

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 20 May 1544 and proved 10 March 1549, of Edmund Sheffield (1521-1549), whose wife was Oxford's paternal aunt, Anne de Vere (d.1572). The following excerpts are taken from the online edition of *The Dictionary of National Biography*:

Edmund Sheffield, first Baron Sheffield (1521–1549), nobleman, was born on 21 November 1521, the elder son of Sir Robert Sheffield (d. 1531), of West Butterwick, Lincolnshire, and his first wife, Jane Stanley, a second cousin of Henry VIII. His family had prospered in recent generations, mainly through legal practice, and Edmund, who had a younger brother, David, and a sister, Eleanor, was heir to a substantial estate in the north midlands and Lincolnshire. Following his father's death on 15 November 1531, on 28 April 1533 Edmund's wardship was granted to George Boleyn, Viscount Rochford. Rochford was executed on 17 May 1536, and on 2 January 1538 the wardship and marriage were granted to John de Vere, fifteenth earl of Oxford; the grant probably confirmed an existing situation, for by the end of that month Sheffield was married to Oxford's daughter Anne, and the earl was asking Thomas Cromwell to be good lord to his son-in-law. About this time Sheffield was duly numbered among the 'Gentlemen of my lord Privy Seal's mete to be preferred unto the King's Majesty's service' (LP Henry VIII, 13/2, no. 1184).

Predeceased by his first wife, Sir Robert Sheffield had later married Margaret Zouche. Following Sir Robert's death his widow herself remarried, her second husband being John Cavendish.

Having attained his majority at the end of 1542, [Edmund Sheffield] had livery of his lands on 7 February 1543. In 1544 he went with the army to France. Before he left, on 20 May, he made his will, which reveals that by this time he had a son, John, and two daughters, Frances and Eleanor. On the same day he conveyed his estates in Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire, and Derbyshire to trustees headed by Henry Howard, earl of Surrey.

At the end of 1546 Sheffield was one of ten men considered by Henry VIII for promotion to the baronage, and one of only four to be eventually ennobled: his charter of creation was given on 16 February 1547. His qualifications in terms of past services are hardly conspicuous. He was a wealthy man, however, able in his will to order the payment of debts and bequests totalling some £3000, and with lands assessed at £400 per annum in 1547, and it may have been hoped that he and Sir William Willoughby of Parham, likewise made a baron, would fill a gap left in the structure of authority in Lincolnshire in 1545 by the death of the county's greatest lord, Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, leaving a nine-year-old heir. He may also have owed his ennoblement to his personal qualities: loyal, brave, cultivated—Thomas Fuller later wrote of him, 'Great his skill in music, who wrote a book of sonnets after the Italian fashion' (Fuller, 2.291)—and with reformist leanings in religion, perhaps he was simply the sort of promising young man the old king liked and wished to advance.

In 1549 he joined the royal army confronting Kett's rising in Norfolk, and was a member of the force with which the marquess of Northampton tried to occupy Norwich on 31 July. The incursion came to grief in the city streets, and Sheffield fell into a ditch while wheeling his horse and was killed by the rebels, pleading in vain for his life—a butcher named Fulke is said to have struck the fatal blow. He was buried next day in St Martin's at the Palace, Norwich.

As the foregoing account indicates, Margaret (nee Zouche) Cavendish, the daughter of Sir John Zouche of Codnor, Derbyshire, whom the testator refers to throughout the will below as his mother, was in fact his stepmother.

The testator's mother, Jane Stanley, was the daughter of George Stanley (c.1460–1503), eldest son and heir of Thomas Stanley, 1st Earl of Derby (c.1433–1504), and his first wife, Eleanor Neville, the daughter of Richard Neville (1400-1460), 5th Earl of Salisbury, the eldest son of Ralph Neville (c.1364–1425), 1st Earl of Westmorland, and his second wife, Joan Beaufort (d. 1440), daughter of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. Richard Neville (1400-1460) was thus the nephew of Henry IV, and a close kinsman of all three Lancastrian kings. In 1422 he married Alice (c.1406–1462), sole daughter and heir of Thomas Montagu, Earl of Salisbury (1388–1428). Eleanor Neville's sister, Margaret Neville, was the first wife of John de Vere (1442-1513), 13th Earl of Oxford. There was thus a relationship between the families of the testator and Anne de Vere (d.1572) prior to their marriage.

Before 26 February 1480/1, the testator's maternal grandfather, George Stanley, married Joan Strange (d. 1514), heir of the barony of Strange of Knockin, the daughter of John, 8th Lord Strange of Knokin and his wife, Jacquetta Woodville.

The testator's maternal grandfather and great-grandfather played pivotal roles in the Battle of Bosworth, as depicted in Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Their unique position in the battle came about because the testator's great-grandfather, Thomas Stanley, first Earl of Derby (c.1433–1504), after the death of his first wife, Eleanor Neville, married, as his second wife, Margaret Beaufort, the mother of the eventual victor of the Battle of Bosworth, King Henry VII. From the online edition of *The Dictionary of National Biography*:

Appointed steward of the king's household late in 1471, [Thomas Stanley, first Earl of Derby (c.1433–1504),] was thenceforward a regular member of the royal council. The death of his first wife some time before 1471 severed his connection with the Nevilles and made possible, some time early in 1472, a marriage even more distinguished and politically significant. Margaret Beaufort, countess of Richmond, his new wife, was the mother of Henry Tudor and potentially heir-general of the house of Lancaster. Yet the marriage was probably blessed by Edward IV, and strengthened rather than weakened Stanley's position at court, where a match between Elizabeth of York and Henry Tudor was mooted.

Richard cannot wholly have trusted Stanley. When in the summer of 1485 the latter took leave to return to Lathom the king asked that his son, George Stanley, Lord Strange, take his place at court. The Stanleys had been in communication with Henry Tudor and the Lancastrian exiles for some time. Henry Tudor's strategy of landing in Wales and crossing to Shrewsbury depended on the support of Sir William Stanley, the chamberlain of Chester and north Wales, and presumably on that of Stanley himself. Once informed of the invasion, the king ordered the two brothers to raise the men of the region in readiness to take the field against the pretender. On hearing that Henry Tudor was marching unopposed through Wales, Richard ordered Lord Stanley to join him at once. According to the continuator of the Crowland chronicle, Stanley excused himself on the grounds of illness. By this stage the king had firm evidence of Stanley complicity. After an abortive bid to escape from the court, Lord Strange confessed that he, his uncle Sir William Stanley, and his cousin Sir John Savage (d. 1492) were in league with Henry Tudor. The king proclaimed the two knights traitors, and let it be known that Strange was hostage for his father's loyalty in the coming conflict.

From Shakespeare's *Richard III* (V.v 342-6):

[Enter a messenger]

K. Richard. What says Lord Stanley? Will he bring his power?

Messenger. My Lord, he doth deny to come.

K. Richard. Off with his son George's head!

*Norfolk. My lord, the enemy is past the marsh,
After the battle let George Stanley die.*

The testator's grandfather, George, Lord Strange, died after a banquet in London in December 1503. It is said that he was poisoned.

Oxford's first cousin, the testator's son and heir, John (c.1538–1568), 2nd Baron Sheffield of Butterwick, Lincolnshire, married Douglas Howard (1542/3–1608), the daughter of William, 1st Lord Howard of Effingham. Shortly after her husband's death on 10 December 1568, Douglas Sheffield embarked upon a liaison with the Earl of Leicester. She later claimed that a secret marriage occurred about 1571 and, although the evidence for this union is inconclusive, she did bear Leicester a son. The anonymous author of *Leicester's Commonwealth* (1584), charges Leicester with the murder of Oxford's first cousin, John (c.1538–1568), 2nd Baron Sheffield:

Long after this, [Leicester] fell in love with the Lady Sheffield, whom I signified before, & then also had he the same fortune to have her husband die quickly with an extreme rheum in his head (as it was given out), but as other say of an artificial catarrh that stopped his breath.

The testator's widow married John Brock of Colchester. She was buried at Stepney, Middlesex 14 February 1571/2. See Richardson, Douglas, *Plantagenet Ancestry* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2004), pp. 647-8.

Thomas (1506-1558), 1st Lord Darcy of Chiche, named as a trustee and executor in the will below, was the testator's brother-in-law, the husband of Anne de Vere's sister, Elizabeth de Vere (d.1565).

The Lady Anne Grey mentioned in the will was Anne (nee Barlee), the second wife of the testator's paternal grandfather, Sir Robert Sheffield (d.1497), who left her an annuity of 100 marks out of lands in Coningsby and West Butterwick in his will. After Sir Robert Sheffield's death, Anne married Sir John Grey of Blisworth. See Challen, W.H., 'Lady Anne Grey', *Notes and Queries*, 1963, Vol. 10, pp. 5-9. For the will of Lady Anne Grey, see TNA PROB 11/40, ff. 149-152.

LM: Edmundus Sheffelde

In the name of God, Amen. The 20th day of May in the year of Our Lord God 1544 and of the reign of our most Sovereign Lord Henry the 8th by the grace of God of England, France and Ireland King, Defensor of the Faith, and in earth under God Supreme Head of the Church of England and Ireland the 36th, I, Edmund Sheffield of West Butterwick in the county of Lincoln, esquire, of whole mind and good memory, maketh this my last will and testament in manner and form following:

First, I bequeath my soul to Almighty Jesus, and to all the holy company of heaven, and my body to be buried within the holy ground where it shall please God to provide for it;

Also I bequeath for my mortuary that that the law of the church will;

And further will and declare this my last will and testament as concerning my manors, lands, tenements and other hereditaments in form following, that is to say, that David Sheffield, my brother, shall have my manor of Woodbury now in my possession, and also the reversion of all such lands and tenements as Lady Margaret Cavendish, my mother, hath assigned to her in dower in Woodbury aforesaid when at the pleasure of God it shall chance her to decease, to have and to hold the said manor in possession & reversion as is aforesaid to the said David Sheffield for term of his life;

And further for the payment of my debts unto the King's Majesty that I do owe unto his Grace's Highness, I declare my last will and testament as hereafter ensueth, that is to say, I will and declare this to be my last will and testament, that Thomas Darcy, knight, Lady Anne, my wife, George Zouche, esquire, and John Sutton, esquire, their executor[s] and assign[s], shall immediately from the time of my death receive and take all the rents, issues and profits of all and singular my manors of Hilderstone in the county of Stafford, Humby, Bratoft, Borowe, Winthorpe, Ingoldmells, Wrangle, Sibsey, Halton, Skegness, Sutton, Irby, with all and singular their members and appurtenances in the county of Lincoln, Walpole with the appurtenances in the county of Norfolk, Measham and Welysley [=Willesley?] with their appurtenances in the county of Derby, unto such time as they have received of the clear yearly profits thereof the sum of seven hundred and six

pounds thirteen shillings and four pence to and for the payments of such debts as I do now owe unto our said Sovereign Lord the King's Majesty, as appeareth by my several obligations thereof made;

Also I will that immediately after my said debts paid, the aforesaid Thomas Darcy, knight, Lady Anne, my wife, George Zouche, esquire, and John Sutton, esquire, shall take and receive the issues, revenues and profits of the same manors, lands and tenements and other hereditaments last above-rehearsed unto such time as they have received and taken the sum of one thousand seven hundred and three pounds eighteen shillings and two pence to th' intents and uses following, that is to say, for the marriage of my two daughters, Eleanor and Frances, two thousand marks, and the residue of the said sum of £1703 18s 2d that the foresaid Thomas Darcy, knight, Lady Anne, my wife, George Zouche, esquire and John Sutton, esquire, their executors or assigns, shall receive and employ the same unto the use of such child or children as Lady Anne, my wife, now is or shall be conceived with by me, the said Edmund, and if so chance and fortune that my said wife, Lady Anne, be not with child as is aforesaid, then I will that the foresaid Thomas Darcy, Lady Anne, George Zouche and John Sutton shall employ and bestow the said residue of th' aforesaid sum of £1703 18s 2d to th' use & preferment of the said David Sheffield, my brother, and if it fortune the said David to decease before he hath received the said residue of the sum beforesaid, that then I will the same residue so unpaid to be employed and bestowed to the enstoring of the pastures and furnitures of my head houses of Butterwick and Coningsby for th' use of John Sheffield, my son and heir apparent, and of my heirs, and if it fortune my said daughters, Eleanor and Frances, to die, as God defend, afore the said sum of 2000 marks be paid as is aforesaid, that then the said sum of money remaining unpaid to go and be delivered to the heirs of me, the said Edmund;

And further I will and declare this for my last will and testament for the payment of the residue of my debts that the foresaid Thomas Darcy, Lady Anne, my wife, George Zouche and John Sutton shall have and take the revenues, issues and profits of all my manors, lands and tenements with their members and appurtenances in Crakemarsh, Marchington, Creighton, Strongshelf, Uttoxeter, Clayton, Griffyth, Hanchurch, Hanford, Keele, Whitmore, Delves, Rugges and Chesterton in the county of Stafford unto such time as they have contented and paid unto my creditors the sum of six hundred forty and four pounds and six shillings, and after the same sum paid, I will that John Cavendish, knight, Lady Margaret, his wife, and the abovesaid John Sutton, their executors and assigns, shall have, take and receive of the issues, revenues and profits of all my said manors, lands and tenements last above-named, the sum of two hundred and fourteen pounds fifteen shillings and four pence for & towards the marriage of Eleanor Sheffield, my sister, and the said sum of £214 15s 4d to be delivered as it shall grow yearly to my said sister immediately after my said debts paid, and in case that any parcel or part of the foresaid sum of £644 6s do remain in th' hands of th' aforesaid Thomas Darcy, Lady Anne, my wife, George Zouche and John Sutton after all my debts well and truly paid, then I will that the said part and parcel be delivered unto the said Eleanor, my sister, towards her preferment and marriage, so that it amounteth not above the sum of one hundred marks,

and if there remain more than one hundred marks, then I will that David Sheffield, my brother, shall have the same;

And further I will that if the foresaid Eleanor, my sister, do die, as God defend, afore she be married, or marry without the assent of John Cavendish, knight, Lady Margaret, his wife, George Zouche and John Sutton abovesaid, her friends, that then the said sums of money shall be delivered by the said John Cavendish, Lady Margaret, his wife, and John Sutton and other above-named unto the said David Sheffield, my brother;

And further I will and declare this for my last will and testament that the said Thomas Darcy, Lady Anne, my wife, George Zouche and John Sutton, for their labours and charges in well and truly executing of this my last will according to the true intent and purport of my mind herein declared, shall have the sum of one hundred seven pounds seven shillings and eight pence, to be received by them of th' issues and profits of the manors of Crakemarsh and other lands and tenements last above-named;

Also I will that after all th' aforesaid sums of money be well and truly contented and paid after my true intent and mind afore declared, that Anne Sheffield, my cousin, shall have towards her marriage out of the said manors of Crakemarsh and other last above-named, the sum of one hundred marks;

And also I will that after the said hundred marks paid, Anne Buckwood shall have out of the said manors of Crakemarsh and other last above-named the sum of 40 marks;

Also I will that after the said 40 marks paid, that Anne Sheffield and Margaret Sheffield, my aunts, shall have out of the said manors of Crakemarsh and other last above-specified the sum of two hundred marks;

And after the said two hundred marks paid, I will that (blank), my aunt, wife of Thomas Monson, shall have of th' issues and profits of the same lands the sum of one hundred marks to th' use and preferment of her and her children;

And after the said one hundred marks paid, I will that Agnes Zouche and Cecily Zouche, my aunts, shall have of th' issues and profits of the said manors last above-named the sum of one 100 marks;

Also I will that after the said 100 marks paid, the Lady Margaret Cavendish, my mother, shall have of th' issues and profits of the said manors last above-named the sum of £176 18s 4d;

Also I will and declare this my last will and testament, that immediately after all sums of money had, received and taken of th' aforesaid manors of Crakemarsh and other next above-mentioned and fully contented and paid in manner and form aforesaid, that the afore-named Thomas Darcy, Lady Anne, my wife, George Zouche and John Sutton shall take and receive the revenues, issues & profits of the said manors of Crakemarsh and other next above-mentioned unto such time as they shall have received the sum of £214

15s 4d to th' use of the abovesaid John Cavendish, knight, and Lady Margaret, his wife, my mother, to th' intent they shall be better unto my friends;

And further I will that Lady Anne, my wife, after the decease of Lady Anne Grey, immediately shall have one annuity or yearly rent of one hundred marks going out of my manors of Butterwick and Coningsby for term of her life in like sort and form as the Lady Grey now hath and enjoyeth for term of her life the same;

And further I give and bequeath by this my last will and testament to John Sheffield, my sons and heir apparent, all my dominions, lordships, manors, lands and tenements with their appurtenances in this my last will mentioned, and also all and singular my other dominions, manors, lands and tenements, rents, reversions and services and other hereditaments with their appurtenances within the realm of England, to have and to hold all the said dominions, manors and other the premises with their appurtenances to the said John Sheffield, my son, and to the heirs males of his body lawfully begotten, and for default of such issue male the remainder thereof to the heirs males of the said Edmund Sheffield lawfully begotten, and for default of such issue male the remainder thereof to David Sheffield, my brother, and to the heirs males of his body lawfully begotten, and for default of such issue male the remainder thereof to the right heirs of me, the said Edmund Sheffield, forever;

Also I will and declare for my last will and testament that all such legacies, bequests to all uses and intents had and specified in certain schedule or schedules hereunto annexed, signed and sealed with mine own hand and seal, shall be and take effect for the further declaration of my last will and testament as though they were herein particularly specified or mentioned;

The residue of all my goods moveable not bequeathed I give and bequeath to Lady Anne, my wife;

And further for the true executing and fulfilling of this my last will and testament I ordain, constitute and make the above-named Thomas Darcy, John Cavendish, knights, Lady Anne, my wife, George Zouche, John Sutton and Anthony Neville, esquires, Christopher Egmonton and Robert Brokelsbye, gentlemen, my full executors, these being witnesses: Robert Ivers, Alexander Banester, William Anderson, John Blake, John Cruso(?), priest, and Robert Wresyll & other. Edmund Sheffield.

Also I will that the within-named John Cavendish and Christopher Egmonton shall take and receive all the issues, revenues and profits to the value of £8 yearly of all my lands and tenements called Wadnynges lands within the Isle of Axholme to th' use and purpose hereafter following, that is to say, to th' use of Custance [=Constance] Lokwood, sometime wife of John Sheffield, Jane Sheffield and Anne Sheffield, daughters to the same John Sheffield, to and for the term of their lives, equally to be divided amongst them, provided alway that the said Custance shall have but her third part of the said sum for term of her life;

Also I will that Thomas Newlande shall have my farm in Beltofte for term of his life, now being in the tenure of John Newlande, his father, immediately after the death of the said John.

Probatum fuit huiusmodi testamentum Coram Domino Cantuariensis Archiepiscopo apud London Decimo die Marcij Anno Domini Millesimo quingentesimo quadragesimo Nono Iuramento Domine Anne Relicte et executricis in eodem testamento nominate Ac approbatum et Insinuatam Et commissam fuit Administracio omnium et singulorum bonorum &c dicti defuncti prefate executrici de bene &c Ac de pleno Inventario &c exhibendo ad sancta dei evangelia in debita Iuris forma Iurate Reservata potestate similem commissionem faciendos alijs executoribus in huiusmodi testamento nominatis eos cum venerint In forma Iuris Admissuris

[=The same testament was proved before the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury at London on the tenth day of March in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred forty-ninth by the oath of Lady Anne, relict and executrix named in the same testament, and probated and entered, and administration was granted of all and singular the goods etc. of the said deceased to the forenamed executrix, sworn on the Holy Gospels in due form of law to well etc., and to exhibit a full inventory etc., with power reserved for a similar grant to be made to the other executors named in the same testament when they shall have come in form of law to be admitted.]