

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 24 May 1583 and proved 24 September 1583, of Walter Corbet, whose first cousin, Sir Richard Newport, was the owner of a copy of Hall's *Chronicle* thought to contain annotations by Shakespeare.

The testator was a younger son of Roger Corbet (d.1538/9) and his wife, Anne Windsor (d.1550/1). For the will of the testator's father, Roger Corbet (d.1538/9), see TNA PROB 11/27/408. The testator's father 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 the Earl's 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). There were thus extensive connections between the Earls of Oxford and the families of Windsor and Corbet.

The testator's aunt, Joanna or Anna Corbet, married Thomas Newport (d.1548x51), the father of Sir Richard Newport (d.1570/1), the owner of a copy of Hall's *Chronicle* (formerly Loan 61 in the British Library, and now in the hands of Lord Hesketh, a trustee) containing annotations thought to have been made by Shakespeare (see Keen, Alan, *The Annotator: The Pursuit of an Elizabethan Reader of Halle's Chronicle* (London: Putnam, 1954)). For the wills of the testator's uncle, Thomas Newport, and the testator's first cousin, Sir Richard Newport, see TNA PROB 11/34/176 and TNA PROB 11/53/456.

The testator appoints as executors two of his brothers, Robert Corbet (buried 30 January 1593) of Stanwardine, and Jerome Corbet (buried 30 July 1598). The testator leaves bequests to three of his brother Robert's children (Thomas, Jane and Susan). Susan Corbet later married William Yonge, esquire, of Caynton (in Edgmond), Shropshire, eldest son of William Yonge (d. December 1583) and Anne Sneyd, and elder brother of Giles Yonge, who was a co-purchaser, with Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham (d.1612), of King's Place in Hackney in 1597 (see TNA C 66/1476 and Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. IV, p. 387). See also the will of Robert Corbet, TNA PROB 11/83/158; and the pedigree of Yonge in Grazebrook, George, and John Paul Rylands, eds., *The Visitation of Shropshire Taken in the Year 1623, Part II*, (London: Harleian Society, 1889), Vol. XXIX, p. 519 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationshrop01grazgoog#page/n246/mode/2up>.

The testator died of the plague. His nephew, Robert Corbet (d. 30 May 1583), the eldest son and heir of the testator's eldest brother, Sir Andrew Corbet (d. 16 August 1578), also died of the plague, having travelled to London to visit the testator:

This year about the end of May one Mr Robert Corbet, a Shropshire gentleman, son and heir to Sir Andrew Corbet of Morton Corbet, going up to London to visit his uncle Walter

Corbet of London, who anon after his coming died of the plague, and the said Robert by reason of the infection died there also, who was of great estimation with the Queen's Majesty and the nobility because he could speak perfectly sundry foreign languages by reason of his long absence in his youth out of England in foreign countries and especially trained up as it were in the Emperor's court, who was like to have come to great worship if he had lived, and especially to the whole county of Salop, whose death was greatly lamented, whose dead body was brought from London down to his said place in the country where he was the 24th day of July buried by his father and his ancients very worshipfully.

See Corbet, Augusta Elizabeth, *The Family of Corbet*, (London: St. Catherine's Press, n.d.), Vol. II, pp. 287, 295 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/familyofcorbetit02corb#page/n199/mode/2up>.

The testator's nephew, Robert Corbet, whose death from the plague is recounted above, was a close friend of Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), and is perhaps the 'Mr Corbek' mentioned in Oxford's letter to Lord Burghley written from Paris on 17/18 March 1575 (see Cecil Papers 8/24). In the will below the testator bequeaths him £50, a chain and gold buttons, and bequeaths £50 as well to another nephew, Robert's brother, (later Sir) Richard Corbet (b. circa 1544, d.1606), for whose will see TNA PROB 11/109/24.

For further details of the testator's family, see the will of his mother, Anne (nee Windsor) Corbet, TNA PROB 11/34/443, and the references cited there.

LM: T{estamentum} Walteri Corbett ar{migeri}

In the name of God, Amen. The 24th day of May in the year of Our Lord God one thousand five hundred eighty-three and in the five and twentieth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Elizabeth by the grace of God Queen of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith etc., I, Walter Corbet, esquire, sick in body but yet of perfect mind and memory (thanked by Almighty God), knowing and considering the instability of this transitory life, the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of the time and place when and where the same shall approach, do therefore to the pleasure of Almighty God and quiet of my conscience make, ordain and establish this my present last will and testament in form following, that is to say:

First I commit and commend my soul to Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, trusting most assuredly to be saved by the death, passion and merits of Jesus Christ, my only Saviour and Redeemer;

My body I commend to the earth to be buried in honest and decent manner by the good discretion of my executors hereunder named, that is to say, my loving brothers, Mr

Robert Corbet and Mr Jerome Corbet, whom I make, nominate and appoint sole and only executors of this my said last will and testament;

Item, I give two Bibles of Tremelius' translation unto Magdalene College in Oxford, and the other unto Saint John's College in Cambridge;

Item, I give to every of my yeomen, viz., to Anthony Buckeley and John Barrett, to either of them five pounds apiece;

Item, I do give to my nephews, Mr Robert and Mr Richard Corbet, one hundred pounds in money, viz., to either of them fifty pounds;

Item, I give & bequeath to Jane Corbet, my said brother Robert's daughter, one hundred pounds in money;

Item, to Susan Corbet, one other of the daughters of my said brother, Robert, I do give and bequeath four hundred pounds in money;

Item, I give to Thomas Corbet, eldest son of my said brother, Robert, one hundred pounds in money only towards his maintenance at the study of the common laws;

Item, I give and bequeath to my said nephew, Robert Corbet, my chain and my buttons of gold;

Item, I give and bequeath unto Mrs Harding forty shillings;

Item, I give unto the poor of Saint Clement's twenty nobles;

Item, I will that all the rest of my ready money, apparel and other my goods and chattels movable and unmovable shall be disposed by the good discretions of my said brothers and executors, Mr Robert and Mr Jerome Corbet;

In witness whereof hereunto I have put my hand, these being witnesses, the day and year above-written: Robert Corbet, John Dalton, Jerome Brither, Randall Northe. W. Corbet.

Probatum fuit suprascriptum testamentum apud London coram vnerabili viro mag^{ist}ro Will^{el}imo Drury legum Doctore curie prerogatiue cantuarien^{sis} commissario etc Vicesimo quarto die mensis Septembris Anno Domini mill^{es}imo quingentesimo octogesimo tertio Iuramento Edwardi Willett notarij publici procuratoris executoru^m etc Quibus commissa fuit administracio bonorum etc De bene etc Iuratⁱ

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before the worshipful Master William Drury, Doctor of the Laws, Commissary etc. of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the twenty-fourth day of the month of September in the year of the Lord

the thousand five hundred eighty-third by the oath of Edward Willett, notary public, proctor of the executors etc., to whom administration was granted of the goods etc., sworn to well etc.]