

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 20 January 1617 and proved 4 June 1617, of Anne (nee de Vere) Shernborne Stubbe Stapley. The testatrix was born Anne de Vere, the eldest daughter of Oxford's uncle, Aubrey de Vere, and his wife, Margaret Spring, the daughter of John Spring of Lavenham, Suffolk. According to the will of her uncle, John de Vere (1516-1562), 16th Earl of Oxford, who bequeathed her 100 marks to be paid at the day of her marriage, she had two brothers, Hugh and John, and two younger sisters, Bridget and Jane (see TNA PROB 11/46, ff. 174-6). Her first husband was Christopher Shernborne of Shernborne, Norfolk, by whom she had a son, Francis Shernborne. For the will of Christopher Shernborne, dated 6 July 1575 and proved 27 September 1575, mentioning his wife, Anne, and his son, Francis, see TNA PROB 11/57, f. 271. For the Shernborne pedigree, see Parkin, Charles, *An Essay Towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, Vol. X (London: William Miller, 1809), p. 358; and Rye, Walter, ed., *The Visitation of Norfolk* (London: Harleian Society, 1891), p. 246, both available online.

There may have been earlier connections between the de Vere and Shernborne families through the FitzLewis family. Moreover Oxford matriculated at Queen's College, Cambridge, in November 1558, and a Francis Shernborne matriculated in the same college in the same year (see Berry, p. 206).

The testatrix' second husband was John Stubbe [Stubbs], author of *The Discovery of a Gaping Gulf* which criticized Queen Elizabeth's proposed marriage to the Duke of Alencon. For the publication of this tract, Stubbe lost his right hand on 3 November 1579, and was imprisoned until 1581. While her husband was imprisoned, Anne petitioned Queen Elizabeth on his behalf, but to no avail (see Berry, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii). Through her second marriage, Anne was the sister-in-law of the Puritan leader Thomas Cartwright, who had married John Stubbe's sister, Alice. John Stubbe was also a close friend of Lord Burghley's secretary, Michael Hicke (d.1612), and in a letter dated 30 July 1582 commended himself and his wife, Anne, to Michael Hicke's mother, Julian Penn (d.1592), from whom in 1590 Oxford rented rooms at her house on St Peter's Hill (see Berry, p. 119, and BL Lansdowne MS 68, ff. 252-6). From 1585, Stubbe was employed as secretary to Oxford's brother-in-law, Peregrine Bertie (1555-1601), Lord Willoughby de Eresby, and may have resided at Willoughby's house at the Barbican while Willoughby was abroad. He acted as a channel of communication between Willoughby and Burghley on Dutch affairs, as well as overseeing Willoughby's household and financial affairs. He also accompanied Oxford's sister, Mary (d.1624), Lady Willoughby, to the Low Countries in 1588. In 1589, Stubbe went to France with the English force, where he died in February 1590. In his will, written before his departure for France, he appointed his wife Anne as his executrix, and Lord Willoughby as supervisor. Three of the witnesses to the will, Colman, Newman and Vaughan, were servants in Lord Willoughby's household (see Berry, p. 208), suggesting that Stubbe composed his last will at Lord Willoughby's house in the Barbican. For the will of John Stubbe, see TNA PROB 11/75, ff. 313-4. After John Stubbe's death, the testatrix was involved in litigation concerning the will of John Stubbe's father (see Berry, p. xxii, and TNA C 2/Eliz/C14/57).

After the death of John Stubbe, by whom it would appear she had no children, the testatrix married Anthony Stapley, who may have been Anthony Stapley of Framfield in Sussex.

In her will, the testatrix leaves most of her possessions to her three grandchildren, Henry, Anne and Mary Shernborne, the children of her son Francis Shernborne, now deceased. She appoints her first cousin John Vere (d.1624) of Kirby Hall in Castle Hedingham, eldest son of Oxford's uncle, Geoffrey Vere (c.1525–1572?), as her executor, and leaves a diamond ring to his wife, Thomasine (d.1639). For the wills of John and Thomasine Vere, see TNA PROB 11/143, ff. 510-15 and TNA PROB 11/181, ff. 229-30. She leaves two furred gowns to 'my sister Cracherode', who may have been her sister Bridget, and bequests to her Cracherode nephews. She also leaves a gold ring with an emerald to 'my sister Hunt'. This was likely her sister Jane, who married Henry Hunt of Gosfield, Essex. Their eldest son, John Hunt, was considered by Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, to be a bad influence on Oxford's son, Henry de Vere (1593–1625), 18th Earl of Oxford, in 1611 (see TNA SP 14/65, ff. 76-9). Her nephew, Robert Vere, to whom she leaves a bequest of £20 is likely Robert de Vere (d.1632), 19th Earl of Oxford, the son of her elder brother, Hugh Vere, and his wife, Eleanor, the daughter of William Walsh. Their son, Aubrey de Vere (d.1703), succeeded as the 20th and last Earl of Oxford.

The Sir John Tyndall mentioned in the will may have been Sir John Tyndall (d.1616) of Great Maplestead, Essex, steward of Queen's College, Cambridge, and one of the Masters of Chancery, who in 1586 married Anne Egerton, the widow of John Stubbe's close friend, and Lord Burghley's nephew, George Blythe (d.1581) (see Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 2005), p. 843, and Barnett, Richard C., *Place, Profit and Power; A Study of the Servants of William Cecil, Elizabethan Statesman*, James Sprunt Studies in History and Political Science, Vol. 51, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), pp. 40-2).

RM: Testamentum Anne Stapley vidue

In the name of God, Amen. I, Anne Stapley, widow, sometime the wife of Christopher Shernborne of Shernborne in the county of Norfolk, esquire, deceased, considering the uncertainty of my frail life in this transitory world, do this present twentieth day of January one thousand six hundred and sixteen [=20 January 1617] and in the fourteenth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King James of this his realm of England, being in good health and remembrance, praised be God, make this my last will and testament in manner and form following:

First, I humbly bequeath my soul into the hands of my merciful God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and my body to be buried at the discretion of mine executor, there to remain till the joyful day of resurrection when both in soul and body I hope to enjoy the life everlasting, and I will that my executor shall not exceed the charge of forty pounds about my funerals;

Item, I give and bequeath unto the poor of the parish where I shall be buried the sum of three pounds;

Item, I do give and bequeath unto my grandchild, Henry Shernborne, all the money which William Newell, John Hunt and (blank) Poynter, three citizens of London, do owe unto me, for five hundred pounds whereof the bonds be taken in the name of Sir John Tyndall, knight, now deceased, and for two hundred pounds more the bonds be taken in the name of my son, Francis Shernborne, late deceased, and if he die before his age of twenty and one years, then I will the same to his sisters, Anne Shernborne and Mary Shernborne;

Item, I give and bequeath unto the same Anne Shernborne, my grandchild, whom I have especially undertaken to bring up, the sum of one thousand pounds of lawful English money to be paid unto her at the day of her marriage or when she shall accomplish the age of twenty and one years, which of them shall first happen, and my mind and will is that she shall be in the meantime virtuously educated and brought up by mine executor with the profit that may be conveniently raised by the same; I would allow her thereof fifty pounds a year more;

I give unto her for her better advancement my two leases of Tendall [=Tyndall?] Wood and Hallowell, and all unbequeathed herein, my debts, funeral charges and legacies discharged, I give unto the said Anne Shernborne, my grandchild, for her better advancement, and if she shall happen to die before her marriage or be unmarried before her age of twenty and one years, then I will and bequeath eight hundred pounds of the said thousand pounds unto my said grandchild, Henry Shernborne, and the other two hundred pounds unto my grandchild, Mary Shernborne, his said sister;

Item I give and bequeath unto the said Anne Shernborne all my chains, borders, jewels, rings and silver plate which I shall have at the time of my decease and be not in this my will otherwise bequeathed, the same to be delivered unto her at the time of her marriage or age of one and twenty years, which first shall happen, and in the meanwhile she may have the use of so many of them as to my executor shall be from time to time thought convenient;

Item, I give unto the said Anne two of my best beds with all the best furniture thereunto belonging, with all my linen not herein otherwise bequeathed, and if the said Anne Shernborne happen to die before marriage or the age of twenty and one years, then whatsoever I have in this my will given her not herein otherwise bequeathed, I give all to my grandchild, Mary Shernborne;

Item, I give unto the said Mary Shernborne, my grandchild, two hundred pounds to be paid her at her day of marriage or age of twenty and one years, which first shall happen, and I will that ten pounds yearly to be raised out of the profits thereof be allowed her in the meantime towards her maintenance and education, and if she shall happen to die before her said marriage or being unmarried before her age of twenty and one years, then whatsoever I have in this my will given and bequeathed unto the said Mary, I give and bequeath the same unto her brother, the said Henry Shernborne;

Item, I give unto the wife of my well-beloved cousin, John Vere of Castle Hedingham in the county of Essex, esquire, a diamond that I wear on my right hand;

Item, I give unto my nephew, Robert Vere, twenty pounds, to be paid by five pounds every half year next after my decease till the same be paid;

Item, I give unto my nephew, John Cracherode, half my brass and half my pewter;

Item, I give to my nephews, William Cracherode, Henry Cracherode and Robert Cracherode, to each of them twenty shillings to buy them rings to wear for my sake;

Item, I forgive my brother Cracherode ten pounds that I lent him and have a bill of his hand therefore;

Item, I give unto my sister Cracherode two of my gowns that are furred and all things that are furred;

Item, I give and bequeath to my sister Hunt my gold ring with th' emerald;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my daughter-in-law, Mistress Shernborne, a diamond that I wear on my little finger of my left hand;

Item, I give unto my niece, John Cracherode's wife, a bed and all that belongs unto it, and two pair of sheets and two board-cloths, two cupboard cloths and two dozen of table napkins;

Item, I give to Mrs Turner of St Edmondsbury in the county of Suffolk, widow, my ring of plain gold which I use to wear on my thumb;

Item, I give unto my niece Lockey [=Lucke?] forty shillings to buy her a silver porringer, and to my nephew, her husband, thirty shillings to buy him a ring to wear for my sake;

Item, I give to my man that shall be with me in service at the time of my decease forty shillings, and to my then maidservant twenty shillings, and I give unto Everede's wife who was my servant forty shillings which remaineth due unto me of a more sum that I lent her husband;

Item, more to her, a gown and a kirtle of stuff that I wear ordinarily;

And of this my last will and testament I do ordain and make my said well-beloved cousin, John Vere, esquire, my sole executor, and for his pains herein I give him twenty pounds to buy him a gelding, and I would humbly entreat the right honourable the Earl of Suffolk, Lord High Treasurer of England, to vouchsafe to be the supervisor of this my last will;

In witness whereof I have subscribed my name to every of these three sheets of paper, and hereunto have put my seal the day and year first above-written. A. Stapley.

Signed, sealed and published for her last will the day and year first above-written in the presence of John Lete, John Hill, Frances Lete. The mark of Elizabeth Tovey.

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum apud London coram Magistro Hugone Barker legum doctore Surrogato venerabilis viri domini Iohannis Benet milite legum etiam doctoris Curie Prerogatiue Cantuariensis magistri Custodis siue Comissarij legitime constituti quarto die Mensis Iunij Anno domini millesimo sexcentesimo decimo septimo Iuramento Iohannis Vere consanguinei dicte defuncte et executoris in huiusmodi testamento nominati Cui comissa fuit Administracio bonorum Iurium et creditorum eiusdem Defuncte de bene et fideliter administrando eadem Ad sancta dei Evangelia vigore Comissionis in ea parte alias emanate Iurato

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before the worshipful Master Hugh Barker, Doctor of the Laws, surrogate of the worshipful Sir John Bennett, knight, also Doctor of the Laws, lawfully constituted Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the fourth day of the month of June in the year of the Lord the thousand six hundred seventeenth by the oath of John Vere, cousin of the said deceased and executor appointed in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of the goods, rights and credits of the same deceased, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer the same by force of a grant in that respect issued at another time.]