

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 15 April 1616 and proved 7 October 1616, of Edward Vernon. The testator was an uncle (by the half blood) of Elizabeth Vernon, wife of Henry Wriothesley (1573-1624), 3rd Earl of Southampton, to whom Shakespeare dedicated *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, and to whom the testator leaves a bequest in the will below.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

The testator was the son of George Vernon (died c.1554) by his second wife, Mary (nee Lacon) Aston Vernon (d. 27 April 1563). He was the grandson of Sir Thomas Lacon (d.1536) of Willey, Shropshire, and Mary Corbet, and the great-grandson of Sir Richard Corbet (1451 - 6 December 1493) and Elizabeth Devereux (d.1516), the daughter of Walter Devereux (c.1432 – 22 August 1485), 1st Baron Ferrers of Chartley, slain at the Battle of Bosworth. See Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. II, pp. 163-5, and Vol. III, pp. 69-70.

Testator's siblings

By his mother's first marriage to Thomas Acton (d. 2 January 1547), esquire, of Sutton, Worcestershire, the testator had a half-sister, Joyce Acton (1532 – 10 February 1596), who married Sir Thomas Lucy (d. 7 July 1600) of Charlecote, Warwickshire, from whose park William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon is alleged to have poached deer.

By his father's first marriage to Elizabeth Pigott, the testatrix had two half-brothers, Richard Vernon (d.1560?) and John Vernon (d.1591).

By his parents' marriage, the testator had a brother and two sisters of the whole blood, George Vernon (d.1604), Anne Vernon (d.1570), and Dorothy Vernon (d.1599).

See the will of the testator's father, George Vernon (died c.1554), TNA PROB 11/37/222; the will of his mother, Mary (nee Lacon) Aston Vernon (d. 27 April 1563), TNA PROB 11/46/222; the will of his brother, George Vernon (d.1604), TNA PROB 11/104/161; the will of his sister, Anne Vernon (d.1570), TNA PROB 11/52/492; and the will of his sister, Dorothy Vernon (d.1599), TNA PROB 11/93/301.

See also the pedigree of Vernon (which, however, does not show the second marriage of George Vernon (d.1554) to Mary Lacon) in Grazebrook, George and John Paul Rylands, eds., *The Visitation of Shropshire Taken in the Year 1623*, Part II, (London: Harleian Society, 1889), Vol. XXIX, p. 474 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationshrop01grazgoog#page/n202/mode/2up>

OTHER PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE WILL

As noted above, the testator was the half brother of Joyce Acton (1532 – 10 February 1596), wife of Sir Thomas Lucy (d. 7 July 1600) of Charlecote. In the will below the testator leaves a bequest to their grandson, Richard Lucy, son of Thomas Lucy (1551-1605) and his second wife, Constance Kingsmill. From the *ODNB* entry for Sir Thomas Lucy (d. 7 July 1600):

Sir Thomas and Joyce had only two children, Anne and Thomas. Anne married Edward Aston of Tixhall, in Staffordshire, in 1580. . . .

Thomas's son, also Thomas (1551–1605), who survived him by only five years, married twice. His first wife, whom he married on 27 January 1574, was Dorothea, only daughter of Roland Arnold of Highnam in Gloucestershire. She died in 1580, a month after giving birth to a son who did not survive her long. His second wife was Constance, daughter of Sir Richard Kingsmill of Highclere in Hampshire; they had fourteen children. Their eldest son, Thomas (1585–1640), succeeded to the family estates on his father's death in July 1605.

See Fetherston, John, ed., *The Visitation of the County of Warwick in the Year 1619*, (London: Harleian Society, 1877), Vol. XII, p. 280 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationcount01britgoog#page/n314/mode/2up>

See also Burke, John, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland*, (London: Henry Colburn, 1838), Vol. III, p. 99 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=yshsAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA98>

The testator also leaves a bequest to his nephew, Benjamin Vernon, the son of the testator's half-brother, John Vernon (d.1591) (see above), and brother of Elizabeth (nee Vernon), Countess of Southampton. See Grazebrook, *supra*, p. 474.

The testator also leaves a bequest to his cousin, Harcourt Leighton, son of Sir William Leighton (c.1565-1622). For the testator's relationship to the Leighton family see the will of the testator's sister, Dorothy Vernon (d.1599), TNA PROB 11/93/301, and the pedigree of Leighton in Botfield, Beriah, *Stemmata Botevilliana*, (Westminster: J.B. Nichols and Son, 1858), p. 186 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=mBZYAAAACAAJ&pg=PA184>

See also the *ODNB* entry for Sir William Leighton (c.1565-1622):

Leighton, Sir William (c.1565–1622), poet and composer, of Plash Hall, Plaish, Shropshire, was the elder of two sons of William Leighton (d. 1607), chief justice of the Welsh marches, and Isabella, daughter of Thomas Onslowe. Besides his probable

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attendance at Shrewsbury School (from c.1578) little is known of Leighton's early life in Shropshire; by the time he had become established as a gentleman pensioner at court he was married to Winifred (d. 1616), daughter of Simon Harcourt, of Ellenhall, Staffordshire. This marriage produced a son and two daughters.

See also the History of Parliament entry for Sir William Leighton at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/leighton-william>

The testator also leaves bequests to Richard Leighton, son of William Leighton (d.1607), Chief Justice of North Wales, by his first wife, Elizabeth Onslow, and Henry Leighton, son of the Chief Justice by his second wife, Anne Corbet (d.1615), the daughter of Reginald Corbet (d. 19 November 1566) of Stoke. After the death of the Chief Justice, Anne (nee Corbet) Leighton married secondly, Edward Mytton. The testator leaves a bequest to their son, Edward Mytton, the testator's godson, as well as a bequest to Richard Mitton of Halston. See *Stemmata, supra*; the will of Reginald Corbet, TNA PROB 11/49/18; the *ODNB* entry for Reynold Corbet (c.1510 – 19 November 1566); and the will of Anne (nee Corbet) Leighton Mitton at:

<http://apps.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/records.aspx?cat=166-2171&cid=-1#-1>

The testator bequeaths a piece of plate to Sir Edward Bromley (1563-1626), Baron of the Exchequer, for whom see the *ODNB* entry, and another piece of piece of plate to his nephew, Sir Thomas Lucy (1585-1640) (see above).

As noted above, the testator also bequeaths a piece of plate to his niece, Elizabeth (nee Vernon), Countess of Southampton.

The testator's residuary legatee and executor, Sir Robert Vernon, Comptroller of the Household to Elizabeth I, was the grandson of the testator's father, George Vernon (d.1554), and his first wife, Elizabeth Pigott, and was thus the testator's nephew of the half blood. After his father's death in 1591, Sir Robert Vernon became a ward of Robert Devereux (1565-1601), 2nd Earl of Essex. He was knighted by Essex in Ireland in 1599, and joined Essex' rebellion in February 1601. See the History of Parliament entry for Sir Robert Vernon at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/vernon-sir-robert-1576-163640>

Sir Robert Vernon's sister of the whole blood was Elizabeth (nee Vernon), Countess of Southampton.

LM: T{estamentum} Edwardi Vernon

[f. 264r] In the name of God, Amen. The fifteenth day of April in the year of Our Lord God one thousand six hundred and sixteen, I, Edward Vernon of Lincoln's Inn in the county of Middlesex, gentleman, being of good and perfect health and remembrance (thanks be to God), knowing that death is certain but most uncertain in time and hour, and being willing and desirous to set down my intent and meaning for the disposing of such goods and chattels whereof God hath blessed me, do make and ordain this my last will and testament in manner and form following:

First I commend my soul to the hands of Almighty God, hoping assuredly through the merits and passion of Jesus Christ, my Saviour, to be made partaker of everlasting life, and I commend my body to the earth whereof it is made;

Item, I give and bequeath to my nephew, Richard Lucy, one hundred pounds now remaining in Sir Thomas Lucy's hands;

Item, I give and bequeath to my nephew, Benjamin Vernon, two hundred pounds;

Item, I give and bequeath to my cousin, Mr Harcourt Leighton of Plaish, esquire, one hundred pounds;

Item, I give unto my cousin, Mr Richard Leighton, forty marks and thirteen pounds six shilling six pence which my cousin, Mr Lesham Thomas, doth owe me for his wife and his son laid out here for them at his request;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my cousin, Mr Harry Leighton of Lincoln's Inn, two hundred marks;

Item, I give to my cousin, Mr Edward Mytton, my godson, one hundred marks;

Item, I give to my cousin, Edward Roe, my godson, ten pounds;

Item, whereas Sir William Harman, Sir Edward Greville, knights, and Mr Cheyme [=Cheyney?] do by their bands of five hundred pounds stand duly indebted to me for the payment of three hundred pounds at a day long past, and also more, the said Sir William Harman doth stand further indebted to me in the sum of fourscore and ten pounds, I, the said Edward Vernon, do by these presents give and bequeath unto my cousins, Mr Harcourt Leighton, Mrs Robina Rooe, and my cousin, Mrs Dorothy Leighton, the said three hundred pounds and the said fourscore and ten pounds equally to be divided between them together, with all such right and interest as I have in the said band of five hundred pounds to their only use and behoof;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my man, Thomas Harcourt, if he continue in my service till my death, fifty pounds and the one half of my apparel;

Item, my will and meaning is that my executors shall bestow twenty pounds upon a piece of plate double gilt whereupon my name and coat of arms to be engraved and set upon,

and the same piece to be given to my assured loving cousin, Mr Baron Bromley, as a remembrance of my love unto him;

Item, my will and meaning is further that my said executors shall bestow one hundred marks upon a piece of plate double gilt whereupon my name and coat of arms to be engraven and set upon, and the same piece of plate to be given to Sir Thomas Lucy, knight, [f. 264v] my nephew, as a remembrance of my love unto him;

Item, my will and meaning is also further that my said executors shall bestow twenty marks upon another piece of plate double gilt whereupon my name and coat of arms to be likewise engraven and set upon, and the same to be given unto my kinsman and loving friend, Mr William Jones of Lincoln's Inn, esquire, as a remembrance of my love unto him;

Item, my will and meaning is also further that my said executors shall bestow ten pounds of another piece of plate double gilt whereupon my name and coats of arms to be likewise engraven and set upon, and the same to be given to my assured loving friend, Mr John Jeffreys of Lincoln's Inn, esquire, as a remembrance of my love unto him;

All the rest of my goods and chattels whatsoever I have in the world saving forty marks, which my will and meaning is shall be given to the poor of the parish where I shall be buried, I give and bequeath to my nephew, Sir Robert Vernon of Hodnet, knight;

And as touching my lands of inheritance lying in Wavers Hopton [=Hopton Wafers] in the county of Salop [=Shropshire] now or late in the tenure or occupation of widow Normegrewe or of her assigns, I give and bequeath the same to my said nephew, Sir Robert Vernon, knight, and to his heirs forever;

For the execution of this my last will and testament for all matters whatsoever, and also for the disposing of the goods and chattels which I have in the world, I do make and ordain the said Sir Thomas Lucy and Sir Robert Vernon, knights, my nephews, my executors;

And thus hoping to change this life for a better I do take my leave of this miserable world;

Item, I give and bequeath to Edward Plomste, my godson, five pounds;

Item, I give and bequeath to Sir Roger Owen, knight, my assured good friend and landlord, my best rapier and dagger enamelled, with the girdle and hangers;

Item, I give and bequeath to the Lady Constance Lucy, my niece, my gold ring with a death's head in it as a remembrance of my love unto her. Edward Vernon.

Item, I give to my cousin, Mr Richard Mitton of Halston, esquire, my Damask sword and dagger, with the girdle and hangers thereunto belonging;

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Item, my will and meaning is also further that my said executors shall bestow one hundred marks upon a piece of plate double gilt whereupon my name and coat of arms to be engraven and set upon, and the same to be given to the Honourable Lady the Countess of Southampton, my niece, as a remembrance of my love unto her. Edward Vernon.

Item, I give and bequeath to Mr Ralph Cleaton [=sic for 'Clapton'?] four angels of gold;

Item, I give to my cousin, Peter Corbet, my silver watch. Edward Vernon.

This is the last will and testament of me, Edward Vernon, written with mine own hand, as the persons whose names are hereunder written can well witness the same. William Johnson, Ralph Clapton, John Clerke. Teste Gilberto Watkys.

Probatum fuit Testamentum suprascriptum apud London coram venerabili viro D^{omi}no Iohanne Benet milite legum doctore Curie Prerogatiue Cantuariens^{is} Magistro Custode siue Commissario I^{egi}tⁱme constituto Septimo die mens^{is} Octobris Anno Domini millesimo sexcentesimo Decimo sexto Iuramento Roberti Vernon militis vnus Executorum in eodem Testamento no^minat^{orum} Cui commissa fuit Administracⁱo bonorum Iurium et creditor^{um} dicti Defuncti De bene et fideliter administrand^o &c ad sancta Dei Evangelia Iur^{ato} Reservata potestate similem Commissionem faciendⁱ Thome Lewcie Militi executori etiam alteri in h^{uius}mo^di Testamento nominat^o eam cum venerit petitur^o in debita Iuris forma admissur^o

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before the worshipful Sir John Bennet, knight, Doctor of the Laws, lawfully constituted Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the seventh day of the month of October in the year of the Lord the thousand six hundred sixteenth by the oath of Robert Vernon, knight, one of the executors named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of the goods, rights and credits of the said deceased, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer etc., with power reserved for a similar grant to be made to Thomas Lucy, knight, the other executor named in the same testament, when he shall have come to petition the same in due form of law.]