

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 13 April 1563 and proved 18 May 1563, of Mary (nee Lacon) Acton Vernon (d. 27 April 1563), whose second husband, George Vernon (died c.1554) of Hodnet, Shropshire, was the grandfather of Elizabeth Vernon, wife of Henry Wriothesley (1573-1624), 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Southampton, to whom Shakespeare dedicated *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*.

### ***FAMILY BACKGROUND***

For the testatrix' family background, see the pedigree of Corbet in Burke, John, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland*, (London: Henry Colburn, 1836), Vol. III, pp. 189-90 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/genealogicalhera03burk#page/188/mode/2up>.

The testatrix 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), 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Ferrers of Chartley, slain at the Battle of Bosworth.

The testatrix' aunt, Elizabeth Corbet, sister of Sir Robert Corbet (c.1478 - 11 April 1513) and of the testatrix' mother, Mary 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 testatrix' aunt, Elizabeth Vernon (d. 29 March 1563), see Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2011, 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.

See also the pedigree of Corbet in Grazebrook, George, and John Paul Rylands, eds., *The Visitation of Shropshire Taken in the Year 1623, Part I*, Vol. XXVIII, (London: Harleian Society, 1889), p. 136 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationshrop02britgoog#page/n190/mode/2up>.

See also the pedigree of Lacon in Grazebrook, George, and John Paul Rylands, eds., *The Visitation of Shropshire Taken in the Year 1623, Part II*, Vol. XXIX, (London: Harleian Society, 1889), p. 307 at:

[https://archive.org/stream/TheVisitationOfShropshireV.29/VisitationshrophshireTaken1623\\_treswellVol.28P2#page/n29/mode/2up](https://archive.org/stream/TheVisitationOfShropshireV.29/VisitationshrophshireTaken1623_treswellVol.28P2#page/n29/mode/2up).

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**FIRST MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN**

The testatrix married firstly Thomas Acton (d. 2 January 1547), esquire, of Sutton, Worcestershire, by whom she had two sons, Lancelot and Gabriel, 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.

For the children of the testatrix' daughter, Joyce (nee Acton) and Sir Thomas Lucy, see the *ODNB* article on Sir Thomas Lucy:

*Sir Thomas and Joyce had only two children, Anne and Thomas. Anne married Edward Aston of Tixhall, in Staffordshire, in 1580. . . . Anne died in 1596 and four of her children came to live at Charlecote.*

*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.*

**SECOND MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN**

The testatrix married secondly, George Vernon (died c.1554) of Hodnet, Shropshire, who had two sons by his first marriage to Elizabeth Pigott: Richard Vernon (d.1560?), who died young and without issue, and John Vernon (d.1591).

By George Vernon the testatrix had two sons, George Vernon (d.1604) and Edward Vernon (d.1611), and two daughters, Dorothy Vernon (d.1599) and Anne Vernon (d.1570). In the will below the testatrix directs that the wardship of her stepson, John Vernon (d.1591), be sold to provide marriage portions for her two daughters by George Vernon, Dorothy and Anne.

See Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 testatrix' son); the will of Sir Thomas Lacon (d.1536), TNA PROB 11/25/371; the *ODNB* entry for Sir Thomas Lucy (d. 7 July 1600) of Charlecote; the will of the testatrix' second husband, George Vernon (died c.1554), TNA PROB 11/37/222; the will of the testatrix' son, George Vernon (d.1604), TNA PROB 11/104/161; the will of the testatrix' son, Edward Vernon (d.1616), TNA PROB 11/128/313; the will of the testatrix' daughter, Anne Vernon (d.1570), TNA PROB 11/52/492; the will of the testatrix' daughter, Dorothy

Vernon (d.1599), TNA PROB 11/93/301; and the monument to Thomas Acton and the testatrix at Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire, at:

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

Although the monument at Tenbury states that the testatrix died in 1564, her will is dated 13 April 1563 and was proved on 18 May of that year.

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>.

### ***TESTATRIX' EXECUTOR***

The testatrix' executor, William Leighton, esquire, was likely the testatrix' nephew, William Leighton (d.1607), Chief Justice of North Wales, for whose will see TNA PROB 11/111/525. William Leighton (d.1607) was the son of Sir William Leighton (d.1520), first husband of the testatrix' sister, Dorothy Lacon, and was a younger brother of Sir Thomas Leighton (1443-1519) of Wattlesborough, Shropshire, second husband of the testatrix' grandmother, Elizabeth Devereux (d.1516). See the pedigree of Leighton in Botfield, Beriah, *Stemmata Botevilliana*, (Westminster: J.B. Nichols and Son, 1858), pp. 184, 186 at:

[http://books.google.ca/books?id=mBZYAAAACAAJ&pg=PA184&lpg=PA184&dq=%22William+Leighton%22+%22Chief+Justice%22&source=bl&ots=P6Ta0o9MZ6&sig=rvJikQve6eYgqMhSkHgD6Y5VuZk&hl=en&sa=X&ei=jxnZU\\_-dHM\\_joASvr4KYCA&ved=0CCMQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=%22William%20Leighton%22%20%22Chief%20Justice%22&f=false](http://books.google.ca/books?id=mBZYAAAACAAJ&pg=PA184&lpg=PA184&dq=%22William+Leighton%22+%22Chief+Justice%22&source=bl&ots=P6Ta0o9MZ6&sig=rvJikQve6eYgqMhSkHgD6Y5VuZk&hl=en&sa=X&ei=jxnZU_-dHM_joASvr4KYCA&ved=0CCMQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=%22William%20Leighton%22%20%22Chief%20Justice%22&f=false).

LM: T{estamentum} Marie Vernon

In the name of God, Amen. The 13<sup>th</sup> day of April in the year of Our Lord God 1563, I, Mary Vernon of Sutton in the county of Worcester, widow, being in whole and perfect memory, do make my last will and testament in manner and form following:

First I bequeath my soul unto Almighty God and all the blessed company of heaven, trusting through the merits of Christ's passion I shall be partaker of everlasting blessedness prepared for all Christian people;

Item, I will that my body be buried in the church chancel of Tenbury by my late husband, Thomas Acton;

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

Item, I will that my executor do sell the wardship of my son-in-law [=stepson], John Vernon, not above the sum of six hundred marks, and of that money which shall come for his wardship and of other of my goods and chattels I will, bequeath and devise to my daughter[s], Dorothy Vernon and Anne Vernon, nine hundred marks equally between them to be divided, of which sum £400 pounds is due to them of the bequests of their father;

And the said nine hundred marks to be paid within one year next after my decease by my son, George Vernon, who I will shall only administer my goods and chattels, unto the hands of my son-in-law, Thomas Lucy, and Joyce Lucy, my daughter, to the use, behoof and preferment of my said 2 daughters' marriages, whom I will shall have the rule, custody and government as well of my said daughters as of their said 900 marks money till it shall fortune either of them to be married or else to be of th' age of 21 years, and in the meantime I will that my said son and daughter Lucy (illegible) to use and set the said 900 marks to the best profit and advantage of my said 2 daughters;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my son-in-law [=stepson], John Vernon, his father's signet of gold and one silver salt, 6 silver spoons;

Item, I give and bequeath to my son, George Vernon, one chain of gold which was his father's;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my son, Edward Vernon, one lesser chain of gold;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my said daughter, Dorothy Vernon, a book of gold, a jewel of gold which is called a gargament, a purse of fine cheverel leather, with certain pieces of divers kinds of gold amounting to the sum of 20 marks, my second bracelet of gold, and my best frontlet of white satin, and the one half of all my apparel, the same to be divided equally betwixt them by my executors and overseers;

Item, I give and bequeath to Anne Vernon, my daughter, a tablet of gold, a purse of tawny velvet with a portague and certain pieces of gold amounting to the sum of 20 marks, my best bracelet of gold and my best billiment of gold, and thone half of all my apparel to be divided as aforesaid by my executors and overseers over and above the sums to them before bequeathed;

Item, I give and bequeath to my son-in-law, Thomas Lucy, my best white ambling stone colt;

Item, I give and bequeath to my daughter Lucy one gold ring wherewith her father and I were married together, and a portague of gold;

Item, I give and bequeath to my said son, George Vernon, a little casket with all the gold in it towards the finding of him to his learning;

Item, I give and bequeath to Edward Vernon, my son, 20 angels of gold towards the finding him to his learning;

Item, I give and bequeath to George Horde five marks in money to be paid by my executors;

Item, I give and bequeath unto Berye(?), my servant, a heifer of 3 years of age;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my said son, George Vernon, my lease which I have of the parsonage of Rochford during the years therein contained;

Item, I will that my executors shall bestow on me at my burial ten pounds in money to poor people, and six black gowns to six poor folks;

Item, I will that my executors shall give myme [sic] black coats at my burial;

Item, I give and bequeath to Margaret Phillips a black gown towards her pains;

Item, I will and desire my son Lucy and my daughter Lucy to be good to my said children upon my blessing, and to suffer John Rowberye, my servant, to enjoy his lease which I made him for 21 years of the terrell {es} without any suit or trouble;

All the residue of my goods and chattels unbequeathed, as well real as personal, my funerals and debts discharged, I give and bequeath the same to my said sons, George Vernon and Edward Vernon, equally to be divided betwixt them by my executors and overseers;

And I earnestly will and require my said executors and overseers to see that my said children be brought up in learning and in the fear of God as my whole trust lieth in them;

Provided always that if it chance any of my said children to die before they shall happen to be married or come to the age of 21 years, then I will that the legacies and bequests to any of them before bequeathed shall remain and come to the rest of them living (my daughter, Joyce Lucy, only excepted), and to be equally divided among them by my executors and overseers;

And of this my present will and testament I ordain and make William Leighton, esquire, and George Vernon, my son, my executors, and further I will and appoint that my said son, George Vernon, only shall have the administration and custody of my goods and chattels, and he to distribute the same according to this my said will and testament, and that my other executor shall collect and gather up my debts;

And of this my last will and testament I make overseers Thomas Baskervild [=Baskerville], esquire, John Barker, George Horde and Henry Jenkins, gentlemen, to see this my last will in all points performed,;

And I give and bequeath to every of my said executors and overseers 40s apiece for their pains to ride and go to see this my last will performed etc., these being witnesses: Thomas Lucy, esquire, Walter Philpott, John Rowbery, Henry Jenk{es}, Margaret Phelipps and Joyce Leighton.

Probatum fuit h{uius}mo{d}i Testamentum coram Mag{ist}ro Waltero Haddon Legum Doctore Curie Prerogatiue Cant{uariensis} Comissario apud London Decimo octauo Die Mensis Maij Anno domini Mill{es}imo Quingentesimo Sexagesimo terc{i}o Iuramento Georgij Vernon executoris in h{uius}mo{d}i testamento nominat{i} Cui comissa fuit administrac{i}o &c de bene &c Ac de pleno In{uenta}rio Necnon de vero et plano computo Reddend{o} Iurat{i} Reservata pot{es}tate Will{el}mo Leighton Ar{mige}ro executori etiam cu{m} venerit &c

[=The same testament was proved before Master Walter Haddon, Doctor of the Laws, Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, at London on the eighteenth day of the month of May in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred sixty-third by the oath of George Vernon, executor named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted etc., sworn to well etc., and to render a full inventory and also a true and plain account, with power reserved to William Leighton, esquire, also executor, when he shall have come etc.]