

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 9 May 1581 and proved 17 May 1581, of John Freke of Iwerne Courtney in Dorset, co-purchaser, with Matthew Bragge, of Oxford's manor of Thorncombe. John de Vere (1516-1562), 16th Earl of Oxford, and his first wife, Dorothy (nee Neville) had been granted the manor of Thorncombe by King Henry VIII on 29 April 1544 in exchange for Dovercourt, Harwich and other manors (see C 66/740, m. 5). For the licence granted on 2 January 1577 for Oxford to alienate the manor of Thorncombe to John Freke and Matthew Bragge, see TNA C 66/1153, m. 25. For lawsuits concerning Oxford's former manor of Thorncombe mentioning the testator and his co-purchaser, Matthew Bragge, see TNA C 2/Eliz/B25/34 and TNA C 2/Eliz/C19/36. The testator's executor, and the principal beneficiary of his will, was his brother, Robert Freke (d.1592?), Teller of the Exchequer. Nothing further is known of the testator's wife, Jane. The testator's co-purchaser, Matthew Bragge, is one of the witnesses to the will below.

An indication of the family's position is given in this note on Robert Freke's son, Sir Thomas Freke (1563-1633) in Hays, Rosalind Conklin, Sally L. Joyce and Evelyn S. Newlyn, *Records of Early English Drama: Dorset, Cornwall* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999, p. 326, (available online):

Thomas Freke (1563-1633) was the son of Robert Freke, teller of the Exchequer and surveyor of Dorset. Robert had married a Blandford girl and set himself up as a country gentleman at Iwerne Courtney. [Thomas] Freke was MP for Dorchester in 1584 and for Dorset in 1604 and 1626 and deputy lieutenant of the county for about thirty years; he and his son owned the largest of the Dorset privateering ships and he lent money to both Sir Walter Raleigh and Lord Burleigh. He was knighted at the coronation of James I.

For a pedigree of the testator's family, see *A Pedigree, or Genealogy, of the family of the Freke's* (available online).

LM: Testamentum Iohannis ffreke

In the name of God, amen. I, John Freke of Iwerne Courtney in the county of Dorset, being sick in body but of sound and perfect remembrance (thanks be given unto Almighty God), do make and ordain this my last will and testament in manner and form following, that is to say:

First, I give and bequeath my soul unto Almighty God, and my body to be buried in the church or chancel of Iwerne Courtney aforesaid;

Item, I give and devise unto Jane, my wife, all my land in Farringdon during her life;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my said wife twelve of my best kine, twenty of my best ewe sheep, my best young grey gelding, all which premises I give and bequeath unto my

said wife in consideration and recompense of her dower, so that she shall not claim any other part of my lands for her dower;

All the residue of my lands whatsoever, goods and chattels, as well movable as unmovable, I do devise, give and bequeath unto my brother, Robert Freke, whom I do make and appoint as well my heir of all my land as executor of this my last will & testament;

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal the ninth day of May in the year of our Lord God one thousand five hundred fourscore and one, these persons whose names are hereunder written being witnesses. Per Iohannem ffreke. Teste Matheo Brage, Richardo ffarham Iohanne fflowkes et alijs, signum Iohannis fflowkes.

Probatum fuit suprascriptum testamentum apud London coram venerabili viro magistro Willelmo Drurye legum doctore curie prerogatiue Cantuariensis commissario etc. decimo septimo die mensis Maij anno Domini millesimo quingentesimo octogesimo primo Iuramento Roberti ffreke executoris etc. Cui commissa fuit administracio bonorum etc. de bene &c Iurati. Examinatus

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before the worshipful Master William Drury, Doctor of the Laws, Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury etc., on the seventeenth day of the month of May in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred eighty-first by the oath of Robert Freke, executor etc., to whom administration was granted of the goods, etc., sworn to well etc. Examined.]