

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 3 October 1601 from William Waad (1546-1623), Clerk of the Privy Council, to Sir Robert Cecil in which he mentions his cousin, William Leveson (d.1621), one of two trustees used by William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon in the allocation of shares in the ground lease of the Globe Theatre in 1599.

The exact relationship by which Sir William Waad and William Leveson (d.1621) were cousins has not yet been established.

For the will of Shakespeare's trustee, Sir William Leveson (d.1621), see TNA PROB 11/137/600.

For the will of his brother, 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.

For William Waad, see the *ODNB* article.

For William Leveson (d.1621), Shakespeare's trustee, see also Honigmann, E.A.J., *Shakespeare: The Lost Years*, 2nd ed., (Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 87-9.

It may please your Honour, my cousin, Leveson, brother to Sir John Leveson, a little before her Majesty's remove from Greenwich, did inform my Lord Admiral and your Honour of a chest that was consigned to a servant of his in France pertaining to one Harrison that was committed by his Lordship to the Gatehouse in Westminster, and his Lordship thereupon gave direction that when the chest arrived here I should search the same, which I did this day, my cousin Levison being present and two of my servants.

Amongst other things there was a little box that my servant, the bearer hereof, will show your Honour, which my cousin Levison took forth and advised me not to open the same because he, opening the box when the chest was first landed at the custom house, when the chest was opened fell on sneezing very extraordinarily.

I caused the box to be opened, holding it afar off, where I found her Majesty's picture in metal, and a kind of mercury sublimate which had eaten in the metal, whereupon I sent the box by two of my folks unto Mr. Weymes, an apothecary of my acquaintance, where upon view and trial it was found to be a very strong poison, as this bearer will report unto your Honour, and lying with the picture hath so eaten into it as it hath consumed the metal so as it brake with a little slip out of one of their hands on a board.

I cannot conceive he can have a good meaning that will place the picture of her Majesty's sacred person with such poison as hath endangered the apothecary's man that did but put it to his tongue. Therefore I thought good to send the same to your Honour with

signification of thus much, referring the rest to the report of this bearer, the disposition of the party not being known unto me, and humbly remain at the commandment of your Honour.

W. Waad

From Charing Cross the 3 of October 1601.

Endorsed: To the Right Honourable Sir Robert Cecil, knight, Principal Secretary to the Queen's Majesty and Master of the Court of Wards and Liveries.

Endorsed: 3 October 1601, Mr Waad to my Master concerning a picture of her Majesty found in a box of poison in a chest of Harrison's directed to a servant of Mr Leveson's.