

SUMMARY: The document below is the will, dated 14 November 1593 and proved 16 November 1594, of Thomas Darcy (1560-1593/4), whose wife, Camilla Guicciardini, was related to the historian Francesco Guicciardini, whose *Historia d'Italia* Oxford owned a copy of in the original Italian, now at the Folger Shakespeare Library.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

For the Darcy pedigree see Metcalfe, Walter C., ed., *The Visitations of Essex, Part I*, (London: Harleian Society, 1878), Vol. XIII, pp. 44-5 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationsofess13metc#page/44/mode/2up>

The testator was the son of Thomas Darcy (1538?-1586) and Margaret Sulyard, the daughter of Eustace Sulyard (d. 26 February 1547) of Flemings, Essex, by Margaret Forster (d. 5 February 1587), widow of Gregory Bassett (d.1528), esquire. After the death of Eustace Sulyard, Margaret Forster Bassett married thirdly, William Aylofffe (d.1569). For the will of Eustace Sulyard, see TNA PROB 11/31/508. For the will of Margaret Forster Sulyard Aylofffe, see TNA PROB 11/72/1. For the will of William Aylofffe, see TNA PROB 11/51/50.

For the will of the testator's father, Thomas Darcy (1538?-1586), see TNA PROB 11/69/668.

None of the testator's siblings, John, Eustace, Margaret, Anne, Bridget and Dorothy (all of whom are mentioned in the will of his father), is mentioned by the testator in the will below, although the Eustace Darcy who witnessed the will was likely the testator's brother. One of the testator's sisters was married to Thomas Bedingfield, described by the testator as his brother-in-law in the will below, and it seems possible that this was the Thomas Bedingfield (d.1613) whose translation of *Cardanus' Comfort* was dedicated to Oxford.

MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

The testator married Camilla Guicciardini (1561/2-1606), the daughter of Vincent Guicciardini (d.1581) and Lucretia Bryskett, the daughter of Anthony Bryskett (d.1574), by whom, according to the pedigree in Sissons, *infra*, he had three sons, two of whom died young, and five daughters:

* **Thomas Darcy.**

* **Margaret Darcy**, who married Thomas Browne, the son of Sir Anthony Browne.

* **Mary Darcy**, who married Christopher Neville, third son of Edward Neville, Baron abergavenny.

* **Elizabeth Darcy**, who married Sir Henry Mildmay.

* **Bridget Darcy**, who married Sir George Fenner.

* **Frances Darcy**, who married Sir Henry Vane.

After the testator's death, his widow, Camilla, married Francis Harvey of Witham (d.1602), by whom she had a daughter, Elizabeth Harvey. According to the 1612 Visitation of Essex, Francis Harvey was the son of John Harvey, esquire, of Ickworth, Suffolk, and Elizabeth, the daughter of Henry Pope of Mildenhall, Suffolk. See Metcalfe, *supra*, p. 215 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationsofess13metc#page/214/mode/2up>

See also Sisson, Charles Jasper, ed., *Thomas Lodge and Other Elizabethans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933), pp. 345-7, available online.

For the will of the testator's widow, Camilla (nee Guicciardini) Darcy Harvey (d.1606), see TNA PROB 11/108/64. For the will of Camilla's father, Vincent Guicciardini (d.1581), see TNA PROB 11/63/334.

Vincent Guicciardini (d.1581) was the brother of Lorenzo Guicciardini (d.1593) of Florence, who was involved in the intelligence gathering activities of both Oxford's father-in-law, Lord Burghley, and Robert Devereux (1565-1601), 2nd Earl of Essex, in the latter case through Vincent's son, James Guicciardini. See Hammer, Paul E.J., *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 179, available online:

For all these reasons, Essex was happy to employ James Guicciardini as his agent at Florence in late 1593. Although his family were prominent Florentine merchants, Guicciardini was born in London and was the nephew of Edmund Spenser's close friend, Lodowick Bryskett. Following disputes over his father's will, Guicciardini traveled to Florence, where his uncle, Lorenzo, was a leading official under the grand duke of Tuscany. During 1592 and early 1593, writing on his master's behalf, Lorenzo Guicciardini had tried to open communications with Burghley. Although he wished to keep it secret, the duke was anxious that England should endorse Henri IV's conversion. However, Burghley was unenthusiastic and it seems that contact with Florence was passed over to Essex – clearly with Elizabeth's approval. James Guicciardini arrived back in England during this period, and when he finally returned to Florence at the end of 1593, he did so under direction from Essex. Unfortunately, his uncle died before his return and he himself had to assume the role of secret contact between Essex and the duke.

Although the precise nature of the relationship has not yet been established, Vincent Guicciardini (d.1581) and his brother, Lorenzo Guicciardini (d.1593), would appear to have been nephews of the historian Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540), the author of *Historia d'Italia*, written from 1537 to 1540, but not published until 1561 in an edition by the author's nephew, Angelo Guicciardini. Oxford owned a copy of the 1565 edition of Guicciardini's *Historia d'Italia*, which is now in the Folger Shakespeare Library (see DG539.G8 H4 1565 Cage). Oxford's ownership of this book testifies to his fluency in Italian, while Oxford's ties to members of the testator's family, as well as his father-in-law, Lord Burghley's, ties to members of the Guicciardini family, suggest that Oxford may have visited members of the Guicciardini family on his continental tour in 1575-6.

LM: T{estamentum} Thome Darcie

In the name of God, Amen. The fourteenth day of November in Anno Domini a thousand five hundred ninety-three and in the five and thirtieth year of the reign of our most gracious Sovereign Lady Elizabeth, our Queen's Majesty etc., I, Thomas Darcy of Tolleshunt Darcy in the county of Essex, esquire, and in the diocese of London, being of good and perfect remembrance, thanks be unto Almighty God, do ordain and make this my present testament containing herein my last will in manner and form following:

First, I bequeath my soul to Almighty God in sure and certain hope of everlasting life through Jesus Christ, and my body to be buried in the usual place of my ancestors in Tolleshunt Darcy church;

Inprimis, I give unto the poor of this parish of Tolleshunt Darcy the sum of fifty-three shillings and four pence of lawful English money, to be paid by mine executrix within four months next after my decease;

Item, I give unto my well-beloved wife the use of all my moveable goods within my house whatsoever during her natural life, the remainder of all the said goods to so many of my daughters as shall then be living, equally divided amongst them part and part like;

Item, my will is that if my said wife shall depart this life before my daughters come to their several ages of one and twenty years, that than Mr Thomas Beningfeilde [=Bedingfield], my brother-in-law, shall have the bringing up of my daughters then living and under the age of one and twenty years, and the use of their portions afore given, and he, the said Thomas Beningfeild, to enter into bands with sufficient sureties unto Mr Arthur Harris, esquire, for the full performance and payment of their several portions at their several ages of one and twenty years as they shall accomplish the same, according to the true meaning of this my will;

Item, I give unto my well-beloved wife my manor house called Tolleshunt Darcy Hall, with all the lands and commodities belonging or appertaining to the same, and all other my freehold lands, with one parcel of copyhold land as it is surrendered, to her use during

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her natural life, the remainder of all the said lands after her decease to be proportionably and equally divided among all or so many of my daughters as shall then survive my wife;

And if my wife shall depart this life before my said daughters come to their several ages of one and twenty years, then I will that Mr Thomas Beningfeilde, my brother-in-law, shall have their and every of their several portions of lands to their uses also, and deduct out of the same their portions for either of their sufficient maintenance until they come to their several ages of one and twenty years;

All the residue of my goods moveable and unmovable whatsoever unbequeathed, my debts being paid, my legacies fulfilled, my funeral charges deducted, and my body being brought to the earth, I give wholly unto my well-beloved wife, whom I ordain sole executrix of this my present testament, these being witnesses: C. Atkinson, Doctor of Physic, Henry Maxey and Eustace Darcy, Henry Ewstace, John Bushe, his mark, Thomas Darcy.

Probatum fuit Testamentum suprascriptum apud London Coram venerabili viro magistro Willmo Lewyn Legum Doctore Curie Prerogatiue Cantuariensis Magistro Custode siue Commissario Legitime deputato decimo sexto die mensis Novembris Anno Domini Millesimo Quingentesimo Nonagesimo Quarto Iuramento magistri Thome Ashwoode notarij publici procuratoris Camille Darcie Relicte dicti defuncti et executricis in huiusmodi testamento nominatim Cui commissa fuit administratio etc De bene et fideliter administrandis etc Ad sancta dei Evangelia iuratim

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before the worshipful Master William Lewin, Doctor of the Laws, lawfully deputed Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the sixteenth day of the month of November in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred ninety-fourth by the oath of Master Thomas Ashwood, notary public, proctor of Camilla Darcy, relict of the said deceased and executrix named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted etc., sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer etc.]