

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 28 February 1568 but not proved until 30 May 1588, of George Kempe, uncle of Alice (nee Kempe) Hales Lee, the 'Lady Hales' to whom Robert Greene dedicated *Menaphon*.

The testator was also the uncle of Anne (nee Kempe), Shirley (d.1623), mother of Sir Thomas Shirley (1564–1633/4), who married Frances Vavasour, the sister of Oxford's mistress, Anne Vavasour.

The testator's niece, Anne (nee Kempe) Shirley, was also the mother of Sir Anthony Shirley, whose meeting in Rome with the comedian Will Kempe of the Lord Chamberlain's Men was later dramatized in *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* (1607).

FAMILY BACKGROUND

For the Kempe family, see Hitchin-Kemp, Frederick, *A General History of the Kemp and Kempe Families*, (London: The Leadenhall Press, 1902), pp. 25-8 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/generalhistoryof00kemp#page/n41/mode/2up>

See also Robertson, Herbert, *Stemmata Robertson et Durdin*, (London: Mitchell and Hughes, 1893-95), pp. 105, 224-5 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/stemmatarobertso00robe#page/224/mode/2up>

See also Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. III, pp. 275-7.

Testator's parents

The testator was a younger son of Sir William Kempe (1487 – 28 January 1539) of Olantigh, Kent, and Eleanor (nee Browne) Fogge Kempe. See the wills of his father and mother, TNA PROB 11/27/500 and TNA PROB 11/43/638, and Hitchin-Kemp, *supra*, pp. 25-8 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/generalhistoryof00kemp#page/n41/mode/2up>

The testator's mother was a descendant of Robert de Vere, 3rd Earl of Oxford, and was well connected at court. She served for a decade and a half in the households of Queen Katherine Parr and Queen Mary, and was present at the baptism of Elizabeth I in 1533. See Hitchin-Kemp, *supra*, Section IV, Part II, Chapter I, 'Early and Slindon Kempes', p. 21 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/generalhistoryof00kemp#page/n273/mode/2up>

The testator is mentioned in his mother's will, and appears to have inherited the manor of Chelworth, mentioned in the will below, through her.

Testator's siblings

The testator had six brothers and five sisters, including Edward Kempe, Anthony Kempe and Francis Kempe mentioned in the will below. For further details concerning the testator's siblings, see the will of the testator's father, Sir William Kempe, TNA PROB 11/27/500.

Two of the testator's siblings, Sir Thomas Kempe (1517 - 7 March 1591), and Margaret Kempe, are briefly mentioned here because of their literary connections.

The testator's eldest brother, Sir Thomas Kempe (1517 - 7 March 1591), was the father of:

(1) Anne Kempe (c.1542-1623), who married Sir Thomas Shirley (c.1542-1612), by whom she was the mother of Sir Anthony Shirley. From the *ODNB*:

Kemp, William (fl. 1585–1602), actor, was the most important stage clown working in the late Elizabethan period. . . . During the ensuing year [=1601] Kemp made his way into Germany and Italy, eventually arriving at Rome, where he met the English traveller Sir Anthony Shirley, an encounter dramatized after his death in Day, Rowley, and Wilkins's play about the Shirley family, The Travailes of the Three English Brothers (1607).

Anne Kempe was also the mother of Sir Thomas Shirley (1564–1633/4), who married Frances Vavasour, the sister of Oxford's mistress, Anne Vavasour. For the will of Anne (nee Kempe) Shirley, see TNA PROB 11/141/330. For Sir Thomas Shirley (c.1542-1612), see the *ODNB* entry, and the History of Parliament entry at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/shirley-thomas-i-1542-1612>

For Anne Kempe's children, see also *Stemmata Chicheleana*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1765), p. 6 at:

<https://archive.org/details/stemmatachichele00buckuoft/page/6>

In his will proved 5 February 1599, TNA PROB 11/94/3, Anne Kempe's uncle, Anthony Kempe, left his mansion in the Blackfriars to Anne and her husband, Sir Thomas Shirley (c.1542-1612) rent free for a year after his death:

Item, my will is that my nephew, Sir Thomas Shirley, and my niece his wife, shall have and quietly enjoy my mansion house in the Blackfriars for one whole year after my decease, paying nothing for the same house for the said year, and after the end of the said year, my will is that my executors shall not put them out, but use them with all kindness for the rent thereof.

(2) Alice Kempe (c.1550-1592), to whom Robert Greene dedicated *Menaphon*. She married firstly Sir James Hales (d.1589), grandson of Sir James Hales (d.1554). The latter's death by drowning is alluded to in the gravedigger's speech in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The testator's mother had a family connection to his widow, Margaret (nee Wood) Mantell Haute Hales (d. 18 September 1567), who initiated the lawsuit *Hales v Petit* alluded to in the gravedigger's speech in *Hamlet*. See the *ODNB* entry for Sir James Hales (d.1554), and the will of Sir James Hales (d.1589), TNA PROB 11/75/265. Alice Kempe married secondly Sir Richard Lee (d.1608), illegitimate half-brother of Queen Elizabeth's champion, Sir Henry Lee (d.1611). Sir Henry Lee's mistress during the latter years of his life was Oxford's former mistress, Anne Vavasour. See the *ODNB* entries for Anne Vavasour and Sir Henry Lee.

The testator's sister, Margaret Kempe, married, as his first wife, George Fogge (died c.1592) of Braborne and Repton, brother of Sir John Fogge (d.1564), and Abell Fogge. Sir John Fogge married Margaret Brooke, the daughter of Thomas Brooke (d.19 July 1529), 8th Baron Cobham. Abell Fogge married Cranmer Brooke (living 1573), the son of Thomas Brooke (d.1547) of Reculver, Kent, son of Thomas Brooke, 8th Baron Cobham. Thomas Brooke (d.1547) appears to have been the father of Arthur Brooke, author of *Romeus and Juliet*, a principal source of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. See the will of Sir John Fogge, TNA PROB 11/47/303; the will of Thomas Brooke, 8th Baron Cobham, TNA PROB 1123/361; the will of Thomas Brooke (d.1547) of Reculver, Kent, PRC 32/21/72; and T.G.F., 'Family Chronicle of Richard Fogge of Danes Court in Tilmanstone', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, (Kent Archaeological Society, 1863), Vol. V, pp. 116, 125 at:

<http://archive.org/stream/archaeologiacant05kent#page/n189/mode/1up>

TESTATOR'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE COMEDIAN, WILL KEMPE

As noted above, Sir Anthony Shirley, son of the testator's niece, Anne (nee Kempe) Shirley, and the comedian Will Kempe of the Lord Chamberlain's Men met in Rome, a meeting which was later dramatized in *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* (1607).

For further details of the Kempe family's relationship to the comedian, Will Kempe, see the wills of the testator's father and mother, *supra*.

In the name of God, Amen. I, George Kempe of London, gentleman, being in perfect health and memory, laud and praise be unto Almighty God, do make and ordain this my will and testament in manner and form following:

First, I commit my soul to the tuition of Almighty God, trusting through the merits of Christ's passion and the faith of the Catholic Church, wherein I intend to live and die, to be a saved soul in heaven; my body I will to be buried as to mine executors shall seem good in Christian burial;

Item, I give unto my well-beloved brother, Edward Kempe, all that fifth part of the manor of Chelworth and hundred of Staple in the county of Wiltshire, with all lands, tenements and hereditaments, woods and underwoods belonging to the same, with all and singular the appurtenances which I late had to me and mine heirs of the bargain, sale, gift or grant of the said Edward, to have and to hold to the said Edward and his heirs forever;

Item, I will and bequeath the one fourth part of my goods being within this realm of England at the time of my death to be given to poor folks and prisoners as to mine executors shall seem good;

And I do ordain and constitute my well-beloved brothers, Anthony Kempe and Francis Kempe, executors of this my will and testament;

In witness whereof I have hereunto subscribed my name, given the last of February in the year of Our Lord one thousand five hundred sixty-seven after the computation of the Church of England. George Kempe. These being witnesses: Nicholas Shawe, John Morys.

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum apud London coram venerabili viro Magistro Willmo Drury legum doctore curie Prerogative Cantuariensis commissario &c tricesimo die mensis Maij anno domini millesimo quingentesimo octogesimo octavo Iuramento Thome wheeler notarij publici procuratoris Anthonij Kempe et francisci Kempe executorum in huiusmodi testamentorum ministro Quibus comissa fuit administratio &c De bene &c Iuratis

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before the worshipful Master William Drury, Doctor of the Laws, Commissary of the Prerogative Count of Canterbury etc., on the thirtieth day of the month of May in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred eighty-eighth by the oath of Thomas Wheeler, notary public, proctor of Anthony Kempe and Francis Kempe, executors named in the same testament, to whom administration etc., sworn to well etc.]