

SUMMARY: The document below is the last will and testament, dated 7 November 1536 and proved 13 October 1539, of Nicholas Leveson (c.1490 - 20 August 1539), grandfather of William Leveson (d.1621), who acted as trustee to the Lord Chamberlain's Men, including William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon, in the allocation of shares in the ground lease of the Globe Theatre in 1599. For the will of the testator's grandson, William Leveson (d.1621), see TNA PROB 11/137/600.

### ***FAMILY BACKGROUND***

The testator was the son of Richard Leveson (d.1503) of Prestwood and his wife, Jane Bradbury, who appears to have been the sister of Sit Thomas Bradbury (d.1510), Lord Mayor of London, stepfather of the testator's wife, Dionyse (nee Bodley) Leveson. See the Sutherland Collection at the Staffordshire Record Office:

<https://www.search.sutherlandcollection.org.uk/search.aspx?SearchType=2&ThemeID=132>

See also the Leveson pedigree in 'Star Chamber Proceedings Henry VIII and Edward IV', *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, (London: Harrison and Sons, 1912), pp. 1-206 at p. 34A:

[https://archive.org/stream/collectionsforhi03staf\\_3#page/n57/mode/2up](https://archive.org/stream/collectionsforhi03staf_3#page/n57/mode/2up)

See also Sutton, Anne F., 'Lady Joan Bradbury (d.1530)' in Barron, Caroline M. and Anne F. Sutton, *Medieval London Widows 1300-1500*, (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 209-38 at p. 211:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=uc3RLXFANoMC&pg=PA211>

In the will below the testator mentions a brother, James Leveson, for whose will see TNA PROB 11/31/655.

The testator also mentions 'my sister, Margaret Gell'.

### ***MARRIAGE AND ISSUE***

The testator married Dionyse Bodley (d.1560), by whom he had eight sons and ten daughters. Four sons, John, Thomas, Nicholas and William, and five daughters Grysell, Joan (or Jane), Alice, Mary and Dionyse are mentioned in the will below.

The testator's eldest son, John Leveson (d.1549), was slain in Kett's Rebellion. He married Anne Smith, the daughter of Sir John Smith (d.1547), Baron of the Exchequer, and widow of Anthony Wodhull, by whom he had no issue. See Richardson, Douglas,

*Plantagenet Ancestry*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2011, Vol. I, p. 523. See also Sutton, *supra*, pp. 211 (pedigree), 233 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=3-veBAAAQBAJ&pg=PA211>

For further particulars of the testator's wife and children, see the will of his wife, TNA PROB 11/43/645.

The testator and his wife were bequeathed black gowns in the will, TNA PROB 11/25/123, of Sir William Butler, Lord Mayor of London in 1515, whose first wife was Dionyse Bodley Leveson's first cousin, Isabella Bodley, sister of William Bodley (for whose will see TNA PROB 11/28/311). See also Barron, *supra*, p. 234, and the will of Sir William Butler, TNA PROB 11/25/123, in which he leaves bequests to Nicholas Leveson and 'my cousin, his wife'. See also the will, TNA PROB 11/48/64, of Edward North (c.1504-1564), 1<sup>st</sup> Baron North, whose second wife, Margaret Butler (d. 2 June 1575), was the niece of Sir William Butler. See also the will of Margaret Butler, TNA PROB 11/57/602.

#### ***OTHER PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE WILL***

Guy Crafford (d.1553) was the husband of Joan Bodley (d.1584), the daughter of the testator's brother-in-law, James Bodley (d.1514). See his will, TNA PROB 11/36/76, and the pedigree in Sutton, *supra*, p. 211.

LM: T{estamentum} Nich{ola}i Leveson

[f. 250v] In the name of Almighty God, Amen. The 7<sup>th</sup> day of the month of November in the year of Our Lord God 1536 and in the 28 year of the reign of King Henry the Eight, I, Nicholas Leveson, citizen and mercer of London and Merchant of the Staple at the town of Calais, being of whole mind and of good perfect memory, thanked be Almighty God, considering the frailty of man's life, how that death to every creature is certain and the hour and time of coming thereof is uncertain, not willing therefore with godless grace to die intestate, for the health of my soul do ordain and make this my present testament and last will, as well of all my goods and chattels movable as of all my lands and tenements with th' appurtenances which I have in the city of London and in the counties of Stafford, Essex and Kent or elsewhere within the realm of England, in manner and form following, that is to wit:

First and principally I bequeath and recommend my soul to the mercy of Almighty God, my Creator & Redeemer, and to the most glorious Virgin, our Blessed Lady Saint Mary, his mother, and to all the company of heaven, and my body to be buried within the tomb made before the upper pillar on the north side of the parish church of Saint Andrew

Undershaft of London, that is to wit, between the high altar and the altar of the north aisle;

And I bequeath to the high altar of the same church in recompense of my tithes forgotten, if any be, 6s 8d;

Item, I bequeath to the brotherhood of Our Lady and Saint Anne within the said church 6s 8d;

Also I will that mine executors of my goods shall lay out, bestow and expend in and about the charges of my burying and funerals, and for black cloth for gowns to be given against my said burying, and for the dinner then to be made, and to other charges and things needful and convenient to be had and done at and for my said burying, the sum of an hundred pounds [f. 251r] or more as shall be thought convenient by the discretion of mine executors, whereof I will that twenty pounds shall be dealed and distributed and disposed amongst poor householders dwelling in the said parish of Saint Andrew and in other parishes near thereabouts and to other poor people coming to my said burying and Mass of Requiem on the morrow following;

Item, I will that soon after my burying and funerals done, such debts as I shall owe at time of my decease being first reckoned, paid and deducted, that all my goods and chattels, wools, ready money and sperate debts, as well beyond the sea as on this side the sea, shall be divided in three equal parts or portions, whereof I will and reserve one part to myself and to mine executors thereof to bear the charges of my said burying and funerals and to perform this my present will and the legacies therein contained and all other charges and things concerning me;

And thother part thereof I bequeath to Dionyse, my wife, for her full part and portion to her belonging by the law & custom of the city of London of all my said goods, chattels and debts;

And the third part of the same my goods, chattels and debts I bequeath to all my children living and not married at time of my decease between them equally to be divided for their full part and portions to them and every of them belonging by the said law and custom of London of all my said goods, chattels and debts;

And I will that every of my said children shall be other's heirs, that is to weet, if any of them happen to decease before his or her lawful age or marriage, that the part and portion of him or her so deceasing shall remain to all thother of them surviving equally to be divided between them, and so of every of them;

Of the which mine own part and portion to me and mine executors reserved as is aforesaid I make the bequests hereafter specified, that is to weet:

First I bequeath to my wife for a remembrance to pray for my soul a hundred pounds sterling;

I bequeath unto my brother, James Leveson, for such service and pleasures as he hath done for me heretofore, and hereafter with God's grace shall do for me, the sum of a hundred pounds sterling and a ring of gold of the value of 40s for a token of remembrance;

And to my sister, his wife, I bequeath another like ring of gold of the value of 40s for a token also of remembrance for my soul;

And to my sister, Margaret Gell(?), to pray also for my soul £6 13s 4d;

And I will that mine executors shall provide and find a secular priest of honest conversation and of good and virtuous disposition to sing and say his Mass daily when he shall be thereto disposed in the parish church of Saint Andrews in London, praying for my soul and for the souls of my father and mother by the space of ten years next after my decease;

And also shall cause an obit or anniversary to be kept yearly by note during the said ten years, that is to weat, yearly the day of my decease if it may conveniently be kept the same day, or else as soon after as conveniently may be in the said church of Saint Andrews by the priests and clerks of the same church in good and convenient manner after the use there accustomed for my soul and the souls of my said father and mother;

And for the salary and charges of the said priest and yearly obit so to be kept asounde(?), I bequeath a hundred marks and ten, that is to weat, for every year of the said ten years ten marks for the priest and one mark yearly for the obit to the priests and clerks and other necessities and the rest to be given to poor people;

Item, I bequeath to the making and repairing of highways about the city of London to be bestowed by the discretion of mine executors a hundred marks;

Item, I bequeath to the exhibition and finding of some well-disposed student or students at the University of Oxford twenty pounds to be disposed by the discretion of my said executors;

And in like wise to the finding and exhibition of some well-disposed student or students in the University of Cambridge by like discretion of mine executors other £20;

The residue of all my said part and portion, after my said legacies paid and this my present testament fulfilled, I will shall be divided to and amongst my children, equally to be divided amongst my sons, John, Thomas, Nicholas and William, and all my daughters, that is to weat, to every of them her part when he or she shall come to his or her lawful age or marriage;

And if the said John, my son, happen to decease before that he shall come to his lawful age, I will that then mine executors under-named shall distribute and dispose the same his

---

part of the said residue amongst all my children that then shall be living when they shall come to their full age or marriage;

And I will in like wise that if any of my sons, Thomas, Nicholas or William, or any of my said daughters happen to decease before their lawful age or marriage, that then thother of them then living shall have the part or portion of the said residue which should come to him or them that so deceaseth equally to be divided amongst them in form abovesaid, and so of every of them;

And if my said sons, John, Thomas Nicholas and William, and all my said daughters happen to decease before their lawful ages or marriages, as God defend, I will that then all their said parts and portions of the residue of my part and portion shall be distributed and disposed by my said executors in deeds of alms and works of charity, that is to weet, in like manner and form as their other parts and portions of my said goods, chattels and debts been afore specified to be distributed and disposed after all their deceases;

Item, I give to the reparations of the parish church of Halling to pray for my said soul 40s;

Item, I give to the parish church of Cuxton to buy any ornament that the said church shall need 40s;

Item, to my son [=son-in-law] Sadler, £20;

Item, to Ralph Davenant £20;

Item, I bequeath unto my cousin, Guy Crafford, £20;

Item, I bequeath unto Sir John Buttell, the parson of Cuxton, to pray for my soul a black gown and in money 20s;

Item, I give unto Sir Thomas Snyderoll, vicar of Halling, to pray for my said soul ten shillings;

Item, I will that every servant to the number of three that doth pertain and belong to my brother, James Leveson, shall have a black gown;

Item, I will that the foresaid Dionyse, my wife, shall have two standing pots, six bowls with a cover parcel gilt, and six bowls without a cover clean gilt, which were sometime her mother's;

Item, I give unto the said Dionyse the one half of mine own third part and portion of all the rest of my plate and implements of household stuff that is now in my dwelling-house at London, any thing, ordinance or provision in this my will given [f. 251v] or declared to the contrary notwithstanding;

Item, I give to Robert Wem of Wolverhampton, Henry (blank) and unto all other my household servants of London, as well men as women, to every one of them 20s, and also to every other of my servants, as well men as women, dwelling in my house at Horne Place, 13s 4d;

Item, I give unto Gresell, my daughter, a gilt cup of the price of £6 13s 4d with mine arms to be set upon the same cup for a token of remembrance, and the same cup to be bought by mine executors;

Item, to my daughter, Jane Davenant, a cup of silver and gilt of the value of £6 13s 4d.

LM: Vltima Voluntas eiusdem

Item, this is the last will of me, the above-named Nicholas Leveson, made as to the disposition of all my lands and tenements above specified in manner and form as followeth, that is to weet:

I will that John Leveson, my son, shall have as well all such my lands and tenements, rents, reversions and services with th' appurtenances in the county of Stafford as came to me by inheritance after and by the decease of Richard Leveson, my father, as all such my lands and tenements, rents, reversions and services with th' appurtenances which I have bought and purchased lying in the said county of Stafford and in the parishes of East Ham & West Ham in the county of Essex, Middlesex, Huntingdon and Hertfordshire, with one parcel lying in the parish of Chatham in the county of Kent, to have and to hold all the same lands, tenements, rents, reversions and services with the appurtenances to the said John Leveson, my son, and to the heirs of his body lawfully begotten;

And I will that mine executors shall have the rule and guiding of all the same lands and tenements with th' appurtenances to the use of my said son till he shall come to his full age of 21 years;

And if it happen the said John, my son, to decease without heir lawfully begotten, I will that then all the said lands and tenements with th' appurtenances shall remain unto the next heirs of me, the said Nicholas Leveson, to have and to hold to them, my next and right heirs, and to their heirs and assigns forever;

Item, I will that Dionyse, my wife, shall have my messuage or house with th' appurtenances wherein I now dwell with the garden belonging unto the same messuage set, lying and being in Lime Street in the parish of Saint Andrew Undershaft of London, and also all other my tenements with th' appurtenances set lying and being in Lime Street aforesaid, to have and to hold the same messuage, garden and tenements set, lying and being in Lime Street aforesaid with all their appurtenances to the said Dionyse and her assigns during her life, she keeping the necessary and needful reparations of the same messuage and tenements with th' appurtenances;

Item, I will that Dionyse, my wife, have all my manors, lands and tenements with their appurtenances set, lying and being in the towns and parishes of Halling, Cuxton, Birling, Snodland and Luddesdown in the county of Kent unto her own use and unto such time as Thomas and Nicholas, my sons, come to their full and lawful age, that is to say, the age of 21 years;

And at such time as the said Thomas and Nicholas shall come to that age, then I will the moiety of the said manors, lands and tenements unto the said Thomas and to the heirs of his body lawfully begotten, and for default of issue, the same moiety to remain to John Leveson, my son, and to his heirs forever;

And thother moiety to Nicholas in like manner, and for default so such issue the foresaid manors, lands and tenements with their appurtenances to remain to my daughters, Grysell, Joan, Alice, Mary and Dionyse, and to their heirs and assigns forever;

Item, I will that Dionyse, my wife, have my manor or tenement called West Thurrock in the county of Essex with all the stock of cattle and all such lands and tenements with th' appurtenances now being in the tenure and occupying of one Gose, to have and to hold to the said Dionyse, my wife, during her natural life;

And after the decease of my said wife, then I will that the foresaid manor or tenement with their appurtenances called West Thurrock with the stock aforesaid to remain to William Leveson, my fourth son, and to his heirs of his body lawfully begotten;

And for default of such issue, then I will that the foresaid manor or tenement with th' appurtenances to remain to the right heirs of me, the foresaid Nicholas Leveson;

Item, I will that my said wife have to her during her natural life all my lands and tenements with their appurtenances lying & being in the parish of Gillingham in the county of Kent, the which I late purchased and now is in the tenure and occupying of one John Godfrey;

And after the decease of my said wife, then I will that the same lands and tenements with their appurtenances shall remain to John, my son, and to his heirs forever;

And whereas before I have willed my messuage and tenements with their appurtenances set, lying and being in Lime Street in London unto my said wife term of her life, I will that the same messuage and tenements with their appurtenances after her decease shall remain wholly to John, my son, and to his heirs forever;

And of this my testament and last will I make and ordain mine executors, that is to say, Dionyse, my wife, and the foresaid James Leveson, my brother;

In witness whereof to this my testament and last will I have put to my seal and subscribed my name the day and year above-written, these being witnesses, Guy Crafford, John Sadler and John Butyll, parson of Cuxton. Per me, Nicholas Leveson.

Probatum fuit sup{ra}scriptum testamentu{m} coram d{omi}no Apud London xiiijo die mens{is} Octobris Anno Domini Mill{es}imo quingentesimo Tricesimo Nono Iuramento Executor{um} in h{uius}mo{d}i testamento no{m}i{n}at{orum} Ac approbatum et insinuatum Com{m}issaque fuit admi{ni}stracio o{mn}i{um} et sing{u}lor{um} bonor{um} iuriu{m} et creditor{um} dict{i} Defunct{i} p{re}fat{is} ex{ecutoribus} De bene et fidel{ite}r admi{ni}strand{o} Ac de pleno et fideli Inuentario &c conficiend{o} Necnon de plano et vero compoto reddend{o} Ad Sancta dei Euangelia Iurat{is}

[=The above-written testament was proved before the Lord at London on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the month of October in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred thirty-ninth by the oath of the executors named in the same testament, and probated and entered, and administration was granted of all and singular the goods, rights and credits of the said deceased to the forenamed executors, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer, and to prepare a full and faithful inventory etc., and also to render a plain and true account.]