

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 19 February 1622 [=1623] and proved 1 April 1623, of Lady Anne (nee Kempe) Shirley (c.1542-1623), sister of Alice (nee Kempe) Hales (d.1592), the dedicatee of Greene's *Menaphon* (1589), and half-sister of the comedian Will Kempe. She was the daughter of Sir Thomas Kempe (d.1591) of Olantigh in Kent and his first wife, Cecily Cheyney. Her grandparents were Sir William Kempe (d.1539) of Olantigh, and his wife, Eleanor (nee Browne) (d.1559). For the wills of her grandparents, see TNA PROB 11/27, f. 228 and TNA PROB 11/43, ff. 457-8. For the wills of her uncles George Kempe (d.1588) and Anthony Kempe (d.1598), see TNA PROB 11/72, f. 294 and TNA PROB 11/94, f. 113. For the will of her brother-in-law, Sir James Hales (d.1589) see TNA PROB 11/75, f. 212. Her husband was Sir Thomas Shirley (c.1542-1612) of Wiston, Sussex, the son of William Shirley (c.1498-1551) and his wife Mary, the daughter of Thomas Isley of Sundridge, Kent.

In her will, Lady Anne Shirley makes no mention of her three sons Sir Thomas Shirley (1564-1633/4), Robert Shirley (c1581-1628), and Sir Anthony Shirley (1565-1636?). Her bequests for the most part are to her daughters and to her female grandchildren. Her six daughters were: Cecily, widow of Thomas West, 3<sup>rd</sup> Baron De La Warr (1577-1618), Mary, wife of Sir John Crofts of Saxham; Anne, wife of Sir John Tracy of Toddington; Elizabeth, widow of Sir Edward Onslow; Margery, wife of Sir Pexsall Brocas; and Jane, apparently deceased, wife of Sir John Shirley of Isfield (1569-1631).

Only three of the grandchildren named in the will appear to have been the children of Lady Anne Shirley's sons – Thomas Shirley, Frances Molle and the playwright Henry Shirley (1591x7-1627), the son of Sir Thomas Shirley (1564-1633/4) and his first wife, Frances Vavasour, the daughter of Sir Henry Vavasour of Copmanthorpe, Yorkshire, and the sister of Oxford's mistress, Anne Vavasour, the mother of his illegitimate son, Edward Vere. In her will, Lady Anne Shirley leaves her grandson, Henry Shirley (1591x7-1627) an annuity of £40. Her fear that he might waste it is reflected both in the fact that she leaves £300 outright to her executor, Sir Thomas Bishop, on the understanding that he will pay the annuity of £40 to Henry Shirley, and in the proviso that the annuity will be void should Henry Shirley attempt to dispose of it by sale or otherwise. This bequest was to have fatal consequences for Henry Shirley only four years later. From *The Dictionary of National Biography*:

*In 1622 Shirley's grandmother Lady Anne Shirley left him £40 per annum in her will, to be paid out annually by Sir Thomas Bishop. However, Shirley ran up debts and was chronically short of money. In October 1627 he went to the lodging of Sir Edward Bishop (Sir Thomas's son) in Chancery Lane, London, to demand his annuity, whereupon Sir Edward slew the unarmed Shirley with a sword. Bishop was originally sentenced to be burnt on the hand, but was pardoned on 21 October. The incident was gleefully recounted four years later by William Prynne in *Histriomastix*, and in two newsbooks of 1645.*

An account suggesting that Sir Edward Bishop's murder of Henry Shirley might have been motivated by his own disastrous financial circumstances is given in Shirley, Evelyn

P., 'Who was Henry Shirley, the author of "The Martyr'd Soldier?"' *Notes & Queries*, vol. XII (London: Bell, 1855), July 14, 1855, at p. 27 in which the author quotes from BL Add. MS 4177:

*Mr Beaulieu to Sr Thomas Puckering, Bart., London, 31 October, 1627.*

*There is a foul murther committed on Friday last by Sr Edward Bishop, of Sussex, on Mr Henry Shirley of the same shire, whom he run thro' with his sword (having no weapon about him), as he came to him in his lodging in Chancery Lane to demand of him an annuity of 40l., which the said Sr Edward Bishop was to give him, whose lands (which are reported be of 1500l, or 2000l, by the year) were presently begged or given away, but himself not yet found out.*

The author of the article comments:

*The Henry Shirley here mentioned, and who by the preceding extracts is identified with the play-writer, was the second son of Sir Thomas Shirley the younger, of Wiston, in the county of Sussex, by Frances Vavisore [=Vavasour], his first wife. . . . The annuity of 40l., which was the occasion of his death, was bequeathed to him by his grandmother, Lady Shirley, who secured it on the estate of her friend, Sir Thomas Bishop, knt., of Parham (father of Sir Edward), and in whose will it is also mentioned.*

Since the theatre financier Philip Henslowe (c.1555-1616) was from Lindfield, Sussex, there is a remote possibility that Lady Anne Shirley's bequest to 'Edward Allen and his wife' might have been to Henslowe's son-in-law, the actor Edward Alleyn (1566-1626) and his wife, Henslowe's step-daughter, Joan.

RM: Domine Anne Shirley

In the name of God, Amen. I, Dame Anne Shirley, widow, late wife of Sir Thomas Shirley, knight, late of Wiston in the county of Sussex, deceased, knowing that it is appointed for all men once to die, but that time only known to God, do therefore this nineteenth day of February in the year of the incarnation of Our Blessed Saviour Christ one thousand six hundred twenty and two, revoking all former wills whatsoever, ordain and make this my last will and testament, as well in respect of Christian duty by declaration of my faith as for the disposing of my body and goods after my decease in manner and form hereafter following:

First, I die in an assured hope that by the only merits of my God, Redeemer and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and by faith in his death and passion, I shall shortly with these eyes behold with comfort him, my Redeemer, in the land of the living;

And as touching the disposing of my body and funeral after my decease, I do will and charge my executor hereafter named that my body be buried by my said late husband in

the south chapel of the parish church of Wiston aforesaid; all other matters concerning the same I wholly leave to the discretion of my executor;

My plate, monies, jewels, stock, household stuff and goods whatsoever, I give and bequeath as followeth:

First, I will that all such debts and duties as upon specialty or in right and conscience I owe and am answerable for shall be paid and satisfied by my executor, that none may receive hindrance or loss by me;

Item, I give and bequeath unto the poor of the parish of St. Giles in the Field in the county of Middlesex forty shillings of current money of England;

Item, I give and bequeath unto the poor of the parishes of Wiston aforesaid and Steyning in the county of Sussex aforesaid three pounds six shillings and eight pence, to be divided among them as my executor, the ministers and churchwardens for the time being there shall think best of;

Item, I give and bequeath to my loving and kind daughter, Cecily La Warr, late wife of Thomas, Lord La Warr, deceased, my ebony bedstead with the tester, valance, curtains, quilt, chair and stool thereunto belonging or therewithal used, and also two Persian carpets, with two window carpets and my largest carpet of Turkey work, a silver casting-bottle & a gilt trencher-salt, the bigger cabinet in my closet with all things therein, a little cellar covered with green velvet & all things therein, a long cushion and a chair of needlework of apples, a long cushion of orange work wrought by herself, two wrought cushion-cloths, two pairs of wrought pillow-beres, a suit of diaper and another of damask of the best, containing in either suit a tablecloth, cupboard cloth, towel and twelve napkins;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my grandchild, Lord La Warr, son of the said Lord La Warr, a down bed, bolster and pillows, the best rug at Parham which I imagine is crimson coloured, a pair of my best blankets, four pairs of my best sheets at London, whereof one pair to be of three breadths, with four pairs of pillow-beres suitable, six of my high stools of silk needlework, two low stools of silk needlework, my chair of silk needlework, and five of my chairs of crewel needlework, my right Persian carpet, the largest next to that bequeathed by me unto my daughter La Warr, my suit of hangings of green leaves, and a suit of diaper and another of damask, either of them containing a tablecloth, a cupboard cloth, a towel and twelve napkins, my carpet of needlework of gillyflowers and woodbines, my Turkey carpet of cucumbers, and a piece of fine Holland to be taken out of my chest to make his Lordship shirts withal;

And unto my grandchildren, the daughters of the said Lady La Warr, to each of them I give and bequeath as followeth, viz., to Anne West, six gilt spoons, my silver strainer, my sapphire stone, and the little coffer wherein the same is kept; to Elizabeth West, my twelve silver spoons with gilt heads; to Cecily West, my twelve silver spoons with ox feet; to Jane West, my silver pot with three feet and, the cover with a round foot; to Lucy

West, my great silver caudel-cup; to Essex West, my eighteen silver trenchers, my silver porringer with a spoon therewith used, my lesser cabinet in the closet and all things therein; and also one hundred pounds of current money of England, provided always and it is my meaning that my executor hereafter named shall pay unto my said grandchild Essex West the profit or interest yearly for the said one hundred pounds until her age of fifteen years towards her maintenance, and at her age of fifteen years then she to have the said one hundred pounds paid unto her at one entire payment;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my loving and kind daughter, the Lady Crofts, wife unto Sir John Crofts, knight, my cabbage carpet of Turkey work;

And I give and bequeath unto my grandchildren, the daughters of the said Lady Crofts, as followeth, viz., to Anne, now wife of the Lord Wentworth, my square carpet of Turkey work wrought into pyramids and trasles [=trestles?], and a long cushion of trasles [trestles?] with several beasts thereon embroidered; to Frances Crompton, now wife of Sir John Crompton, knight, my square board and cupboard carpets grounded with yellow, and a long cushion of the Irish stitch; to Jane Mildmay, now wife of Sir Humphrey Mildmay, knight, my carpet of hawthorns and other flowers with a black ground, and a long cushion of purple cloth of gold; to Dorothy Bennett, now wife of Sir John Bennett the younger, knight, my long carpet of right Turkey work red and yellow, a square board carpet of woodbines, and a cupboard carpet of Turkey work, and a suit of damask containing a tablecloth, a cupboard cloth, a towel and twelve napkins; to Mary Crofts, a diamond ring which I have of the gift of the Countess of Middlesex; to Cecily Crofts, my lesser silver ladle; to Alice Crofts, my cupboard carpet of woodbines and gillyflowers;

Item, I give and bequeath to my loving and kind daughter, the Lady Tracy, now wife of Sir John Tracy th' elder, knight, my silver mortar and pestle, a gilt trencher-salt, my greatest silver ladle, and a suit of damask of the story of Abraham containing a tablecloth, cupboard cloth, towel and twelve napkins;

And to my grandchildren, the daughters of the said Lady Tracy, as followeth: viz., to Anne Tracy, my silver posnet with a cover, and to each of the rest of her daughters, one gold ring of forty shillings' price;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my loving and kind daughter, the Lady Onslow, late wife of Sir Edward Onslow, knight, deceased, one tablecloth, one towel, one cupboard cloth and twelve napkins of damask, and to my grandchildren, the daughters of the said Lady Onslow, to each of them one gold ring with a death's-head of forty shillings' price, and also to the wife of Richard Onslow, esquire, son of the said Lady Onslow, a piece of plate of ten pounds' price;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my loving and kind daughter, the Lady Brocas, now wife of Sir Pexsall Brocas, knight, my suit of hangings of imagery work, and my two little silver boats(?), and to my grandson, Thomas Brocas, son of the said Lady Brocas, one silver cup of ten pounds' price;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my loving son-in-law, Sir John Shirley, knight, my basin and ewer of silver, and the large Turkey work carpet already in his custody, to use the said carpet during his life, and after his decease I will and bequeath the same to my granddaughter, the Lady Covert, if she be living after the decease of the said Sir John Shirley; if not, the same to be at his dispose;

And to the residue of my grandchildren, the daughters of the said Sir John Shirley, as followeth, viz., to Cecily Shirley, my Turkey work carpet on the longest table in the dining-room at London, and a cupboard carpet of Turkey work; to Elizabeth Shirley, a needlework cupboard carpet, and a cupboard carpet of thistles; to Anne Shirley, Charity Shirley and Mara Shirley, to each of them a pair of fine sheets with pairs of pillow-beres thereto belonging or therewithal used;

Item, I give and bequeath unto other my grandchildren as followeth, viz., to Frances Molle, my grandchild, now wife of (blank) Molle, esquire, my blue damask bed-tester, valence and curtains, two feather-beds, two bolsters, two pillows, a blue rug, a pair of blankets, two pair of sheets, two diaper board-cloths, and two dozen of napkins belonging to the said board-cloths, to be of the best ordinarily used, my white quilt of linen cloth now at Parham, a piece of coarse Holland, and a pair of fine sheets out of my own press;

And I give and bequeath to Thomas Shirley, my grandchild, my crimson damask bed-tester without curtains, a down bed and bolster with all that belongs thereto, my crimson damask canopy with two large taffety curtains, two pieces of cloth of baudekin, two feather-beds with their bolsters, pillows, blankets and coverings, three pairs of fine sheets with pillow-beres, a suit of damask and a suit of diaper, each containing a tablecloth, a cupboard cloth, a towel and twelve napkins;

Item, I give and bequeath to my loving friend, the Lady Bishop, now wife of Sir Thomas Bishop of Parham in the county of Sussex, knight and baronet, my sables, my little black cellar and all therein, my clock, a pair of silver candlesticks, and my five copper cauldrons now at Parham;

Item, I give and bequeath unto the Lady Gresham, now wife of Sir John Gresham, knight, two stools of purple velvet laid on with a broad gold lace and fringe, and unto Frances Alford, now wife of John Alford, esquire, my silver strainer and my silver preserving spoon, and unto the said Sir John Gresham, John Alford and unto Edward Bishop and Henry Bishop, sons of the said Sir Thomas Bishop, to every of them I give and bequeath a ring of gold with a death's-head of forty shillings' price;

Item, I give and bequeath unto Mr Edward Scott at Parham aforesaid a ring of gold with a death's-head thereon;

Item, I give and bequeath unto Mr Edward Allen and his wife, to either of them a ring of gold with death's-heads thereon;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my loving sister-in-law, Mrs Shirley th' eldest of Preston in the county of Sussex, my calamanco gown, kirtle, cloak and doublet, three velvet forehead-cloths and one of taffeta, a cornet of velvet, a bongrace of taffety and all my own ordinary wearing linen;

Item, I give and bequeath unto Anne Harris, once my woman, forty shillings current money of England;

Item, I give and bequeath unto Joan Brett, wife of (blank) Brett, one pair of good ordinary sheets and a dozen of ordinary napkins;

Item, I give and bequeath unto (blank) Johnson, widow, late wife of William Johnson, deceased, twenty shillings of current money of England;

Item, I give and bequeath unto Judith Bullock an ordinary feather-bed with bolster, blankets, coverlet and two pairs of ordinary sheets, and twenty shillings of current money of England;

Item, I give and bequeath unto William Nazerbegg, the Persian boy, an ordinary feather-bed with bolster, coverlet and blankets, and two pairs of ordinary sheets, and to be bound apprentice according as my executor shall deem best and meetest for him;

Item, I give and bequeath to so many of the seven poor people in or near to Wiston aforesaid (that weekly received an allowance from me there) that shall be living at the time of my decease, the sum of three shillings four pence current money of England, a piece to every one of them;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my servants in manner and form following, viz., unto Lawrence Baskerville twenty-six pounds thirteen shillings four pence current money of England over and above all wages and other monies that shall be due and owing to him from me at the time of my decease;

Also I do give unto him the feather-bed whereon he now lieth, with bolster, pillow and blankets he useth therewith, and also a covering such as shall be thought fitting, and a bedstead and two pairs of sheets, and a pair of pillow-beres such as my executor shall think meet for him;

Item, I do give unto Frances Bromley ten pounds lawful money of England over and above her wages or any money that shall be due to her at my decease;

To Mary Follyott, six pounds thirteen shillings four pence, and to Suzan Stoniard forty shillings current money of England over and above their sages due to them at my decease;

And to all other of my servants in household half a year's wages over and above whatsoever shall be due to them at the time of my decease;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my true and loving friend, the said Sir Thomas Bishop, the sum of three hundred pounds current money of England being now in his own custody, upon the trust and confidence hereafter following, viz., that he, the said Sir Thomas Bishop, shall retain the same forever, and in lieu thereof shall pay or cause to be paid by his heirs or assigns unto Henry Shirley, my grandchild, during his natural life only for and towards his maintenance, the full sum of forty pounds yearly of current English money at two usual feasts in the year, viz., the feast of Sir Michael th' Archangel and the Annunciation of Our Blessed Lady St. Mary the Virgin by even and equal portions, the first payment thereof to begin at such of the feasts as shall first happen after my decease, and I do charge my executor that he see and provide that the same yearly sum of forty pounds be wholly used and employed according to my true intent and meaning, viz. for the only maintenance of the said Henry Shirley during his natural life and not otherwise;

And lastly I do make and ordain the said Sir Thomas Bishop the sole executor of this my last will and testament;

In witness whereof I have hereunto subscribed my name and set to my seal the day and year aforesaid;

Memorandum. Whereas I by my will have given and bequeathed unto my grandchild, Henry Shirley, the sum of forty pounds yearly during his life only for his maintenance, as by this my will it doth appear, and strictly charged my executor therein to see the said forty pounds paid for that purpose and not otherwise, these are therefore to signify that my further meaning and intent therein is that if my said grandchild, Henry Shirley, shall sell or dispose of the said forty pounds or any part thereof unto any person during his life otherwise than is herein intended and meant unto him, that then my executor shall forbear the yearly paying thereof and that the said gift by me to my said grandchild, Henry Shirley, shall utterly cease and be void as if there had been no such thing;

And I do hereby give and bequeath as an increase to that already by me in this my will given unto my loving daughter, the Lady Brocas formerly herein named, more one feather-bed, one bolster, a pillow, a pair of blankets and a covering, one pair of sheets and a pair of pillow-beres. Anne Shirley.

Subscribed, sealed and published in the presence of us, and the memorandum after the tester [=testor?] beginning with the word 'memorandum' and ending with the word 'pillow-beres', containing about four lines, was inserted before the sealing and publishing hereof. Lawrence Baskeruyte [=Baskerville], Robert Peito [=Peto], Richard Cobby.

A codicil to be annexed to the last will and testament of Dame Anne Shirley, widow, deceased.

Memorandum, that after the making and acknowledging of the will hereunto annexed, the said Lady Shirley, being of perfect mind and memory, and having an intent to add

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something to her will in writing, gave and bequeathed these legacies following by word of mouth, viz., first she gave and bequeathed to the Lady Delves forty shillings, and to Doctor Lionel [=Leonell] Sharpe, Doctor of Divinity, a ring of gold with a death's-head, which words or the like in effect she spake and uttered to her executor.

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum vnacum Codicillo nuncupato annexo apud London coram magistro Richardo Clarke legum doctore Surrogato venerabilis viri Domini Willelmi Bird militis legum etiam doctoris Curie Prerogatiue Cantuariensis magistri Custodis sive Commissarij legitime Constituti primo die mensis Aprilis Anno Domini Millesimo sexcentesimo vicesimo tertio Iuramento Domini Thome Bishopp militis et Baronetti et executoris in huiusmodi testamento nominati Cui Commissa fuit administracio bonorum iurium et Creditorum dicte defuncte De bene et fideliter administrando eadem Ad sancta Dei Evangelia Iurato examinatus

[=The above-written testament was proved, together with the nuncupative codicil annexed, at London before Master Richard Clarke, Doctor of the Laws, surrogate of the worshipful Sir William Bird, also Doctor of the Laws, lawfully constituted Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the first day of the month of April in the year of the Lord the thousand six hundred twenty-third by the oath of Sir Thomas Bishop, knight and baronet and executor 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 the same. Examined]