

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the last will and testament, dated 22 March 1540 and proved 21 July 1542, of Margaret Ryther, the wife of Nicholas Ryther of Castle Hedingham (see Bindoff, S.T. *The House of Commons 1509-1558* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1982), p. 240, available online).

The testatrix was bequeathed 53s 4d in the will of John de Vere (1442-1513), 13th Earl of Oxford (see TNA PROB 11/17, ff. 82-90), and was for many years in the service of the 13th Earl's wife, Elizabeth (nee Scrope) Beaumont de Vere (d.1537), Countess of Oxford. From the Countess' will:

Item, I give and bequeath to Margaret Ryther th' elder, for the true and faithful service that she of long continuance hath done to me, one hundred marks in ready money, 2 salts of silver and gilt with a cover and a Garter in the midst of them, weighing 26 ounces; item, 2 of my best featherbeds not before bequeathed; item, 4 pair of my best sheets, 2 bolsters, 2 pillows, one long, and 2 mattresses, 2 counterpoints, the one having the pictures of Saint John the Baptist, Saint Peter and Saint Giles of counterfeit arras, used to be laid upon my bed, the other like unto the same of counterfeit arras; item, 2 pair of fustians; item, all my tappets of tapestry of damask-work, the ground green, with the Garter and my Lord's arms in them, used to be hanged in my chamber; item, 2 brass pots of 3 gallons, 2 small pans of brass, and one garnish of counterfeit vessel largest of pewter.

The testatrix' son, John Ryther (d.1552), his then wife, Margaret, and two of their children are also mentioned in the Countess' will:

Item, I give and bequeath to John Ryther, my controller of household, 2 pots of silver parcel-gilt which I lately bought of Master Lucas, weighing 64 ounces one quarter, and also 2 bowls of silver parcel-gilt of the value of £11 6s 8d, and for lack of the same bowls, he to have of my gift £11 6s 8d in ready money.

Item, I give and bequeath to Margaret, his wife, my trussing bed of blue velvet and crimson, my counterpoint of yellow Turkey satin and curtain of yellow sarsenet to the same; item, 2 featherbeds, 2 bolsters, 2 pillows, 2 pillow-beres, 2 pair of sheets and one pair of fustians.

Item, I give to my god-daughter, Elizabeth Ryther, five pounds in ready money, and to John Ryther, her brother, other five pounds in ready money.

For the will of the testatrix' son, John Ryther (d.1552), see TNA PROB 11/35, f. 240.

A number of other persons mentioned in the testatrix' will below are also mentioned in the will of Elizabeth (nee Scrope) Beaumont de Vere (d.1537), Countess of Oxford, including the Countess' sisters, Mary Kingston, Jane Brewes and Frances Seyntclere, and the Countess' niece, Ursula Brewes, as well as the Countess' almoner, Doctor Cranker, the Countess' chamberer, Emlyn Badbye, the Countess' receiver, John Danyell, the Countess' gentleman-usher, Robert Goldingham, and Elizabeth Miche.

For the Countess' will, see TNA PROB 11/27, ff. 84-6.

According to Higgs, the testatrix' husband, Nicholas Ryther, had been in the service of John de Vere (1442-1513), 13th Earl of Oxford, and his son, John Ryther (d.1552) served as controller of the household of the 16th Earl. See Higgs, Laquita M., *Godliness and Governance in Tudor Colchester* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 49-50, available online:

More obviously a protégé of [the 16th Earl of] Oxford than were either [John] Lucas or [Anthony] Stapleton was John Ryther, who served with Lucas in Edward VI's first Parliament in 1547. There is no indication that Oxford dictated the selection of Lucas and Ryther, but it is quite possible that Oxford, as an active supporter of the Protestant Reformation, wanted the right people elected and used his influence to get them elected. Ryther's father had been a servant to the thirteenth earl, and Ryther began his service to the de Veres as comptroller of the household of Elizabeth, dowager countess, and after her death, comptroller of the sixteenth earl's household. Probably the Oxford connections helped bring Ryther to the office of cofferer of the household of Prince Edward and then of the royal household, but even earlier Ryther would have come to the attention of Colchester when he was appointed by Thomas Cromwell to report on the alleged embezzlement by one of the abbot's servants of the jewelry of Colchester abbey. Ryther served only in the 1547 Parliament for Colchester, as he died before another Parliament was elected.

It would appear from her will that the testatrix came from Wakefield in Yorkshire, and that her husband, Nicholas Ryther, was one of the six sons of William Ryther (d. 19 July 1475) and his wife, Eleanor Fitzwilliam, a descendant of Geoffrey Plantagenet (1113-1151). One of Nicholas Ryther's brothers, Sir Ralph Ryther (b. about 1451, d. 2 October 1520), had a son and heir, Thomas Ryther, who by settlement dated 2 April 1510 married Agnes Scrope, one of the younger daughters of Henry Scrope (b. about 1468, d. 1506), 6th Baron Scrope of Bolton, a first cousin Elizabeth (nee Scrope) Beaumont de Vere (d.1537), Countess of Oxford. It was likely as a result of family connections of this sort that the testatrix and her husband entered the service of the 13th Earl.

For the information in the foregoing paragraph, see Richardson, Douglas, *Plantagenet Ancestry* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 2004), p. 623; the entry for John Scrope (1437/8–1498), 5th Baron Scrope of Bolton in the online edition of *The Dictionary of National Biography*, and his will, TNA PROB 11/11, ff. 211-12; the entry for Henry Scrope (b. about 1468, d. 1506), 6th Baron Scrope of Bolton, in *The Complete Peerage*, p. 546; the pedigrees of Gascoigne, Redman, Scrope and Ryder in Norcliffe, Charles Best, ed., *The Visitation of Yorkshire in the Years 1563 and 1563* by William Flower, Vol. 16, (London: Harleian Society, 1881), pp. 136, 280, 367, available online; and <http://newsgroups.derkeiler.com/Archive/Soc/soc.genealogy.medieval/2006-08/msg00722.html>.

LM: Testamentum Margarete Ryther vidue

In dei nomine amen. The 22nd day of the month of March in the year of Our Lord God a thousand five hundred 39th and in the 31st year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King Henry the 8th, I, Margaret Ryther, widow, being in health of body and having my perfect memory, thanks be to Our Lord, do ordain and make this my last will and testament in the manner and form following, that is to say:

First I bequeath my soul to the infinite mercy of Almighty God, Maker and Redeemer of the same, to the Blessed Lady, and to all the blessed and holy company of heaven, and my body to be buried in the next parish church where it shall please Our Lord to call me to his mercies;

Item, I will in the same church where my body shall be buried one priest to sing there for my soul, my father and mother's and my husband's souls, by one year next and immediately following my death, and he to have for his stipend ten marks in money;

Item, I give and bequeath to the high altar of Hedingham Castle church for dirge and Mass there to be said incontinent after my departure for my husband's soul, my soul, and all Christian souls, 20s in money;

Item, I give and bequeath to the high altar of the parish church of Earls Colne 3s 4d in money;

Item, I give and bequeath to the high altar of Saint Giles church in Maplestead other 3s 4d in money;

Item, I will that within the year next after my departure one dirge and Mass to be sung within the parish church of Wakefield within the county of York for my soul, my father & mother's souls, and all Christian souls, and I give to the same 20s in money;

Item, I give and bequeath to my Lady, Dame Mary Kingston, my ring of gold with the Five Wounds;

Item, I give and bequeath to Mrs Jane Brewes my largest pair of excelarne beads of 60;

Item, I give to my Lady, Dame Frances Seyntclere, a rial of gold;

Item, I give to Mrs Elizabeth Rede, her daughter, one double docket of gold;

Item, I give to Robert Seyntclere, her brother, my godson, one old noble of gold;

Item, I give to Mrs Ursula Brewes, late nun in Denny, one angel of gold;

Item, I give to Doctor Croncker one rial of gold;

Item, I give to Mr Robert Goldingham one angel of gold;

Item, I give to Mr Robert Rochester one angel of gold;

Item, I give to Mrs Elizabeth Brewes my spoon of silver with a squirrel of th' end;

Item, I give to Mistress Elizabeth Lovell my spoon of silver with the letters of I and R at th' end;

Item, I give to Mrs Margaret Gought my best bonnet of black velvet;

Item, I give to Mrs Jane Fitzwilliam my best partlet of black velvet;

Item, to give to Mrs Elizabeth Miche my gown of black cloth furred with budge;

Item, I give to Mrs Anne Goldingham one pair of new sheets of two breadths d(?);

Item, I give to Mistress Emlyn Badbye my pair of beads of black jet gauded with beads of silver and gilt, with amber about the gauds;

Item, I give to my son, John Ryther, my marrying ring, my bowl of silver, my two goblets of silver with one cover, and one sovereign of gold, and six spoons of silver slipped;

Item, I give to John Ryther, his son, my ring with a ruby, six spoons of silver with knops of th' ends, and one rial of gold;

Item, I give to his daughter, Elizabeth Ryther, my pair of beads of silver gauded with gold, six new spoons with B(?) of th' ends, one rial of gold, and my two salts of silver and gilt with one cover, to be delivered unto her when she shall come to th' age of 20 years;

Item, I give Mr Robert Skene one angel of gold;

Item, I give to Mary Turnor a pair of sheets of two breadths;

Item, I give to Widow Porter a black gown of cloth with cuffs of velvet;

Item, I give to Elyne Nycholles one pair of sheets of two breadths, somewhat worn;

Item, I give to Agnes, my maid, late her fellow, one kerchief, one rail, and one gown, and one kirtle at mine executors' discretion;

Item, I give to Mr John Danyell of Messing one sovereign of gold;

Item, I give to Mistress Loo(?), his wife, one pair of sheets of three breadths;

Item, I give to her daughter, Alice, my new spoon of silver slipped at th' end, to her daughter, Anne, my kerchief of linen, to her daughter, Jane, one kerchief of linen;

Item, I give to Margaret Danyell one kerchief and one rail of linen;

Item, I give to Sir Robert Towneley, vicar of Messing, to pray for my soul, one angel of gold;

Item, I give to Sir John Morteyn, Mr Danyell's chaplain, one angel of gold;

And I do make my son, John Ryther, my sole executor to see this my will performed, and I give and bequeath to my said son all my goods not bequeathed for his pains to be taken in th' execution of this my will and to bury my body after his mind and discretion;

In witness hereof I have set to my seal;

Item, I give to my god-daughter, Mary Ryther, my ring of gold with a rock-ruby, one of my featherbeds with a bolster, one long pillow of down being the lesser of two, one pair of fustians, my counterpoint of verders with roses, one pair of fine sheets of three breadths;

This given and bequeathed after the writing of this my will by reason of marriage had betwixt my said son and daughter.

Probatum fuit suprascriptum testamentum coram domino apud London xxjo die mensis Iulij Anno domini Millesimo quingentesimo quadragesimo secundo Iuramento Iohannis Rither Executoris in huiusmodi testamento nominati Ac approbatum et insinuatum Comissaque fuit administracio omnium et singulorum bonorum iurium et creditorum dicti defuncti prefato executori De bene &c Ac de pleno et fideli Inventario &c conficiendo Necnon de plano et vero compoto reddendo Ad sancta dei Euangelia Iurato

[=The above-written testament was proved before the Lord [+Archbishop] at London on the 21st day of the month of July in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred forty-second by the oath of John Ryther, executor 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 executor, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well etc., and to prepared a full and faithful inventory etc., and also to render a plain and true account.]