

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 16 March 1597 [=1598] and proved 5 February 1598 [=1599], of Anthony Kempe, esquire, of Slindon in Sussex. Anthony Kempe had acquired Slindon while in service with Queen Mary:

In the first year of Queen Mary's reign Sir Anthony St. Leger, whose name is still remembered in the neighbourhood, was made, in conjunction with Sir Geoffrey Poole, keeper of the manor and park, but soon afterwards the Queen granted the entire estate to Anthony Kempe, esq., the representative of an eminent family long seated at Ollantigh, co. Kent. With the descendants of the grantee Slindon remained unto the year 1752.

See Elwes, Dudley George Cary and Charles John Robinson, *A History of the Castles, Mansions and Manors of Western Sussex* (London: Longmans, 1876), p. 200, and Attree, F.W.T., *Notes of Post Mortem Inquisitions Taken in Sussex I Henry VIII to 1649 and After*, vol. xiv, Publications of the Sussex Record Society, 1912, p. 613.

In his will, Anthony Kempe terms himself 'esquire', a designation likely related to his early career at the court of Queen Mary:

Some [Sussex Catholics] had established links with Mary before her accession. Anthony Kempe of Slindon had been in her service since 1550. His second marriage was to Sir Edward Gage's daughter, Margaret. Kempe was something of a Court favourite, and was used as a diplomatic agent to the Spaniards. In 1554 he became an 'aid of the chamber' to King Philip (as did another Sussex Catholic, Richard Shelley, and also James Bassett, Bishop Gardiner's servant, who married into the Roper family). See Questier, p. 112.

Anthony Kempe's first wife was Anne Conyers (d.1567), one of the three daughters and co-heiresses of John, Lord Conyers (d.1557). Anne Conyers' sister, Elizabeth, married Thomas Darcy (d.1605), the first cousin of John (1530-1602), Lord Darcy of the North, to whom Robert Greene dedicated his first book, *Mamillia* (1583). Perhaps not by mere coincidence, but because of some connection to this family circle, Greene dedicated *Menaphon* (1589) to Anthony Kempe's niece, Alice (nee Kempe) Hales (d.1592).

By 1570, Anthony Kempe had married Margery, the daughter of Sir Edward Gage (d.1568) of West Firlie in Sussex. At least one member of the Gage family was imprisoned for recusancy. In 1581, Anthony Kempe's brother-in-law, Edward Gage of Bentley in Sussex was allowed out of prison at the behest of his first cousin, Anthony Browne, 1st Viscount Montagu (1528-1592), to 'see to the affairs of the recently-deceased Henry Wriothesley, second Earl of Southampton (Montague's son-in-law), to whom Gage was also an executor'. A decade later, in 1592, the privy council released Edward Gage from house arrest to attend to matters connected with the funeral of his first cousin Viscount Montague himself, and in 1597 the 3rd Earl of Southampton turned over the administration of his financial affairs to Edward Gage and two others (see Questier, Michael C., *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic*

Patronage and Religion, c.1550-1640 (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 81, and Akrigg, G.P.V., *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton* (Harvard University Press, 1968) pp.58, 69).

Anthony Kempe's father-in-law, Sir Edward Gage (d.1568), had a large family: John (d.1598), his son and heir, who married Elizabeth Shelley; Anthony (d.1567); Thomas (d.1591), who married Elizabeth, the daughter of Sir Thomas Guildford; George; Edward; Richard; John; Robert; Philippa, who married Edward Saunders; Agnes, who married Sir Edward Stradling; Mary, who married James Thatcher; and Margery, who married the testator, Anthony Kempe (see pedigree of Gage in Questier, Appendix 2).

Anthony Kempe's marriage to Margery Gage by 1570 is established by a document in the East Sussex Record Office:

Receipt for £150 SAS/G21/55A 28 Mar 1570. Anthony Kempe of Olantigh, Kent, esq to John Gage 'brother of my wife Margery' in part payment of £216 13s 4d given by John Gage 'of his mere good will and liberality' over and above £500 given by the will of her father Edward Gage, knight.

In his will, Anthony Kempe mentions his relationship to both Sir Thomas Shirley (c.1542-1612) the elder, who had married his niece, Anne Kempe (c.1542-1623), and to Thomas and Anne's son, Sir Thomas Shirley (1564-1634), who had married Frances Vavasour, the sister of Oxford's mistress, Anne Vavasour, the mother of Oxford's illegitimate son, Edward Vere. From the *Dictionary of National Biography* entries for father and son:

Sherley [Shirley], Sir Thomas (c.1542–1612), politician and courtier, was the eldest of three children born to William Sherley (c.1498–1551), a gentleman of Wiston, Sussex, and his wife, Mary, daughter of Thomas Isley of Sundridge, Kent. . . . Sherley married, about 1559, Anne (c.1542–1623), daughter of Sir Thomas Kempe of Wye, Kent. They had twelve children, including three adventurous sons: Sir Thomas Sherley (1564–1633/4), Sir Anthony Sherley (1565–1636?), and Robert Shirley (c.1581–1628).

Sherley [Shirley], Sir Thomas (1564–1633/4), privateer and travel writer, was the eldest son of Sir Thomas Sherley (c.1542–1612) of Wiston, Sussex, and his wife, Anne Kempe (c.1542–1623), daughter of Sir Thomas Kempe of Olantigh, Kent. Sir Anthony Sherley and Robert Shirley, Count Shirley, were his younger brothers. Together the three brothers through their exploits in Persia and the Mediterranean earned a reputation in their day in pamphlet and play as champions of Christendom against the Turk. . . . Back in England [in 1589], Sherley frequented the court, where he succumbed to the charms of a wealthy widow, Frances, Lady Stourton, the sister of Lord Cobham and sister-in-law of Robert Cecil. Although both families favoured the match, Sherley's gaze proved fickle as he met and secretly married Frances Vavasour, the daughter of Sir Thomas Vavasour, in the summer of 1591. But in order to avoid offending his father he still outwardly confessed his intentions towards Lady Stourton. However, in August 1591, while on progress with the

court, the queen found out about the match and was furious. Sherley was sent to the Marshalsea prison where he remained until early 1592.

The marriage between Anne Kempe and Sir Thomas Shirley the elder is perhaps explained by a prior family connection. As noted in the entry above, Sir Thomas Shirley the elder's mother was Mary, the daughter of Thomas Isley of Sundridge, Kent, and his wife, Elizabeth (nee Guildford), the daughter of Sir Richard Guildford (c.1450-1506) and his first wife, Anne Pympe. Elizabeth (nee Guildford) Isley's sister, Mary Guildford, married Christopher Kempe, the elder brother of Anne Kempe's grandfather, Sir William Kempe (1487-1539) of Olantigh (see Guildford pedigree in Burke, John and Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Extinct and Dormant Baronetcies of England, Ireland and Scotland*, 2nd ed. (London: Scott, 1841), p. 231). Anthony Kempe, who was Anne Kempe's uncle, appointed her husband, the elder Sir Thomas Shirley, an overseer of his will, and granted to the younger Sir Thomas Shirley, and his wife Frances (nee Vavasour), a year's free rent of his mansion house in the Blackfriars:

Item, my will is that my nephew, Sir Thomas Shirley, and my niece his wife, shall have and quietly enjoy my mansion house in the Blackfriars for one whole year after my decease, paying nothing for the same house for the said year, and after the end of the said year, my will is that my executors shall not put them out, but use them with all kindness for the rent thereof;

When the closeness of the family relationship between the testator Anthony Kempe to members of the Shirley family is considered in connection with the meeting between the comedian Will Kempe and Sir Anthony Shirley (1565-1636?), the brother of Sir Thomas Shirley the younger, in Rome in 1601, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the comedian Will Kempe was a member of the family of Kempe of Olantigh, and in fact the son of the testator Anthony Kempe's elder brother, Sir Thomas Kempe (d.1591) of Olantigh, particularly when it is recalled that Will Kempe is described as 'generosus' ('gentleman') in the indenture for the ground lease of the Globe Theatre as recited in the lawsuit brought by Thomasina Heminges Ostler in 1615 against her father, John Heminges (see *Coram Rege* Roll 1454, 13 James I, Hilary term, m. 692).

For the wills of the testator's father and mother, Sir Thomas Kempe (d.1539) of Olantigh, and Dame Eleanor Kempe (d.1559), see TNA PROB 11/27, f. 228 and TNA PROB 11/43, ff. 457-8. For the will of the testator's brother, George Kempe (d.1588), see TNA PROB 11/72, f. 294.

LM: Testamentum Anthonij Kempe

In the name of God, Amen. The sixteenth day of March one thousand five hundred ninety-seven, I, Anthony Kempe of Slindon in the county of Sussex, esquire, being of perfect health and memory (thanks be given to Almighty God therefore), revoking all

former wills and testaments heretofore by me made, do ordain and make this my last will and testament in manner and form following:

First, I bequeath my soul into the hands of my Saviour and Redeemer Christ Jesus, hoping through his grace and mercy to me, a miserable sinner, to have forgiveness of my sins and to be partaker of life everlasting, and my body to be buried in the parish church of Slindon (if it shall please God that I decease there), and if it happen that I die in London, then my will is that my body be buried in the church of the Savoy in Strand near unto the body of my late wife, Margery Kempe;

Item, I give to the reparations of the church of Slindon ten pounds;

Item, I give to the poor of the said parish, to be distributed amongst them at the discretion of my executors, ten pounds;

Item, I give and bequeath to all my menservants and maidservants which shall be with me in my service at the time of my death, to every of them one year's wages to be paid to them within two months after my decease, and further my will is that my said servants shall continue together where I shall happen to die for the space of two months after my death, and to have their meat, drink and lodging there at the charges of my said executors;

Item, I give and bequeath to Elizabeth Kempe, my daughter, the sum of one thousand marks [=£666 13s 4d] of lawful money of England, to be paid unto her when she shall accomplish the age of one and twenty years or be married, which shall happen first, so always as she do marry with the consent and good liking of the executors of this my last will and testament, and in the meantime till the said age or marriage, I will that she be found and maintained by my said executors;

Item, I give and bequeath to George Kempe, my son, threescore acres of woodland and twenty acres of marshland lying and being in the parish of Plumstead in the county of Kent, to have and to hold the same to the said George Kempe and to the heirs males of his body lawfully to be begotten, and for default of such issue to the right heirs of me, the said Anthony Kempe, forever, provided always that whereas the devise of the said threescore acres of woodland and twenty acres of marshland is void for one third part to ye said George Kempe if Garrett Kempe, my eldest son or his heirs within six month[s] after his full age and death of me, the said Anthony, do not, after reasonable request to him or them by the said George Kempe or his assigns made, confirm and ratify unto the said George Kempe, my son, the said threescore acres of woodland and twenty acres of marshland in such sort as the same is by this my last will and testament intended or mentioned to be to him devised, then I give and bequeath to the said George Kempe, my son, in lieu of that third part of the threescore acres of woodland and twenty acres of marshlands, one annuity or yearly rent of ten pounds by the year to him and to the heirs males of his body lawfully to be begotten, issuing and going out of my manor of Southstoke in the county of Sussex;

Item, I give and bequeath to Anthony Kempe, one other of the sons of me, the said Anthony Kempe, the manor of Walmore in the county of Gloucester with the appurtenances, to have and to hold the said manor with the appurtenances to him, the said Anthony, and to the heirs males of his body lawfully to be begotten, and for default of such issue to the right heirs of me, the said Anthony, forever, provided always and upon condition that if Garrett Kempe, my eldest son, or his heirs do at any time hereafter by good and sure conveyance in the law convey and assure or procure to be conveyed and assured lands and tenements or hereditaments (being one entire manor or farm of the value of thirty pounds by the year over and above all charges and reprises) to the said Anthony and to the heirs of his body in like manner and sort as the said manor of Walmore by these presents are given, granted or bequeathed, then this present bequest and devise touching the manor of Walmore aforesaid to be utterly frustrate and void;

Item, I give unto Mary Walrond, wife of Humphrey Walrond, and one of the daughters of me, the said Anthony Kempe, one thousand marks of lawful money of England, to be paid unto her when Henry Walrond, father of the said Humphrey Walrond, shall assure unto her for her jointure by good conveyance in the law lands and tenements to the yearly value of two hundred marks [=£133 6s 8d] by the year, and shall also assure unto Humphrey Walrond, his son, and to the heirs males of his body on the body of the said Mary Walrond lawfully begotten, his mansion house and the demesnes to the same belonging called the Sea in the county of Somerset, and also lands and tenements to the yearly value of fourscore pounds by the year of old rents of assize, and two leases of two hundred marks by the year, according to th' articles of agreement thereof made between me, the said Anthony Kempe, and the said Humphrey Walrond, as by the said articles more plainly appeareth;

Item, I give unto John Heylen, my servant, in consideration of his service heretofore done for me, fifty pounds;

Item, I do make and ordain for the performance of this my last will and testament my well-beloved cousin, Edward Gage of Bentley, and my brother-in-law, James Thatcher, esquires, my full and whole executors, and do give unto every of them for his pains herein to be taken one piece of plate of the value of ten pounds;

Also I do make my loving cousin, Sir Thomas Shirley the elder, knight, and my brother-in-law, Sir John Carrell [=Caryll], knight, overseers of this my last will, and give to either of them for their pains therein to be taken one ring of gold of the value of (blank);

The residue of my goods and chattels not bequeathed (my debts and legacies paid and my funeral discharged), I give and bequeath to Garrett Kempe, my eldest son;

In witness whereof I have caused this my last will and testament to be written, and have hereunto subscribed my name and set my seal the day and year abovesaid.

A codicil to be annexed to the abovesaid will of me, Anthony Kempe, as followeth:

And that my full mind and will is that all these legacies hereafter mentioned shall be annexed to my last will & testament, and taken, deemed and judged to be part and parcel of my said will, viz.:

I give to my son, George Kempe, forty pounds;

Item, I give to Anthony Kempe, my youngest son, forty pounds of like lawful money, to be paid unto them (if they be then living) at the age of twenty-three years, or sooner if the executors of my said will shall think it fit;

Item, I give and bequeath all my jewels which were my late wife's to my daughter Mary Walrond and to my daughter Elizabeth Kempe, to be equally divided between them;

And whereas I have given to George Kempe, my son, and to the heirs males of his body lawfully begotten certain lands lying in Plumstead in the county of Kent, and to Anthony Kempe, my son, the manor of Walmore in the county of Gloucester, and to the heirs males of his body lawfully begotten (as by my said will doth plainly appear), my will is that the executors of my said will shall have the use, profit and commodity of all ye said lands so given to my said sons, and the bringing up of them till they shall accomplish the age of one and twenty years;

Item, my will is that my nephew, Sir Thomas Shirley, and my niece his wife, shall have and quietly enjoy my mansion house in the Blackfriars for one whole year after my decease, paying nothing for the same house for the said year, and after the end of the said year, my will is that my executors shall not put them out, but use them with all kindness for the rent thereof;

Item, I give to my servant, John Higgens, in consideration of his faithful service to me done, the sum of twenty pounds;

Item, I give to my servant, Allen Orledge, in consideration of his service to me done, the sum of twenty pounds.

Probatum fuit Testamentum suprascriptum apud London coram venerabili viro Magistro Iohanne Gibson Legum Doctore Curie Prerogatiue Cantuariensis magistri Custodis siue Comissarij legitime constituti Quinto die mensis february Anno Domini iuxta cursum et Computacionem ecclesie Anglicane millesimo Quingentesimo Nonagesimo Octauo Iuramento magistri Thome Wheeler notarij publici procuratoris prefatorum Edwardi Gage et Iacobi Thatcher, Amigerorum, executorum in huiusmodi Testamento nominatorum Quibus commissa fuit Administratio bonorum Iurium et Creditorum eiusdem defuncti De bene et fideliter administrando &c Iurati Examinatus

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before the worshipful Master John Gibson, Doctor of the Laws, of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury lawfully constituted Master, Keeper or Commissary, on the fifth day of the month of February in the year of the Lord according to the course and reckoning of the Church of England the thousand five hundred ninety-eighth [=5 February 1599] by the oath of Master Thomas Wheeler, notary public, proctor of the forenamed Edward Gage and James Thatcher, esquires, executors named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of the goods, rights and credits of the same deceased, sworn to well and faithfully administer, etc. Examined]