

SUMMARY: The document below is the last will and testament, dated 17 July 1562 and proved 7 September 1562, of Sir Peter Meautys (buried 8 September 1562), whose grandfather, John Meautys, is named as a target of the rioters in the anonymous play, *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, and who was granted the manor of Bretts, which was later owned by Oxford from 1584 until his death.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

From the *ODNB*:

Mewtas [Mewtis], Sir Peter (d. 1562), soldier and courtier, was the son of Philip Mewtas and Elisabeth Foxley, and grandson of Frenchman John Mewtas, French secretary to Henry VII and Henry VIII between 1491 and 1522. . . . Mewtas was appointed gentleman of the privy chamber (1536), master of Bethlem Hospital (1536), comptroller of the mint (1537), overseer of artillery (1537), keeper of Wanstead Park (1540), governor of Guernsey (1545), and chancellor of the tenths of the household (by 1546). He married Jane Astley, a lady of the queen's privy chamber, in 1537; and, by 1552, another Jane, perhaps surnamed Angersley, about whom little is known. In 1539 he and the first Jane were granted lands at West Ham, Essex, to which was added the adjacent manor of Bretts in 1540. A child was baptized in February 1539, probably Henry, or perhaps Frances, later gentlewoman of the chamber to Elizabeth I and wife of Henry, Viscount Howard of Bindon. There were other sons, Thomas and Hercules, the youngest. Mewtas's widow and Frances were given a new lease of Bretts in 1565 and, in 1567, enjoyment of it for Jane's life; she died in 1577.

The testator was at one time in the service of Thomas Cromwell (d. 28 July 1540). See 'The Death of Thomas Cromwell':

<https://engelskhistoria.wordpress.com/2015/07/28/the-death-of-thomas-cromwell/>

Item I gyue and bequeth to Peter mewtes my seruauntt vj^{li} xiij^s iiij^d.

See also Gairdner, James, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1891), Vol. XII Part II, pp. 392 and 409 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/letterspapersfor122grea#page/392/mode/2up/>

Item, to remember Peter Mewtas.

For a grant to the testator of Pontefract Priory on 1 July 1542 see Gairdner, James and R.H. Brodie, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1900), Vol. XVII, p. 695 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/letterspapersfor17greaught#page/694/mode/2up>

For leases dated 13 January 1543 in which the testator is described as Gentleman of the Privy Chamber and Master of Bethlehem Hospital, see East Sussex Record Office, DAN/1572 and DAN/1573 at:

http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?_st=adv&_ep=DAN%2F1572&_dss=range&_ro=any

For a licence dated 25 August 1537 authorizing the testator and two other Gentlemen of the Privy Chamber to be ‘overseers of the science of artillery’, see Gairdner, James, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1891), Vol. XII Part II, p. 227 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/letterspapersfor122grea#page/226/mode/2up/>

MARRIAGES AND CHILDREN

The testator married firstly Jane Astley, and secondly another wife named Jane (d.1577). The testator had three sons and a daughter:

* **Henry Meautys** (born c.1526 – d.1588?) of West Ham, Essex, who married Anne Jermy, the daughter of Sir John Jermy of Brightwell, Suffolk. For Sir John Jermy, see his will, TNA PROB 11/44/243; the account of his funeral in Nichols, John Gough, ed., *The Diary of Henry Machyn*, (London: Camden Society, 1868), pp. 244-5, 383; and:

<http://www.jermy.org/valdar.html>

Sir John Jermy of Metfield and Brightwell was made a Knight of the Bath at the coronation of Anne Boleyn in 1533. He attended a reception of Lady Anna of Cleves in 1539. His son and heir Francis was High Sheriff of Suffolk 1586/7.

By Anne Jermy, Henry Meautys had three sons and a daughter:

-**Thomas Meautys** (d.1614), who married Elizabeth Coningsby (buried 19 August 1641), the daughter of Sir Henry Coningsby (d.1590) of North Mimms, Hertfordshire, by whom he was the father of five sons and three daughters, including Sir Thomas Meautys (c.1590-1649), Clerk of the Privy Council and ‘confidential friend and secretary’ to Sir Francis Bacon, another first cousin of Oxford’s wife, Anne Cecil. For Sir Henry Coningsby, see Collins, Arthur, *The Peerage of England*, (London: W. Innys and J. Richardson, 1756), Vol. IV, p. 312 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=I5lcAAAAcAAJ&pg=PA312>

For Sir Thomas Meautys (c.1590-1649), see the *ODNB*:

Meautys, Sir Thomas (c.1590–1649), government official, was the third son of Thomas Meautys (d. 1614) of West Ham, Essex, and St Julian's Hospital, Hertfordshire, and Elizabeth (d. 1641), daughter of Sir Henry Coningsby of North Mimms, Hertfordshire. The family was descended from John Meautas (or Meautis), a native of Calais and secretary of the French tongue to Henry VII. Thomas Meautys's great-great-grandfather, Philip, was a clerk of the privy council under Henry VII and Henry VIII. His great-grandfather, Sir Peter, gentleman of the privy chamber to Henry VIII, undertook delicate continental missions for the king and acquired the family's Essex estates, former monastic property.

It was Sir Thomas Meautys (c.1590-1649) who erected the monument to Bacon in St Michael's Church in St Alban's. See Bunten, Alice Chambers, *Sir Thomas Meautys, Secretary to Lord Bacon, and his Friends*, (London: Page & Thomas Ltd., 1918), pp. ii, 8-11 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/sirthomasmeautys00buntiala#page/ii/mode/2up>

-Henry Meautys (d.1615?), who married Mary Eyre, daughter of Edward Eyre of Farley, Surrey.

-Peter Meautys, who married Jane Colte, daughter of John Colte of Sussex [sic?]. Jane Colte may have been the daughter of John Colte (second son of Sir George Colte of Long Melford, Suffolk, by Elizabeth Mackwilliams, daughter of Henry Macwilliams of Stambourne, Essex) and Elizabeth Coningsby. See the pedigree of Colte in Howard, Joseph Jackson, ed., *The Visitation of Suffolk*, (Lowestoft: Samuel Tymms, 1868), Vol. II, p. 30 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationsuffo00howagoog#page/n42/mode/2up>

-Margaret Meautys, who married Sir Thomas Wilson (d.1629), translator of *Diana*, a source used by Shakespeare in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. From the ODNB:

*Wilson, Sir Thomas (d. 1629), record keeper and author . . . On 19 July 1593 at St Clement Danes, Westminster, Wilson married Margaret Meautys of Hertfordshire, a descendant of government officials of Henry VII and Henry VIII and aunt of Thomas Meautys (c.1590–1649), who was also in his youth a servant of the Cecils. In 1594 a recommendation from Burghley failed to secure for Wilson election as fellow of Trinity Hall. He then embarked on foreign travel, with or without his wife. While staying in Italy and Germany in 1596 he translated from the Spanish Gorge de Montemayor's *Diana*, a romance later used as a source by William Shakespeare for *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The original translation, dedicated to Shakespeare's friend the earl of Southampton, does not appear to be extant, but about 1617 Wilson made a copy which he dedicated to Fulke Greville, chancellor of the exchequer, and afterwards Lord Brooke. He remarks that Brooke's friend Sir Philip Sidney 'did much affect and imitate' *Diana*, and possibly Wilson took part in publishing some of Sidney's works, for on 12 April 1607 he asked Sir*

Thomas Lake to further his petition for the privilege of printing ‘certain books [by Sidney] wherein myself and my late dear friend Mr. Golding have taken pains’ (CSP dom., addenda, 1580–1625, 495). He is possibly also the Thomas Wilson whose name appears at the foot of the first page of the manuscript ‘Brooke on the state of Ireland’ addressed to the earl of Essex by ‘H. C.’ (possibly Henry Cuffe) in 1599, which has been attributed to Edmund Spenser.

* **Thomas Meautys**, of whom nothing further is known.

* **Hercules Meautys**, who married Philippa Cooke, daughter of Richard Cooke (1531 – 3 October 1579) of Gidea Hall, brother of Mildred (nee Cooke) Cecil (1526-1589), Lady Burghley. Philippa Cooke was thus a first cousin of Oxford’s wife, Anne Cecil. See Armytage, George J., ed., *Allegations for Marriage Licenses Issued by the Bishop of London 1520 to 1610*, (London, 1887), Vol. I, p. 91 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/allegationsforma01ches#page/180/mode/2up>

For the will of Richard Cooke see TNA PROB 11/61/533. For Hercules Meautys’ children by Philippa Cooke, see TNA PROB 11/73/110.

* **Frances Meautys**, a Maid of Honour to Queen Elizabeth, who married firstly, on 16 February 1566, Henry Howard (c.1540 - 16 January 1591), 2nd Viscount Bindon, and secondly Edmund Stansfield. For Frances Meautys, see the will of Thomas Howard, 1st Viscount Bindon, TNA PROB 11/65/112; and the will of her brother, Hercules Meautys, *supra*.

For the foregoing, see the pedigree of Meautys in *The Private Correspondence of The Lady Cornwallis 1613-1644*, (London: S. & J. Bentley, Wilson & Fley, 1842), pp. xxv-vi, xlvi-x at:

<https://archive.org/stream/privatecorrespon00baco#page/n57/mode/2up>

See also Bunten, *supra*, pp. ii, 9-11 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/sirthomasmeautys00buntiala#page/8/mode/2up>

For further details of the testator’s family, see the will of the testator’s grandfather, John Meautys, TNA PROB 11/21/4, and the will of the testator’s son, Hercules, *supra*.

For the will of the testator’s second wife and executor, Jane, see TNA PROB 11/59/248.

The *ODNB* entry for the testator describes the circumstances of the testator’s death:

Back in France in July 1562, on a somewhat ill-defined mission to the prince de Condé, he fell sick at Dieppe, dying there in August or September 1562, and was buried there in September.

The *ODNB* entry also provides background for two bequests in the will:

Mewtas was one of the English dignitaries greeting Anne of Cleves at Calais in 1540. It was probably about this time that he received from Duke Philip of Bavaria, who was of the same party and a suitor to the Princess Mary, that 'best diamonte' bequeathed in his will to Frances.

In February 1547 he conveyed to France notice of Edward VI's accession. At Rye on 6 July 1551 he was deputed to greet Jean d'Albon, Maréchal de St André, on the latter's embassy to invest Edward with the order of St Michel, apparently receiving from the maréchal a brooch and chain which Frances also came to inherit.

The *ODNB* also notes that 'Henry VIII willed 200 marks to Mewtas, as one deserving a token of special affection.'

OTHER PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE WILL

For the testator's overseer, Francis Russell (1526/7-1585), 2nd Earl of Bedford, see the *ODNB* entry. In 1566 Bedford married, as his second wife, Bridget Hussey (1525/6 - 12 January 1601), the daughter of John Hussey (executed 29 June 1537), 1st Baron Hussey of Sleaford, Lincolnshire, and widow of Sir Richard Morison (c.1510 – 20 March 1557) and of Henry Manners (1526-1563), 2nd Earl of Rutland. Bridget Hussey Morrison Manners Russell, Countess of Bedford, had the care of Oxford's daughters, Bridget Vere (1584-1631) and Susan Vere (1587-1629), after the death of their grandfather, Lord Burghley, and was the grandmother of Francis Norris (1579-1622), Earl of Berkshire, who married Oxford's daughter, Bridget de Vere. For her will, see TNA PROB 11/97/10.

LM: T{estamentum} Petri Meawtys

[f. 160v] In the name of God, Amen. I, Sir Peter Meautys of West Ham in the county of Essex, knight, being whole both of body and mind, thanks be unto Almighty God, do make this my last will and testament in manner and form following:

First and above all things I bequeath my soul unto the hands of Almighty God, [+trusting to be saved?] through the death and passion of my Saviour, Jesus Christ, only, my body to be buried in the next convenient burying-place where it shall please God to call me;

And all my temporal goods I firmly bequeath and give as hereafter followeth:

First I give unto my wife one basin and one ewer of silver, graved; item, 6 white silver pots with covers, graved; item, one bowl all gilt with a cover; item, 6 white spoons of

silver; item, one of the best salts with a cover, all gilt; item, I give unto my said wife half and moiety of all my goods whatsoever is unbequeathed;

Also I do give and bequeath to Frances Meautys, my daughter, first, all my jewels as well stone as pearl and gold which she hath presently in her keeping;

Also I do give unto her my brooch which the Marshall of Saint Andrew did give me, also the chain which he did also give unto me;

Also I do give unto her my best diamond which Duke Philip did give unto me;

Also I give unto her the best bedstead with all the furniture of crimson satin, [f. 161r] and such stuff as belongeth to the best chamber, both cushions, cupboard, chairs and all others to the same belonging;

Item, I do give unto her one basin and a ewer parcel gilt which was Sir George Lawson's; item, 12 silver dishes and 12 trenchers of silver, 3 standing cups with covers all gilt, 8 spoons with harts(?) set(?) parcel gilt, one chafing-dish of silver, 6 ale-pots of silver all gilt without covers, and thother moiety of all my goods, whatsoever they be, not bequeathed;

Item, I do give unto Hercules Meautys, my youngest son, 2 goblets of silver; also my harness and corslet and all my implements of war; also I do give unto him the bedstead in the gallery with all the furniture;

And as for my apparel, I do refer the ordering thereof to my executors;

Also I will that my said executors shall value and sell my great chain containing 177 links, and therewith redeem certain jewels of stone and gold lying in pawn for divers sums of money;

And all my goods unbequeathed, my debts paid, I give unto my executors, which executors I do appoint and ordain to be my wife, Jane Meautys, and my daughter, Frances Meautys, jointly together;

And I do ordain and appoint [-And I do ordain and appoint] the right honourable the Earl of Bedford the supervisor of this my last will, and I give unto him my gilt cup in a case of leather;

In witness whereof I have subscribed this with mine own hand the 17th day of July 1562 anno quarto Elizabeth{e} Regine in the presence of Peter Smyth and Thomas Johnson, gentlemen. Peter Meautys. Peter Smyth, Thomas Johnson.

Probatum fuit h{uius}mo{d}i Testamentum coram Mag{ist}ro Waltero Haddon [-Haddon] Legum Doctore Curie Prerogatiue Cant{uariensis} Comissario apud London septimo die mensis Septembris Anno Domini mill{es}imo quingentesimo sexagesimo secundo Iuramento Thome Johnson procurat{oris} D{omi}ne Jane Relicte et ffrauncisse filie dicti defuncti executricu{m} in h{uius}mo{d}i Testamento nominat{orum} Quibus comissa fuit administrac{i}o &c de bene &c Ac de pleno Inuentario Necnon de vero et plano computo Reddend{o} Ad sancta dei Evangelia Iurat{i}

[=The same testament was proved before Master Walter Haddon, Doctor of the Laws, Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, at London on the seventh day of the month of September in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred sixty-second by the oath of Thomas Johnson, proctor of Lady Jane, relict, and Frances, daughter of the said deceased, executrixes named in the same testament, to whom administration etc., sworn on the Holy Gospels to well etc., and [+to prepare] a full inventory, and also to render a true and plain account.]