

SUMMARY: The document below is the last will and testament, dated 1 June 1591 and proved 27 June 1593 of William Leveson, uncle of William Leveson (d.1621), who acted as trustee to the Lord Chamberlain's Men, including William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon, in the allocation of shares in the ground lease of the Globe Theatre in 1599.

### ***FAMILY BACKGROUND***

The testator was the son of Nicholas Leveson (d.1539) and Dionyse Bodley (d.1560). See the wills of Nicholas Leveson, TNA PROB 11/27/552; and Dionyse Leveson, TNA PROB 11/43/645.

The testator was predeceased by his elder brother, Nicholas Leveson (d.1568), for whose will see TNA PROB 11/50/162.

The testator was also predeceased by his elder brother, Thomas Leveson (1532-1576), who married Ursula Gresham (1534-1574), by whom he was the father of Sir John Leveson (1555-1615); Shakespeare's trustee, William Leveson (d.1621); and nine daughters named in the will below.

For the testator's nephew, Sir John Leveson (1555-1615), who assisted in the suppression of the Essex Rebellion on 8 February 1601, see the entry in the *ODNB* and his will, TNA PROB 11/126/409.

The testator's niece, Dionyse Leveson, married Robert Spring, son of Robert Spring (1502 – 3 or 20 April 1549?) of Lavenham, Suffolk, whose father, Thomas Spring (d.1523), and John de Vere (1442-1513), 13<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, were major benefactors of the Church of St Peter and St Paul in Lavenham. See:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/church\\_gallery\\_03.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/church_gallery_03.shtml)

For the marriage of Robert Spring and Dionyse Leveson, see Corder, Joan, ed., *The Visitation of Suffolk, 1561*, Part I, (London: Harleian Society, 1981), p. 33.

See also the will of Thomas Leveson (1532-1576), TNA PROB 11/58/397, and the will of William Leveson (d.1621), TNA PROB 11/137/600.

### ***MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN***

According to the pedigree in the Visitation of Essex, the testator married Barbara Chapman, the daughter of Robert Chapman (d.1574) of Stone Castle in Kent. She is mentioned in the will of the testator's brother, Nicholas Leveson (d.1568), *supra*. See also the will of Robert Chapman, TNA PROB 11/57/46, and Howard, Joseph Jackson and

George John Armytage, eds., *The Visitation of London in the Year 1568*, (London: Harleian Society, 1869), Vol. I, p. 18 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationoflond00cook#page/18/mode/2up>

There is a discrepancy between the PCC copy of the will of the testator's father-in-law, Robert Chapman, and the copy of Chapman's will enrolled in the Court of Husting on 20 June 1575. In the latter, Robert Chapman's will is stated to contain this clause, which is not found in the PCC copy:

*To Robert and Ellen, children of Barbara his deceased daughter, late wife of William Lewson, mercer, fifty pounds apiece.*

See Sharpe, Reginald R., ed., *Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London*, Part II, (London: John C. Francis, 1890), p. 690 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=ek4MAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA690&lpg=PA690>

It thus appears that although the testator died without issue, he had a son and daughter living on 20 February 1571 when his father-in-law, Robert Chapman, made his will. A Robert Leveson and Ellen Leveson are also mentioned in the 1578 will of the testator's sister-in-law, Mary (nee Mathew) Leveson, TNA PROB 11/62/540.

In a memorandum to the will below, the testator's nephew, William Leveson (d.1621), stated on 29 May 1593 that the testator had told him that he 'had in his hands a will of Mrs Chapman's, his mother, all written by one Sharpe, a chandler.' In her will dated 18 October 1593 and proved 16 August 1595, TNA PROB 11/86/184, Ellen Chapman, widow, leaves the residue of her estate to 'my well-beloved cousin, Richard Sharpe, wax-chandler of London', and appoints him as her sole executor, and it thus seems that this is the will of the testator's mother-in-law, Ellen, second wife of the testator's father-in-law, Robert Chapman (d.1574).

For the will of Richard Sharpe (d.1608), wax-chandler of London, see TNA PROB 11/111/203.

See also Richardson, Joan A. Carew, 'Carew of Stone Castle', in *North West Kent Family History*, Vol. 3, No. 3, December 1983, pp. 114-118, available online.

RM: T{estamentum} Will{el}mi Leveson

In the name of Almighty God, Amen. The first day of June in the year of Our Lord God a thousand five hundred fourscore and eleven and in the three and thirtieth 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, William Leveson th' elder, citizen and mercer of

London, being of good and perfect memory, thanked be Almighty God therefore, considering the changing of this mortal life is to me certain, and the hour and time when it shall be changed is at the pleasure of Almighty God, wherefore tarrying his good leisure in his fear, not minding to die intestate, do make and ordain this my present last will and testament in manner and form following, that is to say:

First and principally I commend my soul unto Almighty God, faithfully trusting only by the merits of his Son, Jesus Christ, my Saviour and Redeemer, to have remission of my sins committed in this mortal life, and after the same life to be partaker of the heavenly and everlasting life to come, and I will my body to be buried at the discretion of mine executors herein ordained;

Item, I bequeath to the poor of St Dunstan's in the East where I am now a parishioner forty shillings, to be distributed by the churchwardens for the time being to such as have most need;

Item, I will that no cloth for gowns or cloaks be given at my burial saving to such as shall be my household servants at the time of my decease, and unto every of my said servants I give twenty shillings of lawful money of England, or more at the discretion of my executors;

Item, I bequeath to Mrs Chapman, my mother-in-law, my ring of gold set with the lesser ruby for a remembrance of me;

Item, I bequeath to my sister Calthorpe my ring of gold set with the greater ruby for a remembrance of me;

Item, I bequeath to Henry Plankney, draper, my ring of gold with a death-head having within the same the letters W.L. for a remembrance of me;

Item, I will that a chest with a hanging lock in the innermost chamber of my dwelling-house with all the books and writing shall be delivered, locked up as it is and shall be at the time of my decease, unto Sir John Leveson, my nephew, knight, or his heirs for his or their indemnity in consideration that his lands and mine stand chargeable unto the executors of my mother, Dionyse Leveson, for payment and performance of her debts and legacies by a recognizance for performance of covenants contained in a pair of indentures, whereof thone of them remaineth in the same chest;

Item, I bequeath unto my said nephew, Sir John Leveson, knight, my stocks of cattle let to farm to Humphrey Hayes, deceased, now in th' hands and occupation of Thomas Reding of Tendinges in West Thurrock in Essex;

Item, whereas I being a free man of the Right Worshipful Company of English Merchants for the Discovery of New Trades, not having any child and never having made child or apprentice free, it is ordered by the same Company that all such in that case may dispose and by their last will and testament bequeath their freedoms to any man, as heretofore

some have done, wherefore I will, give and bequeath my freedom of the same Right Worshipful Company unto my loving nephew, William Leveson, of this city of London, mercer;

The residue of all and singular my goods, chattels, ready money and debts whatsoever not herein given or bequeathed, my debts paid, my funerals discharged and this my last will and testament performed, I do fully and wholly give and bequeath unto William Leveson, Dionyse Leveson, Mary Leveson th' elder, Elizabeth Leveson, Frances Leveson, Ursula Leveson, Anne Leveson, Grisell Leveson, Mary Leveson the younger, and Nazareth Leveson, children of my brother, Thomas Leveson, deceased, equally and indifferently amongst them to be divided, every of them giving security unto my executors for saving them harmless so far as any of their parts shall extend for and in such debts as mine executors shall be lawfully bound to pay, and the charges in defence of the same;

Item, I will that if any of the forenamed my brother's children shall depart this life (being married), that their husbands living shall notwithstanding have and enjoy in manner before said that part in division bequeathed unto any of their wives deceased;

And I make and ordain my loving nephews, Sir John Leveson, knight, and William Leveson, his brother, executors of this my last will and testament;

And I make and ordain the before-named Henry Plankney overseer of the same;

And as concerning the order and disposition of my manors, lands, tenements and hereditaments, I give and bequeath unto my said nephew, Sir John Leveson, knight, all that my manor of Westcourt and all my lands, tenements and hereditaments set and lying in the parishes of Sillingham [=sic?] and Chetham [=Chatham?] in the county of Kent;

And also that my tenement in Lime Street in London;

And also all those my two acres of land or marsh called Hurtes in Garlandes(?) in the parish of West Thurrock in the county of Essex;

To have and to hold the said manors, lands, tenements, marsh and hereditaments with all and singular their appurtenances to the said Sir John Leveson and his heirs forever;

In witness whereof I, the said William Leveson th' elder, have with mine own hand written this my last will and testament, subscribed my name and put to my seal the day and year first above-written. By me, William Leveson the elder, mercer.

Memorandum. That on the eight and twentieth day of September 1592 annoq{ue} r{egni} R{egin}e Elizabethe etc tricesimo quarto the said William Leveson th' elder did acknowledge and confess before us, the witnesses hereunder named, that he did write the said will with his own hand, and did seal and subscribe unto the same, and likewise

before us did publish the same to be his last will and testament. Richard Gall, notary public, Thomas Gall and Henry Burnley.

Memorandum. That the nine and twentieth day of May in the year of Our Lord God a thousand five hundred ninety-three William Leveson the younger, going to his uncle, Mr William Leveson th' elder, to take his leave of him because he was for some occasions to go into the country, he, the said William Leveson th' elder, then declared unto him that he had made his will, whereof he had constituted Sir John Leveson, knight, and him, the said William, his executors, praying them to perform the same, and that to them and their sisters he had given all he had, and willed likewise that some not named in his will who had taken pains about him, as his servants, might be considered with mourning apparel and twenty shillings apiece, and that his maidservant, who had been very careful and diligent about him in his sickness, should have that legacy which he had given unto her in his will made up twenty nobles or more;

Thother of his hired servants and not in wages, twenty shillings and mourning clothes;

The boy the like;

And to be delivered to the executors as to Alderman Catcher.

Also that where he had in his custody the lease of West Thurrock, his meaning was that it should be delivered or held by his executors according to the meaning of the woman which committed it to his custody, howsoever it was;

Further he declared that where he had in his hands a will of Mrs Chapman's, his mother [=mother-in-law], all written by one Sharpe, a chandler, wherein was disposed divers things according to the desire of the said Sharpe, his mind and will was that the same will should not be delivered back again at the desire or request of either of them both, but that the same should be retained by his executors in his force;

Finally, whereas there was a bond made unto him in trust by one Mr Bullock, his mind and meaning was that the same bond should be held according to the writing or condition.

Probatum fuit Testamentum suprascriptum apud London Coram m{agist}ro Thoma Creake Legum Doctore Surrogato Venerabilis viri m{agist}ri Will{el}mi Lewyn Legum etiam Doctoris Curie Prerogatiue Cant{uariensis} Mag{ist}ri Custodi siue Com{m}issarij L{egi}time deputati vicesimo septimo die mens{is} Iunij Anno D{omi}ni Mill{es}imo Quingentesimo Nonagesimo Tertio Iuramento m{agist}ri Iohannis Robinson Notarij publici procu{rato}ris Will{el}mi Leveson vnus executorum in h{uius}mo{d}i testamento nominat{i} Cui commissa fuit adminstrac{i}o etc De bene et fidel{ite}r adminstrand{o} etc Ad sancta Dei Evangelia Iurat{i} Reservata p{otes}tate

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similem commissionem faciend{i} D{omi}no Iohanni Leveson Milit{i} alteri  
executor{i} in h{uius}mo{d}i Testamento nominat{o} cum Venerit eam petitur{o} in  
debita iuris forma admissur{o}

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before Master Thomas Creake, Doctor of the Laws, lawfully deputed Surrogate of the worshipful Master William Lewin, also Doctor of the Laws, Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the twenty-seventh day of the month of June in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred ninety-third by the oath of Master John Robinson, notary public, proctor of William Leveson, one of the executors named in the same testament, to whom administration etc., sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer etc., with power reserved for a similar grant to be made to Sir John Leveson, knight, the other executor named in the same testament when he shall have come to petition to be admitted the same in due form of law.]