

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 21 December 1554 and proved 12 January 1555, of George Vernon of Hodnet, Shropshire, grandfather 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*.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

The testator was the nephew of Sir Robert Corbet (c.1478 - 11 April 1513), whose sister Elizabeth Corbet married Thomas Trentham (died c.1519), by whom she was the great-grandmother of Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham (d.1612). For Sir Robert Corbet's marriage to the testator's aunt, Elizabeth Vernon (d. 29 March 1563), see Richardson, *supra*, Vol. III, p. 69; the will of Sir Robert Corbet (c.1478 – 11 April 1513, TNA PROB 11/17/471; the will of Sir Henry Vernon (c.1441 – 13 April 1515) of Haddon, Derbyshire, TNA PROB 11/18/121; and the will of Thomas Trentham (died c.1519), TNA PROB 11/19/252.

For further details of the testator's family background, see the will of his grandfather, Sir Henry Vernon (c.1441 – 13 April 1515) of Haddon, Derbyshire, TNA PROB 11/18/121.

PARENTS AND SIBLINGS

The testator was the eldest of the three sons of Sir Henry Vernon's third son, Humphrey Vernon (d.1542) by Alice Ludlow (d.1531), the daughter and coheir of Sir John Ludlow (d.1495) and Lady Elizabeth Grey. See Burke, John and John Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland*, (London: Henry Colburn, 1847), Vol. II, p. 1478 at:

http://books.google.ca/books?id=0NEKAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA1478&lpg=PA1478&dq=%22Walter+Vernon%22+%221592%22&source=bl&ots=a7JZjPbrpf&sig=0_0pdIcH03ksCgwAd6AeDMB4IX8&hl=en&sa=X&ei=51fUU5ytLMHpiwLqooDADw&ved=0CDQ Q6AEwBTgK#v=onepage&q=%22Walter%20Vernon%22%20%221592%22&f=false.

See also the pedigree of Vernon (which, however, does not show the testator's second marriage 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, pp. 472-4 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationshrop01grazgoog#page/n200/mode/2up>.

The testator had two younger brothers, Thomas (see below) and Henry, who died without issue, and at least two sisters:

*Thomas Vernon (d. 17 January 1557), esquire, of Houndhill (near Marchington), Staffordshire (which his father had purchased from Robert Dormer in 1517), who married, by settlement dated 5 May 1545, Eleanor Shirley (buried 28 April 1595), daughter of Ralph Shirley (d. 15 January 1535) and Amy Lolle, the daughter and co-heiress of William Lolle of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire. Ralph Shirley (d. 15 January 1535) was the son of Robert Shirley of Repton, Derbyshire, and Worthington (near Staunton Harold, Leicestershire), third son of John Shirley (d. 18 May 1486) of Staunton Harold. See Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. IV, p. 29 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=8JcbV309c5UC&pg=RA3-PA29&lpg=RA3-PA29&dq=%22Thomas+Vernon%22+%22Eleanor+Shirley%22&source=bl&ots=kvhIKTHQa5&sig=KCfn1NELwJzfSJqZL14t3VIZSpU&hl=en&sa=X&ei=c0nUU5bDFKLTiwK2r4GYAw&ved=0CDYQ6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=%22Thomas%20Vernon%22%20%22Eleanor%20Shirley%22&f=false>.

See also Shirley, Evelyn Philip, *Stemmata Shirleiana*, pp. 39, 52-4 and 407 [misprinted 470] at:

<https://archive.org/stream/cu31924029787250#page/n75/mode/2up>.

Thomas Vernon and Eleanor Shirley had a son, Walter Vernon (1552-1592), who married Mary Littleton (d. 17 December 1622), by whom he had five sons and four daughters (for Walter Vernon and Mary Littleton, see also the will of Henry Vernon (d. 29 September 1569), TNA PROB 11/51/409), and a daughter, Dorothy Vernon (buried 24 December 1620), who married, by 1580, Job Throckmorton (d. February 1601) of Haseley, Warwickshire, who was involved in the printing of the Marprelate tracts in 1589. See the *ODNB* article on Job Throckmorton; Carlson, Leland H., *Martin Marprelate, Gentleman; Master Job Throckmorton Laid Open in His Colors*, (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1981), pp. 129, 378 (citing Shaw, Stebbing, *The History and Antiquities of Staffordshire*, 2 vols. (London, 1798), 1801) I (Hanbury): 85-88, 398-404); and the History of Parliament entry for Job Throckmorton at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/throckmorton-job-1545-1601>.

See also:

<https://histfam.familysearch.org/getperson.php?personID=I153563&tree=EuropeRoyalNobleHous>.

See also Fetherston, John, ed., *The Visitation of the County of Warwick in the Year 1619*, (London: Mitchell and Hughes, 1877), pp. 89, 207 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationcount01britgoog#page/n232/mode/2up>.

After the death of Thomas Vernon (d. 17 January 1557), his widow, Eleanor (nee Shirley) married Nicholas Browne (buried 18 January 1587) of Snelston, Derbyshire, son of Thomas Browne of Snelston and Margaret Chetham, by whom she had a son, Sir William Browne (1558 – April 1611), and a daughter, Gertrude Browne. The match strengthened earlier family connections: Thomas Vernon's uncle, Sir John Vernon (d. 4 February 1545), had married Helen Montgomery, whose sister, Anne Montgomery, married John Browne of Snelston. See Richardson, *supra*, Vol. IV, p. 29, and the pedigree of Browne of Snelston in *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, Vol. XLVIII, 1894, (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, 1997 reprint), p. 269 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=UPn5MhS6X0QC&pg=PA269&lpg=PA269&dq=%22Gertrude+Browne%22+%22Snelston%22&source=bl&ots=Ff9zDFFDIU&sig=FwLNaSVcFbQIE6NVjfchKDOiedg&hl=en&sa=X&ei=EVnUU8PjMaLDigLh9oBw&ved=0CBwQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%22Gertrude%20Browne%22%20%22Snelston%22&f=false>.

Sir William Browne is described by Lodge as follows:

This gentleman, who was born in 1558, was the only son of Nicholas Browne, of Snelston in Derbyshire, by Eleanor, daughter and heir of Ralph Shirley, of Stanton Harold in Leicestershire. He was one of the old Low Country Captains; served in Flanders almost from the beginning of the war; and had the conduct of the surprise of Gravelines in 1586, where he was made prisoner. Sir Philip Sydney was his particular friend and patron, and the valiant brethren Sir Francis and Sir Horace Vere, who had probably been trained to the military profession under his care, always styled him "Father". He was appointed Lieutenant Governor of Flushing towards the end of this reign, and seems to have gained no further promotion in the next than the honour of knighthood, which was conferred on him at the Tower, March 15, 1604-5.

See Lodge, Edmund, *Illustrations of British History, Biography and Manners in the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, & James I*, 2nd ed., Vol. II, (London: John Chidley, 1838), p. 574 at:

http://books.google.ca/books?id=Y20EAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA574&lpg=PA574&dq=%22Lodge%22+%22illustrations%22+%22Nicholas+Browne,+of+Snelston%22&source=bl&ots=d6oPNpRuQm&sig=MzoKQ_nWghk6vwP0mpmAkNV0A3o&hl=en&sa=X&ei=ZU3UU5WTIIObjAKym4GoBA&ved=0CCIQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=%22Lodge%22%20%22illustrations%22%20%22Nicholas%20Browne%2C%20of%20Snelston%22&f=false.

For the will of Sir William Browne, dated 22 September 1602 and 7 July 1604, and proved 23 January 1612, see TNA PROB 11/119/58.

For Anne Montgomery's marriage to John Browne, see Cox, J. Charles, *Notes on the Churches of Derbyshire*, (London: Bemrose and Sons, 1877), Vol. III, pp. 92, 322-3 at:

http://books.google.ca/books?id=-Jg1AAAAMAAJ&pg=PA6&lpg=PA6&dq=%22Sir+John+Vernon%22+%22Ellen+Montgomery%22&source=bl&ots=x0jQml0PHL&sig=mcfB_4PrBI7EQeXpndElXxHpFGk&hl=en&sa=X&ei=cSLQU4LEHdfaoASwuILYAQ&ved=0CDQQ6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=%22Sir%20John%20Vernon%22%20%22Ellen%20Montgomery%22&f=false

See also the pedigrees of Throckmorton in Fetherston, John, ed., *The Visitation of the County of Warwick Taken in the Year 1619*, (London: Harleian Society, 1877), Vol. XII, pp. 89, 207 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationcount01britgoog#page/n114/mode/2up>.

According to the will of the testator's grandfather, Sir Henry Vernon (d. 13 April 1515), the testator had two sisters, Bennet Vernon and Elizabeth Vernon:

Item, I will that Bennet and Elizabeth, daughters to my son, Humphrey, have an hundred marks which he oweth me.

According to Brydges, the testator also had two other sisters, Margaret Vernon and Catherine Vernon; see Brydges, Egerton, *Collins's Peerage of England*, (London: F.C. and J. Rivington, 1812), Vol. VII, p. 404 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=HVY5AAAAMAAJ&pg=PA403&lpg=PA403&dq=Sir+John+Ludlow%22&source=bl&ots=GVZuUXcwmm&sig=rfgyOFs3i17FPnlcZFPiB-BCKzo&hl=en&sa=X&ei=TjzQU6KANeWwjALGpIEo&ved=0CBsQ6AEwADgK#v=onepage&q=Sir%20John%20Ludlow%22&f=false>

FIRST MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

The testator married firstly Elizabeth Pigott, the daughter of Thomas Pigott of Chetwynd, Shropshire, and Elizabeth Onley, daughter of John Onley (died c.1537), by whom, according to the pedigree of Vernon, he had a daughter, Katherine Vernon, who married John Poole, and two sons:

* Richard Vernon (d.1560?), eldest son and heir, who died young without issue.

* John Vernon (d.1591), who in 1564 married Elizabeth Devereux, (c.1541-c.1583) the daughter of Sir Richard Devereux (d. 13 October 1547), and his wife, Dorothy Hastings, daughter of George Hastings (1486/7–1544), 1st Earl of Huntingdon (1486/7–1544), by whom, according to the pedigree of Vernon, he had five sons and nine daughters, of whom only one son and four daughters lived to adulthood and married:

** Sir Robert Vernon, Comptroller of the Household to Elizabeth I, who after his father's death in 1591 became a ward of Robert Devereux (1565-1601), 2nd Earl of Essex, and who married, by 1605, Mary Needham, daughter of Robert Needham (buried 18

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December 1603), esquire, of Shavington Hall near Whitchurch, Shropshire, and widow of Thomas Onslow (d.1604) of Boreatton, Shropshire, by whom he had two sons and a daughter. 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>.

For the marriage of Sir Robert Vernon and Mary Needham, see Richardson, Douglas, *Plantagenet Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. III, p. 332 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=kjme027UeagC&pg=RA2-PA332&lpg=RA2-PA332&dq=%22Robert+Needham%22+%22Frances+Aston%22&source=bl&ots=qvLkFv3ddl&sig=xV14KUbKvNCg8ifNV2azMnVubrs&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj3nZaH9qTTAhVL4mMKHbCHBUMQ6AEIOzAG#v=onepage&q=%22Robert%20Needham%22%20%22Frances%20Aston%22&f=false>.

** Anne Vernon, who married George Barlow. See:

<http://www.barlowgenealogy.com/wales/slebatch.html>.

** Elizabeth Vernon (b. 11 January 1573, d. after 1655), who married Henry Wriothesley (1573–1624), 3rd Earl of Southampton.

** Susan Vernon, who according to Brydges married George Carey, esquire, of Cockington, Devonshire, but according to other sources married, as his second wife, Sir Walter Leveson (1551–1602), eldest son of Sir Richard Leveson (d.1560) of Lilleshall, Shropshire, and Mary Fitton (1529-1591), the daughter of Sir Edward Fitton (d.1548) of Gawsworth, Cheshire, and sister of Sir Edward Fitton (1527–1579). By his first wife, Anne Corbet, Sir Walter Leveson was the father of Sir Richard Leveson (c.1570-1605). See the pedigrees in Keen, Alan and Roger Lubbock, *The Annotator*, (London: Putnam, 1954), p. 216; the *ODNB* entry for Sir Richard Leveson (c.1570-1605); and the History of Parliament entry for Sir Walter Leveson at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/leveson-walter-1551-1602>.

** Frances Vernon (baptized 1573), who in 1594 secretly married Sir Anthony Shirley (1565-1636?), a marriage which incurred the Queen's displeasure. See the *ODNB* article on Sir Anthony Shirley.

John Vernon's wife, Elizabeth Devereux (c.1541-c.1583), was the sister of Walter Devereux (1539–1576), 2nd Viscount Hereford and 1st Earl of Essex, the father of Robert Devereux (1565-1601), 2nd Earl of Essex. The children of John Vernon (d.1591) and Elizabeth Devereux (c.1541-c.1583) were thus first cousins of Queen Elizabeth's favourite, Robert Devereux (1565-1601), 2nd Earl of Essex.

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See also Burke, John, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners*, Vol. IV (London: Henry Colburn, 1838), pp. 134-5 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/genealogicalhera04burk#page/134/mode/2up>.

See also Burke, John, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Extinct and Dormant Baronetcies* (London: Scott Webster and Geary, 1838), p. 546 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/agenealogicalan03burkgoog#page/n586/mode/2up>.

See also the will of John Onley (d. 22 November 1537), TNA PROB 11/27/241; Brydges, *supra*, Vol. VII, p. 404; and Grazebrook, Part II, *supra*, p. 474 at:

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

See also the *ODNB* entries for Sir Henry Vernon (c.1445-1515); John Talbot (c.1413–1460), 2nd Earl of Shrewsbury; Walter Devereux (born c.1489, d. 17 December 1558), 1st Viscount Hereford; Walter Devereux (1539–1576), 2nd Viscount Hereford and 1st Earl of Essex; George Hastings (1486/7–1544), 1st Earl of Huntingdon (1486/7–1544); Robert Devereux (1565-1601), 2nd Earl of Essex; and Henry Wriothesley (1573–1624), 3rd Earl of Southampton.

SECOND MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

The testator married, secondly, Mary (nee Lacon) (d. 27 April 1563), the widow of Thomas Acton (d. 2 January 1547), esquire, of Sutton, Worcestershire, by whom she had two sons who died young and a daughter, 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. The testator's second wife was the daughter of Sir Thomas Lacon (d.1536) of Willey, Shropshire, by Mary Corbet, sister of Sir Robert Corbet (c. 1478 - 11 April 1513) and daughter 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.

By his second wife, the testator had two sons, George Vernon (d.1604) and Edward Vernon (d.1616), and two daughters, Dorothy Vernon (d.1599) and Anne Vernon (who died unmarried in 1570).

See Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. II, pp. 163-5 and Vol. III, pp. 69-70; Keen, Alan and Roger Lubbock, *The Annotator*, (London: Putnam, 1954), p. 216 (where it is erroneously stated that John Vernon (d.1591) was the son of the testator by his second wife, Mary Lacon); the will of Sir Thomas Lacon (d.1536), TNA PROB 11/25/371; the will of the testator's second wife, Mary Lacon (d. 27 April 1563),

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TNA PROB 11/46/222; the *ODNB* entry for Sir Thomas Lucy (d. 7 July 1600) of Charlecote; the will of the testator's son, George Vernon (d.1604), TNA PROB 11/104/161; the will of the testator's son, Edward Vernon (d.1616), TNA PROB 11/128/313; the will of the testator's daughter, Anne Vernon (d.1570), TNA PROB 11/52/492; the will of the testator's daughter, Dorothy Vernon (d.1599), TNA PROB 11/93/301; and the monument to Thomas Acton and Mary Lacon at Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire (in which it is erroneously stated that Mary (nee Lacon) died in 1564), at:

<http://www.churchmonumentsociety.org/Monument%20of%20the%20Month%20Archive/2013-08.html>.

See also:

'Parishes: Tenbury', *A History of the County of Worcester: volume 4* (1924), pp. 362-371. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42911>.

TESTATOR'S EXECUTOR

For the testator's executor, Sir Richard Newport (d.1570/1), see his will, TNA PROB 11/53/456. Sir Richard Newport was the owner of a copy of Hall's *Chronicle*, formerly Loan 61 in the British Library, containing annotations thought to have been made by Shakespeare. See Keen, Alan and Roger Lubbock, *The Annotator*, (London: Putnam, 1954). The volume is now in the hands of a trustee, Lord Hesketh.

RM: T{estamentum} Georgij Vernon

Be it known unto all men to whom these presents shall come to be heard or read, I, George Vernon of Hodnet in the county of Salop, do make my last will and testament as hereafter ensueth:

First I bequeath my soul to Almighty God, and my body to be buried in the church of Hodnet;

And I give to every one of my servants at Hodnet, both men and women, one whole year's wages, and to my servant, Anne Pickeren, a cow;

And I give to Edward Corbet, my servant, all my wearing repanel, to be delivered by the discretion of my wife, except my cloth gown and my two gowns whereof the one is of damask, the other of taffeta;

And I will that my servant, William Overton, shall have twenty shillings yearly during his life going out of the tenement wherein he now dwelleth;

And I will that my servant, Humphrey Hoorde, shall have forty shillings paid to him in money;

And the rest of my goods, movable and unmovable, I give to Mary, my wife;

And as concerning a devise and legacy to be made of all my lands, tenements and hereditaments according to statutes in such case provided, I will that all my lands, tenements and hereditaments shall be divided into three parts, whereof I will that one part shall descend and come in possession to my son and heir according to the course of descent at the common law without diminution thereof, that the King and the Queen may have the custody and wardship thereof if any be holden in chief of them;

And one other part of the said three parts I will, devise and bequeath to Mary, my wife, by these presents in full recompense, satisfaction and demand of her jointure and dowry that she may demand or claim in my said lands, to have to her for term of her life, the remainder thereof to my son, Richard Vernon, and to the heirs of his body lawfully begotten, and for default of such heirs, the remainder thereof to my son, George Vernon, and to his right heirs forever;

And for the residue and rest of the said three parts, I will, devise and bequeath the same to my executors that they may take the issues and profits thereof for the term of ten years until they have received of the issues and profits thereof the sum of four hundred pounds for the preferment of my two daughters, that is to say, for the preferment of Dorothy, my daughter, two hundred pounds, and for the preferment of my daughter, Anne, two hundred pounds;

And after the said sum of four hundred pounds is by my executors so levied and received, then I will that the said third part shall be divided into two parts, the one part whereof I will and bequeath to my son, George Vernon, and to the heirs males of his body lawfully begotten, the remainder thereof to my right heirs forever;

And I will and bequeath the other part of the said two parts to my two sons, that is to say, to my son, John Vernon, and to my son, Edward Vernon, equally betwixt them for and during their two natural lives and the survivor of them, the remainder thereof to my right heirs forever;

And of this present testament and last will well and truly to be executed I do ordain and make my lawful executor Mary, my wife, Sir Andrew Corbet, knight, Richard Newport, and George Bromley, esquires, these being witnesses, my brother, Thomas Vernon, John Barker, gentleman, John Steinton, Humphrey Hoorde, Hewe [=Hugh?] Overton and George Hoorde. Dated at Hodnet the 21st day of December anno d{omi}ni a thousand five hundred fifty and four.

Probatum fuit suprascriptum testamentum coram decano et capitulo ecclesie Metropolitice Christi Cantuariensis sede Archie{pisco}pali iam vacante duodecimo die mensis Ianuarij Anno d{omi}ni Millesimo Quingentesimo Quinquagesimo Quarto Iuramento Edmundi Brudenhell Procuratoris Marie executricis relicte in huiusmodi testamento nominate ac approbatum et insinuatum Et commissa fuit administratio omnium bonorum Iurium et creditorum dicti defuncti prefate executrici de bene et fideliter administrando eadem ac de pleno Inventario secundo die post festum sancti Hillarij proxime futurum exhibendo Necnon de plano computo inde reddendo ad sancta dei euangelia Iurate

[=The above-written testament was proved before the Dean and Chapter of the Metropolitan Church of Christ of Canterbury, the Archiepiscopal seat now vacant, on the twelfth day of the month of January in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred fifty-fourth by the oath of Edmund Brudenell, proctor of Mary, executrix, [+and] relict, named in the same testament, and probated and entered, and administration was granted of all the goods, rights and credits of the said deceased to the forenamed executrix, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer the same, and to exhibit a full inventory on the second day after the feast of Saint Hillary next to come, and also to render a plain account thereof.]