

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the last will and testament, dated 8 January 1621 and proved 21 June 1621, of William Leveson, one of two trustees used by William Kempe, Thomas Pope (d.1603), Augustine Phillips (d.1605), John Heminges (bap. 1566, d. 1630) and William Shakespeare (1564-1616) of Stratford to allocate shareholdings in the Globe Theatre in 1599 (see Corrigan, Brian Jay, *Playhouse Law in Shakespeare's World* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2004), pp. 64-71).

The testator was related by marriage to Anne (nee Chapman) Carew, the mother of Thomasine (nee Carew) Amyce Vere (d.1639), who married, firstly, Oxford's servant Israel Amyce, and, secondly, Oxford's first cousin, John Vere (d.1624) of Kirby Hall. In a codicil to his will dated 24 October 1572, Anne Carew's father, Robert Chapman, refers to my 'son-in-law, William Leveson, citizen and mercer of London'. Chapman's reference was to William Leveson the elder (d.1593), the husband of Anne Carew's sister, and a younger brother of Thomas Leveson (1532-1576).

The testator was the son of Thomas Leveson (1532-1576) and his wife, Ursula Gresham (1534-1574), and a grandson of Nicholas Leveson (d.1539) and his wife, Dionyse Bodley. He had an elder brother, Sir John Leveson (1555-1615), and nine sisters, of whom, according to the will of the testator's uncle, William Leveson the elder, eight were living in 1593 (Dionyse, Mary the elder, Elizabeth, Frances, Ursula, Anne, Grissell, Mary the younger, and Nazareth).

In his will, the testator's childless uncle, William Leveson the elder (d.1593), made the testator one of his residuary legatees, and bequeathed him his interest as a freeman of the Muscovy Company:

*Item, whereas I being a freeman of the Right Worshipful Company of English Merchants for the Discovery of New Trades [=the Muscovy Company], not having any child and never having made child or apprentice free, it is ordered by the same Company that all such in that case may dispose and by their last will and testament bequeath their freedom to any man, as heretofore some have done, wherefore I will, give and bequeath my freedom of the same Right Worshipful Company unto to my loving nephew, William Leveson of the city of London, mercer.*

The testator's grandfather, Nicholas Leveson (d.1539), was the brother of James Leveson (c.1500-1547) who purchased Trentham Priory in Staffordshire. James Leveson's son, Sir Richard Leveson (d.1559) married Mary Fitton. Sir Richard Leveson (d.1559) and Mary Fitton were the parents of Sir Walter Leveson (1551-1602), who married Anne Corbet, the daughter of Sir Andrew Corbet (d.1578), and died in debt in prison. Their son was the admiral, Sir Richard Leveson (1570-1605).

Sir Walter Leveson's sister, Elizabeth Leveson, married William Sheldon (d.1587), the younger brother of Ralph Sheldon (d.1612/3) of Beoley. William Sheldon (d.1587) was the uncle of Oxford's sister-in-law, Katherine Trentham. As noted, his first wife was

Elizabeth Leveson, a second cousin of Shakespeare of Stratford's trustee, William Leveson (d.1621). For the will of William Shelson (d.1587), see TNA PROB 11/71, f. 181. William Sheldon's wife, Elizabeth Leveson, predeceased him. At the time of his death in 1587 he was married to a second wife named Jane.

A Robert Leveson was a member of Oxford's Men in 1580:

*On 13 April 1580 the Privy Council committed Robert Leveson and Lawrence Dutton, players under the patronage of the Earl of Oxford, to the Marshalsea for taking part in an affray with certain gentlemen of the Inns of Court.*

A player named 'Shealdon' [=Sheldon?] also witnessed a loan for Henslowe on 24 August 1595.

See Nungezer, Edwin, *A Dictionary of Actors* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929), pp. 124-5, 236, 323.

See also Keen, Alan & Roger Lubbock, *The Annotator*, (London: Putnam, 1954), pp. 115-18; Hotson, Leslie, *I, William Shakespeare* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), pp. 160-1; the pedigrees of Gresham and Leveson in Howard, Joseph Jackson and George John Armytage, eds., *The Visitation of London in the Year 1568* (London: Harleian Society, 1869), pp. 15, 18, available online, and the entry for Sir John Leveson (1555-1615) in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, available online. See also the Leveson documents on the Staffordshire County Council website at:

<http://www.search.sutherlandcollection.org.uk/engine/theme/default.asp?theme=97&originator=%2Fengine%2Ftheme%2Fdefault.asp&page=2&records=18&direction=1&pointer=914&text=0>

See also the wills of Robert Chapman (d.1575), TNA PROB 11/57, ff. 13-14; Anne (nee Chapman) Carew (d.1599), TNA PROB 11/93, ff. 162-3; James Leveson (c.1500-1547), TNA PROB 11/31, ff. 373-4; Nicholas Leveson (d.1539), TNA PROB 11/27, ff. 250-1; Dionyse Leveson (d.1560), TNA 11/43, ff. 463-6; Thomas Leveson (1532-1576), TNA PROB 11/58, ff. 197-8; William Leveson the elder (d.1593), TNA PROB 11/82, ff. 47-8; and Sir John Leveson (1555-1615), TNA PROB 11/126, ff. 246-250.

The testator's wife was Mary Robotham. See the pedigree of Robotham of St. Alban's in Metcalfe, Walter C., ed., *The Visitations of Hertfordshire made by Robert Cooke, Esq., Clarencieux, in 1572, and Sir Richard St. George, Kt., Clarencieux, in 1634* (London: Harleian Society, 1886), p. 87. For the will of Robert Robotham (d.1570/1), see TNA PROB 11/53, ff. 342-4. See also the entry for Robert Robotham in Bindoff, S.T., *The House of Commons 1509-1558* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1982), pp. 202-3.

Although the pedigree of Robotham of St Albans does not give the first name of Mary Robotham's mother, other sources establish that she was Grace (nee Paget), the daughter of Anne (nee Smyth) Paget Yorke (d.1575), the daughter of Robert Smyth of London, and

wife, firstly, of Robert Paget of London, and secondly, of Sir John Yorke (d. 1569). For the will of Anne (nee Smyth) Paget Yorke (d.1575), see TNA PROB 11/57, f. 386. For the will of her second husband, Sir John Yorke (d.1569), see TNA PROB 11/51, ff. 29-30.

In her will Lady Yorke refers to her daughter, Grace (nee Paget) as ‘my daughter Fanshawe’. Grace Paget, married, firstly, Robert Bull (d.1551), secondly, Robert Robotham (d.1571), and thirdly, Godfrey Fanshawe (d. 12 February 1588), a younger brother of the Queen’s Remembrancer of the Exchequer, Thomas Fanshawe (c.1533–1601). For the licence dated 30 November 1550 for the marriage of Robert Bull of St Clement Danes, London, gentleman, and Grace Paget of St. Stephen’s Walbrook, London, see Armytage, George J., ed., *Allegations for Marriage Licences Issued by the Bishop of London 1520-1610* (London: Harleian Society, 1887), p. 13, available online. For the will of Robert Bull (d.1551), dated 11 July 1551, which mentions Lady Yorke, see TNA PROB 11/34, ff. 135/6. For the will of Robert Robotham (d.1571), see TNA PROB 11/53, ff. 342-4. See also the entry for Robert Robotham in Bindoff, S.T., *The House of Commons 1509-1558* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1982), pp. 202-3, and the pedigree of Robotham of St. Alban’s in Metcalfe, Walter C., ed., *The Visitations of Hertfordshire made by Robert Cooke, Esq., Clarencieux, in 1572, and Sir Richard St. George, Kt., Clarencieux, in 1634* (London: Harleian Society, 1886), p. 87, available online. For the will of Godfrey Fanshawe (d.1588), dated 26 October 1584, see TNA PROB 11/85, ff. 174-5. A copy of the latter will is available online in Howard, Joseph Jackson, ed., *Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica*, (London: Hamilton Adams, 1876), pp. 288-9.

LM: T{estamentum} Will{el}mi Leveson

In the name of God, Amen. The eight day of January Anno D{omi}ni stilo Anglie 1620 and in the eighteenth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King James over England etc., and over Scotland the four and fiftieth, I, William Leveson, citizen and mercer of London, being sick in body but of perfect mind and remembrance, thanks be given to Almighty God, do make this my present testament declaring herein my last will as followeth:

First I commend my soul into the hands of Almighty God, steadfastly believing by the alone sufficient merits and death of his Son and my Saviour, Jesus Christ, to obtain remission and pardon of all my sins and to be made an heir with him in the kingdom of heaven, and my body, when it shall please God to call me out of this mortal life, I commit to the earth whereof it was made;

And for such worldly goods as it hath pleased Almighty God to bestow upon me, I give, will and bequeath the same in manner and form following, viz.:

First I give and bequeath to the parson and churchwardens of the parish of Aldermanbury where I was sometime an inhabitant, for and towards the augmentation of the stock belonging unto the said parish, sometimes in my hand, wherein I might be mistaken, the sum of four pounds of lawful money of England;

Item, I give to the poor of the parish of St. Alphage wherein I dwell twenty shillings, to be distributed amongst them by my executrix hereafter named;

Item, I give to Susan Hall ten shillings;

And I do give to Robert Harrys ten shillings, and do forgive him all debts that he doth owe me;

Item, I do give to my servant, Anne Curlis(?), ten shillings;

Item, I owe to Robert Hall four pound for soliciting my business, which I will my executrix to pay him, and I give him a cloak cloth of four nobles;

These sums aforesaid I will to be paid out of one third part of such estate as shall be due to me at my death according to the custom of the city of London;

And the residue thereof I give to Mary, my loving wife, together also with one whole third part more of my said estate which I leave to her according to the custom of the city of London;

And thother third part of my said estate I give and leave to and amongst my sons, Thomas and James;

And my will is that my debts be paid and funeral expenses out of my whole estate before any division be made of the same;

And I do make Mary Leveson, my loving wife, sole executrix of this my last will and testament, not doubting but she will see the same faithfully performed;

In witness whereof I have hereto set my hand and seal, given the day and year first above-written. William Leveson. Sealed and published by the within-named William Leveson to be his last will in the presence of us, James(?) Stonehouse, Richard Chapman, servant to Charles Bostock, scrivener, Robert Hall, Thomas Stockwood.

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum apud London coram Magistro Hugone Barker legum doctore Surrogato venerabilis viri Domini Iohannis Bennett militis legum etiam doctoris Curie Prerogatiue Cantuariensis magistri Custodis siue Commissarij legitime Constituti vicesimo primo die mensis Iunij Anno Domini Millesimo Sexcentesimo vicesimo primo Iuramento Marie Leveson relicte dicti defuncti et executricis in huiusmodi

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testamento nominat{e} Cui Commissa fuit administratio bonorum iurium et creditorum dicti defuncti De bene et fideliter administrand{o} &c Ad sancta Dei Evangelia Iurat{e}

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before Master Hugh Barker, Doctor of the Laws, surrogate of the worshipful Sir John Bennet, knight, also Doctor of the Laws, lawfully constituted Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the twenty-first day of the month of June in the year of the Lord the thousand six hundred twenty-first by the oath of Mary Leveson, relict of the said deceased and executrix named 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.]