

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 26 June 1539 and proved 5 July 1541, of Sir William Kingston (c.1476–1540), brother-in-law of Elizabeth de Vere (d.1537), Countess of Oxford, the second wife of John de Vere (1442-1513), 13th Earl of Oxford. For the testator's relationship by marriage to the Countess, see Norcliffe, Charles Best, ed., *The Visitation of Yorkshire in the Years 1563 and 1563* by William Flower, Vol. 16, (London: Publications of the Harleian Society, 1881), p. 280, available online. In her will, the Countess leaves these bequests to her sister, Mary, and to her brother-in-law, Sir William Kingston:

Item, I give and bequeath to my brother, Sir William Kingston, knight, my Jesus of diamonds set in gold with 3 great pearls hanging at the same, also my 2 flagons of silver having my Lord of Oxenford's arms in them.

Item, I give and bequeath to my sister, Dame Mary, his wife, a basin and an ewer of silver chased gilt of the newest making afore the chance of fire, weighing 92 ounces; my goblet of gold graven with crankettes and mullets, weighing 13 ounces 1 quarter; and also my book of gold set with pearl.

Item, I give and bequeath to my sister, Dame Mary Kingston, and to my sister, Jane Brewes, all my samplers, evenly to be divided between them, and I will my said sister Kingston to have the choice.

For the will of the Countess, see TNA PROB 11/27, ff. 84-6.

In the will below, the testator leaves the 'Jesus of diamonds' which had been bequeathed to him by his sister-in-law, the Countess of Oxford, to the overseer of his will, Thomas Cromwell, (executed 28 July 1540), Lord Privy Seal,:

Item, I make and ordain my Lord Privy Seal to be overseer of this my said will, and for his pains to be taken therein I bequeath to him a Jesus of diamonds which the late Countess of Oxford gave me.

From the online edition of *The Dictionary of National Biography*:

Sir William Kingston (c.1476–1540), courtier and administrator, is of uncertain origins, but was probably a member of a Gloucestershire family related to the barons Berkeley of Berkeley Castle; he also had some connection with the third duke of Buckingham. His marriages are uncertain as well: his first two wives (the order is unclear) were Anne, widow of Sir John Guise (d. 1501), and Elizabeth (surname unknown). By 1534 he had wed Mary, daughter of Richard Scrope and widow of Edward Jerningham (d. 1515) of Somerleighton, Suffolk. He had one son, Anthony Kingston, and one or two daughters.

As constable of the Tower from 28 May 1524 Kingston was responsible for the custody of a number of state prisoners. In November 1529 he was sent from London to Yorkshire to take charge of Wolsey and, according to the cardinal's biographer George Cavendish,

treated his prisoner with consideration. He had several conversations with the dying minister, in one of which the latter advised him how to deal with the king if he ever became a privy councillor. Kingston, who subsequently told Henry how his mission had fared, was a councillor by 1533. In 1536 he similarly treated Anne Boleyn with respect during her imprisonment in the Tower, assuring her that she would be taken to the royal lodgings she had occupied before her coronation rather than to a dungeon, as she feared. It is possible, however, that his reports were the basis for some of the charges against Anne at her trial. His wife Mary was one of the queen's attendants before her execution, to which Kingston escorted her. In 1540 it was his duty to inform Thomas Cromwell of the charges against him, and presumably to carry the fallen minister's response to the king.

During the last years of his life Kingston received additional offices and lands. In 1539 he was named comptroller of the king's household and was installed as a knight of the Garter. He profited from the dissolution of the monasteries, in March 1537 receiving the site and possessions of the Cistercian abbey of Flaxley, Gloucestershire. He was granted a number of wardships, including that of Edmund Jerningham, his wife's son from her first marriage. After Cromwell's fall he acquired, for £1000, the manors of Painswick and Morton Valence, both in Gloucestershire, which Cromwell had purchased from the Lisles for £1400.

Kingston died at Painswick on 14 September 1540 and was buried there. In his will, drawn up on 26 June 1539, he made a traditional bequest of his soul to God, the Virgin, and the heavenly host. Among numerous bequests of money, plate, and clothes, he left to his son and heir, Anthony, six great silver-gilt bowls given him by the king of France. His wife, William Fitzwilliam, earl of Southampton, and Sir Anthony Browne were named as his executors.

For further information on the testator's executors, Sir Anthony Browne (c.1500-1548), and his half-brother, William Fitzwilliam (c.1490-1542), Earl of Southampton, see the entries in the online edition of *The Dictionary of National Biography*. The testator's relationship to Sir Anthony Browne (c.1500-1548) may have been partly due to Browne's marriage by 1528 to Alice (d. March 1540), the daughter of Sir John Gage (1479-1556) of Firle, since the testator's daughter, Bridget Kingston, married Sir George Baynham, who after her death married Cecilia Gage, the daughter of Sir John Gage (1479-1556) of Firle. The testator's granddaughter, Frances Baynham (d.1583), the daughter of Sir George Baynham and his first wife, Bridget Kingston, married the testator's stepson, Sir Henry Jerningham (1509/10-1572). See the entry for Henry Jerningham (1509/10-1572) in the online edition of *The Dictionary of National Biography*; Maclean, John, ed., *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society for 1881-82*, Vol. VI, (Bristol, C.T. Jefferies), pp. 149-151, available online; and the pedigree of the family of Gage in Questier, Michael C., *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

It is perhaps of interest that the eldest son and heir of the testator's executor, Sir Anthony Browne (c.1500-1548) and his wife, Alice Gage (d. March 1540), was Anthony

Browne, Viscount Montagu (1528–1592), the maternal grandfather of Shakespeare's dedicatee, Henry (1573-1624), 3rd Earl of Southampton.

The testator's wife, Mary (nee Scrope) Jerningham Kingston (d.1548), had been married, firstly, as his second wife, to Edward Jerningham (d.1515) of Somerleyton, by whom she had a son, Sir Henry Jerningham (1509/10-1572), to whom the testator leaves a bequest in the will below:

Item, I bequeath to my son-in-law, Henry Jerningham, twenty pound in money, a gown of black satin furred with sables which the King's Grace gave me.

The testator also leaves a bequest in the will below to his stepson, Edmund Jerningham:

Item, I bequeath to my son-in-law, Edmund Jerningham, twenty pound in money, and also my gown of tawny velvet lined with tawny taffeta.

According to the online edition of *The Dictionary of National Biography*, Edmund Jerningham was also a son of the testator's wife by her first marriage:

[Sir William Kingston] was granted a number of wardships, including that of Edmund Jerningham, his wife's son from her first marriage.

Another source states that this Edmund Jerningham was a gentleman of the bedchamber to King Henry VIII, and died 9 February 1546. See Betham, William, *The Baronetage of England*, Vol. I, (Ipswich: Burrell and Bransby, 1801), p. 227, available online.

For the will of Edward Jerningham (d.1515), see TNA PROB 11/18, ff. 30-1. For the will of Sir Henry Jerningham (1509/10–1572), see TNA PROB 11/55, ff. 134-6. For the will of Mary (nee Scrope) Jerningham Kingston, see TNA PROB 11/32, ff. 168-9.

RM: Testamentum domini Willelmi Kingeston militis

In the name of God. I, Sir William Kingston, knight of the right honourable Order of the Garter, the 26th day of June in the year of Our Lord God a thousand five hundred thirty and nine and in the 31st year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King Henry the 8th, being in good health and perfect remembrance, thanks be to Our Lord God, revoking and annulling all wills and testaments by me afore this time made, do make and declare this my last will and testament in manner and form as hereafter doth follow and ensue:

Inprimis, I bequeath my soul unto Almighty God, my Maker and Redeemer, and to Our Lady Saint Mary the Virgin, and to all the whole company of heaven, and my body to be buried in the next parish church to the place where it shall please Almighty God to take me to his mercy out of this transitory life;

Item, I bequeath to the parson of the church of Wanstead in the county of Essex twenty shillings for my tithes there forgotten;

Also I bequeath to the vicar of Painswick in the county of Gloucester for like cause twenty shillings;

Item, I bequeath to Sir John Dauntsey, knight, a cup of silver and gilt of the value of four pound;

Also I bequeath to Sir John Seyntloo [=Saintloe], knight, a cup of silver and gilt to the value of five pound;

Also I bequeath to my son, Anthony Kingston, 6 great bowls of silver and gilt with one cover, and two flagons of silver and gilt, the which the French King gave me;

Item, I bequeath to my said son my roaned horse which I lately bought, and also a gown of black satin furred with sables, the which the late bishop of Karber(?) gave unto me, and a gown of black velvet lined with satin bordered with silk and gold, and a jacket of crimson velvet, and also all my harness provided for my body;

Item, I bequeath to my son-in-law, Henry Jerningham, twenty pound in money, a gown of black satin furred with sables which the King's Grace gave me;

Item, I bequeath to my son-in-law, Edmund Jerningham, twenty pound in money, and also my gown of tawny velvet lined with tawny taffeta;

Item, I bequeath to Thomas Gyes [=Guise] a jacket of black velvet bordered with 6 threads of gold, and also a cup of silver of the value of four pound;

Item, I bequeath to John Gyes th' elder a cup of silver to the value of four pound;

Item, I bequeath to all and every my servants, the which have served me above twenty years their whole year's wages, and to all other my servants, being serving-men, their half year's wages;

Item, I bequeath to my brother, George Kingston, toward the marriage of his daughters, forty pound in money;

Also I bequeath to Bartilmewe [=Bartholomew] Kingston five marks in money;

Item, I bequeath to Richard Crumwell [=Cromwell], esquire, a cup of silver to the value of five pound;

Item, I will that Mary, my wife, shall have the full and whole occupation and profits coming and growing of my farm at Bidfelde [=Bidfield?] in the county of Gloucester, the which I have taken of the King's Grace for term of years yet during, and also all the stock

of sheep being on the said farm, to her own use during her natural life, and after her decease I will that all the said sheep and stock of sheep shall wholly remain unto my said son, Anthony Kingston, provided always and my full mind and intent is that if my said son fortune to decease, living my said wife, then she shall have all the said farm and stock of sheep to her own use and to dispose it at her pleasure;

Item, I will that my said son, Anthony Kingston, shall have all my interest and term of years which I have in the farm of Wisehancestor(?) in the said county of Gloucester, together with the same stock of sheep being on the said farm;

And whereas my said wife hath an estate made to her for term of her life of and in the manor of Clopton and Russhe in the county of Berkshire which I purchased of Leonard Rede, esquire, the reversion thereof after her decease belonging to me and to mine heirs, I will and my full mind is that if the said Leonard Rede do content and pay or cause to be contented and paid nine hundred and forty marks sterling for the redemption of the said manor of Clopton and Rushe according to the indentures between me and the said Leonard afore this time made, that then such person or persons to whom the said money shall be paid within three years next after the payment of the said money shall therewith purchase as much other manors, lands, tenements and hereditaments as they can conveniently buy and purchase with the said money, and shall cause a sufficient and sure estate thereof to be made to my said wife for term of her life in recompense of the said manor of Clopton and Russhe, and after her decease all the same to remain to my right heirs;

And my further mind and will is that if the said person or persons to whom the said money shall be paid as is afore-rehearsed do not purchase the said manors, lands, tenements and hereditaments within the said three years, then I will that all the said nine hundred forty marks shall be distributed and disposed in manner and form following, that is to say, that my said wife have three hundred marks, parcel of the said sum of nine hundred forty marks, to her own use and my said son, Anthony, to have three hundred forty marks, also parcel of the said sum, and three hundred marks, residue of the said sum of nine hundred forty mark, I will that Francis Baynarde shall have for his preferment;

And all the residue of my goods and chattels, as well such as be movable as such which be unmovable, after that my debts be paid, my funerals finished, I freely give and bequeath to my said wife;

And further I make and ordain my said wife and the right honourable Earl of Southampton and Sir Anthony Browne, knight, mine executors, and I bequeath to the said Earl of Southampton for his pains to be taken about the execution of this my said will a cup of silver and gilt with a cover of the value of five pound, and also five pounds in money, and to the said Sir Anthony Browne for like cause a cup of silver and gilt of the value of four pounds sterling, and also five pound sterling;

Item, I make and ordain my Lord Privy Seal to be overseer of this my said will, and for his pains to be taken therein I bequeath to him a Jesus of diamonds which the late Countess of Oxford gave me;

In witness of all which premises I, the said Sir William Kingston, to this my present will and testament have subscribed my name. William Kingston.

Probatum fuit suprascriptum Testamentum coram Domino apud London quinto die mensis Iulij Anno Dominj Millesimo quingentesimo quadragesimo primo Ac approbatum et insinuatum etc Et comissa fuit administracio omnium et singulorum bonorum Iurium et creditorum dicti defuncti Relicte et Executricis in huiusmodi testamento nominate de bene et fideliter administrando eadem Ac de pleno et fideli Inventario omnium et singulorum bonorum huiusmodi conficiendo citra festum secundi annmais(?) proximum futurum exhibendo Necnon de planoque vero compoto reddendo Ad sancta dei Euangelia iurate Reseruata potestate alteris Executoribus cum venerint

[=The above-written testament was proved before the Lord [+Archbishop] at London on the fifth day of the month of July in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred forty-first, and probated and entered etc., and administration was granted of all and singular the goods, rights and credits of the said deceased to the relict and executrix named in the same testament, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer the same, and to prepare a full and faithful inventory of all and singular the goods of the same, and to exhibit [+it] before the feast of the second(?) [] next to come, and also to render a true and plain account, with power reserved to the other executors when they shall have come etc.]