

SUMMARY: The document below is the last will and testament, dated 9 June 1587 and proved 20 November 1588, of Hercules Meautys. The testator was the son of the soldier and courtier, Sir Peter Meautys (d. 8 September 1562) whose background is given in the online edition of *The Dictionary of National Biography*:

Mewtas [Mewtis], Sir Peter (d. 1562), soldier and courtier, was the son of Philip Mewtas and Elisabeth Foxley, and grandson of Frenchman John Mewtas, French secretary to Henry VII and Henry VIII between 1491 and 1522. . . . Mewtas was appointed gentleman of the privy chamber (1536), master of Bethlem Hospital (1536), comptroller of the mint (1537), overseer of artillery (1537), keeper of Wanstead Park (1540), governor of Guernsey (1545), and chancellor of the tenths of the household (by 1546). He married Jane Astley, a lady of the queen's privy chamber, in 1537; and, by 1552, another Jane, perhaps surnamed Angersley, about whom little is known. In 1539 he and the first Jane were granted lands at West Ham, Essex, to which was added the adjacent manor of Bretts in 1540. A child was baptized in February 1539, probably Henry, or perhaps Frances, later gentlewoman of the chamber to Elizabeth I and wife of Henry, Viscount Howard of Bindon. There were other sons, Thomas and Hercules, the youngest. Mewtas's widow and Frances were given a new lease of Bretts in 1565 and, in 1567, enjoyment of it for Jane's life; she died in 1577.

The family background of Sir Peter Meautys' first wife, Jane Astley, is obscure, despite the existence of a well known sketch of her by Hans Holbein the younger.

The testator's elder brother, Henry Meautys, married Anne, the daughter of Sir John Jermy of Brightwell, Suffolk, and had a son, Thomas Meautys (d.1614) of West Ham, who was the father of Sir Thomas Meautys (c.1590-1649), Clerk of the Privy Council, and secretary to Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626). It was Sir Thomas Meautys (c.1590-1649) who erected the monument to Bacon in St Michael's Church in St Alban's.

As noted above, the testator's sister, Frances Meautys, was the unfortunate wife of Henry Howard (d. 16 January 1590/1), 2nd Viscount Bindon, the son of Thomas Howard (d. 28 January 1581/2), 1st Viscount Bindon, and his first wife, Elizabeth Marney. The first Viscount Bindon was one of three surviving children of Thomas Howard (1473-1554), 3rd Duke of Norfolk, and his second wife, Elizabeth Stafford (1497-1558). The other two were Oxford's uncle, Henry Howard (1516/17-1547), Earl of Surrey, and Mary (nee Howard) Fitzroy (c.1519-1555?), Duchess of Richmond, the wife of Henry VIII's illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond and Somerset (1519-1536). According to the online edition of *The Dictionary of National Biography*, Mary Howard's intended husband had been John de Vere (1516-1562), the future 16th Earl of Oxford:

Arrangements for a marriage with Lord Bulbeck, heir of the earl of Oxford, were abandoned when in December 1529 Henry VIII proposed one of Norfolk's daughters should marry his illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond and Somerset (1519-1536).

As noted above, the Meautys family held the manor of Bretts prior to Oxford's ownership of it. The manor of Bretts was centered at Plaistow, but including tenements at Upton, Stratford, and elsewhere. It was given to Margaret, daughter of the Duke of Clarence, who was created Countess of Salisbury by Henry VIII. By her attainder in 1541 it again became vested in the Crown, and was granted to Sir Peter Meautys and his wife, Jane, for life. In 1576, Queen Elizabeth granted it in fee to Sir Thomas Heneage, who in 1583 alienated it to Roger Townshend, by whom it was conveyed the next year to Oxford, who died seised of it in 1604. Oxford's widow, Elizabeth Trentham, sold it in 1610 to Henry Wollaston, esquire, who died seised of it in 1619. See Lysons, Daniel, *The Environs of London*, Vol. I, Part II (London: T. Cadell, 1811), pp. 730-1, available online. See also 'West Ham: Manors and estates', *A History of the County of Essex: Volume 6* (1973), pp. 68-74. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42753>.

The Meautys family's neighbour was Sir Thomas Lodge (1509/10–1585), Lord Mayor of London and father of the author, Thomas Lodge (1558-1625), who also had a country residence at Plaistow in the parish of West Ham, held of the Queen's manor of West Ham. The testator's stepmother, Lady Jane Meautys (d.1577), gave evidence concerning the Lodge's property in Plaistow in a suit in the Court of Requests brought by Sir Thomas Lodge (1509/10–1585) against Thomas Banks in 1576. In his will, Sir Thomas Lodge (1509/10–1585) describes himself as of West Ham. See Sisson, Charles J., *Thomas Lodge and Other Elizabethans* (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), pp. 17, 19, 21-2, 39, 42-3, 72, 136; the entry for Sir Thomas Lodge (1509/10–1585) in the online edition of *The Dictionary of National Biography*; and the documents mentioned at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/A2A/records.aspx?cat=190-490&cid=-1&Gsm=2008-06-18#-1>.

It is also of interest that a Star Chamber suit brought by Sir Thomas Lodge (1509/10–1585) in 1570 involved a claim by Sir William Sneyd (d.1571), the grandfather of Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham (see Sisson, p. 26).

The testator married Philippa Cooke, the daughter of Lady Burghley's brother, Richard Cooke (d.1579) and his wife, Anne Cawnton. For the will of Richard Cooke (d.1579), see TNA PROB 11/61, ff. 348-9.

Jane Meautys (1580/1-1659), the daughter of the testator and Philippa Cooke, married, as his second wife, Sir William Cornwallis (c.1551-1611) who purchased Oxford's lease of the mansion of Fisher's Folly in the parish of St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate in 1588, and whose daughter, Anne Cornwallis (d.1635), has been identified as the 'Anne Cornwaleys' of the short anthology of sixteenth century poetry known as the Cornwallis-Lysons manuscript, now in the Folger Library (Folger MS V.a.89).

It would appear that the testator's legatees, Thomas Knowles and Samuel Knowles can be identified with the sons of Elizabeth (nee Castlyn) Knolles Martyn (d.1583), the second wife of Sir Roger Martyn (d.1573), Lord Mayor of London, and the stepmother of Humphrey Martyn, the addressee of the *Langham Letter* which describes the Earl of Leicester's entertainment of Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth in the summer of 1575.

Elizabeth (nee Castlyn) Knolles Martyn (d.1583) was the daughter of Edward Castlyn. Her first husband, the mercer Thomas Knolles, died 11 July 1550 (for his will, see TNA PROB 11/34, f. 131). Thomas Knolles and Samuel Knolles, mentioned in her will, were her sons by this marriage. By her second marriage to Sir Roger Martyn (d.1573), the testatrix had three daughters: Mary, the wife of Alexander Denton of Hillesden in Buckinghamshire; Joan, the wife of Anthony Smith of Camden in 1593; and Anne, the wife of Anthony Culpeper (1560-1618) of Bedgebury. For the will of Elizabeth (Castlyn) Knolles Martyn (d.1583), see TNA PROB 11/65, ff. 288-9. For the will of Sir Roger Martyn (d.1573), Lord Mayor of London, see TNA PROB 11/56, ff. 2-4. See also Sutton, Anne F., *The Mercery of London* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), pp. 542-3.

Sir Thomas Palmer (1540/41–1626), appointed as an overseer of the will, may have been a relative of the testator's stepmother, Jane Meautys (d. 1577). For her will, see TNA PROB 11/59. According to the online edition of *The Dictionary of National Biography*, 'there were several Thomas Palmers active at about that time, including his cousin of Angmering'. It is said that the testator's stepmother was from Sussex, the daughter of 'Angersley', which may be an error for Angmering. See the Meautys pedigree in *The Private Correspondence of Jane Lady Cornwallis* (London: S. & J. Bentley, 1842).

RM: Testamentum Herculis Mewtas

In the name of God, Amen. The ninth day of June in the year of Our Lord God a thousand five hundred eighty-seven and in the nineteenth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Elizabeth by the grace of God Queen of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith etc., I, Hercules Meautys of West Ham in the county of Essex, esquire, being sick in body but of good and perfect remembrance, laud and praise be given unto Almighty God therefore, do make and ordain this my present testament and last will in manner and form following, that is to say:

First and principally I give and bequeath my soul to Almighty God, my Maker and Creator, and to Jesus Christ, my Saviour and Redeemer, by the merits of whose death and passion I hope to be of the number of those which shall be saved;

Item, I give my body to the earth to be buried in the parish church of West Ham in the place where my mother, brother and kindred do lie;

Item, as touching the disposition of my good[s], chattels, debts and other things I ordain, will and dispose thereof as followeth:

First I give to my loving wife, Phillipp Meautys, all that my lease and interest made and granted to me by my brother, Henry, dated the first day of April in the eighteen year [=1 April 1576] of her Majesty's reign, with all profits, commodities and advantages whatsoever incident to the same lease, to have and to hold the same lease with th'

appurtenances aforesaid from the day of my decease during the rest of the years then to come and unexpired in the same if she, the said Phillipp, do so long live;

Provided always that if it happen the said Phillipp to depart this life before th' expiration of the said term of years mentioned in the said lease, or if she, the said Phillipp, in her widowhood, or any person to whom she [+be] lawfully married, do alien or make away the said lease or term of years or any part thereof, then my will and mind is that the whole interest thereof shall come and remain to the children of me, the said Hercules, to be equally divided amongst them;

Item, I give and bequeath to my said wife the sum of one thousand pounds of lawful English money now being in the hands of Sir William Fitzwilliam, knight;

Item, I do also give to the said Phillipp, my wife, five hundred pounds which I am to receive of my brother, Mr Anthony Cooke, which he is condemned in and have execution for;

Further, I do give and bequeath to my said wife, Phillipp, all my goods, chattels and household stuff and movables whatsoever, in consideration that she shall carefully bring up my children and hers, as my only trust is in her, and discharge my debts and funerals;

Item, I do ordain and make the said Phillipp my sole and [-and] only executrix of this my present testament and last will, and I ordain and make Sir Thomas Palmer, knight, and Edmund Yorke, esquire, my overseers, to whom I give for their pains as followeth, viz., to Sir Thomas Palmer my case of falchions which be at Slattons, and to Mr Yorke my bay gelding;

Item, I do give to every of my servants which shall be with me at my departure one year's wages of four marks, and to my now horse-keeper, four marks for his wages;

In witness whereof I have hereunto put my hand and seal the day and years above-written in the presence of these witnesses, viz.:

Item, I do give to the said Sir Thomas Palmer, to Mr Yorke and his wife, to Mr Thomas Knowles and Mr Samuel Knowles and to their wives, and to every one of them a ring weighing an ounce of angel gold wherein I will my arms to be graven. By me, Hercules Meautys. Witnesses hereunto: Edmund York, Samuel Knowles, Miles Leedes, Edward Moore and Philip Barten.

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum apud London coram venerabili viro magistro Willelmo Drury Legum Doctore curie prerogatiue Cantuariensis magistro Custode siue Commissario &c vicesimo die mensis Novembris Anno Domini millesimo quingentesimo Octogesimo Octauo iuramento Petri Johnson notarij publici procuratoris Philippe Mewtas relicte dicti defuncti et executricis in huiusmodi testamento nominate cui

commissa fuit administratio bonorum iurium et creditorum eiusdem defuncti de bene et fideliter administrando &c ad sancta dei evangelia in debita iuris forma iurati

[=The above-written will was proved at London before the worshipful Master William Drury, Doctor of the Laws, Master, Keeper or Commissary etc. of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the twentieth day of the month of November in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred eighty-eighth by the oath of Peter Johnson, notary public, proctor of Philippa Meautys, relict of the said deceased and executrix named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of the goods, rights and credits of the said deceased, sworn on the Holy Gospels in due form of law to well and faithfully administer etc.]