

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 20 January 1558 and proved 29 November 1558, of Ursula (de Vere) Knightley, sister and co-heir of John de Vere (1499-1526), 14<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, whose second husband, Sir Edmund Knightley, held the manor of Fawsley, at which the second Marprelate tract, *The Epitome*, was printed in November 1588.

### ***FAMILY BACKGROUND***

The testatrix was the daughter of Sir George Vere (died c.1503) by Margaret Stafford, daughter and heiress of Sir William Stafford (d. before 1487).

For the testatrix' family background see the will of her father, Sir George Vere, TNA PROB 11/13/144; Richardson, Douglas, *Plantagenet Ancestry*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2011, Vol. III, pp. 413-14; and the pedigrees in Ross, James, *John de Vere, Thirteenth Earl of Oxford (1442-1513)*; *'The Foremost Man of the Kingdom'*, (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2011), pp. 18, 24.

The testatrix had two brothers and three sisters:

**-George Vere** (d.1498).

**-John de Vere** (1499-1527), 14<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, who inherited the earldom after his uncle, John de Vere (1442-1513), 13<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, died without legitimate issue. He married Anne Howard (d.1559), daughter of Thomas Howard (1443 – 21 May 1524), 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Norfolk, by his second wife, Agnes Tilney. The Countess of Oxford mentioned in the will as holding a reversionary interest in certain manors is Anne (Howard) de Vere, widow of the 14<sup>th</sup> Earl.

**-Elizabeth Vere** (d.1557), who married Sir Anthony Wingfield (d. 15 August 1552), eldest son and heir of Sir John Wingfield (d.1509) of Letheringham, Suffolk. See the pedigree of Wingfield of Letheringham at:

<http://www.letheringhamlodge.com/wingfield-of-wingfield-and-letheringham/>

Although she is one of the testatrix' principal legatees, Elizabeth Vere's own will, TNA PROB 11/42B/640, is dated 28 July 1557, and was proved 13 November 1559, and it is therefore unclear whether she survived the testatrix.

Elizabeth Vere was the mother of two of the testatrix' legatees:

**(1) Sir Robert Wingfield** (d. 19 March 1596), who married firstly Cicely Wentworth (d. 22 August 1573), daughter of Thomas Wentworth (1501-1551), 1st Baron Wentworth, and secondly Bridget Spring (d.1570), widow of Thomas Fleetwood (1518-1570) of The Vache, Buckinghamshire, Master of the Mint, and daughter of Sir John Spring of

Cockfield and Hitcham, Suffolk. For the will of Sir Robert Wingfield, see TNA PROB 11/87/510. For the will, dated 8 June 1544 and proved 21 May 1549, of Sir John Spring, see TNA PROB 11/32/430. For the will, dated 15 April 1564 and proved 10 November 1564, of his widow, Dorothy (nee Waldegrave) Spring, daughter of Sir William Waldegrave, see TNA PROB 11/47/337.

See also the History of Parliament entry for Sir Robert Wingfield at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/wingfield-sir-robert-1596>.

See also the History of Parliament entry for Thomas Fleetwood (1518-1570) at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/fleetwood-thomas-1518-70>.

**(2) Elizabeth Wingfield**, who married William Naunton (d. 7 June 1553), esquire, of Alderton, Suffolk. Their son, Henry Naunton, mentioned in the will, was the father of Sir Robert Naunton, the author of *Fragmenta Regalia*. From the *ODNB*:

*Naunton, Sir Robert (1563–1635), politician, was born in Alderton, Suffolk, the son of Henry Naunton of Alderton and his wife, Elizabeth Asheby of Hornsby, Leicestershire. . . . The Nauntons were considered established members of the county gentry and had been so for well over two centuries. Henry Naunton was master of horse to the dowager duchess of Suffolk, while Elizabeth Asheby had a brother who became a valued member of the diplomatic corps that served Elizabeth I. But it was William Naunton, Sir Robert's grandfather, who increased the family's prestige to that point. He was a lawyer who became one of the chief servants of the duke and then the dowager duchess of Suffolk. He then married a daughter of Sir Anthony Wingfield KG, a leading servant of Henry VIII.*

The terms of the will suggest that the testatrix may have resided with Elizabeth Naunton during her final years.

Another legatee, Thomas Seckford (1515-1587) of Gray's Inn, also had a family connection to the Wingfields. He was the son of Thomas Seckford (1495-1575) and Margaret Wingfield (1493-1557), the sister of Sir Anthony Wingfield (d. 15 August 1552) of Letheringham. For Thomas Seckford, see below.

A later marriage further strengthened ties between the Wingfield and de Vere families: in 1582, Susan Bertie, the sister-in-law of Oxford's sister, Mary de Vere, married Sir John Wingfield (d.1596), a grandson of the testatrix' sister, Elizabeth Vere, and Sir Anthony Wingfield.

For the Wingfield family, see also the extensive pedigree at:

<http://www.letheringhamlodge.com/wingfield-of-wingfield-and-letheringham/>

-**Margaret Vere**, mentioned in her father's will.

-**Dorothy Vere** (d. 7 February 1527), who married John Neville (1493-1543), 3<sup>rd</sup> Baron Latimer, for whose will see TNA PROB 11/29/303. The Lord Latimer mentioned in the will is their son, John Neville (d.1577), 4<sup>th</sup> Baron Latimer.

The four daughters and co-heirs of John Neville (d.1577), 4<sup>th</sup> Baron Latimer, were:

**(1) Katherine Neville** (1545/6-1596), who married Henry Percy (c.1532-1585), 8<sup>th</sup> Earl of Northumberland.

**(2) Dorothy Neville** (1548-1609), who married Lord Burghley's elder son, Thomas Cecil (1542-1623).

**(3) Lucy Neville**, who married William Cornwallis (1545?-1611) of Brome.

**(4) Elizabeth Neville** (1545x50-1630), who married Sir John Danvers (1540-1594) of Dauntsey.

Several of the manors mentioned in the will had descended to the testatrix through her uncle, John de Vere (1442-1513), 13<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford. For his will, see TNA PROB 11/17/379.

## ***MARRIAGES AND ISSUE***

### ***Testatrix' first marriage***

The testatrix married firstly George Windsor, eldest son and heir apparent of Andrew Windsor (d.1543), 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Windsor. George Windsor predeceased his father, dying before 1520. According to his father's will, TNA PROB 11/29/416, he was buried in the chapel at Hounslow. Part of the inscription on the tomb of George Windsor is given in Weever, John, *Antient Funeral Monuments* (London: W. Tooke, 1768), at p. 299:

*Orate pro animabus GEORGII WINDSORE, filij ANDREE WINDSORE, de Stanwell, militis; & VRSULE uxoris eius . . . suorum & heredis apparentis . . . JOHANNIS, comitis Oxonie . . .*

### ***Testatrix' second marriage***

The testatrix married secondly Sir Edmund Knightley (by 1491 – 12 September 1542), serjeant-at-law. For Sir Edmund Knightley's maternal grandparents, see:

<http://collections.glasgowmuseums.com/starobject.html?oid=39707>

There were no surviving issue of either marriage, although the memorial brass to Sir Edmund Knightley and the testatrix at his manor of Fawsley in Northamptonshire depicts six daughters who died young.

### ***OTHER PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE WILL***

For the testatrix' friend, Thomas Seckford (1515/16 – 19 December 1587) of Gray's Inn, whom she appoints as supervisor of her will, see the History of Parliament entry at:

<http://historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/seckford-%28sakford%29-thomas-151516-87>

*b. 1515/16, 2nd s. of Thomas Seckford of Seckford Hall, Great Bealings, Suff. by Margaret, da. of Sir John Wingfield of Letheringham, Suff.; bro. of Thomas<sup>†</sup>. educ. Camb.; G. Inn, adm. 1540, called 1542. m. lic. 18 Jan. 1567, Elizabeth (d. 28 Nov. 1586), da. of Thomas Harlowe, wid. of William Billingsley and Sir Martin Bowes (d. 4 Aug. 1566) both of London, s.p.2*

Thomas Seckford was the brother of Sir Henry Seckford (d.1610), Master of the Tents, Hales and Pavillions, who married Alice Bedingfield (d. by 3 December 1583?), daughter of Sir Henry Bedingfield (d. 22 August 1583). For the will of Sir Henry Bedingfield, see TNA PROB 11/66/130. For Sir Henry Seckford, see the *ODNB* entry, and Griffith, Eva, *A Jacobean Company and its Playhouse: The Queen's Servants at the Red Bull Theatre* (c.1605-1619), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 54-7 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=ZSLNAQAAQBAJ&pg=PA54>

### ***MARPRELATE TRACTS***

The manor of Fawsley is of significance in connection with the publication of the Marprelate tracts during Queen Elizabeth's reign. It was at Fawsley, then in the possession of Sir Edmund Knightley's nephew, Sir Richard Knightley (1533-1615), that the second Marprelate tract, the *Epitome*, was printed on a secret press in November 1588.

Sir Richard Knightley had family connections to the de Veres though the testatrix, and to the Windsors; his mother was Anne Ferrers (d.1544), aunt of Edward Ferrers (1526-1564) of Baddesley Clinton, whose wife was Bridget Windsor, daughter of William Windsor (d.1558), 2<sup>nd</sup> Baron Windsor.

LM: Tes{tamen}t{u}m D{omi}ne Vrsule knightley vid{ue}

In the name of God, Amen. The 20<sup>th</sup> day of January in the year of Our Lord God a thousand five hundred fifty and seven, I, Dame Ursula Knightley, widow, late the wife of Sir Edmund Knightley, knight, deceased, being in health of body and of perfect mind and memory, thanks be unto Almighty God therefore, remembering and calling unto mind the uncertainty of this transitory life, do make and ordain this my last will and testament, revoking all other former wills, in manner and form following:

First, I bequeath and commend my soul to Almighty God the Father, the Son and th' Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, having full hope and perfect trust through the merits of the death and passion of my Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, to be one of those saved souls that shall have the fruition of the high Deity, and my body I will to be buried in such church and in such place thereof as it shall be thought good and convenient to th' executors of this my said last will and testament;

And as touching th' order, declaration and disposition of all my part and portion of, in and to all the manors, lands, tenements, rents, reversions, services and all other hereditaments hereafter especified which now I have and hold in possession or reversion, in coparcenary, in fee-simple or fee-tail with my nephew Sir John Neville, knight, Lord Latimer, and my well beloved sister Elizabeth Wingfield, widow, late wife of Sir Anthony Wingfield, knight, deceased, or in common with any other person or persons having or claiming any estate or interest in the same manors, lands, tenements, rents, reversions, services or other hereditaments from, by or under the said Lord Latimer and my said sister Dame Elizabeth Wingfield, or of any of them, I will and declare this my last will and testament, revoking thereby all other former wills, in manner and form following:

First, I will and bequeath all my part and portion of, in and to the manors, lands, tenements, rents, reversions, services and other hereditaments called Brokes Hall and Holbrook Park with th' appurtenances in the county of Suffolk, and of the manor of East Winch with th' appurtenances in the county of Norfolk, and of the manors, lands and tenements called Old Hall in Wethersfield in the county of Essex, to my said sister Dame Elizabeth Wingfield if she fortune to be in life at the time of my death, to have and to hold the said part and portion of all and singular the premises to the said Elizabeth from and immediately after my decease unto th' end and term of 20 years then next following, if she, the same Dame Elizabeth, so long shall live, and if it fortune the said Dame Elizabeth Wingfield not to be in life at the time of my death, then I will and devise by this my last will and testament all my said part and portion of all and singular the premises to my well beloved nephew, Sir Robert Wingfield, knight, son and heir of the said Sir Anthony Wingfield, knight, deceased, begotten of the body of my said sister Elizabeth, to have and to hold to him, the said Sir Robert, his executors and assigns, for and during the said term and number of 20 years from and immediately after my death, and if my said sister Dame Elizabeth Wingfield fortune to be in life at the time of my death, and to die before th' end and term of the said 20 years, then I will that all and singular my said part and portion of, in and to the premises and every part thereof shall remain and be to the

said Sir Robert Wingfield, knight, his executors and assignees, for and during the said term of 20 years;

Item, I will and bequeath by this my last will and testament all my part and portion of and to the manor of Weeting, Barton Bendish, Babingley, Wolverton and Sandringham, Tostres and Fittons in Wiggenhall with th' appurtenances in the county of Norfolk, and of, in and to the manors, lands or tenements called Predenneck, Rosemaphen, Etheron, Poldian and Penhale with th' appurtenances in the county of Cornwall, and of all other my lands and tenements, rents, reversions, services and other hereditaments in the said county of Cornwall, and of the capital house called Berismarques in London, and of the gardens thereunto belonging and adjoining, and of all the yearly rents and services reserved upon any demise or demises heretofore made of the premises or any part thereof, to my well beloved niece Elizabeth Naunton, widow, to have and to hold to her, her executors and assignees, from and immediately after my death unto th' end and term of 20 years then next following fully to be completed and ended, to th' intent that the said Elizabeth Naunton with th' issues and profits thereof rising shall perform and fulfil such things as hereafter in these presents shall be appointed for her to do, according to the true meaning and intent of the same;

Item, further I will and bequeath by this my last will and testament all my part and portion of, in and to the manor of Hillington with th' appurtenances in the county of Norfolk, and of the manor of Kensington with th' appurtenances in the county of Middlesex, and of the reversion of the same manors and of every part of them, and of all other my lands, tenements, rents, reversions, services and other hereditaments lying and being in the gownes(?) of Kensington and Chelsea otherwise Chelsall, or any of them, or elsewhere within the said county of Middlesex, to Thomas Seckford of Gray's Inn, gentleman, to have & to hold so much of the premises last before-mentioned as shall be in the possession of me, the said Dame Ursula, at the time of my decease, or in th' occupation or tenure of any other person or persons as farmers of the same, to the said Thomas Seckford, his executors or assignees, from and immediately after my death to th' end and term of 20 years then next ensuing, and to have and to hold so much of my part and portion of the premises as is assigned and limited to the Lady Anne, Countess of Oxenford, during her life immediately after the decease of the said Countess unto the said Thomas Seckford, his executors & assignees, for and during the term of 20 years then next ensuing fully to be completed and ended;

Item, whereas the said Anne, Countess of Oxenford, now hath and holdeth for term of life the manors of Knapton, Middelton, Scales Hoo and Tittleshall with th' appurtenances in the county of Norfolk, and the manors of Chelsworth, Walshams Hall and Preston with th' appurtenances in the county of Suffolk, and the manors of Stratford and Calverton with th' appurtenances in the county of Buckingham, and the manors of Saxton, Hawkeston and Dullingham with th' appurtenances in the county of Cambridge, and the manors of Wigston with th' appurtenances in the county of Leicester, the reversion of all and singular the said manors belonging to the said Lord Latimer, my said sister Elizabeth Wingfield, and to me, the said Dame Ursula, and to th' heirs of our body lawfully begotten, and for default of such issue to our right heirs, I will that immediately after our

[sic] death of the said Lady Anne, Countess of Oxenford, that all my said part and portion of, in and to the said manors with th' appurtenances last before-mentioned whereof the said Countess of Oxford is tenant during her life, shall remain and be to my said niece Elizabeth Naunton, her executors and assigns, [-shall with th' issue and profits of my said part] for and during the term of 20 years then next and immediately following fully to be complete and ended;

Item, I will that my said niece Elizabeth Naunton, her executors and assignees, shall with the issues and profits of my said part and portion of the premises immediately after my death pay unto every of the younger sons of the said Sir Anthony Wingfield, that is to say, Charles Wingfield, Richard Wingfield, Anthony Wingfield and Henry Wingfield, yearly for and during the said term of 20 years next after my death the sum of four pounds of good and lawful money of England at two several terms in the year of Saint Michael th' Archangel and the Annunciation of Our Lady by even portions to be paid; and to William Castlond, my servant, and Margaret, his wife, and to the longer-liver of them yearly during the said term three pounds, at the said several feasts by even portions to be paid; and to my servant Robert Porter yearly during the said term of 20 years next ensuing my death 10s yearly at the several feasts aforesaid by even portions to be paid; and to Nicholas Philips, my servant, yearly during the said term of 20 years next ensuing my death 20s at the feasts aforesaid by even portions to be paid if the said Nicholas shall remain and dwell with me at the time of my death; and to my servant Thomas Clerke yearly for and during the said term of 20 years next and immediately after my death 10s at the several feasts aforesaid to be paid;

And I will that the said Sir Robert Wingfield, knight, within one half year after my decease and the decease of my said sister Elizabeth Wingfield, shall by his sufficient deed and writing in the law grant one annuity or yearly rent of five pounds to be then going out of his part and portion of the said manor of East Winch to Harry Naunton, the younger son of my said niece Elizabeth Naunton, to have and perceive to him, the said Henry, for and during the term of his life, with clause of distress to be contained in the said deed for the non-payment thereof, and if he fail in making and granting the said annuity to the said Harry, then I will that the said Harry Naunton shall have all such like interest in the said manor of East Winch as by this my last will is limited, devised and appointed to the said Sir Robert;

Item, I will that my said niece Elizabeth Naunton, her executors and assignees, shall with th' issues and the profits of my said part and portion of the premises immediately after my death pay yearly unto my servant William Walter, and Joyce, his wife, and to the longer-liver of them for and during the said term of 20 years next after my death 10s of good and lawful money of England at two several terms in the year of Saint Michael th' Archangel [-th' Archangel] and th' Annunciation of Our Lady by even portions to be paid;

Item, I will that my said niece Elizabeth Naunton, her executors and assignees, shall with th' issues and profits of my said part & portion of my said lands immediately after my death pay yearly unto my servant John Skeawe, and Ursula, his wife, and the longer-liver

of them for and during the said term of 20 years next after my death forty shillings of good and lawful money of England at the feast of Saint Michael th' Archangel and th' Annunciation of Our Lady by even portions to be paid;

Provided always that when any of the said persons to whom the said several annuities are willed, limited & appointed to be paid by my said niece, her executors or assignees, shall die within the said term of 20 years, that then the said several annuities of every such person and persons so dying shall cease;

Item, I bequeath to every of my maidens waiting upon me daily in my chamber, and to every other of my yeomen(?) servants remaining in my service at the time of my death, except such as are before mentioned unto whom I have given the several annuities aforesaid, 10s, and to every other of my inferior servants, as well men-servants as women servants remaining in my service at the time of my death, 20s over and besides all their wages that then shall be due;

And as touching my moveable goods, chattel[s], plate or household stuff, I do nor can thereof make or declare any testament, forsomuch as by my deed in writing sealed under my seal I have already, for many considerations me moving, given them all to my said well beloved niece, Elizabeth Naunton, whom for the having, obtaining or recovering of all such debts and other things as is or shall be due unto me at the time of my death, and for the having and obtaining of all other things which by the law pertain and belong to an executor to demand, have or recover, I do nominate, ordain and appoint to be the sole executrix of this my last will and testament, and I most heartily require my said well beloved friend, Thomas Seckford of Gray's Inn, thereof to be supervisor, and to aid and assist my said well beloved niece in all things touching th' execution of this my said will, unto whom for his pains and travail I give of th' issues and revenues aforesaid the sum of ten pounds;

In witness whereof unto this my said last will and testament I have set my seal and subscribed my name the day and year above-written. Witnesses hereof: Ursula K., Richard Wingfield, Francis Sone, Thomas Seckford, George Robson, John Cooke, clerk, William Castlon, William Strangewiche, Robert Riswicke, clerk.

Probatum fuit suprascriptum tes{tamen}t{u}m coram d{omi}no apud London xxixmo die mens{is} Nouembris Anno d{omi}ni Mill{es}imo quingentesimo qui{n}quagesimo Octauo Iuramento Iustiniam Kidd procur{atoris} Eliz{abethe} Naunton executric{is} in h{uius}mo{d}i testamento no{m}i{n}at{e} Ac app{ro}bat{um} et insinuatu{m} &c Comissaq{ue} fuit admi{n}istrac{i}o &c pefat{e} executrici De b{e}n{e} &c Ac de pleno et fideli Inuentario &c Necnon de plano et vero compoto &c iurat{e}

[=The above-written testament was proved before the Lord [+Archbishop] at London on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of the month of November in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred fifty-eighth by the oath of Justinian Kyd, proctor of Elizabeth Naunton, executrix



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appointed in the same testament, and approved and entered etc., and administration was granted etc. to the forenamed executrix, sworn to well etc. and a full and true inventory etc. and also a plain and true account etc.]