

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 23 April 1509 and proved 16 November 1513, of Sir Robert Corbet (b. about 1477, d. 11 April 1513).

The testator was the eldest son and heir of Sir Richard Corbet (b. 1451, d. 6 December 1493) and Elizabeth Devereux (d.1516), the daughter of Walter Devereux (1432-1485), 1st Baron Ferrers of Chartley, slain at the Battle of Bosworth on 22 August 1485. Elizabeth Devereux's nephew, Walter Devereux (born c.1489, d. 17 December 1558), 1st Viscount Hereford, the son and heir of John Devereux (c.1463/4-1501), 2nd Baron Ferrers of Chartley, was the great-grandfather of Queen's Elizabeth's favourite, Robert Devereux (1565-1601), 2nd Earl of Essex.

The testator's parents, Sir Richard Corbet (b. 1451, d. 6 December 1493) and Elizabeth Devereux (d.1516) had two sons (the testator, and another son, George), and five daughters: Mary Corbet, who married Sir Thomas Lacon (d.1536) of Willey, Shropshire (for his will, see TNA PROB 11/25, ff. 252-3); Anne Corbet, who married Sir Thomas Cornwall (1468-1538) of Burford; Elizabeth Corbet, who married Thomas Trentham (d.1518/9) of Shrewsbury (for his will, see TNA PROB 11/19, f. 136); Katherine Corbet, who married Thomas Onslow of Rodington; and Margaret Corbet (d.1573), who married Richard Clyve (d. 22 May 1562) of Walford, Shropshire. The testator's sister, Elizabeth Corbet, and her husband, Thomas Trentham (d.1518/9), were the great-grandparents of Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham (d.1612).

The testator married Elizabeth Vernon (d. 29 March 1563), the daughter of Sir Henry Vernon (b. circa 1441, d. 13 April 1515) of Haddon and his wife, Anne Talbot (d. 17 May 1494), the daughter of Sir John Talbot (1413-1460), 2nd Earl of Shrewsbury. Richard Vernon (d.1517) of Haddon, mentioned in the will below, was the second son and heir of the testator's father-in-law, Sir Henry Vernon (b. circa 1441, d. 13 April 1515). For the will of the testator's father-in-law, Sir Henry Vernon (b. circa 1441, d. 13 April 1515) of Haddon, see TNA PROB 11/18, ff. 66-7.

The testator and his wife, Elizabeth Vernon (d. 29 March 1563), had three sons: Roger Corbet (d.1538/9), who married Anne Windsor (d.1550/1), the daughter of Andrew Windsor (b.1467, d. 30 March 1543), 1st Lord Windsor; Richard Corbet (d.1564x6), who married Margaret (nee Savile), the widow of Thomas Wortley, esquire, of Wortley, Yorkshire, and daughter of Sir John Savile (d.1504) of Thornhill, Yorkshire; and Reginald Corbet (born c. 1510, d. 19 November 1566), who married Alice Gatewood (d.1603), daughter of John Gatewood of Wollerton, Shropshire, and Margaret Hill, sister of Sir Rowland Hill (c.1495-1561).

The testator's eldest son and heir, Roger Corbet (d.1538/9) was a ward of John de Vere (1442-1513), 13th Earl of Oxford (see TNA C 1/1485/58). For the will of the testator's son and heir, Roger Corbet (d.1538/9), see TNA PROB 11/27, f. 194. For the will of the testator's son, Richard Corbet (d.1564x6), see TNA PROB 11/48, f. 408. For the will of

the testator's son, Reginald Corbet (born c. 1510, d. 19 November 1566), see TNA PROB 11/49.

The testator and his wife, Elizabeth Vernon (d. 29 March 1563), also had four daughters: Jane, who married Thomas Lee (d.1561/2), the son and heir of Fulke Lee and Alice, the daughter of Sir Richard Cornwall of Berrington, Herefordshire (for the will of Thomas Lee, see TNA PROB 11/46, ff. 23-4); Joan or Anne, who married Thomas Newport (d.1548x51); Mary, who married Thomas Powell of Oswestry, and Dorothy, who married Sir Richard Mainwaring (b. about 1499, d. 30 September 1558) of Ightfield, Shropshire.

The testator's daughter, Joan or Anne Corbet, and her husband, Thomas Newport (d.1548/51), were the parents of Sir Richard Newport (d.1570/1), the owner of a copy of Hall's *Chronicle* in the British Library containing annotations thought to have been made by Shakespeare. For the will of Thomas Newport (d.1548/51), see TNA PROB 11/34, f. 112. For the will of Sir Richard Newport (d.1570/1), see TNA PROB 11/53, f. 290.

George Bromley (d.1545), appointed as one of the testator's executors, was George Bromley (d.1545) of Hodnet, Shropshire, who married Jane Lacon (b. about 1505), one of the daughters of Mary Corbet and Sir Thomas Lacon (d.1536). George Bromley (d.1545) was a first cousin of Margaret Bromley, the wife of Sir Richard Newport (d.1570/1), owner of the annotated copy of Hall's *Chronicle* mentioned above. George Bromley (d.1545) and Jane Lacon (b. about 1505) were the parents of Queen Elizabeth's Lord Chancellor, Sir Thomas Bromley (c.1530–1587), who was a trustee of Oxford's indenture entered into on 30 January 1575 prior to his departure for his continental tour (see ERO D/DRg2/25).

The testator's sister, Mary Corbet, and Sir Thomas Lacon (d.1536) had another daughter, Mary Lacon (d.1563), who married firstly, Thomas Acton (d.1546) of Sutton, Worcestershire, and by him had two sons, Lancelot and Gabriel, who died in infancy, and a daughter, Joyce Acton (1532-1595), who married Sir Thomas Lucy (b. in or before 1532, d. 1600) of Charlecote, famous for Shaksper of Stratford's alleged poaching of deer from his park. From the entry for Sir Thomas Lucy (b. in or before 1532, d. 1600) of Charlecote in the online edition of *The Dictionary of National Biography*:

Thomas Lucy was educated at home, at one time by John Fawkenner, an Oxford graduate, and then, for a year or so between the summer of 1545 and early in 1547, by John Foxe, the martyrologist. During this period Thomas, still only fourteen or so, was betrothed to Joyce (1532–1595), the twelve-year-old only child and heir of Thomas Acton of Sutton Park, in Worcestershire. Their marriage settlement is dated 1 August 1546, the marriage itself presumably taking place shortly afterwards. Five months later, in January 1547, Acton died, and his extensive estates, subject only to his wife's dowry, were thus inherited by his daughter.

Thomas Lucy might not now be so well known had his name not come to be associated with one of the earliest examples of Shakespeare folklore. Nicholas Rowe was the first to publish this, in 1709 and in some detail, but similar stories can be found in three other autonomous sources of late seventeenth-century date, all ultimately derived, no doubt, from local Stratford gossip. Rowe's account records that the young William Shakespeare, having got into bad company, had more than once stolen deer from Thomas Lucy's park at Charlecote, that he had been caught and rather too severely punished, and that in revenge had composed a ballad satirizing Lucy, which got him into such trouble that he had to leave Stratford for London. Another version of the story introduces the concept that Shakespeare's revenge included a caricature of Lucy in the person of Justice Shallow. Further embellished, this has proved to be one of the most popular and enduring Shakespeare legends, and has provoked much debate as to its authenticity. Some writers have drawn attention to inconsistencies (there was, for example, no formal park at Charlecote at this date), and few claim that the story can be true throughout. Nevertheless, during Shakespeare's youth Thomas Lucy was certainly well known in Stratford.

After the death of Thomas Acton (d.1546), Mary Lacon (d.1563) married George Vernon (d.1554/5) of Hodnet, who, by his first wife, Elizabeth Pigot, was the father of John Vernon (d.1592), the father of Elizabeth Vernon (b. 11 January 1573, d. after 1655), who married Henry Wriothesley (1573–1624), 3rd Earl of Southampton. For the will of Mary Lacon Acton Vernon (d.1563), see TNA PROB 11/46, ff. 157-8. For the will of George Vernon (d.1554/5) of Hodnet, see TNA PROB 11/37, f. 129.

For the foregoing see Richardson, Douglas, *Plantagenet Ancestry* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, pp. 310, 473-4, 485, 705; Corbet, Augusta Elizabeth, *The Family of Corbet*, Vol. II (London: St. Catherine's Press, n.d.), pp. 253,258, 263-97, available online; the pedigree of Corbet in Burke, John, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners*, Vol. III (London: Henry Colburn, 1838), pp. 189-90; the pedigree of Savile of Thornhill in Foster, Joseph, *Pedigrees of the County Families of Yorkshire*, Vol. II (London: W. Wilfred Head, 1874), available online; The Savile Family at <http://www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/sources/saville/clay2.shtml>; the pedigree of Clyve in Jewitt, Llewellyn, ed., *The Reliquary*, Vol. VI, 1865-6 (London: Bemrose & Sons), p. 27; the will of Margaret (nee Corbet) Clyve (d.1573), TNA PROB 11/55, ff. 251-2; the pedigree of Lee in *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, Vol. V, (Shrewsbury: Adnitt and Naunton, 1882), pp. 374-9, available online; and the entries in the online edition of *The Dictionary of National Biography* for the Vernon family; Walter Devereux (1432-1485), 1st Baron Ferrers of Chartley; Walter Devereux (born c.1489, d. 17 December 1558), 1st Viscount Hereford; Walter Devereux (1539-1576), 1st Earl of Essex; Reginald Corbet (born c.1510, d. 19 November 1566), Sir Thomas Bromley (c.1530–1587); and Sir Rowland Hill (c.1495-1561).

LM: Testamentum domini Roberti Corbet Militis

In the name of God, Amen. Whereas I, Sir Robert Corbet, knight, have made a feoffment by deed unto Sir Henry Vernon, knight, Thomas Englefield, knight, Thomas Cornwall, knight, Thomas Lacon, esquire, Roger Corbet, my son and heir apparent, esquire, Richard Vernon, esquire, Roger Thornes, esquire and George Onslowe of all and singular my lordships, manors, meses, lands and tenements, rents, reversions and fines and all other hereditaments with th' appurtenances in Hopton, Fitz, Eaton Constantine, Lawley, Waters Upton, Dallington, Linslade, Southcote(?), Howbridge Hill and Wigginton within the county of Salop, Northampton, Buckingham, Essex and Hertford, to have and to hold to them, their heirs and assigns, to the use of me, the foresaid Sir Robert, and of mine heirs, to fulfil my last will made or hereafter to be made, know ye, me, the said Sir Robert, whole of remembrance and perfect mind, thanked be God, make, ordain and declare my last will and testament in manner and form following:

First, I bequeath my soul to God Almighty and to his Blessed Mother, Saint Mary, and to all the holy company of heaven, and my body to be buried in the church of Saint Bartholomew at Moreton Corbet, if it please God I decease there, and if it happen me by the pleasure of God to decease in any other place, then I commit my body to be buried in such a holy place as mine executors think most meetliest and convenient;

Also I will that my said executors prepare and ordain for meat, drink, light and all other things necessary and belonging for me at the time of my burying as they think convenient and according after their discretion;

Item, I will that my said executors see my dirges and Masses be songen and said with secular priests, clerks and religious men at the same time as they shall think most expedient and profitable for my soul health;

Item, I will that my said executors cause my trentals and 30 Masses, every of them, to be songen and said with secular priests, clerks and religious men at the day of my said burying if they so may have priests to do it, and if they may not, then to see it be done as shortly after as they conveniently can have time;

Item, I will have that my said executors, in as short time as they can conveniently after my burying, prepare and ordain the Great Trental of Saint Gregory to be sung, said and done in due form and order as it ought to be for my soul and all Christian [+souls];

Item, I will that every secular priest, clerk and religious man be rewarded for their divine service saying and doing at the time of my said burying after the laudable custom thereto belonging and the discretion of my executors;

Item, I will that my said executors provide and hire two honest and conveniable priests, such as shall be of good name and fame, to song and say dirge Masses and other devout prayers by the space of 2 whole years next following the day of my said burying, to pray for my soul and all Christian souls in manner and form following, that is to say, every Monday during the said 2 years, every of them to say Masses of the Trinity, Dirge and

Commendations; every Tuesday, Mass of the Holy Ghost and Our Lady[’s] Psalter; every Wednesday, Mass of Requiem, Dirge and Commendations; every Thursday, Mass of the 5 Wounds, 7 Psalms and Litany; every Friday, Mass of John(?), Dirge and Commendations; every Saturday, Mass of Our Lady and Our Lady[’s] Psalter; and every of the said priests to have 8 marks for their hire or more after as they be hired;

Item, I bequeath to Roger, my son and heir, my best salt with the covering, my best piece of silver with the covering, my best goblet and half my spoons, and all the residue of my said plate I bequeath to Elizabeth, my wife, during her life, and after her decease to remain to Roger, my said son;

Item, I bequeath half my stuff of household and half my cattle to Roger, my said son, and the other half to Elizabeth, my wife;

Item, I will that my wearing gear and all other things not bequeathed stand at my pleasure till my departing to give, do with and bequeath where I or my executors shall think most best and convenient;

Item, I will that my said feoffees or the overlivers of them and their heirs shall stand and be seised of and in the said lordships, manors, meses, lands, tenements and all other hereditaments above-rehearsed to th’ intent they shall suffer mine executors to take, receive and levy th’ issues and profits of all the said lordships, manors, meses, lands and tenements and all other hereditaments with th’ appurtenances and every parcel of them to pay my debts and all other things pertaining to my interment and soul health in manner and form abovesaid, and after that done, I will that my said executors with the yearly profits and issues aforesaid content, pay and bestow to and for the marriage of every of my daughters, that is to say, Anne, Dorothy and Jane, the sum of 100 marks and their arrayment, which sums, after my debts paid, shall be received to the use and form following, that is to say, that every of my said daughters shall have yearly a portion of the said issues and profits of the said lordships, manors, meses, lands and tenements with their appurtenances till her said sum and bequest be fully content and paid;

Also I will that my said daughters and every of them have sufficient finding of meat, drink and cloth convenient and meetly for them, over and beside their portion of 100 marks apiece and their arrayment abovesaid for their marriage, till they be married, and at such time as any of them shall be married, she that so shall be married shall have her portion if it be levied, or as much as is levied, and her arrayment, and no further finding, and that sum of her portion that is not paid at the time of her marriage to be paid in manner and form abovesaid;

Item, I will that my executors content and pay to and for the marriage of Margaret, my sister, the sum of 40 marks and her arrayment of the yearly issues and profits abovesaid, and her finding of meat, drink and arrayment till she be married upon the same issues and profits beside her said bequest;

Item, I will that my said feoffees or the overlivers of them, after my debts paid and my will and testament in everything accomplished and fulfilled, make an estate of all the said lordships, manors, meses, lands and tenements and all other hereditaments with th' appurtenances abovesaid unto Roger Corbet, my son and heir, and to the heirs of his body lawfully begotten, and for lack of such issue, the remainder to my right heirs;

Item, I make and ordain Thomas Cornwall, knight, Thomas [], esquire, Elizabeth, my wife, George Bromley and George Onslowe my executors, and Henry Vernon, knight, and Richard Vernon, his son and heir, overseers;

In witness whereof to this my present will and testament I have put to my seal and sign manual the 23rd day of April in the year of our Lord God 1509, and of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King Henry the 7th after the conquest of England the 24th.

Probatum fuit suprascriptum testamentum coram domino Apud Lamhith xvj die Mensis Nouembris Anno domini Millesimo quingentesimo terciodecimo habentis dum vixit et mortis suo tempore bona siue debita in diuersis Diocesis sive(?) provincijs Cantuariensis Iuramento Domine Elizabethe Relicte et Executricis in huiusmodi testamento nominate in persona Willelmi Cromwell procuratoris sui in hac parte sufficienter et legitime constituti Ac approbatum et insinuatum Et commissa fuit Administracio omnium et singulorum bonorum et debitorum dicti defuncti prefate Executrici de bene et fideliter Administrando eadem Ac de pleno et fideli Inuentario &c citra festum Natalis domini proximum futurum &c Necnon de plano et vero compoto &c Reddendo Ad sancta dei Euangelia Iurate Alijs Executoribus onus execucionis testamenti eiusdem expresse refutarunt

[=The above-written testament was proved before the Lord [+Archbishop?] at Lambeth on the 16th day of the month of November in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred thirteenth, having while he lived and at the time of his death goods or debts in divers dioceses or provinces of Canterbury, by the oath of Lady Elizabeth, relict and executrix appointed in the same testament, in the person of William Cromwell, her proctor sufficiently and lawfully constituted in that respect, and probated and registered, and administration was granted of all and singular the goods and debts of the said deceased to the forenamed executrix, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer the same, and a full and true inventory etc. before the feast of the Birth of the Lord next to come etc., and also to render a plain and true account etc., the other executors having expressly refused the burden of the execution of the same testament.]