

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 26 August 1565 and proved 22 January 1567, of Reginald Corbet (born c.1510, d. 19 November 1566), third son of Sir Robert Corbet (b. about 1477, d. 11 April 1513), and Elizabeth Vernon (d. 29 March 1563), the daughter of Sir Henry Vernon (d.1511) of Haddon.

The testator's eldest brother, Roger Corbet (d.1538/9), had been a ward of John de Vere (1442-1513), 13th Earl of Oxford (see TNA C 1/1485/58). After the 13th Earl's death, the wardship was sold by his executors to Andrew (1467-1543), 1st Lord Windsor, who married his ward to his daughter, Anne Windsor (d.1550/1). Anne Windsor's brother, George Windsor (d. before 1520), was the first husband of Ursula de Vere (d.1558), sister and co-heir of John de Vere (1499-1527), 14th Earl of Oxford. Edward (1532?-1575), 3rd Lord Windsor, married Oxford's half-sister, Katherine de Vere (1538-1600). Moreover the testator's sister, Anne or Joan Corbet, married Thomas Newport (d.1548x51), the father of Sir Richard Newport (d.1570/1), the owner of a copy of Hall's *Chronicle* containing annotations thought to have been made by Shakespeare. There were thus strong family connections in this generation between the Newports (owners of the annotated copy of Hall's *Chronicle*), the Corbets, the Windsors, and the de Veres.

The testator had another older brother, Richard Corbet (d.1564x66), and four sisters: Jane, who married Thomas Lee (d.1561x3) of Langley, the son and heir of Fulke Lee and Alice, the daughter of Sir Richard Cornwall of Berrington, Herefordshire; Joan or Anne, who married Thomas Newport (d.1548x51), as noted above; Mary, who married Thomas Powell of Oswestry; and Dorothy, who married Sir Richard Mainwaring (b. about 1499, d. 30 September 1558) of Ightfield, Shropshire.

For the will of the testator's father, Sir Robert Corbet (b. about 1477, d. 11 April 1513), see TNA PROB 11/17, ff. 214-5. For the will of the testator's elder brother, Roger Corbet (d.1538/9), see TNA PROB 11/27, f. 194. For the will of the testator's sister-in-law, Anne (nee Windsor) Corbet (d.1550/1), see TNA PROB 11/34, ff. 241-2. For the will of the testator's brother, Richard Corbet (d.1564x66), see TNA PROB 11/48, f. 408. For the will of the testator's brother-in-law, Thomas Lee (d.1561x3), in which the testator is named as a trustee, see TNA PROB 11/46, ff. 23-4. For the wills of the testator's brother-in-law, Thomas Newport (d.1548x51), and nephew, Sir Richard Newport (d.1570/1), owner of the annotated copy of Hall's *Chronicle*, see TNA PROB 11/34, f. 112 and TNA PROB 11/53, f. 290.

The testator married Alice Gratewood (d.1603), the daughter of John Gratewood (d. 8 August 1570) and Jane Hill, whose brother, Sir Rowland Hill (c.1495-1561), born in Hodnet, was a prominent member of the Mercers' Company and the first protestant Lord Mayor of London. For the will of Sir Rowland Hill (c.1495-1561), in which he leaves bequests to his brother-in-law, John Gratewood, his niece, Alice (nee Gratewood) Corbet (d.1603), and her brother William Gratewood (d. circa 1583) of Adderley, Shropshire, see TNA PROB 11/44, ff. 259-60.

By his wife, Alice (nee Gratewood) Corbet (d.1603), the testator had six sons, Andrew, Robert, Roland, Francis, Richard (d.1601?) and Peter, of whom only the latter two left heirs, and five daughters, Elizabeth, Maria, Anne, Margaret and Jane.

The testator's eldest surviving son and heir, Richard Corbet (d.1601?) married Anne Bromley, the daughter of Sir Thomas Bromley (c.1530-1587), one of the trustees in Oxford's indenture of 30 January 1575 (see ERO D/DRg2/25).

The testator's daughter, Elizabeth Corbet, unmarried at the time the testator made his will, became the wife of Robert Arden (d.1635), the son of Edward Arden (1533-1583) of Park Hall and his wife, Mary Throckmorton (d.1603), the daughter of Sir Robert Throckmorton (b. circa 1510, d. 12 February 1581) of Coughton and his second wife, Elizabeth (nee Hussey) Hungerford Throckmorton (d. 23 January 1554). Sir Robert Throckmorton (b. circa 1510, d. 12 February 1581) was the uncle of Job Throckmorton (1545-1601) who was involved in the publication of the Marprelate tracts. Edward Arden (1533-1583) of Park Hall was the son of William Arden (d.1545), said to have been a second cousin of Mary Arden, the mother of Shaksper of Stratford.

The testator's daughter, Margaret Corbet, married Sir Humphrey Lee (d.1632) of Langley, son and heir of Richard Lee (d.1590/1), and grandson of the testator's brother-in-law, Thomas Lee (d.1561x3) of Langley. In the will below the testator mentions his 'nephew Lee', i.e., Richard Lee (d.1590/1), the son of the testator's sister, Jane Corbet, and her husband, Thomas Lee (d.1561x3) of Langley. For the will of Sir Richard Lee (d.1590/1), see TNA PROB 11/77, ff. 379/80.

The testator's brother-in-law, William Gratewood (d. circa 1583), referred to in the will below as 'my brother Gratewood', married Mary Newport, the daughter of Sir Richard Newport (d.1570/1), owner of the annotated copy of Hall's *Chronicle* mentioned above. After the death of William Gratewood (d. circa 1583), Mary Newport married Ralph Sneyd (b. circa 1527, d. 15 August 1620), who was the maternal uncle of Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham (d.1612), and acted as a trustee in several documents entered into in connection with Oxford's marriage to Elizabeth Trentham (d.1612). See the will of Elizabeth Trentham, TNA PROB 11/121, ff. 74-5. Mary Newport's second marriage perhaps came about because of earlier connections between the Corbet and Trentham families. The testator's aunt, Elizabeth Corbet, the sister of the testator's father, Sir Robert Corbet (b. about 1477, d. 11 April 1513), was the wife of Thomas Trentham (d.1518/9) of Shrewsbury. Thomas Trentham (d.1518/9) and his wife Elizabeth Corbet were the great-grandparents of Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham (d.1612). For the will of Thomas Trentham (d.1518/9), see TNA PROB 11/19, f. 196.

The testator appoints his brother-in-law, Thomas Powell, the wife of his sister, Mary Corbet, and his nephew, Sir Andrew Corbet (d.1578), the son and heir of his elder brother, Roger Corbet (d.1538/9), as overseers of his will. Sir Andrew Corbet's son and heir, Robert Corbet (d.1583), also mentioned in the will, was a close friend of Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) and is perhaps the 'Mr Corbeck' mentioned in Oxford's letter to Lord Burghley written from Paris on 17/18 March 1575 (see Cecil Papers 8/24).

For the foregoing see Richardson, Douglas, *Plantagenet Ancestry* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, pp. 473-4, 484. See also Corbet, Augusta Elizabeth, *The Family of Corbet*, Vol. II (London: St. Catherine's Press, n.d.), pp. 253,258, 263-97, 350; the pedigree of Corbet in Burke, John, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners*, Vol. III (London: Henry Colburn, 1838), pp. 189-90; the pedigree of Lee in Grazebrook, George, ed., *The Visitation of Shropshire*, Part II (London: Harleian Society, 1889), pp. 314-20; the pedigree of Lee in *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, Vol. V, (Shrewsbury: Adnitt and Naunton, 1882), pp. 374-9; French, George Russell, *Shakspeareana Genealogica* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1869), p. 462; Lee, John Robinson, *A History of Market Drayton*, pp. 75-6; the pedigrees in Keen, Alan, *The Annotator: The Pursuit of an Elizabethan Reader of Halle's Chronicle* (London: Putnam, 1954); and the entries in the online edition of *The Dictionary of National Biography* for Reynald Corbet (born c.1510, d. 19 November 1566); Sir John Corbet (bap. 1594, d. 1662), 1st Baronet Corbet; Sir Rowland Hill (c.1495-1561); Sir Thomas Bromley (c.1530-1587); and Edward Arden (1533-1583) of Park Hall, all of which are available online.

LM: Testamentum Reginaldi Corbett

In dei nomine Amen. I, Reginald Corbet, one of the Queen's Justices of her pleas before her Highness to be holden, and the third son of Sir Robert Corbet, knight, of Moreton Corbet within the county of Salop, make my testament concerning my goods in manner and form following:

First, in charity I forgive all men that have offended me, and secondly I ask all them forgiveness whom I have offended, and thirdly and chiefly, with all my might, with all my heart and with all my soul I ask the Almighty God forgiveness of all my offences and the punishment that I have deserved for the same, faithfully believing that by the death and passion, and by thy promise, I have remission of all my sins and shall inherit the kingdom of heaven;

First, I give unto Sir Andrew Corbet, knight, and to all his brethren and sisters that be the children of my old master, my brother, Roger Corbet, the sum of one hundred marks, to be delivered as [+to] Sir Andrew should seem meet by his discretion;

Item, I give unto Sir Andrew Corbet, after he hath taken his two heriots' forfeit, my best gelding remaining, and unto my cousin, Robert Corbet, his eldest son, I give the best gelding he can choose, his father being served, of mine remaining, my cross-bow, and a cup of silver being parcel-gilt with the cover, and I desire Sir Andrew Corbet and his brethren, and my said cousin, Robert, to be good to my wife;

Item, I forgive my brother Gratewood the fourteen pounds which he borrowed of me, and the best gelding he can chose, the former legacies performed;

Item, I give to every of my servants receiving wages one year's wages with one year's entertainment with my wife until they be otherwise provided, and to them that receive no wages I give to every of them twenty shillings apiece with like entertainment for one year as is before expressed;

Item, I give to my brother Powell and to my sister, his wife, a goblet called Fountain, double-gilt, with a cover to it;

And to my nephew Lee a jug of stone garnished with silver gilt, the best of them he can choose, with letters in the top of the cover;

Item, I will that there shall be bestowed amongst my poor tenants in Stoke and Drayton twenty marks, with such other dole(?), preparation and order of my burial as my executors shall think most convenient, and I would wish it might please God I might be buried in Stoke church;

Item, the residue of all my goods, plate, money, cattle(?), jewels not in this former testament given nor hereafter to be given, I wholly give to my singular good wife, Alice Corbet, whom I ordain and make my sole executrix, and overseers Sir Andrew Corbet and my brother Thomas Powell, provided nevertheless and my will is that if hereafter my said wife fortune to marry, my daughter Elizabeth then living unmarried, that then I give and bequeath unto my said daughter, Elizabeth, in preferment of her marriage the sum of four hundred pounds, so that she be married by the advice of my said wife, Sir Andrew Corbet, my brother Powell, and my brother Gratewood, or the most part of them;

And as concerning any devise to be made of my lands, I can make none, for my wife is joint-purchaser with me, and so that I remit wholly to her and to her provision for our children after such plat and devise as I have drawn, and remaineth in my coffer;

And thus our Lord God have mercy on my soul. Written at Stoke the twenty and sixth day of August a thousand five hundred threescore and five, anno regni Regine Elizabethhe octauo, all with mine own hand, and thereunto I have subscribed my name and set to my seal.

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum coram Magistro Waltero Haddon Legum doctore Curie Prerogatiue Cantuariensis Commissario apud London xxijo die mensis Ianuarij Anno domini secundum cursum et computacionem Ecclesie Anglicane Millesimo vCmo Sexagesimo sexto Iuramento Thome Upton Notarij publici procuratoris Alicie Relicte et Executricis in testamento huiusmodi nominate Cui commissa fuit Administratio omnium et singulorum bonorum &c de bene Ad sancta die Evangelia Iurate

[=The above-written testament was proved before Master Walter Haddon, Doctor of the Laws, Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, at London on the 22nd day of

the month of January in the year of the Lord according to the course and reckoning of the English Church the thousand five hundred sixty-sixth by the oath of Thomas Upton, notary public, proctor of Alice, relict and executrix appointed in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of all and singular the goods etc., sworn on the Holy Gospels to well.]