

SUMMARY: The document below is the last will and testament, dated 7 December 1585, of Edmund Yorke, with members of whose family Oxford was on terms of friendship.

The testator was the fourth, but third surviving son of Sir John Yorke (d.1569) and his wife, Anne (d.1575). For the will of the testator's father, see TNA PROB 11/51/58. For the will of the testator's mother, see TNA PROB 11/57/581.

Sir John Yorke's sister, Margaret Yorke, married Bernard Frobisher and by him was the mother of the explorer, Martin Frobisher (1535?-1594). Oxford's friendship with the Yorke family was perhaps part of the reason for his investment in Frobisher's voyages. See Oxford's letter dated 21 May 1578 in which he terms Frobisher 'my friend', TNA SP 12/149/42(15), f. 108v:

After my very hearty commendations, understanding of the wise proceeding & orderly dealing for the continuing of the voyage for the discovery of Cathay by the northwest which this bearer, my friend Mr Frobisher, hath already very honourably attempted, and is now eftsoons to be employed for the better achieving thereof, and the rather induced as well for the great liking her Majesty hath to have the same passage discovered as also for the special good favour I bear to Mr Frobisher, to offer unto you to be an adventurer therein for the sum of one thousand pounds or more if you like to admit thereof, which sum or sums, upon your certificate of admittance, I will enter into bond shall be paid for that use unto you upon Michaelmas day next coming. Requesting your answers therein, I bid you heartily farewell. From the court, the 21 of May, 1578.

The testator had married by 1572, as indicated by a fine in that year mentioning the testator and his wife, Margery. See 'Yorkshire Fines: 1572', Feet of Fines of the Tudor period [Yorks]: part 2: 1571-83 (1888), pp. 13-26 at:

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=49651>.

The testator's wife was Margery Worley, the daughter of Richard Worley or Warley, of Middlesex, and widow of William Whashe and Christopher Lacon. Margery was granted administration of Lacon's estate on 13 December 1570 (see Glencross, Reginald M., *Administrations in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury 1559-1571* (Exeter: William Pollard, 1912), p. 114). The lease of the manor of Ebury in Westminster mentioned by the testator in his will came to him through his marriage. By his will, dated 10 February 1569, William Whashe left the lease of Ebury to his son Francis, with his widow Margery having the profits for life on payment of legacies to the children. Margery then married Christopher Lacon, and the lease was assigned in trust. After Lacon's death, Margery asked the trustees to assign it to John Southcott for her and her children. She then married Edmund Yorke and they and Southcott assigned the lease to William Worley. See Gatty, Charles T., *Mary Davies and the Manor of Ebury*, Vol. I (London: Waverley), p. 42, and the draft Victoria County History of Middlesex entry for the Manor

of Eye, May 2007, both available online. For the will of William Whasshe, see TNA PROB 11/52, ff. 36-7.

In 1584 the Crown granted the reversion of the lease of the manor of Ebury for 60 years from 1615 to Thomas Knyvet (1545/6-1622), the uncle of Oxford's mistress, Anne Vavasour. Two years earlier, on 21 February 1582, Knyvet had dangerously injured Oxford in a fray (see BL MS Cotton Appendix 47, f. 7v).

In his will William Whasshe (d.1569) mentions his daughter, Eleanor Whasshe. Hugh Vere, the eldest son of Oxford's uncle, Aubrey de Vere, who would have been Oxford's heir had Oxford died while on his continental tour (see ERO D/DRg/2/25), is one of the witnesses to the testator's will below. It is said that Hugh Vere married an 'Eleanor Walsh', and it is possible that Hugh Vere's wife was Eleanor Whasshe, the daughter of William Whasshe (d.1569) and his wife, Margery Worley.

The testator and his wife Margery had three sons, Edward, Aubrey [Avery], and Edmund, and a daughter, Mary, who is said to have died at age fifteen. It is possible that the testator's second son was named after Oxford's uncle, Aubrey de Vere. A Captain Avery Yorke, mentioned in a document concerning the wars in Ireland dated 29 September 1600, may be the testator's son, Aubrey Yorke (see Brewer, J.S., ed., *Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts 1599-1600* (London: Longmans, 1869) pp. 455-6).

The testator and his executor, Sir Thomas Coningsby (1550–1625), were among the twenty-four gentlemen knighted by Robert Devereux (1565-1601), 2nd Earl of Essex, at Rouen in 1591.

The testator's other executor, Sir Thomas Perrot (d.1594), was the son of Sir John Perrot (1528-1592), Lord Deputy of Ireland. According to the *ODNB*, Sir John Perrot (1528-1592) was educated in the company of Oxford's father, the 16th Earl:

Aged eighteen Perrot proceeded to London where his stepfather's connections at court (he was groom of the chamber in 1513 and gentleman usher in 1532) secured him a place in the house of William Paulet, Lord St John, later first marquess of Winchester and lord treasurer of England. Here, in the company of Henry Neville, sixth Lord Bergavenny, and John de Vere, sixteenth earl of Oxford, Perrot completed his formal education.

Oxford had a close relationship to the Yorke family. In 1574, he stayed at 'the Lady Yorke's house in Walbrook' before his brief trip to the continent without the Queen's leave, as noted by his uncle, George Golding (see ERO D/Drg/2/24):

Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxenford, went from the Lady Yorke's house in Walbrook in London where he then lay for a time, and at Aldgate, where he took horse, scilicet, the first day of July 1574, being Thursday, between two and three o'clock in the morning, and so to Wivenhoe in Essex, and the next night he took ship & coasted over into Flanders, arriving at Calais.

On 1 July 1574 Edward Bacon wrote to his brother Nathaniel that:

My Lord of Oxford is gone beyond the sea, & hath carried a great sum of money with him. He took shipping by his house in Essex. My Lord Edward Seymour is with him, Edward Yorke, one Cruse & another(?). He went without leave. The cause of their departure unknown. Much speech thereof. The Queen is said to take it ill.

See Folger MS X.d.502(2) at <http://titania.folger.edu/findingaids/dfonathaniel.xml>, and Smith, A. Hassell, Gillian Baker and R.W. Kenny, eds., *The Papers of Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey*, Vol. I (Norwich: Centre for East Anglian Studies, 1979), p. 123.

Prior to his departure for the continent, Oxford granted the testator a 42-year lease of his manor of Tilbury juxta Clare. The indenture was entered into at Oxford's rooms at Greenwich on 25 June 1574, and enrolled in Chancery on 28 June 1574. See ERO D/DCw/T46/52.

While Oxford was away from England on his continental tour of 1575/6, Lady Yorke died. However Oxford again stayed at Yorke House on his return, according to notes made by Lord Burghley (see CP 160/99):

I sent letters to him to entreat him to take my house for his lodging, whereof I had no answer, and yet I wrote twice by 2 several messengers, but my son sent me word that he found him disposed to keep himself secretly 2 or 3 days in his own lodging, and yet that Edward Yorke told him secretly that his Lordship would come first to my house, but he would nobody knew thereof, whereupon I was very glad, but his wife gladder, and the contrary I knew until he was landed, and then my son told me how he did suddenly leave the barge and took a wherry and only with Rowland Yorke landed about Yorke House.

Within 2 hours I heard by them that had been with him how many had been with him without any his misliking, and also that it was heard that he meant to sup out of his lodging at Edward Yorke's, and that there was a coach preparing for my Lady, his sister, to come to him, which being heard by my daughter, she very importunately required me she might go to him, and yet I required her to stay until I might send to my Lord Howard, from whom I would know whether he knew that my Lord, her husband, would go to the court, for if he would, she should not go until he had been there. My Lord Howard sent me word that he as yet could not tell, but when he should know he would send me word, whereof I had none.

Oxford appears to have been a particular friend of the testator's brother, Edward Yorke, as indicated in the foregoing notes, and in the 'Articles whereof Oxford would have accused Leicester' in TNA SP 12/151/50, f. 110:

First, that Ned Yorke had told him in what sort Killingworth was fortified, with brass pieces, munition, powder etc., proportionably as strong as the Tower, against a day under colour of making the Queen sport with fireworks, shooting, etc.

The testator was an executor of the will of Hercules Meautys (see TNA PROB 11/73/110), and there is an as yet unexplained connection between the Yorke and Meautys families, as the testator's brother, Rowland Yorke, was a witness to the will of Hercules Meautys' stepmother, Jane Meautys (see TNA PROB 11/59/248).

Although it was the testator's intention to appoint his wife, Margery, as his executor, and after her death, his eldest son, Edward, he did not specifically do so. Instead, he appointed his next eldest child as executor if Edward were not living at Margery's death. The court therefore granted administration to Edward on 22 March 1597 as though the testator had died intestate. A note to the will of William Walsh indicates that Margery had died by 28 November 1590.

RM: T{estamentum} Edmundi Yorke

In the name of God, Amen. I, Edmund Yorke of the parish of St Martin in the Fields in the county of Middlesex, esquire, being in perfect health and memory, praised be God, do make and declare this my present testament containing therein my last will in manner and form following, that is to say:

First and before all things I commit my soul into the hands of th' Almighty God, my Maker, and to Jesus Christ, his Son, my only Lord and Saviour, by the merits of whose bitter death and passion I hope and believe steadfastly to be saved, and my body to the earth where it shall please God to appoint;

Item, I will, give and bequeath and also my mind and true intent is that Margery Yorke, now my wife, shall & may have and enjoy for and during her natural life the possession and use of all such lands, good chattels, and chattels whatsoever whereof I now stand and am possessed;

Item, I give, will and bequeath unto my son, Edward Yorke, the sum of thirty and six pounds, to be paid him yearly out of the farm of Ebury in the aforesaid county of Middlesex;

Item, I will, give and bequeath unto my son, Aubrey Yorke, the sum of twenty marks a year, to be paid unto him yearly out of the same farm;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my son, Edmund Yorke, the like sum of twenty marks by year, to be to him paid yearly out of the said farm;

All which several sums of money before bequeathed I will shall be yearly taken & received out of the said farm of Ebury for and during so many years as shall be to come and unexpired at the decease of my said wife of the lease by the which I now have and hold the same;

Item, I will, give and bequeath unto my daughter, Marie Yorke, my best jewel, and two hundred marks of lawful English money to be taken out of my movable goods and to be to her paid immediately after the decease of my said wife;

And if it happen the said Edward to decease before or after that he shall enjoy any benefit by force of this my will, and the said Aubrey him surviving, that then I will that his part and portion shall be paid unto the said Aubrey, and if the said Aubrey decease, then I will his part shall redound unto my son, Edmund Yorke, and if he decease, then my meaning is that my said daughter shall have and enjoy all their parts and portions so deceased as heir one to another;

The rest of all and singular my goods chattels and chattels whatsoever I give and bequeath unto the said Edward, my son, if he be living at the decease of his said mother; if not, then the eldest of one of my said children so surviving to have and take the same, and to be executor of this my present testament and last will;

And I ordain and make Sir Thomas Perrot, knight, & Thomas Coningsby, esquire, overseers of this my present testament and last will, to whom I give for the trust I repose in them for the rule of my children and that they may the better see to the executing of this my will, to each of them a ring of forty shillings' price apiece;

In witness whereof I, the said Edmund, have hereunto put my hand & seal the seventh day of December in the eight and twentieth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Elizabeth by the grace of God of England, France and Ireland Queen, Defender of the Faith etc., Anno D^{omi}ni 1585. By me, Edmund Yorke. Witnesses hereunto: Hugh Veer [=Vere], Thomas Catesby, Nicholas Bedworth, scrivener.

Vicesimo secundo die Mensis Martij Anno Domini iuxta cursum et computationem ecclesie Anglicane Millesimo Quingentesimo Nonagesimo Sexto Emanavit Commissio Edwardo Yorke filio naturali et legitimo dicti defuncti H^{ab}entis &c Ad administrand^a bona Iura et credita eiusdem iuxta tenorem Testamenti dicti defuncti ad viam intestati deceden^{tis} pro eo quod dictus Edwardus Yorke filius naturalis et legitimus dicti defuncti tempore mortis Margerie Yorke Relicte dicti defuncti et matris eiusdem Edwardi in p^{rese}nti superstes erat et est dictusq^{ue} Testator in eodem suo testamento nullum nominavit Executorem nisi et casu quo dictus Edwardus tempore mortis prefate Margarie Yorke superstes non [sic?] esset De bene et fideliter Administrand^o &c Ad sancta Dei Euangelia Iurat^o L^{itte}ris p^{rese}nsⁱs(?) administrationis bonorum dicti defuncti tanquam ab intestato deceden^{ti} alias Averio Yorke filio dicti defuncti commiss^{is} et concess^{is} hodie introductis et renuntiatis Literisq^{ue} administrationis bonorum dicti defuncti al^{ias} dicto Edwardo Yorke ad opus et vsum dicti Auerij et duran^{te} eius absentia al^{ia}s concess^{is} introductis et expiratis vt ex actis hodie expeditis liquet Necnon administratio al^{ias} decimo septimo Nouembris Anno D^{omi}ni Millesimo Quingentesimo Nonagesimo tertio ciudam

Edmundo Yorke filio dicti defuncti vndecimo Decembris tunc sequent{i} introductis et renuntiatis Ex {aminatum}

[=On the twenty-second day of the month of March in the year of the Lord according to the course and reckoning of the English Church the thousand five hundred ninety-sixth [=22 March 1597] a grant issued to Edward Yorke, natural and legitimate son of the said deceased, having etc., to administer the goods, rights and credits of the same according to the tenor of the testament of the said deceased by way of an intestacy because the said Edward Yorke, natural and legitimate son of the said deceased, at the time of the death of Margery Yorke, relict of the said deceased and mother of the same Edward, in life(?) was and is surviving, and the said testator in the same his testament named no executor if and in case the said Edward at the time of the death of the forenamed Margery Yorke should not [sic?] be surviving, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer etc., letters [] of administration of the goods of the said deceased as of an intestacy otherwise to Avery Yorke, son of the said deceased, committed and granted, today introduced and renounced, and letters of administration of the goods of the said deceased otherwise to the said Edward Yorke to the use and behoof of the said Avery and during his absence otherwise granted, introduced and expired, as by the acts today expedited appears, and also administration otherwise on the seventeenth of November in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred ninety-third to a certain Edmund Yorke, son of the said deceased, on the eleventh of December then following introduced and renounced. Examined.]