

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 21 October 1620 and proved 27 November 1620, of Sir Thomas Vavasour (1560/1-1620), brother of Oxford's mistress, Anne Vavasour, who in 1585 challenged Oxford to a duel.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

The testator was the son of Henry Vavasour (d.1584) of Copmanthorpe, Yorkshire, by Margaret Knyvet, the daughter of Sir Henry Knyvet (d.1546) and Anne Pickering (1514 – 25 April 1582). For the will of Sir Henry Knyvet, see TNA PROB 11/32/4. For the will of Anne Pickering, see TNA PROB 11/64/217.

See also the History of Parliament entry for the testator at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/vavasour-sir-thomas-15601-1620>

Henry Vavasour and Margaret Knyvet had two sons and three daughters:

-**Sir Thomas Vavasour**, the testator.

-**John Vavasour**, who is mentioned in the 1581 will of his maternal grandmother, Anne (nee Pickering) Weston Knyvet Vaughan (1514 – 25 April 1582), TNA PROB 11/64/217:

Item, I give unto my daughter, Margaret Vavasour, all my household stuff as are now remaining in Escrick House situate and being within the county of York, so that she pay unto her two sons, Thomas Vavasour and John Vavasour, ten pounds of lawful money of England to either of them.

-**Anne Vavasour**, Oxford's mistress, and later the mistress of Sir Henry Lee (1533-1611). For a letter from the testator to Oxford, endorsed 19 January 1585, challenging Oxford to a duel, see BL MS Lansdowne 99/93, ff. 252-253. For a suit against the testator and his sister, Anne Vavasour, in connection with the will of Sir Henry Lee, see TNA C 38/25. For the will of Sir Henry Lee, see TNA PROB 11/117/490.

-**Frances Vavasour**, who married Sir Thomas Shirley (1564–1633/4). See the *ODNB* entry for Sir Thomas Shirley:

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. . . . Sherley frequented the court, where he succumbed to the charms of a wealthy widow, Frances, Lady Stourton, the sister [sic for 'daughter'] 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 [sic for 'Henry 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.

For Sir Thomas Shirley's courtship of Lady Stourton and secret marriage to Frances Vavasour, see also McKeen, David, *A Memory of Honour: The Life of William Brooke, Lord Cobham*, (Salzburg: Institut Fur Anglistik Und Amerikanistik', 1986), pp. 609-13.

-Margaret Vavasour, who married Miles Southwell, eldest son of Francis Southwell (c.1510 – 19 November 1581). See the will of Francis Southwell, TNA PROB 11/64/81, and the History of Parliament entry at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/southwell-francis-1510-81>

For the marriage of Margaret Vavasour and Miles Southwell, see Chambers, E.K., *Sir Henry Lee*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1936), p. 151; Chambers cites Foster, J., *The Visitation of Yorkshire*, 120; and *Yorkshire County Families*, ii. Their daughter, Elizabeth Southwell, was left a bequest of £100 in the will of Sir Henry Lee (1533-1611). See TNA PROB 11/117/490:

For the testator's family see also TNA SP 12/154/13, ff. 23-4, and the pedigree of Pickering in Norcliffe, Charles Best, ed., *The Visitation of Yorkshire in the Years 1563 and 1564*, (London: Harleian Society, 1881), Vol. XVI, p. 251 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationofyork00flow#page/250/mode/2up>

MARRIAGE AND ISSUE

The testator married Mary Dodge, daughter and coheir of John Dodge of Mannington, Norfolk, and widow of the London grocer and alderman, Peter Houghton (d.1596), for whose monument see Strype, John, 'A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster' at:

https://www.hrionline.ac.uk/strype/TransformServlet?page=book2_146

A very fair Monument richly gilded, in the Chancel Wall on the North side.

Here lyeth buried the body of Peter Houghton, of London Alderman: he was free of the Grocers Company, a Merchant of the Staple in England, and a Merchant Adventurer. Hee was one of the Sheriffes of this City, in An. 1593. and dyed the last day of December, 1596. Hee gave to the foure Hospitals (that is to say) Saint Bartholomewes, Christs Church, St. Thomas and Bridewell, 600. pounds, equally to be divided between them. Hee gave also to the Grocers Company 400. pound to be lent to eight young men of the same Company (gratis) from two yeeres, to two yeeres, for ever. Which 1000. pound was paid by Iohn Vernon, Merchant-Taylor, accordingly. He had to wife Mary Houghton, who sithence married with Sir Thomas Vavasor, Knight Marshall. Hee had children by her, two Sonnes, named Hatton, and Peter, who dyed young; and two Daughters, Mary and Elizabeth. Mary was married to Sir James Scudamore, Knight, and Elizabeth to Sir Henry Bedingfield, Knight.

Peter Houghton is said to have been of Hoghton Tower, Lancashire. See the History of Parliament entry for his son-in-law, Sir Henry Bedingfield (1586-1657) at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/bedingfield-sir-henry-1586-1657>

See also Blomefield, Francis, *An Essay Towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, Vol. VI, (London: William Miller, 1807), p. 188 at:

https://books.google.ca/books?id=0r_NAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA188

As noted, Peter Houghton is said to have had four children by Mary Dodge, two sons and two daughters:

-Hatton Houghton, who died young.

-Peter Houghton, who died young.

-Mary Houghton (d. August 1598), who in May 1597 married Sir James Scudamore (1568-1619), for whom see Atherton, Ian, *Ambition and Failure in Stuart England; The Career of John, First Viscount Scudamore*, (Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 29 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=U2e7AAAAIAAJ&pg=PA29>

Sir John Scudamore, with his usual adroitness, also attempted to open a channel of communication to the earl of Essex through his son, James Scudamore (1568-1619). In 1596 James accompanied Essex on the attack against Cadiz and was there knighted, probably by Essex; the following year he joined the ill-fated Islands voyage. Sir James Scudamore continued his attempts to remain within the Essex circle. In May 1597 he married Mary, daughter and co-heiress of Peter Houghton, alderman of London; Essex attended the wedding banquet. She died in August 1598 and in the summer of 1599 Sir James remarried again within the Essex circle. His second wife was Mary, widow of Sir Thomas Baskerville; both she and her infant son Hannibal had been in Essex's care since

her first husband's death. Probably at about the same time Sir James Scudamore acquired the Suffolk manor of Drinkstone from the Earl of Essex.

-Elizabeth Houghton (d. 11 April 1662), who married Sir Henry Bedingfield (d. 22 November 1657).

Peter Houghton was buried in the parish church of St Michael's, Cornhill, on 18 January 1597. See Chester, Joseph Lemuel, ed., *The Parish Registers of St. Michael, Cornhill*, Registers, Vol. VII, (London: Harleian Society, 1882), p. 207 at:

https://books.google.ca/books?id=NBY_AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA207

By Mary Dodge, the testator had two sons and two daughters:

* **Sir Charles Vavasour**, eldest son.

* **William Vavasour**.

* **Mary Vavasour**.

* **Anne Vavasour**.

In the PCC copy, the testator's surname is spelled 'Vavasor'; however the alternate spelling 'Vavasour' has been adopted in the transcript below for the sake of consistency with other documents on this website.

LM: T{estamentum} D{omi}ni Thome Vavasor Militis et Baronetti def{uncti}

In the name of God, Amen. I, Sir Thomas Vavasour, knight and baronet, make my last will and testament in writing dated this one and twentieth day of October 1620, and in and by the same I commit my soul into the hands of Jesus Christ, my Redeemer, hoping to be saved by his merits and passion;

And touching my worldly estate, I thus dispose of the same:

First, that whereas I have an intent and my will is that William Vavasour, my younger son, and Mary Vavasour and Anne Vavasour, my two daughters, shall have their portions out of my manors and lands in Metheringham which were reconveyed to me and my heirs by Mr Edward Alford and Thomas Emerson, out of which they have reserved to them and their heirs three hundred pounds yearly rent, and so the same cannot be sold to the worth without their consents, I therefore desire them that they would agree and condescend ;that the same may be sold and that they would join with them whom I have estated the same in trust upon, and that they should take their monies which I had(?) for the said yearly rent out of monies the same shall be sold for; the rest of the monies I do devise amongst

my said three younger children, viz., to the said William Vavasour, one thousand pounds, to the said Mary, two thousand pounds, and to the said Anne, one thousand pounds, to be paid to them at their several ages of one and twenty years if the said manor and lands shall be sold so soon, and if they cannot be sold so soon, then to pay them upon the receiving of the monies thereof, and in the meantime I devise the overplus of the rents amongst them towards their maintenance, and I desire the right honourable the Earl of Suffolk, my very honourable good friend, and the Reverend Father in God, the Lord Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, to assist my feoffees in trust therein;

And whereas I purchased the now house in Metheringham of Richard Enderly, gentleman, and the house, lands and grounds thereto belonging and other lands there since the conveyances made by me to the said Edward Alford & Thomas Emerson, I devise that the said premises bought of the said Mr Enderly and the rest there newly purchased shall be also sold by my feoffees towards the said children's portions, and the said monies raised upon the sale thereof to be disposed amongst them by the consent of the said Earl and Lord Bishop or one of them, and the rents and profits to be divided amongst them in the meantime;

And whereas also my manor and lordship of Skellingthorpe and my lands and grounds there be in mortgage to one Mr Ferryes [=Ferrers?] of London, linen draper, for four thousand pounds principal money and four hundred pounds due for interest, upon which Mr Ferryes I much rely, verily believing that he is an honest man and conscionable in his dealings, and I desire that so much of the monies raised upon the sale of the said manor and lands in Metheringham which I had from Arnold and Emerson (if any such should be, over and besides the payment of the portions to my said children and the satisfying of the said Mr Alford and Mr Emerson), shall go towards the redemption of Skellingthorpe, and for the rest, or for all his money if none shall remain out of Metheringham as aforesaid, I desire he will take so much out of my manor & lands in Skellingthorpe to and with the consent of my good friends Sir Thomas Grantham, knight, Sir Hamond Whichcote, knight, and Robert Callis, esquire, as shall satisfy him for the monies due to him, and the rest of the said manor and lands, together with my lease and interest in the parsonage there, I hereby devise to Charles Vavasour, my eldest son and his heirs;

And touching the disposing of the lease of my now dwelling-house and my ready money, plate, jewels, household stuff & other my personal estate, after the payment of such debts as I do owe which be not secured to my creditors by my lands, which first of all I appoint to be paid thereout, and especially the debts for the which the said Robert Callis, esquire, and Thomas Browne, gentleman, stand bound for, being a hundred and fifty pounds, I appoint first to be paid before all other, then I devise to Elizabeth Rith one hundred pounds, and to my daughter's Mary's maid forty pounds, to the two launder maids, either of them, five pounds, to Lonne Hughe, five marks yearly for his life out of Skellingthorpe, to a preaching minister at Skellingthorpe so long as it shall remain to my son and his heirs and assigns, twenty pounds yearly out of the parsonage, and to Thomas Randall, five pounds yearly out of Skellingthorpe so long as he shall serve my eldest son, which I desire him to take care of, and to every other of my servants their wages due and a year's wages besides;

And the residue remaining to be divided amongst all my children;

And I do make my eldest son, Charles Vavasour, and William Vavasour, my son, my executors of this my last will and testament, and the said right honourable Earl and the said right reverend Bishop supervisors thereof, desiring them to have care of my children;

And I desire the said Mr Robert Callis to assist my said children with his best advice and counsel, and especially my said eldest son, to whose care I refer him, and the rather because he knows best my estate in my lands;

And I request the said Thomas Browne to deal for my children as he hath heretofore dealt for me in my affairs, wherein he hath behaved himself very honestly, and both of them to aid my executors in all their proceedings, and for their pains I give to either of them twenty nobles;

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal the day and year abovesaid in the presence of the witnesses whose names be subscribed. Tho{mas} Vavasour.

Signed, sealed and published the day and year above-written in the presence of Robert Callis, Edward Vavasour, William Gower, Thomas Randall.

Probatum fuit Testamentum suprascriptum apud London coram venerabili viro D{omi}no Will{el}mo Byrd Milite legum doctore Curie Prerogative Cant{uariensis} Mag{ist}ro Custode sive Com{m}issario l{egit}ime constituto Vicesimo septimo die mensis Novembris Anno D{om}ni Millesimo sexcentesimo vicesimo Iuramento D{omi}ni Charoli Vavasor Militis et Baronetti filij naturalis et l{egi}timis dicti defuncti et unius executorum in eodem testamento nominat{orum} Cui com{m}issa fuit admi{n}istrac{i}o om{n}iu{m} et singulorum bonorum Iurium et Creditorum dicti defuncti De bene et fideliter administrando eadem Ad sancta Dei Eu{a}ngelia Iurat{o} Reservata potestate similem Com{m}issionem faciend{i} Will{el}mo Vavasor filio naturali et l{egi}timo dicti defuncti et alteri executorum in hu{ius}mo{d}i testamento nominat{orum} cum ven{er}it eam petitur{o} in debita Iuris forma admissur{o} ex{aminatus}

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before the worshipful Sir William Byrd, knight, Doctor of the Laws, lawfully constituted Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the twenty-seventh day of the month of November in the year of the Lord the thousand six hundred twentieth by the oath of Sir Charles Vavasour, knight and baronet, natural and legitimate son of the said deceased and one of the executors named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of all and singular the goods, rights and credits of the said deceased, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer the same, with power reserved for a similar grant to be made to William Vavasour, natural and legitimate son of the said deceased

and another of the executors named in the same testament, when he shall have come to petition in due form of law to be admitted the same.]