

SUMMARY: The document below is the last will and testament, dated 9 June 1587 and proved 20 November 1588, of Hercules Meutys, esquire, whose great-grandfather, John Meutys, is named as a target of the rioters in the anonymous play, *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, and whose father was granted the manor of Bretts, which was later owned by Oxford from 1584 until his death.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

For the testator's great-grandfather, John Meutys, see his will, TNA PROB 11/21/4, and references cited there.

For the testator's great-grandfather, John Meutys, as a target of the rioters, see Greg, W.W., *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, (London: Malone Society, 1911), p. 15 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/bookofsirthomasm00brituoft#page/14/mode/2up>

See also:

<https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/11-1/more.htm>

*[W]hat Rowland calls the 'relentlessly familiar' topographic specificity is another important factor in the play's representation of London (18). On the eve of the riot proper, in a scene marked for omission, Lincoln and his comrades gather at St Martins, an outlying liberty of the city near Aldersgate which was notorious – both in 1517 and in the 1590s – for its large and disorderly immigrant population (15). Here Lincoln accurately depicts the Dutch and French inhabitants of this area by naming as the rioters' targets the distinctly non-Italian 'Mewtas a wealthie Piccarde ... / De Barde, Peter van Hollock, [and] Adrian Martine', along with 'many more outlandish fugitiues' (scene iv, lines 419-21). Probably for reasons of dramatic economy, the action against the aliens is confined in the play to St Martin's, where the rioters are confronted by More, rather than, as actually happened, dispersed around various locations where the strangers had congregated (such as Cornhill and Blanche Appleton to the east of the city). Nevertheless, in a strikingly detailed instance of the persistence of civic memory, Mewtas's house is correctly identified by Lincoln as 'the greene gate', where, according to Stow's *Survey of London*, the former 'harbored ... many Frenchmen, that kalendered wolsteds, and did other things contrarie to the Franchises of the Citizens' (vol. I 152) (16).*

The testator was the son of the soldier and courtier, Sir Peter Meutys (d.1562). From the *ODNB*:

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 the testator's mother, Jane Astley, is obscure, despite the existence of a sketch of her by Hans Holbein the younger. The testator was appointed an executor of the will of his stepmother, Jane Angersley (d.1577). See TNA PROB 11/59/248.

According to the *ODNB*, the testator had two elder brothers and a sister, Frances:

-Henry Meautys (d.1588), was the grandfather of Sir Francis Bacon's secretary, Sir Thomas Meautys (c.1590-1649). Henry Meautys (d.1588) married Anne Jermy, the daughter of Sir John Jermy of Brightwell, Suffolk. For Sir John Jermy, see his will, TNA PROB 11/44/243; the account of his funeral in Nichols, John Gough, ed., *The Diary of Henry Machyn*, (London: Camden Society, 1868), pp. 244-5, 383; and:

<http://www.jermy.org/valdar.html>

Sir John Jermy of Metfield and Brightwell was made a Knight of the Bath at the coronation of Anne Boleyn in 1533. He attended a reception of Lady Anna of Cleves in 1539. His son and heir Francis was High Sheriff of Suffolk 1586/7.

By Anne Jermy, the testator's brother, Henry Meautys, had a son, Thomas Meautys (d.1614) of West Ham, who married Elizabeth Coningsby, the daughter of Sir Henry Coningsby (d.1590) of North Mimms, Hertfordshire. For Sir Henry Coningsby, see Collins, Arthur, *The Peerage of England*, (London: W. Innys and J. Richardson, 1756), Vol. IV, p. 312 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=I5lcAAAAcAAJ&pg=PA312>

-Thomas Meautys (d.1614), who married Elizabeth Coningsby, by whom he was the father of Sir Thomas Meautys (c.1590-1649), Clerk of the Privy Council, and secretary to Lord Burghley's nephew, 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. See Bunten, Alice Chambers, *Sir Thomas Meautys, Secretary to Lord Bacon, and his Friends*, (London: Page & Thomas Ltd., 1918), pp. ii, 8 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/sirthomasmeautys00buntiala#page/ii/mode/2up>

-Frances Meautys, Maid of Honour to Queen Elizabeth, who married firstly, on 16 February 1566, Henry Howard (c.1540 - 16 January 1591), 2nd Viscount Bindon, the son of Thomas Howard (c.1520 - 28 January 1582), 1st Viscount Bindon, and his first wife, Elizabeth Marney (born c.1517), the daughter and heir of John Marney (d. 27 April 1525), 2nd Baron Marney, by whom she had one child, a daughter, Douglas Howard (1571 -13 August 1590), who married Sir Arthur Gorges (1557 – 28 September 1625).

See the will of Thomas Howard, 1st Viscount Bindon, TNA PROB 11/65/112; Cokayne, George Edward, *The Complete Peerage*, (London: The St Catherine Press, 1926), Vol. VI, pp. 583-5; and Armytage, George J., ed., *Allegations for Marriage Licenses Issued by the Bishop of London 1520 to 1610*, (London, 1887), Vol. I, p. 32 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/allegationsforma01ches#page/62/mode/2up>

After her first husband's death, Frances Meautys married secondly Edmund Stansfield (or Stanfield), second son of Edward Stansfield (d.1598?) of Stansfield Hall (in Todmorden?) by Margery Taylor, daughter of Edward Taylor of Horsseidge. See TNA C 142/279/361; Cokayne, *supra*, p. 585; and Stansfeld, John, *History of the Family of Stansfeld of Stansfield in the Parish of Halifax*, (Leeds: Goodall and Suddick, 1885), pp. 312, 323, 325-6 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/historyoffamilyo00stan#page/312/mode/2up>

See also:

<http://www.sp12.hull.ac.uk/stac5/stac5alphas/Stansfield.htm>

See also the *ODNB* entry for Sir Arthur Gorges:

Gorges, Sir Arthur (d. 1625), poet and translator, was the third son of Sir William Gorges (d. 1585), seafarer. His father was a younger son of Sir Edward Gorges of Wraxall. His mother was Winifred Budockshed or Butshead (d. 1599/1600) of St Budeaux near Plymouth, a first cousin to Sir Walter Raleigh . . .

Gorges married Douglas (1571–1590), the daughter of Henry Howard, second Viscount Bindon, on 14 October 1584, with the approval of Douglas's mother, Francis Howard, née Meautys, but against the wishes of her irascible father. Protracted legal action followed. When a daughter, Ambrosia, was born (25 December 1588) Thomas Howard (third Viscount Bindon after he inherited his brother's title in 1590) claimed that she was a changeling. Douglas died on 13 August 1590 leaving Gorges embroiled in litigation over his daughter's legitimacy and inheritance. Ambrosia died in October 1600, before Gorges had enjoyed any financial benefit from her inheritance. His efforts to do so were energetic: on Easter day 1600 he was accused of having tried forcibly to evict Edmund Stansfield, the second husband of Douglas's mother, from Lullworth House, which

Gorges claimed was the property of Ambrosia. His correspondence with Robert Cecil in this period (preserved in the Hatfield manuscripts) is punctuated with complaints about his poverty.

The first Viscount Bindon, a first cousin of Anne Boleyn and thus a first cousin once removed of Queen Elizabeth, 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 (1519-1536), Duke of Richmond and Somerset.

For Henry Howard, 2nd Viscount Bindon, see also Richardson, *Douglas, Plantagenet Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. II, pp. 275-6; and Burke, Bernard, *A Genealogical History of the Dormant, Abeyant, Forfeited and Extinct Peerages of the British Empire*, (London: Harrison, 1866), pp. 284-5 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=K3MaAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA285>

According to the *ODNB*, 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).

By his third wife, Mabel Burton (1540–1580) Thomas Howard (d. 28 January 1582), 1st Viscount Bindon, had a daughter, Frances Howard (1578-1639), who married, as his second wife, Edward Seymour (1539?-1621), 1st Earl of Hertford (1539?–1621), whose first wife was Queen Elizabeth's cousin, Lady Katherine Grey (1540?-1568), heir to the throne under Henry VIII's will. See the *ODNB* entries for Edward Seymour and Frances Howard.

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. See ERO D/DHt T313/13 at:

http://seax.essexcc.gov.uk/Result_Details.aspx?DocID=319210

In 1583 Heneage 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. For the documents

connected with Oxford's ownership of Bretts, see HL/PO/PB/1/1609/7J1n33 on this website.

For the ownership of Bretts by the Meautys family and by Oxford, see also Lysons, Daniel, *The Environs of London, Vol. I, Part II* (London: T. Cadell, 1811), pp. 730-1 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=JJcjAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA730>

See also 'West Ham: Manors and estates', in *A History of the County of Essex: Volume 6*, ed. W R Powell (London, 1973), pp. 68-74. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol6/pp68-74> [accessed 18 March 2016].

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, 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 at:

https://books.google.ca/books?id=B5b-k9HO_ooC&pg=PA19

See also the *ODNB* entry for Sir Thomas Lodge (1509/10–1585); 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, *supra*, p. 26).

MARRIAGE AND ISSUE

On 5 November 1579, the testator married Philippa Cooke, the daughter of Lady Burghley's brother, Richard Cooke (1531 – 3 October 1579), and his wife, Anne Cawnton. Philippa Cooke was thus a first cousin of Oxford's wife, Anne Cecil. See Armytage, George J., ed., *Allegations for Marriage Licenses Issued by the Bishop of London 1520 to 1610*, (London, 1887), Vol. I, p. 91 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/allegationsforma01ches#page/180/mode/2up>

For the will of Richard Cooke (d.1579), see TNA PROB 11/61/533.

By Philippa Cooke, the testator had three children:

* **Sir Thomas Meautys**, knighted 8 February 1610, who in 1625 married Anne Burnaby, daughter of Sir Richard Burnaby (d.1629) of Warwickshire. See Bunten, *supra*, p. ii, and *Private Correspondence, infra*, pp. lxix, 114-118, 202, 216 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/privatecorrespon00baco#page/114/mode/2up>

* **Jane Meautys** (1580/1-1659), who married firstly, as his second wife, Sir William Cornwallis (c.1551-1611) whose first wife was Lucy Neville, daughter of Oxford's kinsman John Neville (d.1577), 4th Baron Latimer. Sir William Cornwallis purchased Oxford's lease of the mansion of Fisher's Folly in the parish of St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate in 1588. His daughter, Anne Cornwallis (d.1635), has been identified as the 'Anne Cornwaleys' of the brief anthology of sixteenth century poetry known as the Cornwallis-Lysons manuscript, now in the Folger Library (Folger MS V.a.89). Jane Meautys married secondly, Sir Nathaniel Bacon (d. 11 See the *ODNB* entry for Sir Nathaniel Bacon:

Bacon, Sir Nathaniel (1585–1627), painter, was born at Redgrave in Suffolk in August 1585, the grandson of Lord Keeper Bacon and the youngest son of Sir Nicholas Bacon (c.1543–1624) [see under Bacon, Sir Nathaniel (1546?–1622)], subsequently the premier baronet of England, and his wife, Anne Butts (c.1547–1616). He was admitted to the Order of the Bath in February 1626 to mark Charles I's coronation. Raised at Redgrave Hall, Bacon acquired Brome Hall in Suffolk on his marriage, on 1 May 1614, to Jane, née Meautys (1580/81–1659) [see Bacon, Jane, widow of Sir William Cornwallis, and inherited Culford Hall, 4 miles north of Bury St Edmunds, from his parents.

* **Frances Meautys** (1585 - d. 18 November 1627), who married Edward Shute the son of John Shute, and who was the mistress, and later wife, of Robert Radcliffe (1573 – 23 September 1629), 5th Earl of Sussex, to whom Robert Greene dedicated Thomas Lodge's *Euphues' Shadow* in 1592. From the *ODNB* entry for Robert Radcliffe:

In September the following year [=1610] Jane, ostensibly the daughter of Edward Shute but in fact Sussex's, was baptized at St Clement Danes. Sussex lived with her mother, Frances (d. 1627), daughter of Hercules Meautys, Shute's wife and in due course widow, for many years. Their relationship came before the privy council in 1618, when the earl obstructed their attempt to summon his mistress. The countess of Sussex died in 1623 and Sussex married Frances within days of her burial on 11 December—or even sooner. According to John Chamberlain, Sussex forestalled his wife's deathbed efforts to prevent the marriage taking place by wedding Frances the very day after the countess died, before the pursuivants could deliver a warrant to stop it. Frances died on 18 November 1627, having borne no legitimate children with Sussex.

For the testator's children, see *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*, (London: J.B. Nichols and Sons, 1870), Vol. III, p. 307 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=5joQAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA307>

It would appear that the testator's legatees, Thomas Knowles and Samuel Knowles, were 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. Her first husband, the mercer Thomas Knolles, died 11 July 1550 (for his will, see TNA PROB 11/34/212). Thomas Knolles and Samuel Knolles, mentioned in her will, were her sons by this marriage. For the will of Elizabeth (Castlyn) Knolles Martyn (d.1583), see TNA PROB 11/65/430. For the will of Sir Roger Martyn (d.1573), Lord Mayor of London, see TNA PROB 11/56/48.

The testator's executor, Edmund Yorke, would appear to be the Edmund Yorke to whom Oxford leased his manor of Tilbury juxta Clare. For the will of Edmund Yorke, see TNA PROB 11/89/243. There is an as yet unexplained connection between the families of Meautys and Yorke since, as noted, the testator's executor was Edmund Yorke, while his brother, Rowland Yorke, had earlier been a witness to the will of the testator's stepmother, Jane Meautys (see TNA PROB 11/59/248).

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). According to the *ODNB* '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), pp. xlviii-ix at:

<https://archive.org/stream/privatecorrespon00baco#page/n57/mode/2up>

RM: T{estamentu}m 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 Willmo Drury Legum Doctore curie prerogative Cantuariensis magistro Custode siue Commissario & vicesimo die mensis Novembris Anno Domini millesimo quingentesimo Octogesimo Octavo iuramento Petri Johnson notarij publici procuratoris Philippe Mewtas relicte dicti defuncti et executricis in huiusmodi testamento nominatæ cui commissaria fuit administratio bonorum iurium et creditorum eiusdem defuncti de bene et fideliter administrando & 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.]