

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Count of Canterbury copy of the last will and testament, dated December 1568 and proved 31 January 1569, of Oxford's first cousin, John Sheffield (c.1538–1568), 2nd Baron Sheffield.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

The testator was the son of Edmund Sheffield (1521-1549), 1st Baron Sheffield, and Anne de Vere (d.1572), sister of John de Vere (1516-1562), 16th Earl of Oxford. For the will of the 1st Baron Sheffield, see TNA PROB 11/33/132.

MARRIAGE AND ISSUE

The testator's wife, who is not mentioned in the will, was Douglas Howard (1542/3–1608), the daughter of William Howard (c.1510-1573), 1st Baron Howard of Effingham. Shortly after the testator's death on 10 December 1568, Douglas Sheffield embarked on a liaison with the Queen's favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. She later claimed that a secret marriage occurred about 1571, and, although the evidence for this union is inconclusive, she did bear Leicester a son. The anonymous author of *Leicester's Commonwealth* (1584), charges Leicester with the murder of the testator:

Long after this, [Leicester] fell in love with the Lady Sheffield, whom I signified before, & then also had he the same fortune to have her husband die quickly with an extreme rheum in his head (as it was given out), but as other say of an artificial catarrh that stopped his breath.

By Douglas Howard, the testator had a son and daughter:

* **Edmund Sheffield** (1565-1646), 1st Earl of Mulgrave, who married Ursula Tyrwhitt of Kettleby, Lincolnshire.

* **Elizabeth Sheffield** (d.1600), who married, as his second wife, Thomas Butler (1531-1614), 10th Earl of Ormond and 3rd Earl of Ossory. Ormond is mentioned in connection with the Howards and Oxford in TNA SP 12/154/13, ff. 23-4.

OTHER PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE WILL

The testator's trustee, Thomas Howard (1537-1572), 4th Duke of Norfolk, was the son of the 16th Earl of Oxford's sister, Frances de Vere (d.1577), and was thus both the testator's first cousin and Oxford's first cousin as well. On the same day on which he made his own will, the testator's father, Edmund Sheffield, 1st Baron Sheffield, had conveyed his estates in Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire, and Derbyshire to trustees headed by Norfolk's

father, Henry Howard (1516/7-1547), Earl of Surrey (see the *ODNB* entry). For the will of Edmund Sheffield, 1st Baron Sheffield, see TNA PROB 11/33/132.

The testator's trustee, Sir William Cecil (1520/1-1598), later Lord Burghley, was Oxford's future father-in-law.

The testator's trustee, Sir John Zouche, may have been Sir John Zouche (1524-1586) of Codnor, who married Eleanor Whalley in 1549, by whom he had a son, Sir John Zouche (1550-1611), who on 14 February 1584 married Mary Berkeley (b. 1557), the daughter of Henry (1534-1613), Lord Berkeley, and his first wife, Katherine (nee Howard) Berkeley (1537-1596), who was Norfolk's sister and Oxford's first cousin. See:

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~hwbradley/aqwg3029.htm#74739>

For the will of Sir John Zouche (1524-1586) of Codnor, see TNA PROB 11/69/299.

The testator's trustee, Denzel Holles (c.1538-1590), was the husband of the testator's sister and Oxford's first cousin, Eleanor (nee Sheffield) Holles. For the will of Denzel Holles, see TNA PROB 11/75/300.

RM: T{estamentum} Ioh{ann}is Sheffeld militis Domini Sheffelde

In the name of God, Amen. The (blank) day of December in the year of Our Lord God 1500 threescore and eight, I, Sir John Sheffield, knight, Lord Sheffield, sick of body but, thanks be to God, of good and perfect remembrance, knowing how certain it is every man shall die and yet how uncertain the time of death is, minding as well for th' advancement and preferment of my children and payment of my debts as for other good considerations to make my last will and testament as well touching the disposition of all my manors, lands, tenements and hereditaments as of all my leases for years, plate, household stuff, goods and chattels, do declare this my last will and testament in manner and form following:

First I will and bequeath unto my very good Lord the Duke of Norfolk his Grace, my trusty friends, Sir William Cecil, knight, Principal Secretary to the Queen's Majesty, Sir John Zouche, knight, John Coupledyke and Denzel Holles, esquires, all that my park called Melwood Park in the Isle of Axholme in the county of Lincoln of the yearly rent of £16, and all those lands, meadows, pastures and hereditaments which I purchased of my Lord Clinton, High Admiral of England, in the said Isle of Axholme called the demesnes of the Charterhouse of the yearly value of £22, and all other my purchased lands and tenements in Flixborough in the said county of Lincoln, and my manor of Woodbury in the counties of Cambridge and Huntingdon, and all my lands, tenements and hereditaments in the said counties of Cambridge and Huntingdon and in the county of Stafford, and all other manors, lands, tenements and hereditaments whatsoever whereof I

am seised in fee simple in the said county of Lincoln or elsewhere in the realm of England;

And whereas I am seised in fee simple of the third part of the manors of Coningsby, Flixborough, Butterwick and Crosby in the county of Lincoln, and of the manor of Cave in the county of York, and of divers other lands, tenements and hereditaments in the said county of Lincoln and elsewhere, I do devise and bequeath the said third part of all the said premises to the said Duke of Norfolk, Sir John Zouche and other my said friends, to have and to hold all the said manors, lands, tenements and hereditaments to the Duke of Norfolk, Sir William Cecil, Sir John Zouche, John Copledike and Denzel Holles, esquires, from and immediately after my decease for and during the term of eighteen years then next following fully to be complete and ended to and for the performance of this my last will and testament, and I will that the said Duke of Norfolk and other my said friends shall with the rents, issues and profits thereof and of my leases for years, goods and chattels not bequeathed by this my last will & testament content and pay my debts I owe to any person or persons whatsoever;

And after my debts paid, I will they shall content and pay to my well-beloved daughter, Elizabeth Sheffield, the sum of one thousand marks at the day of her marriage or at such time as she shall accomplish the age of eighteen years, whether shall first happen, and that she shall be decently brought up according to her calling in the meantime of the rents, issues and profits of the said premises devised to my said friends, and to my sister, Frances Sheffield, the sum of one thousand marks in recompense of such portions as I do owe her by the devise of my late father upon condition she, the said Frances, nor any other for her or in her name by her means shall commence any suit against my executors or my said friends for anything to her bequeathed by my said late father;

Also I will my Lord his Grace the Duke of Norfolk and Sir John Zouche shall give to every of these persons hereafter named annual rentcharges or sums of money in consideration of their service by their discretions, viz., Thomas Sheffield, Robert Sheffield of Epworth, Robert Sheffield, Thomas Munson, John Bannister, Thomas Spurre, Richard Smyth, Robert Doddes, William Benson, Robert Cleyton, Richard Nevell, Sampson Allyn, John Pount, John Wallis, Robert Harte, William Robinson, Henry Liggins, John Rippley, Thomas Newlands, Grisby [sic?], Robert Ireland, Thomas Smyth, Robert Hall, William Grisby, Peter horse-keeper, Thomas Allyn, Lancelot Morley, Augustine Houghton, and I will that Thomas Spurre & William Benson shall have their several farms wherein they dwell until my son come to his full age, paying th' old and accustomed rent, and I will that John Bannister shall have the money which I owe unto him paid with as much speed as may be;

The residue of the rents, issues and profits of the said premises before not devised, and also my leases, plate, goods and chattels not bequeathed, I give and bequeath unto the said Edmund, my son, to be delivered and paid unto him at such time as he shall accomplish his age of 21 years, and in the meantime I will that the said Lord's Grace and Sir John Zouche have th' order, custody and disposition thereof;

And I do permit and suffer to descend to Edmund Sheffield, my son and heir, two parts of my said manors of Coningsby, Flixborough, Butterwick, Crosby and Cave, and two parts of the manors of Momby, Bratoft, Borough, Winthrop [=Winthorpe?], Ingoldmells, Wrangle, Sibsey, Halton, Skegness, Sutton and Irby in the said county of Lincoln which was entailed by my late father, Lord Sheffield, by his last will and testament, and all other my lands and tenements which be entailed to me in the county of Lincoln or elsewhere, to th' intent the Queen's Highness might have the wardship thereof during his minority according to the laws of this realm, which is much more than a third part of all my manors, lands, tenements and hereditaments;

Item, I do constitute and make the said Duke of Norfolk his Grace, Edmund Sheffield, my son, and the said Sir John Zouche executors of this my last will and testament, praying them to take pains in execution thereof as my trust is in them;

And I do give to the said Duke for a remembrance my great horse called Grey Sheffield, my best gelding, and a cast of my best hawks, and to Mr Secretary my basin and ewer all gilt, and to Sir John Zouche, Mr Copley and Mr Holles three of my best geldings, viz, every one of them a gelding. Witnesses, Sir John Parrat [=Perrot?], Mr Sergeant Wray, Thomas Spure, Sampson Alleyne, William Benson, with others.

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum coram Mag^{ist}ro Waltero Haddon Legum doctore Curie prerogative Cantuariensis commissario apud London ultimo die Ianuarij Anno domini Millesimo Quingentesimo Sexagesimo octavo Iuramento magistr^{is}ri Xpoferi Smyth notarij publici procurator^{is} prenobilis principis Domini Thome Ducis Norff^e et Ioh^{ann}is Zouche Militis executor^{um} in testamento huiusmodi nominat^{orum} Quibus commissarius fuit administrac^{io} omnium et singulorum bonorum &c De bene &c Ad sancta dei Evangelia Iuratⁱ Reser^uata potestate &c Edmundo Sheffelde filio in minori etate sua existenti cum venerit &c admissur^o

[=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 last day of January in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred sixty-eighth by the oath of Master Christopher Smith, notary public, proctor of the right honourable prince, Lord Thomas, Duke of Norfolk, and John Zouche, knight, executors named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of all and singular the goods, etc., sworn on the Holy Gospels to well etc., with power reserved etc. to Edmund Sheffield, the son, being in his minority, when he shall have come etc. to be admitted.]