

SUMMARY: The document below is a report dated 28 January 1617 by two of the Masters in Chancery, Thomas Ridley and W. Byrde. It is printed in Chambers, E.K., *Sir Henry Lee* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), pp 309-15 under the heading 'The Depredations of Anne Vavasour'. The report concerns items which Anne Vavasour allegedly failed to include in an inventory of the possessions left by Sir Henry Lee at his death. Anne Vavasour's relationship to Sir Henry Lee is described in *The Dictionary of National Biography*:

Anne Vavasour [married names Finch, Richardson], (fl. 1580–1621), lady of the royal household, was the daughter of Henry Vavasour of Copmanthorpe, Yorkshire, and Margaret Knyvet. Sworn as a gentlewoman of the bedchamber to Queen Elizabeth in 1580, she was serving within the year as one of the six maids of honour. This title proved all too ephemeral, for shortly after her arrival at court she became the mistress of Edward de Vere, seventeenth earl of Oxford (1550–1604), and on 23 March 1581 gave birth to his son in the maidens' chamber. The queen sent both parents to the Tower. Their son, Edward Vere, went on to a military career in the Netherlands and a knighthood (1607), probably under the tutelage of his paternal relatives Sir Francis and Sir Horace Vere.

By 1590 Anne had married one John Finch, but was probably already the mistress of the queen's champion at tilt, Sir Henry Lee (1533–1611), with whom she also had a son, Thomas Vavasour, alias Freeman. Anne and Sir Henry lived openly together at Ditchley in Oxfordshire and his other country houses; indeed, they entertained Queen Anne at a lodge near Woodstock in September 1608. At Lee's death in 1611 Anne inherited a jointure worth £700. By 1618 she had married a John Richardson, unmindful, apparently, that her first husband, Finch, was yet living. Lee's heir sued her for bigamy in the court of high commission, where she was fined £2000 in 1621. A tomb with a quatrain verse epitaph was prepared for Anne in St Peter's Chapel at Quarrendon, where Sir Henry was buried:

*Under this stone entombed lies a fair & worthy Dame
Daughter to Henry Vavasour, Anne Vavasour her name.
She living with Sir Henry Lee, for love long time did dwell
Death could not part them but here they rest within one cell.
(Lysons, and Lysons, 624)*

The heading to the Chancery report below indicates that the plaintiff was Sir Henry Lee, knight and baronet, and that the defendants were Sir Thomas Vavasour (1560-1620), knight and baronet, and Anne Finche, alias Vavasour. Sir Thomas Vavasour (1560-1620) was Anne Vavasour's brother. He is not otherwise mentioned in the report, but may have been named as a defendant because he was an executor of the will of Sir Henry Lee (1533-1611). The outcome of the case is not known (see Chambers, p. 240). For the will of Sir Henry Lee, see TNA PROB 11/117, ff. 326-8. For the will of Sir Thomas Vavasour (1560-1620), see TNA PROB 11/136, ff. 288-9.

Inter Henricum Lee militem et Barronettum que Thomam Vauasor militem et Barronettum et Annam Finche alias Vauasor defendentes

According to an order of the 14th of October last, we have entered into the examination of this cause in the presence of the learned counsel on both sides, and have received a note from the plaintiff's counsel of such things as the plaintiff complaineth to be detained from him by the defendant, Anne, and left out of the inventory by her to be delivered to the plaintiff (according to the testament or last will of Sir Henry Lee, deceased, and his explanation thereof) within two months after the said testator's decease, the particulars whereof are these:

First, certain jewels; then, certain plate; certain household stuff; certain linen, hangings, corn and other stuff remaining at the death of the testator in his houses at Lelius in Wedon, Lee's Rest, and Spelsbury, of which plate, linen and household stuff the said Sir Henry Lee, the testator's, will and mind was the defendant, Anne, should have the use and occupation during her natural life;

And first, as concerning the jewels (besides those which were given and delivered in the lifetime of the said Sir Henry and in his presence by the said defendant, Anne, unto the Queen's Majesty that now is, and whereunto the said plaintiff hath relinquished any further claim), we do find the jewels insisted upon to be these:

First, a cross of gold set with diamonds, valued by Joyce Bellamy only at eight score pounds, but by Glanuild at one hundred pounds;

A book of gold valued at fifteen pounds;

A jewel called a linnet of gold valued at thirteen pounds six shillings and eight pence;

Two pearls deposed of only by Joyce Bellamy, and to have cost one hundred pounds;

Three other jewels called the Queen's picture, the butterfly, and the agate, pawned by Sir Richard Lee for one hundred and twenty pounds, and redeemed by Sir Henry Lee, deceased, for the same sum;

There is likewise challenged one jewel with five diamonds, and one ring with one diamond, which was said to have been pawned by John Lee to one Rudyard, a goldsmith, for threescore pounds, and by him redeemed again (as it is deposed by the said Rudyard) for the same money, but we find no other proof why these two jewels should be Sir Henry Lee's jewels, deceased, than that Sir Robert Lee, the plaintiff's father, deposed that John Lee told him since Sir Henry's death that threescore pounds, part of one hundred pounds which was borrowed of one Horsey for the testator's use, for which the said John Lee stood bound (as himself said), was paid to the said Rudyard for the redeeming of certain jewels of Sir Henry's, deceased, late before pawned to Rudyard,

which the said John Lee did also set under his hand, and showed the same to the said Sir Robert a term or two after the death of the said Sir Henry, and that the same jewels (not naming what they were) were redeemed out of the said Rudyard's hands in Michaelmas term next before the death of the said Sir Henry, as the said Sir Robert did understand by the speeches of the said John, and thinks that the said jewels, after they were so redeemed, were delivered either to the testator or to the said defendant, Anne. The which, how far it will persuade this Court they were Sir Henry's, and were in the said defendant, Anne's, custody at the time of his death we leave it to the wisdom of this Court, Rudyard himself, to whom they were pawned, not knowing whose jewels they were;

And as concerning the rest of the jewels before-named, we do not find by the will or the declaration thereof that any jewels were to be put into the inventory which the said defendant, Anne, was to deliver unto the plaintiff, and therefore cannot charge the said defendant therewith as omitted out of the inventory, howbeit we do conceive that the same do belong unto the plaintiff in case they were the said testator's at the time of his death;

The proofs and probabilities concerning the foresaid jewels (excepting the said jewels with five diamonds and the ring with one diamond), we find them to be these:

That the said testator in his lifetime was held to be possessed and owner of the said jewels, and that every of them were of the value as is before expressed, but we find no punctual proof that all the said jewels continued his until the time of his death. Only we find it deposed that the said defendant, Anne, for many years before his death was the keeper of all the said testator's jewels, and kept them until his death, having the keeping of the black box wherein they were, which stood continually in or near the testator's bedchamber. And though we do not find that the defendants have made any proof in the books that ever Sir Henry disposed of any of these particulars in his lifetime, excepting certain rings which he gave away a little before his death, yet we find it proved that the said defendant, Anne, divers times in the lifetime of the testator used and did wear divers of the testator's said jewels as her own, and therefore we humbly leave it unto the judgment of this Court whether the said defendant, Anne, shall be charged to deliver the same or the value thereof unto the plaintiff;

We find these parcels of plate hereafter described to be challenged by the plaintiff to be omitted out of the said inventory, and yet we find it proved that the same were reputed, taken and used as the plate of Sir Henry Lee, deceased, at his death and a little before his death, viz.:

A new voider or charger of silver:

A little silver pot with two ears called a little conscience;

A little silver pot with three feet;

A silver porringer with one ear;

Two salad dishes of silver;

One little silver spoon;

A jug tipped with silver on the mouth and foot;

A little silver boat;

A sugar-box of silver;

A little silver bowl;

And a nutmeg pot dressed and covered with silver

Which all are omitted out of the note of the plate delivered unto the plaintiff under the hand of the said defendant, Anne;

Howbeit we find it deposed that the said voider was newly made a little before the testator's death of certain plate given by the said testator unto Thomas, the son of the said Anne, at his christening, and that the said Thomas did challenge the said voider at the time of the division of the said testator's plate between the plaintiff and the said Anne, and that the said voider was then delivered to the said Thomas in the presence and with the consent of the said complainant;

And we further find it deposed by Alice Teate and Magdalen Cole that the said defendant, Anne, had of her own proper goods sundry such parcels of plate as are before described, viz., a college-pot, two silver pots called cruces' [=Croesus?] lips and tipped with silver, a sugar-box with a spoon in it, a silver porringer and a spoon, a caudle-cup of silver and a spoon, and a silver bowl, boats of silver, and certain silver dishes, but whether these or any of these be the same which are challenged by the plaintiff to be omitted, or others of like form and name, the proofs do not plainly show, neither do we find by any of the witnesses the value or the weight of any of the said parcels at all deposed of;

Now touching the linen goods and household stuff at Lee's Rest, Lelius, and Spelsbury complained to be left out of the inventory, we find first the particular complained of at Lee's Rest to be these:

A wainscot chest full of diaper and damask, a trunk full of fine Holland sheets, a trunk full of housewife's cloth, a trunk bound with iron full of little towels and pillow-beres, some wrought with gold, some with silk, and some with silver, and ten webs of housewife's cloth, and certain bolts of linen cloth sent out of the Low Countries from Sir Edward Vere to the said testator remaining at Lee's Rest at the time of his death, the proofs whereof we find these:

First, the plaintiff proveth by Ann Gad that the wainscot chest, the trunks of linen and housewife's cloth above-mentioned were at Lee's Rest at the time of Sir Henry's death, and that the linens contained in the chest and trunk were worth in her judgment two hundred pounds, but she deposeth not to whom they did belong;

Mary Morris deposeth that she knew great store of wrought linens with gold and silver and so laced used at Lee's Rest at the King's last being there before Sir Henry's death, and that a great wainscot chest of diaper and damask was kept in Mistress Vavasour's closet in Lee's Rest within half a year before Sir Henry's death, but she valueth them not, not speaketh to whom they belong;

Bennet Wilson deposeth of the square box bound with iron full of linen wrought with gold, silk and silver and laced with gold and silver lace, all which stuff was bought by Sir Henry's direction, paid for with his money, and that the testator kept them that wrought them, and used to have them from Ditchley to Lee's Rest when he removed, the value, worth two hundred marks, and so much he would give for it, and deposeth of housewife's cloth bought by himself at Derby market with Sir Henry's money about a year before his death, but doth not depose that they were at Lee's Rest at the death of the testator;

Joyce Lee deposeth that she knew the trunk of find linens richly wrought with gold and silver and laced with gold and silver lace remaining at Lee's Rest at the time of the testator's death, and deposeth likewise of the housewife's cloth bought by Bennet Wilson, but valueth neither of them, but deposeth not where the said housewife's cloth was at the testator's decease;

Joyce Lee further deposeth that about four years before her examination the testator sent certain money into the Low Counties to Sir Edward Vere to buy linen for the better burnishing of Burston House, and that three or four bundles of linen cloth were sent by the said Sir Edward Vere to the said testator, the greatest part of which linen cloth she believeth remained at Lee's Rest at the time of the said Sir Henry's decease, but neither speaketh of the quantity of the money sent nor of the value of the linen;

To all this proof we find nothing offered to the contrary save only we find it deposed by Thomas Jones and Thomas Rawlins that Mrs Vavasour, in the lifetime of the said Sir Henry, the testator, when the inventory of his goods was making, challenged a chest and certain trunks with linen in them belonging unto her in the presence of the said Sir Henry, whereunto the said testator then assented, and which several parcels we find to be left out of the inventory showed unto us of the goods and household stuff at Lee's Rest;

For the linen at Spelsbury, we find it deposed directly only by Margery Cowley, who had the custody of the linen there, that there were at the death of the said Sir Henry two and twenty pair of hempen and flaxen sheets, two pair of Holland sheets, ten pair of pillow-beres, eight cupboard cloths, two long diaper cloths, six diaper napkins, one diaper cupboard cloth, thirteen tablecloths, three of them for the hall, fourteen towels, long and short, eight dozen of napkins, some of them old and overworn, besides seventeen beds

there furnished with linen at the time of his death, out of which four of the sheets and certain of the napkins were taken to make cerecloths for the body of the said testator, but she valueth not the said linen;

Other witnesses there be that depose in a generalty that the said house was well furnished with linen of all sorts at the time of his death, and that there were then lodged thirty persons there;

All which particulars are omitted out of the inventory showed to us by the plaintiff;

Moreover we find linen belonging to his person not to be mentioned in the inventory, viz.:

Ann Gad, who only speaketh thereof, deposeth of six pair of coarse Holland sheets, three sweet bags, one of them wrought with gold and pearl thought to be worth one hundred marks, the other two of taffety edged about with gold lace and having great branches of gold work in the midst of them, and were commonly used about the person of the said Sir Henry, deceased, eight pair of old pillow-beres, twelve handkerchiefs, twelve shirts and eight new Holland kerchers, of all which, saving the sweet bag, she setteth down no value, neither declareth at what house they were at the time of his death, but it should seem they were at Spelsbury house at the time of his death for that it is deposed by Margery Cowley there were two other trunks, one of them in the keeping of the said Ann Gad and the other in the keeping of the said Mistress Vavasour, in one of which she thinketh was the linen belonging to the bed and body of the said Sir Henry;

For hangings of tapestry and arras and other stuff which are complained by the plaintiff to have been left out of the inventory of Lelius which by the will of the testator the defendant was to deliver unto the complainant, we find by the deposition of Bennet Harris only thereupon that there were thirty-two pieces of hangings, little and great, in Lelius house at the time of the said testator's decease, whereof most were of tapestry, and some of arras with silk in them, but we find only six and twenty hangings of tapestry and arras inventoried by the defendants;

Beside, we find in the inventory of Lelius seven pair of sheets only, and yet it is deposed by the said Bennet Harris there were eleven pair, so there wanteth of that number four pair of sheets;

Further, we find there are but only nineteen feather-beds inventoried there, whereof one is down, and we find it deposed by the said Bennet Harris that there were twenty at the time of the testator's decease, so there is one feather-bed wanting of that number;

Touching the Queen's picture, though it be not directly deposed at what house the same as at the testator's death, yet Richard Nashe deposeth that by Mrs Finch's direction it was carried unto Kingston after Sir Henry's death, and is not mentioned in the inventory of any of those houses;

And as touching the corn at Spelsbury we find it deposed that there was some little corn in the barn there, and some winter corn in the ground, but whether it came to Mrs Finch's hands or not is not otherwise proved than by one John Clarke, who speaketh only upon the relation of Ralph Shirley that he said corn was sold to the said defendant, Anne's use, the value of all the corn as the said Clarke deposeth upon the relation only of one Teate and Newman being about forty pounds, to which it is only affirmed on the defendants' behalf that the corn in the barn was spent in the household presently after the death of the testator;

And whereas there are also demanded certain hangings and other stuff of the said Sir Henry Lee's, deceased, conveyed to the Hague, Thomas Pue, late servant to Sir Edward Vere, deposeth that certain hangings of the said Sir Henry Lee's, deceased, of the value of threescore pounds, and certain beds and other stuff to the value of thirty pounds, in toto ninety pounds, were conveyed by water in a barge to Gravesend and there shipped, and from there conveyed to the house of Sir Edward Vere at Dunhage [=Den Hague?], but doth not depose who sent them or from which of the foresaid three houses they were sent, neither how many pieces of hangings there were, so that we know not by the deposition whether they were to be inventoried or not, unless they were the six pieces, residue of the thirty-two pieces of tapestry and arras, which are deposed to be wanting in the inventory of Lelius;

This being the state of the proof made on both parts in the books, and the inventory of the goods unto us showed, not being acknowledged to be that which was by or on the defendants' behalf delivered unto the plaintiff after the death of the testator, Sir Henry, or at the least not to be in that plight or state as it was when it was first delivered to the plaintiff, and no other proof being showed that it was the same than only the affidavit of the plaintiff made after publication of the witnesses in this cause, we have thought fit humbly to certify what we find the proofs and probabilities to be, leaving the same to be judged of this honourable Court.

Thomas Ridley
W. Byrde