver basin with the ewer to it;

Item, I give unto my Lady Waller my kirtle of black cloth of gold;

Item, I give unto my uncle Sneyd my two gilt candlesticks;

I give to Mrs Libbe my black taffeta gown and kirtle, my calamanco gown and my piece of tabine of about twenty yards;

Item, I give to my loving cousin, John Vere, esquire, my deep silver bowl;

And to my nephew, Mr Peregrine Bertie, twenty pounds in gold;

Also, I give unto my good friend, John Wright of Gray's Inn within the county of Middlesex, esquire, one hundred pounds, presuming he will perform his best endeavour to preserve the rights of my son's estate, and to assist him with his best advice in all courses to advance his good fortunes and to increase his virtue and honour;

Item, I give to Margery Flower, my waiting-woman, my tawny satin gown; I give to Marie, my chambermaid, one other gown at the discretion of mine executors; I give to the said Margery Flower £10, and to the said Marie, my chambermaid, five pounds, and to the said Margery and Marie, equally to be divided between them, all my wearing linen about my body;

I give to my laundry-maid forty shillings; to Katherine, three pounds; to Gallantine, the Frenchman that serveth me, five pounds; to [] Thoroughgood, five pounds; to Thomas, my tailor, dwelling with me, five marks; to Thomas, my coachman, five marks; to John Bill, my late servant, five pounds;

Item, I give unto my dumb man yearly during his life [] pounds, to be paid him by my executors quarterly at the four most usual feasts of the year by even and equal portions;

Item, I give for the relief of the poor prisoners in the Counters in London, in Newgate and Ludgate, in the hospitals of Southwark and St. Bartholomew's, in the prisons of the King's Bench, the Marshalsea, and the White Lion in Southwark, thirty pounds, that is to say five marks apiece to every of the said counters, prisons, and hospitals;

Item, I will that there be distributed on the day of my burial to the poor people of the parish wherein I shall happen to die, ten pounds, and to the poor of the said parish of Hackney, twenty pounds;

Also I give to the poor of Castle Hedingham in Essex £20 to be distributed at the discretion of mine executors;

I make and ordain the said Sir Edward More, Francis Trentham, and John Wright the executors of this my last will and testament, desiring them to see the same duly and faithfully performed in every behalf, and my will and meaning is that my said executors and the survivors and survivor of them shall be allowed all such charges and expenses as they or any of them shall in any sort disburse, expend, or lay out in, upon or about the performance or execution of this my will or any matter, cause or occasion touching or concerning the same or the administration thereof;

Also, whereas by my two several deeds indented, bearing date the first day of this instant month of November, made between me on the one part and the said Sir Edward More, Francis Trentham, and John Wright on the other part, I have demised, leased, granted, bargained and sold to the said Sir Edward More, Francis Trentham, and John Wright all that great park of Hedingham ad Castrum aforesaid, and certain parts and parcels of the Castle park, and the little park there, as also the site and precinct of the late priory there, and all the lands, tenements and hereditaments to the same late belonging and appertaining, and also the rectory or parsonage of Walter Belchamp within the said county of Essex, to have and to hold to the said Sir Edward More, Francis Trentham, and John Wright, their executors, administrators and assigns from the feast of St. Michael the Archangel now last past until the full end and term of twenty years from thenceforth next ensuing, by and under certain yearly rents, as in and by the said several deeds indented more fully and plainly may appear, which said several deeds were so by me made in trust, thereby to enable them to raise such sums of money as should sufficiently serve and suffice to discharge and pay all my debts and legacies and funeral expenses, as also all such other payments and disbursements as should be any ways expended, disbursed or laid out by my said executors or any of them for or about the performance of this my will, or for, about or concerning any cause, matter or thing touching or concerning the administration or execution thereof, and afterwards the overplus and surplusage of the profits and benefit thereof to be to the only use and behoof of my said son and of such his children or other persons severally, successively and respectively as from time to time successively shall be seized of the immediate estate in reversion depending and expectant upon any the said several estates or terms granted, passed or conveyed in or by the said-recited deeds or either of them severally and respectively, now I do by these presents signify and declare my will and meaning to be that the said several estates so made and granted in and by the said several deeds indented shall be holden and enjoyed by the said Sir Edward More, Francis Trentham, and John Wright to such uses, intents and purposes, and upon such trust and confidence as is lastly before herein recited and expressed;

And I do further will that the farm of Plaistow and other the portions of tithes late the inheritance of my said late husband Edward, late Earl of Oxenford, shall be sold towards

the payment and satisfaction of my said debts and legacies and performance of this my will by such persons as are now estated therein by force of an Act of Parliament in that behalf made;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my said son Henry, Earl of Oxenford, the said site and precinct of the said late priory and all the lands, tenements, hereditaments and appurtenances to the same late belonging and appertaining, and also the said rectory or parsonage of Walter Belchamp within the said county of Essex, and all other my lands, tenements, and hereditaments with their and every of their appurtenances within the said county of Essex whereof I am seized of an estate in fee simple to me and my heirs, to have and to hold the same unto my said son for and during the term of his natural life without impeachment of or for any manner of waste;

And from and after his decease, then to the first son of the body of my said son lawfully to be begotten, and to the heirs males of the body of the same first son lawfully begotten;

And for default of such issue, then to the second son of the body of my said son lawfully to be begotten, and to the heirs males of the body of the said second son lawfully to be begotten;

And for default of such issue, then to every other son of the body of my said son lawfully to be begotten successively one after another as they shall be in seniority and priority of age, and to the heirs males of the body of every such son lawfully to be begotten successively and respectively one after another in manner and form aforesaid;

And for default of such issue, then to the heirs of the body of the first son of the body of my said son Henry, Earl of Oxenford, lawfully to be begotten;

And for default of such issue then to the heirs of the body of all and every other of the said sons of the body of my said son Henry, Earl of Oxenford, lawfully to be begotten severally and successively, one after another, in form aforesaid;

And for default of such issue, then to all and every the daughters of the body of my said son lawfully to be begotten, and to the heirs of the bodies of the same daughters lawfully to be begotten;

And for want of such issue, then to my said brother Francis Trentham and unto his heirs forever, the said Francis Trentham or his heirs paying unto John Posthumous Stanhope, the youngest son of my sister, the Lady Stanhope, if the said John Posthumous Stanhope shall be then living, the full sum of one thousand pounds of lawful English money at the font-stone within the Temple Church, London, within one year next after the same premises shall accrue, happen, or come unto the said Francis Trentham or his heirs by such failing of the issues of the body of my said son as is aforesaid.

And I do by these presents revoke, frustrate and make void all former and other wills whatsoever I have heretofore made, and have published this as my last will and testament,

and sealed and subscribed the same the day and year first above written in the presence of Katherine Stanhope, Francis Trentham, John Wright, William Thoroughgood, William Hawkeridge.

Elizabeth Oxenford

Probatum fuit Testamentum suprascriptum apud London coram venerabili viro Domino Iohanne Benet milite legum Doctore Curie prerogatiue Cantuariensis Magistro Custode siue Commissario legitime constituto Decimo quinto die mensis ffebruarij Anno Domini iuxta cursum et Computacionem Ecclesie Anglicane millesimo sexcentesimo Duodecimo Iuramento Domini Edwardi Moore militis ffrauncisci Trentham et Iohannis Wright Armigerorum Executorum in eodem Testamento nominatorum Quibus commissa fuit Administracio bonorum Iurium et Creditorum dicte defuncte De bene et fideliter Administrando &c ad sancta dei Evangelia Iuratorum Literis administrationis bonorum iurium et Creditorum dicte defuncte alias auctoritate huius Curie prenobili viro Henrico Comiti Oxonie tanquam ab Intestato decedentis Comissis et concessis hodie introductis et renunciatis vt ex actis liquet examinatus

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before the worshipful Sir John Bennet, knight, Doctor of the Laws, lawfully constituted Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the fifteenth 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 twelfth by the oath of Sir Edward More, knight, Francis Trentham, and John Wright, esquires, executors appointed 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., letters of administration of the goods, rights and credits of the said deceased dying as an intestate by the authority of this court at another time entrusted and granted to the right honourable Henry, Earl of Oxenford, today introduced and renounced, as by the acts appears. Examined]