

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the last will and testament, dated 8 April 1545 and proved 20 October 1547, of James Leveson (d. 13 October 1545), great-uncle 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 great-nephew, 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. See the Sutherland Collection at the Staffordshire Record Office:

[www.search.sutherlandcollection.org.uk/engine/theme/default.asp?theme=132&text=0](http://www.search.sutherlandcollection.org.uk/engine/theme/default.asp?theme=132&text=0)

For the will of the testator's brother, Nicholas Leveson, see TNA PROB 11/27/552.

### ***MARRIAGES AND CHILDREN***

#### ***First marriage***

The testator married firstly Alice Wrottesley (d.1525), daughter of Sir Richard Wrottesley of Wrottesley. See Bowes, G.C., 'A Manuscript Relating to the Family of Offley', in Harwood, H.W. Forsyth, ed., *The Genealogist*, New Series, (London: George Bell & Sons, 1903), Vol. XIX, p. 407 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/genealogist01unkngoog#page/n464/mode/2up>

By Alice Wrottesley the testator had three sons and a daughter:

\* **Sir Richard Leveson** (d.1560), who married Mary Fitton (d.1591). For his will, in which he names his brother-in-law, Robert Eyton (d.1604) (see below) as one of his executors, see TNA PROB 11/43/621.

\* **Walter Leveson**, for whose will, dated 30 October 1551, see TNA PROB 11/36/343.

\* **Edward Leveson** (d.1568) of Perton, who married Elizabeth Morton of Haughton Hall near Shifnal, widow of Thomas Rugeway, but died without issue. See D593/B/2/12/26 at:

<http://www.archives.staffordshire.gov.uk/Dserve/dserve.exe?dsqIni=DserveX.ini&dsqApp=Archive2&dsqDb=Catalog&dsqCmd=show.tcl&dsqSearch=%28RefNo==%27K1%2F1%2F5%2F15%2F3%27%29>

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<http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/>

See also Vaughan, H.F.J., 'Donington Church and Lordship', in *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, Part I, (Shrewsbury: Adnitt and Naunton, 1882), Vol. VI, pp. 1-92 at p. 16 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=7HIHAAAAYAAJ&pg=RA1-PA16>

See also Carter, William F., ed., *The Midland Antiquary*, (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1882), pp. 176-7 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=SBEIAAAAQAAJ&pg=RA1-PA177>

\* **Joan Leveson** (d.1572), who married firstly, William Skeffington (d.1551), son of Sir John Skeffington (d. 10 July 1525), and nephew of Sir William Skeffington (d. 31 December 1535), Lord Deputy of Ireland, for whom see the *ODNB* article; secondly, William Fowke, gentleman; and thirdly, Edward Gifford, esquire. See the pedigree of Skeffington in Betham, William, *The Baronetage of England*, (London: Ward and Betham, 1804), Vol. IV, p. 208 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=kLHVAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA208>

For Joan Leveson's son, Sir John Skeffington (d. 7 November 1604), see the History of Parliament entry at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/skeffington-john-1534-1604>

### *Second marriage*

The testator married secondly Margery Offley (d.1563), third daughter of William Offley, and widow of Thomas Michell, ironmonger of London. See the will of Thomas Michell, proved 12 April 1527, TNA PROB 11/22/308, and Bowes, *supra*, p. 225 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/genealogist01unkngoog#page/n240/mode/2up>

By Margery Offley, the testator had three daughters:

\* **Elizabeth Leveson**, who married Sir Walter Aston (d. 2 April 1589), son and heir of Sir Edward Aston (d. 8 September 1568) of Tixall, by whom she had several children, including a son, Sir Edward Aston (d.1598), (who married firstly Mary Spencer, third daughter of Sir John Spencer, by whom he had no issue, and secondly Anne Lucy, the daughter of Sir Thomas Lucy (d.1600) of Charlecote, from whose park William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon is said to have poached deer); and a daughter, Katherine Aston, who married Sir William Chetwynd of Ingestre. See the *ODNB* article on Sir Thomas Lucy (d.1600); and Clifford, Thomas and Arthur Clifford, *A*

*Topographical and Historical Description of the Parish of Tixall in the County of Stafford*, (Paris: M. Mouzou, 1817), pp. 149-50 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/topographicalhis00cons#page/148/mode/2up>

See also Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2011, Vol. I, p. 60; Bowes, pp. 225-6, *supra*; and the History of Parliament entry for Sir Walter Aston at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/aston-walter-1530-89>

\* **Anne Leveson**, who was unmarried when the testator made his will. She later married Robert Eyton (d.1604), the son of Thomas Eyton by Alice Charlton, the daughter of William Charlton, esquire, of Apley Castle. For the will of Robert Eyton, see TNA PROB 11/105/469.

By Robert Eyton, Anne Leveson was the mother of Richard Eyton, esquire, who married Mary Oteley, the daughter of Adam Oteley (d. 16 October 1576) of Pitchford by Mary Mainwaring, the daughter of Richard Mainwaring of Ightfield. According to the Oteley pedigree, Mary Oteley married firstly Richard Crompton of Acton Burnell, secondly Edward Walter, and thirdly Richard Eyton. See 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. 381 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationshrop01grazgoog#page/n108/mode/2up/>

See also the Eyton pedigree in Grazebrook, *supra*, Part I, Vol. XXVIII, p. 182 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationshrop00britgoog#page/n236/mode/2up>

See also the Eyton pedigree in Burke, J. Bernard, *A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland for 1852*, (London: Colburn and Co., 1852), Vol. I, p. 391 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=9mNHAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA391>

Richard Eyton died without issue. For Richard Eyton and ‘Mary, his wife’, see also TNA C 8/21/44. For a suit in the Star Chamber brought in February 1613 by Sir George Hayward of Acton Burnell against ‘Mary Eyton, late the wife of Richard Eyton, and formerly the wife of Richard Crompton, and Thomas Crompton [of Withington], her son’, see TNA STAC 8/177/24.

The date of Anne Leveson’s death is unknown, but before his own death Robert Eyton had married a second wife, Elizabeth Roe, the daughter of William Roe, by whom he had no issue. After the death of Robert Eyton in 1604, Elizabeth (nee Roe) Eyton married

Francis Brooke of Cotton, Shropshire. See Grazebrook, *supra*, Part I, Vol. XXVIII, p. 81 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationshrop00britgoog#page/n134/mode/2up/>

Robert Eyton was named as an executor in the will of Sir Richard Leveson (d.1560) (see above).

\* **Joyce Leveson** (d. 14 March 1608), who in 1561 married John Gifford (d. 28 August 1613), son and heir of Sir Thomas Gifford (d.1560), son and heir of Sir John Gifford (d. 13 November 1556) of Chillington, by whom she had issue. See Bowes, p. 226, *supra*; the will of Thomas Gifford, TNA PROB 11/43/5; and the pedigree of Gifford at:

'The parish of Church Eaton: High Onn', in *Staffordshire Historical Collections, Vol. 4*, ed. George Wrottesley (London, 1883), pp. 52-63. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/staffs-hist-collection/vol4/pp52-63> [accessed 2 December 2019].

See also the History of Parliament entry for John Gifford at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/giffard-john-1534-1613>

See also Grazebrook, H. Sydney, ed., *The Heraldic Visitations of Staffordshire*, (London: Mitchell and Hughes, 1885, p. 147 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/collectionsforpt205stafuoft#page/146/mode/2up>

In the parish church of St Mary and St Chad in Brewood are memorials to the testator's daughters, Joan Leveson (d.1572) and Joyce Leveson (d.1608). See:

'Brewood: Churches, schools and charities', *A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 5: East Cuttlestone hundred* (1959), pp. 40-48 at:

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=53396>

For the testator's second wife, Margery Offley, see also:

<http://www.amjancestry.com/Leveson3.html>

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

For the testator's cousin, Thomas Wilkes, Merchant of the Staple, see his will, proved 6 February 1559, TNA PROB 11/42A/318; and S.H.A.H., *Ladbroke and its Owners*, (Bury St Edmund: Paul and Mathew, 1914), p. 365 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/ladbrokeitsowner00hervuoft#page/386/mode/2up>

For the testator's overseer, Sir Rowland Hill (d.1561), see the Wikipedia article edited by the author of this summary, and the History of Parliament entry at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/hill-sir-rowland-1498-1561>

According to Bowes, Sir Rowland Hill was the great-uncle of Mary Fitton (d.1591), wife of the testator's eldest son and heir, Sir Richard Leveson (see above). See Bowes, *supra*, p. 225.

### **TESTATOR'S MANORS**

For the testator's manor of Shustoke, see:

'Parishes: Shustoke', *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 4: Hemlingford Hundred* (1947), pp. 205-210 at:

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42682>

RM: T{estamentum} Iacobi Leveson

[f. 373r] In the name of God, Amen. The 8<sup>th</sup> day of April in the year of Our Lord God a thousand five hundred 45 and in the 36<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King Henry the Eight by the Grace of God King of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith and Supreme Head under God of the Church of England and Ireland, I, James Leveson, being of whole mind and in good health of my body, laud and praise be to Almighty God, make and ordain this my testament and last will in manner and form following:

First I bequeath my soul unto Almighty God, to Our Blessed Lady Saint Mary and all the holy company of heaven to pray for me, my body to be buried whereas it pleaseth Almighty God and whereas mine executors and friends shall seem convenient, with a memory to be made upon my grave or near it of me, my two wives, Alice and Margery, and my children by the discretion of mine executors and friends;

And I do make mine executors my wife, Margery Leveson, and my three sons, Richard, Walter and Edward Leveson;

And for burying and month's mind, I remit to the discretion of mine executors aforenamed, howbeit I would have in common dealing of money called a dole neither at my burying nor at my month's mind, but after this manner as hereafter followeth:

I will that by my life or incontinent after my departing out of this world that there shall be sent and dealt in every parish and town hereafter following the sums of money hereafter specified, and I will that the same money shall be delivered to the parish priest and to the upper churchwarden of every of the said parishes, they to divide and give the same money to the most poor and impotent people inhabited within the same parish, to wit, to every person 4d or more or less by their discretions as the number of the said poor people shall be indifferently and by no favour upon their conscience, and that there be sent to every such parish priest and churchwarden within the same one bill wherein shall be contained the sum of money that so shall be sent them to that parish so that they shall take thereof to themselves of the same money either of them 4d for their pains, and the rest to give and dispose upon their conscience to the most poorest people within their parish after the manner and form afore-specified, and further that they shall give warning and knowledge as well to the same poor people as openly in the church how much money they have received to be given amongst them to pray for my soul and all Christian souls in the stead of a dole used at burials or month's minds, declaring unto them that there shall be no such dole made nor given for me neither at my burial nor month's mind but this only;

First, I give to the parish of Wolverhampton, to be dealt there as through th' whole parish, as afore is said, 40s, to be dealt by one of the parish priests and upper churchwarden or else by any of mine executors as aforesaid; Stourbridge, 10s; Enville, 10s; to the parish of Walsall, 13s 4d; to Wednesbury(?) parish, 13s 4d; to Sedgley parish, 13s 4d; to Dudley parish, 13s 4d; Darlaston(?), five shillings; Tipton, 6s 8d; Kinver, 10s; Bobbington, 5s; Rowley, 6s 8d; Himley, 6s 8d; Halesowen, 10s; Kingswinford, 6s 8d; Bromwich, 6s 8d; Claverley(?), 13s 4d; Worfield, 13s 4d; Wombourne, 13s 4d; Penn, 13s 4d; Tettenhall, 13s 4d; Pattingham, 13s 4d; Codsall, 6s 8d; Stockton, 6s 8d; Sutton Maddock, 6s 8d; Beckbury, 6s 8d; Boningale, 4s; Patshull, 4s; Albrighton 6s 8d; Donnington, 5s; Shevenall, 13s 4d; Sheriff Hales, 10s; Bushbury, 13s 4d; Cannock, 10s; Norton, 5s; Penkridge, 10s; Shareshill, 6s 8d; Brewood, 20s; Lapley, 6s 8d; Tong, 13s 4d; Drayton in Hales, 13s 4d; Child's Ercall, 10s; Stoke on Tern, 10s; Hodnet, 10s; Staunton, 6s 8d; High Ercall, 13s 4d; Rocester(?), 10s; Wellington, 13s 4d; Dawley, 10s; Bowles, 6s 8d; Lilleshall, 20s; Newport, 20s; Edgmond, 13s 4d; Stafford, 20s; Lichfield, 20s; Bridgnorth, 20s; Longdon, 5s; Kinnersley(?), 6s 8d; and though I name but the town, yet my meaning is to be divided through the whole parish;

Item, I give unto the parish church of Wolverhampton, to be bestowed upon the reparations of the church or else on ornaments by the discretion of mine executors five pounds;

Item, I give to the marriage of fifty poor maidens within Staffordshire or Shropshire, every one six shillings eight pence, £16 13s 4d;

And I give to fifty poor widows or husbandmen within the same two shires, every one 6s 8d, £16 13s 4d, my tenants, customers or friends to have the preference of these two gifts by the discretion of mine executors;

Item, I give to the making of the highways in Shropshire or Staffordshire by the discretion of mine executors forty pounds;

I give to Harry Southwick £40 and a gold ring of 40s, I mean him that was mine apprentice;

I give to Thomas Corbet six pounds thirteen shillings and four pence, and to every household servant that I shall have beside at the time of my departing, as well men as women, 20s and a black gown or coat;

Item, I give to my cousin, John Leveson of London, and my cousin, Twilkes [=T Wilkes], either of them a ring of gold of 40s apiece, and to my sister, Dionyse Leveson, my cousin John Sadler and his wife, my cousin Davenant and his wife, my cousin Hewett and his wife, each of them a ring of gold of 40s, and to all other of my brethren or sisters' children not herebefore remembered a ring of gold of 20s to each one of them;

Item, I give to my son [=son-in-law] William Skeffington, £40, and to his wife, my daughter, Joan, a cup of silver of £4, and to either of them a ring of gold of 40s and a black gown, and to every child that he now hath ten pounds upon condition that he make my said daughter, his wife, a jointure of lands to the value of £30 or else all these [f. 373v] bequests to him, his wife and children but only the black gowns and rings to be void;

Item, I give to Harry Perett that was my servant all such money as he oweth me, and besides that £10;

And also I give to John Offley all such money as he oweth me, and in money £10, and a ring of gold of 30s;

Also I give to Roger Peret that married my sister's daughter a ring of gold of 20s, and to him and his wife delivered a black gown;

Also I give to my son-in-law, Walter Aston, £40, and to my daughter, his wife, a cup of £5, and to either of them a ring of gold of 40s, and every of them a black gown, but I will that neither of these things be given to them except the marriage betwixt them take effect, and till they have lien together, and if it happen that the said marriage do not take effect, then I will and give unto the said Elizabeth, my daughter, all such money as Sir Edward Aston, knight, oweth to me by reason of the rents and profits that he hath or shall receive of my lands in Warwickshire whereof he now receiveth the p[r]ofits, which lands I have given to the said Elizabeth to her marriage, as it appeareth by an indenture of covenants made for the same marriage between the said Sir Edward Aston on the one party, and me, the said James Leveson, on the other party, and further I give unto the said Elizabeth, my

daughter, £220 which I paid unto the said Sir Edward Aston for her marriage, which he must repay me again if the said marriage take not effect, as by the said covenant doth appear;

And further I will that if the same marriage betwixt the said Walter Aston and my said daughter, Elizabeth take not effect, then I will that the said Elizabeth shall have during her natural life all the said lands in Warwickshire, to wit, the manors of Belhall, Shustoke and Anstey, Paycroftes and other, with all other lands and tenements which I lately purchased of Edward, Lord Clinton, or of any other which be now appointed to the said Walter Aston and the said Elizabeth by the said bargain between the foresaid Sir Edward Aston and me, so that the same Elizabeth be advised and do marry by the counsel and consent of her mother, Margery, now my wife, or else she to have no part of the same manors nor other the premises;

And after the death of the same Elizabeth, the same manors, lands and tenements and all other the premises wholly to remain to the right heirs males of me, the said James Leveson, forever;

Item, I bequeath to my brother-in-law, Lawrence Penbury, a ring of gold of 30s and also a black gown;

Item, I give unto Margery, my wife, all my plate and household wholly as it standeth, in money 1000 marks upon this condition, that she claim no dowry in no lands that I have given to Elizabeth, my daughter, not yet in no lands that I have sold to any person or persons, and will that she be bounden for the same in her widowed [=widowhood] in a thousand marks by obligation to Richard and Walter Leveson, my sons, and if she deny so to be bound, then I will that my said wife shall have my said plate and household and five hundred marks in money and no more;

Item, I give to my son, Richard Leveson, £200, and to Anne Leveson, my daughter, £200 if she be ruled in marriage by my wife and by Richard, my son, or else to have no penny, and to Joyce, my daughter, five hundred marks, and to Walter and Edward, my sons, either of them five hundred pounds;

And the residue of all my goods, my debts, funerals and legacies paid, I give to my three sons, Richard, Walter and Edward, after this manner following, that is to say, to Richard a hundred pound thereof, and the rest wholly to Walter and Edward, my 2 sons, to be equally parted between them because Richard hath the greatest preferment by my lands;

And if it happen either of my 2 daughters, Elizabeth or Joyce, happen to die before that they be lawful age or married, so that their husbands ought not to have the said portions of money to them given, then I will that their portions of money or the portions of either of them shall come to th' hands of Margery, my wife, she to dispose the same at her pleasure;



And amongst my foresaid legacies I will and give to Mary, the wife of my son, Richard Leveson, a cup of £5 and a ring of gold of 40s and a black gown, and to my wife and my three sons each of them a ring of gold of 40s and a black gown, and to Anne and Joyce, my daughters, in like wise;

Also I give to William Auston(?) [Austry] £20 and a ring of gold of 30s and a black coat;

And to William Creswall £10 and a ring of gold of 30s and a black coat;

And to William Norwood a ring of gold of 30s and a black coat;

And to William Charlton of Wombridge a ring of gold of 40s and a black gown;

And to William Charlton of Charsall a ring of gold [-of gold] of 30s and a black coat;

And to George Dyton a ring of gold of 20s and a black coat;

And to Richard Corbet 40s and a black coat;

And to William Eke, Richard Wolaston, every of [f. 374r] them a ring of gold of 20s and a black coat;

And of this my last will I make overseers Sir Edward Aston & Sir Rowland Hill, knights, and I do give to either of them for a remembrance a ring of gold of £3 6s 8d;

In witness hereof this my last will with my hand written and my name thereto put and subscribed with my hand and seal hereto put the day and year *ut supra*, by me, James Leveson.

Probatum fuit suprascriptum Testamentum Coram Domino Archiep{iscop}o Cantuarien{sis} xxviiio Octobris Anno Domini mill{es}imo quingen{tesim}o xlvijio Iuramento Rich{ard}i Walteri et Edwardi Leveson ex{ecuto}rum Commissaq{ue} fuit administracio omnium et sing{u}lorum bonorum Iurium et Creditorum dicti defuncti prefatis executoribus De bene et fidel{ite}r administrand{o} eadem Ac de pleno et fideli Inventario omnium et sing{u}lorum bonorum &c Necnon de plano et vero Comp{ot}o in ea parte reddend{o} Ad sancta dei Eu{a}ngelia Iurat{is} Reservata p{otes}tate similem Commissionem faciend{i} margerie rel{i}c{t}e etc cum venerit &c Admissur{e}

[=The above-written testament was proved before the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury on the 28th of October in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred 47<sup>th</sup> by the oath of Richard, Walter and Edward Leveson, executors, 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 the same, and [+to prepare] a full and faithful inventory of all and singular the goods etc., and also to

render a plain and true account in that regard, with power reserved for a similar grant to be made to Margery, relict etc., when she shall have come etc. to be admitted.]