

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the last will and testament, dated 4 August 1571 and proved 6 September 1571, of Thomas Lewknor, stepfather of William Combe (d.1610), who in 1602 sold land to William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon (see SBTRO ER 27/1).

FAMILY BACKGROUND

It appears that the testator was the son of Richard Lewknor and Joan Mascall, the daughter of Richard Mascall; the grandson of Richard Lewknor of Sherfield; and the great-grandson of Sir Roger Lewknor (d. 4 August 1478) and Eleanor Camoys. According to the will below, the testator had a brother, Richard Lewknor. See the will, dated 16 November 1522, of Richard Mychelborn *alias* Mascall of Lindfield, Sussex, TNA PROB 11-21/104.

See also Cooper, William Durrant, 'Pedigree of the Lewknor Family', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, (London: John Russell Smith, 1850), Vol. III, pp. 89-102 at pp. 96-8:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=VekGAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA96>

See also Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. II, pp. 19-20; and the pedigree of Lewknor in Bannerman, W. Bruce, ed., *The Visitations of the County of Sussex*, (London: Harleian Society, 1906), Vol. LIII, pp. 26-7 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationscoun00owengoog#page/n40/mode/2up>

See also Phillimore, W.P.W., ed., *The Visitation of the County of Worcester Made in the Year 1569*, (London: Harleian Society, 1888), Vol. XXVII, p. 87 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationcount01mundgoog#page/n103/mode/2up>

MARRIAGES AND CHILDREN

First marriage

The testator married firstly, by 1550, Bennett Chaloner, the daughter of Thomas Chaloner of Lindfield, Sussex, widow of William Copley, by whom he had a son and a daughter:

* **Nicholas Lewknor**, who died without issue in 1580. For his will see TNA PROB 11/62/225.

* **Jane Lewknor**, who married the testator's stepson, Anthony Sheldon, the son of Baldwin Sheldon (buried 5 July 1548) and Jane (nee Wheeler) (see below), by whom she

had several children, including William Sheldon (buried 3 September 1626), who was a witness to the 1602 indenture by which the testator's stepson, William Combe (d.1610) sold land to William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon (see SBTRO ER 27/1) .

Second marriage

The testator married secondly, on 22 November 1554, Jane Wheeler (d.1582), the daughter of John Wheeler of Droitwich, Worcestershire, third son of Humphrey Wheeler of Martin Hussingtree. Jane Wheeler (d.1582) was the widow firstly of Baldwin Sheldon (buried 5 July 1548) of Broadway, Worcestershire, and secondly John Combe (d.1550) of Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire. See:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/lewknor-thomas-1529-71>

See also the Wheeler pedigree in Phillimore, W.P.W., ed., *The Visitation of the County of Worcestershire Made in the Year 1569*, (London: Harleian Society, 1888), Vol. XXVII, p. 145 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/publicationsofha27harluoft#page/144/mode/2up>

By her first husband, Baldwin Sheldon (buried 5 July 1548), Jane (nee Wheeler) had three sons and four daughters:

-Ralph Sheldon, who married Mary Huband, daughter of Nicholas Huband. For the will of Sir John Huband, brother of Nicholas Huband, see TNA PROB 11/66/331.

-Anthony Sheldon, who married Jane Lewknor (see above).

-William Sheldon, who married Margaret Stokes.

-Ursula Sheldon, who married Hugh James.

-Jane Sheldon, who married Nicholas Blaby.

-Christian Sheldon, who married John Severne.

-Elizabeth Sheldon, who married Richard Egeocke, referred to in the will below. For the will of Richard Egeocke, dated 6 May 1587, in which he mentions 'my brother [=brother-in-law], William Combe' (d.1610), see TNA PROB 11/70/421).

By her second husband, John Combe (d.1550), Jane (nee Wheeler) had one son:

-William Combe (d.1610), who was born after his father's death, and christened at Broadway on 13 June 1551. According to Lewis, William Combe (d.1610), was the son

of John Combe (d.1550) by his second wife, the widowed Katherine Quiney (see Lewis, B. Roland, *The Shakespeare Documents*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1941), Vol. II, p. 326). However the will below establishes that William Combe (d.1610) was the son of John Combe (d.1550) by his third wife, Jane (nee Wheeler).

The testator's widow, Jane (nee Wheeler), died in 1582 and was buried at Broadway as 'Mistress Jane Lewknor'. See 'Sheldon Family':

<http://welshleigh.org/genealogy/oakleyancestry/sheldonfamily.html>

The testator had no children by his second wife, Jane (nee Wheeler).

OTHER PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE WILL

The testator bequeaths an annuity of £10 to his old master, Nicholas Heath (c.1510?-1578), the former Archbishop of York. For the relationship between the Heath, Sheldon and Lewknor families, see the Heath pedigree at 'Sheldon Family', *supra*.

The testator's overseer, Thomas Copley of Bredon, Worcestershire, married Margaret Handford, the daughter of John Handford of Woollas Hall, Worcestershire. Margaret's brother, John Handford (d. 17 August 1616) left a will in which he referred to his 'loving brother-in-law, Thomas Copley', and to his 'dear kinsman, Thomas Russell', the latter being the Thomas Russell who was the overseer of the will of William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon. See the will of John Handford, TNA PROB 11/127/794; Hotson, Leslie, *I, William Shakespeare, Do Appoint Thomas Russell, Esquire* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), pp. 283-8, and Joseph Lemuel Chester, eds., *The Visitation of London, Vol. I*, (London: Harleian Society, 1880), Vol. XV, p. 188 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=h6wKAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA188>

For the testator's overseer, John Middlemore (d. 7 June 1597) of Hawkesley in King's Norton, Worcestershire, eldest son and heir of William Middlemore (d.1549) and Margery Gatacre, see the will of William Middlemore, TNA PROB 11/32/606, and the Middlemore pedigree in Crisp, Frederick Arthur, ed., *Visitation of England and Wales*, Vol. 8, 1909, pp. 22-3 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationofengl29howa#page/22/mode/2up>

For Thomas Wakeley alias Wakelem of Wollescote mentioned in the will below, see MS 3145/129/1 at:

<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/rd/5f920014-39b9-4fdc-a106-9b7160be354e>

LM: T{estamentum} Thome Lewkner

[f. 284v] In the name of God, Amen. The 4th day of August in the thirteenth year of the Queen's Majesty's reign, Elizabeth, of England, France and Ireland Queen etc., I, Thomas Lewknor of Alvechurch in the county of Worcester, being in health of my body and perfect remembrance, thanks be to God, do make this my last will and testament in manner and form following:

First I bequeath my soul to Almighty God, my only Maker and Redeemer, and to the holy company of heaven, and my body to the ground to be buried in Christian burial where it shall please those that I put in trust with this my will;

Item, I give to my master, the late Bishop of York, for the space of ten years, if he so long do live after my death, yearly ten pounds, the which ten pounds Thomas Copley of Bredon doth pay me yearly for the term of twenty years as it appeareth by an indenture thereof made, and my master's acquittance shall be his discharge for the payment of the same yearly rent for so many years as my master shall live of the said ten years, and for the whole term if he so long do live;

Item, I do give to Jane, my wife, all my free lands and tenements that I have in Alvechurch during her natural life, the which I have assured the same to her already by fine;

The residue of my lands in Sussex I give to Nicholas Lewknor, my son, forever;

Item, I give to Jane, my wife, all my right and term of years that I have in the parsonage of Alvechurch so that she break no part of this my will, she paying the rents and observing all the covenants in my lease thereof;

I do give to my said wife upon the like condition for the space of ten years after my death thone moiety and profit that shall grow of my farm called Wascelles if she so long live and keep herself unmarried, paying half the rents and bearing the half of all other charges due for the same;

Thother moiety I give to Nicholas Lewknor, and the whole after my wife's interest be ended;

Item, I give to Nicholas Lewknor my lease of Norwood Park and Haull meadow, and my lease of the mills and demesnes that I have at Southwell, and I give him my part that I have in the pastures at Everton and other things there, paying the rents and observing the covenants of all the premises with all rents and profits reserved upon every of them, all the which lieth in the county of Nottingham;

And I give unto my said son all such household stuff and other implements that I have at Southwell and at Scrooby;

Item, I give to my said son all my interest that I have in one lease of a furnace and certain closes that I take of my cousin, Drew Barentine, lying in Horsted Keynes in the county of Sussex;

Item, I give to my said son all my books;

Item, I give to my said son, Nicholas Lewknor, my interest that I have and shall have into the farm that Wakelam had of Mr Reynolds, the which I have taken of Mr Richard Edgeocke, so that he pay unto my son-in-law [=stepson], William Combe, within two years after my death £26 13s 4d, being lawfully asked by the said William Combe, and if it be not then paid, I give the residue of the said years to the said William Combe;

Item, I give to the said William Combe one annuity that I have out of Croome Symondes alias Earl's Croome of the grant of William Jefferies, my kinsman, and if the sum of £60 be paid, the same also to the said William Combe I give;

And if my master die before the ten years be ended, then I give the residue of my years to come after my master's death unto William Combe, my son-in-law [=stepson], and to Thomas Sheldon, my godson, and if one of them die before the years be ended, then the survivor to have the whole;

My meaning is that William [f. 285r] Combe shall make a good discharge to my executors for all demands, or else all these my gifts to be void if he refuse the same;

Item, I give to my brother, Richard Lewknor, if he live after my death, five pounds to be paid within one year after my death;

Item, I give to every poor householder in Alvechurch 12d, and to every of my godchildren 12d;

Item, I give to Henry Richards, my servant, 10s; to Bawlden [=Baldwin?] Dickens, if he be with me at my death, 10s; to Gilbert Pen, 40s; to Bess Danes(?), 6s 8d; to Anne Jones, my maid, 6s 8d; to Bess Barnesley, 13s 4d; to Bess Blabye, 13s 4d; if these servants be from me at the time of my death, then their part to be void touching this my gift of them that be from me;

Item, I will and bequeath to Nicholas, my son, all ceiling, glass, cupboards, forms, tables, brewing vessels, bedsteads and such other implements as shall be meet to be left in my house;

I will that my wife shall have the use of them during her life, so that she take them not out of my said house, but to leave them there after her death;

Item, I do give to Nicholas Lewknor, my son, my lease that I have in reversion of Wigorne mill, and my interest that I have in Rowny wood, so that he shall suffer my wife

to take wood to spend in the house where I now dwell, and timber for to build upon the same that she hath by me in Alvechurch;

All such buildings as I have bargained with Thomas Roker to make for me shall be finished at the equal charges of my wife and my son, Nicholas Lewknor, except I have paid for the doing thereof already;

All such goods, chattels, household stuff, plate, money, debts, corn which be not given and bequeathed by this my last will I will they be indifferently divided between my wife and Nicholas Lewknor, my son, my debts and legacies being paid;

I make executors of this my last will & testament Jane, my wife, and Nicholas Lewknor, my son;

And I make overseers Mr John Middlemore of Hawkesley, Mr John Lewes, parson of Alvechurch, and Mr Thomas Copley of Bredon;

And if any variances, suits or troubles do happen by occasion of this my will, then I will the same be ordered by my master, the late Bishop of York, Mr Sergeant Wray, Mr John Talbot of Grafton, Mr Thomas Throckmorton of Moore Hall, Mr Ralph Sheldon of Beoley, Mr Edmund Plowden, and my cousin, Thomas Lewknor of Selsey in the county of Sussex, and whatsoever shall be done by them or by 6, 5 or 4 of them shall be as good and effectual as though I had written the same with my own hand, and whosoever refuseth to obey and stand to this their order that shall be by them appointed shall lose all such profits as he should have by this my will, and I will that their orders from time to time shall be obeyed, being given under their hands in writing or any four of them or moe as aforesaid;

Item, I give to my son, Nicholas Lewknor, all my apparel;

Item, I will that my son, Nicholas, and his wife shall have their board for one year after my death as now they have, paying for that year £10 if they will tarry there, the which £10 shall be paid half yearly by even portions;

Item, I will that my son shall have the lease of the two meadow plerkes(?) in the common fields, the which is taken of the Bishop of Worcester in his name, paying the rents and keeping the covenants;

Item, I will that if my son, Nicholas, nor William Combe do not take any of Wakelam's farm, then I will that he shall have yearly £4, to be paid yearly at the indifferent charges of my executors, and after my master's death or end of the ten years this £4 to cease and no longer to be paid for that he shall take the moiety of that £10.

Witness: John Middlemore, Miles Fisher, with others. A true copy examined in the hearing of Mr John Lewes, parson of Alvechurch, John Wheeler, Ralph Sheldon,

Anthony Sheldon, Richard Edgeocke, Hugh James, John Middlemore and divers others.
John Lewes, John Middlemore, Henry Field.

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum coram Mag^{ist}ro Curie prerogatiue Cantuarien^{sis} com^missario apud London sexto die Septembris anno d^{omi}ni Mill^{es}imo quingen^{tes}imo septuagesimo primo Iuramento Mag^{ist}ri xpoferi Smyth no^{ta}rij pu^{bli}ci procur^{atoris} Jane relⁱc^te et executric^{is} in testamento h^{uius}mo^di no^miⁿat^e Cui com^missa fuit admiⁿⁱstracⁱo omniu^m et sing^ulor^{um} bonor^{um} &c De bene &c Ad sancta dei Evangelia Iurat^e

[=The above-written will was proved before the Master [+and?] Keeper of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury at London on the sixth day of September in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred seventy-first by the oath of Master Christopher Smyth, notary public, proctor of Jane, relict and executrix named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of all and singular the goods etc., sworn on the Holy Gospels to well etc.]