

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 1 February 1595 and proved 27 May 1598, of Oxford's paternal uncle, Robert Vere.

In his will the testator describes himself as 'of Wricklesmarsh in the parish of Charlton in the county of Kent'. According to Hasted, *infra*, the parish is usually called Charlton near Greenwich to distinguish it from the parish of the same name near Dover. A funeral certificate in the College of Heralds indicates that the testator owned Wricklemarsh in 1598, although he makes no mention of lands in his will.

There was at one time a brass plate to the testator's memory in the church of St Luke at Charlton. Ward gives the the inscription as:

*Here lyeth buried Robert Veer Esquire, third son of John de Veer, Earl of Oxford, which said Robert deceased the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1598.*

See Ward, B.M., *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford 1550-1604 From Contemporary Documents*, (London: John Murray, 1928, p. 7 at:

<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.176090/page/n23/mode/2up>

Ward cites Stephenson for the inscription; however Stephenson gives only an abbreviated version which does not include the date of death. See Stephenson, Mill, *A List of Monumental Brasses in the British Isles*, (London: Headley Brothers, 1926), p. 214 at:

<https://archive.org/details/b29828302/page/214/mode/2up>

*Charlton-next-Woolwich. . . II. Inscription and shield Robert Veer, esq., 3<sup>rd</sup> son of John Deveer, earl of Oxford, 1598, mural, against wall, nave.*

See also:

Edward Hasted, 'Parishes: Charlton', in *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent: Volume 1* (Canterbury, 1797), pp. 420-441. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-kent/vol1/pp420-441> [accessed 3 May 2020].

*Wricklesmarsh . . . came at length into the family of Vere, earls of Oxford, one of whom, Robert Vere, third son of John earl of Oxford, died at his house at Wricklesmarsh in 1598, and was buried in this church.*

See also Ireland, W.H., *A New and Complete History of the County of Kent*, Vol. IV, (London: G. Virtue, 1830), p. 687 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=NQ0HAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA687>

*[N]ear the small door, on the south side, a memento for Robert Vere, esq., third son of the earl of Oxford. . . .*

### **FAMILY BACKGROUND**

The testator was the son of John de Vere (1482-1540), 15<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, and Elizabeth Trussell (1496-c.1527).

The testator was a younger brother of John de Vere (1516-1562), 16<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford. See TNA WARD 8/13 and TNA C 54/626 for the manors left by the 16<sup>th</sup> Earl to the testator for life.

See also TNA C 3/251/104 for the Chancery suit over those manors commenced on 6 May 1594:

*In most humble manner show and complain unto your good Lordship your humble orators, Robert Vere of Wricklesmarsh in the county of Kent, esquire, and Joan, his wife, that, whereas the right honourable John, late Earl of Oxenford, deceased, brother of your said orator & father of the Earl that now is, by his deed bearing date the fifth day of March in the five & thirtieth year of the reign of the noble king of most famous memory Henry the Eight [=5 March 1544] did convey unto your said orator the manors of Kennington & Wennington and all his lands & tenements thereof with their appurtenances in the county of Essex, and also the manor of Shottesbrook with the appurtenances in the county of Berkshire, to have & to hold the same unto your said orator during his natural life, and if your said orator should happen to marry any wife that should survive and overlive him, that then the same should remain after the death of your said orator to such his wife as so should survive him for term of her natural life for her jointure, as by the said deed more at large doth & may appear, by force whereof your said orator into the premises entered and was thereof seised in his demesne as of freehold, the one part of which said indenture sealed with the seal of the said Earl many years remained in the custody of Barbara, then wife of your said orator & widow of one Barnish [=Berners] at a house in Finchingfield in the county of Essex which was the jointure of the said Barbara, until that about fourteen years past [=1579] the said Barbara deceased, after whose decease the same & divers other writings belonging to your orator & then being in the said house came to the hands & possession of William Barnish [=Berners], her son, who detained most unjustly the same.*

For the wills of the testator's eldest brother, John de Vere (1516-1562), 16<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, see BL Stowe Charter 633/4 and TNA PROB 11/46/247.

For the will of the testator's brother, Aubrey Vere (d.1580?), see ERO D/AMR 3/281.

For the nuncupative will of the testator's youngest brother, Geoffrey Vere (d.1572), see ERO D/DABW 38/187.

For the will of the testator's sister, Elizabeth (nee Vere) Darcy (d. 26 December 1565), wife of Thomas Darcy (1506-1558), 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Darcy of Chiche, see TNA PROB 11/48/328.

### ***MARRIAGES AND ISSUE***

It appears the testator married firstly Dorothy Leigh (d. October 1561), secondly Barbara Cornwall (d.1579), and thirdly Joan Hubberd. The testator's second wife was the sister of John Cornwall, who married Elizabeth (nee Hart) Brooke, the widow of Thomas Brooke (d. 19 July 1529), 8<sup>th</sup> Baron Cobham.

As noted above, Barbara Cornwall (d.1579), the widow of Francis Berners (d.1560/1) of Finchingfield, Essex, is referred to as the testator's wife in TNA C 3/251/104:

*Barbara, then wife of your said orator & widow of one Barnish [=Berners] at a house in Finchingfield in the county of Essex which was the jointure of the said Barbara, until that about fourteen years past [=1579] the said Barbara deceased. . . .*

According to the Cornwall and Berners pedigrees, the testator's wife, Barbara Cornwall, was the daughter of Thomas Cornwall and his wife, Jane, and the sister of John Cornwall, who married Elizabeth Hart (living 31 March 1552), the widow of Thomas Brooke (d. 19 July 1529), 8<sup>th</sup> Baron Cobham. See the will of Thomas Brooke, 8<sup>th</sup> Baron Cobham, TNA PROB 11/23/361, and the Cornwall and Berners pedigrees in Foljambe, Cecil George Savile and Compton Reade, *The House of Cornwall*, (Hereford: Jakeman and Carver, 1908), pp. 164-5 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/houseofcornewall100live#page/n207/mode/2up>

See also the Berners pedigree in Chauncy, Henry, *The Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire*, (London: J.M. Mullinger, 1836), Vol. I, p. 317 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/historicalantiq03chaugoog#page/n383/mode/2up>

According to the Berners pedigree, Barbara Cornwall had four sons by her first husband:

**-Francis Berners**, who died without issue.

**-Arthur Berners** of Finchingfield, 'captain in the expedition to Portugal', who married the daughter of one Picot of Chelmsford, Essex.

**-John Berners** of Finchingfield, who married the daughter of one Bogas of Essex.

**-William Berners**, who married the daughter of one Nashe, widow of a husband surnamed Deersty.

A Francis Berners, gentleman servant, who was bequeathed £10 in the will, TNA PROB 11/46/247, of Oxford's father, John de Vere, 16<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, may have been Robert Vere's stepson, Francis Berners, the eldest son of Francis Berners and Barbara Cornwall. See also TNA CP 26/1/173, a fine dated 12 November 1577 between William Bendlowes, serjeant-at-law, the testator, his wife, Barbara, and three of Barbara's sons by her first marriage, Arthur Berners, John Berners and William Berners, concerning lands in Finchingfield and Great Bardfield, Essex. For the fine, see also Fitch, Marc and Frederick Emmison, *Feet of Fines for Essex, Volume V 1547-1580*, (Oxford: Leopard's Head Press, 1991), p. 215.

By Barbara Cornwall, the testator is said to have had a son and a daughter:

\* **John Vere** (b.1563, d. by 1594). According to a Chancery suit, TNA C 3/251/104, brought on 6 May 1594 by the testator and his third wife, Joan Hubberd, in 1579 John Vere was 16 years of age, and thus born in 1563.

\* **Mary Vere** (b.1553). According to the above-noted Chancery suit, TNA C 3/251/104, in 1579 Mary Vere was 26 years of age, and thus born in 1553. According to a document dated 10 February 1588 recited in the same Chancery suit, Mary Vere had by that date married a husband surnamed *Griffin*. According to another source, however, she married, on 12 April 1585, John *Griffith*. See *Collectanea Topographica & Genealogica*, Vol. VII, (London: John Bowyer Nichols and Son, 1841), p. 291 at:

<https://archive.org/details/collectaneatopog07londuoft/page/290>

*1585. Ap. 12. Mr. John Gryffyth and Mary Veere.*

*Footnote: Probably daughter of Robert Vere by Dorothy, daughter of Nicholas Leigh.*

See also Leveson-Gower, Granville, *Notices of the Family of Leigh of Addington*, (London: Wyman & Sons, 1878), p. 14 at:

<https://archive.org/details/noticesoffamilyo00gowe/page/n33>

*Dorothy [Leigh] married Robert Veere, and was buried at Addington 17th Oct., 1561.*

It thus seems Robert Vere married firstly Dorothy Leigh (d. October 1561), the daughter of Nicholas Leigh (c.1494 - 30 July 1581), esquire, of Addington, Surrey, by Anne Carew (living 1557), daughter of Sir Richard Carew (d. 18 May 1520) of Beddington, Surrey, and sister of the courtier, Sir Nicholas Carew (beheaded 1539). If so, Robert Vere married Barbara Cornwall after the death of Dorothy Leigh in 1561, and Mary Vere (b.1553) was his daughter by his first wife, Dorothy Leigh, while John Vere (b. 1563) was his son by his second wife, Barbara Cornwall. For Anne Carew, see the entry at:

[http://www.tudorwomen.com/?page\\_id=667](http://www.tudorwomen.com/?page_id=667)

It should also be noted that in his will dated 28 July 1562, the 16<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford bequeathed £40 to the testator's daughter:

*Item, I bequeath to my brother Robert Vere's daughter forty pounds, to be paid at the day of her marriage.*

The 16<sup>th</sup> Earl makes no mention of the testator's son, which supports the conclusion that the testator's son, John Vere, was not born until 1563, after the 16<sup>th</sup> Earl had made his will, and after the death of the testator's first wife, Dorothy Leigh.

Dorothy Leigh's nephew, Sir Oliph Leigh (24 November 1559 – 14 March 1612) of East Wickham and Addington, Surrey, married, on 4 June 1577, Jane Browne (buried 28 June 1631), sister of Sir Matthew Browne of West Betchworth, Surrey, who by indentures dated 7 October 1601 and 10 October 1601 purchased in fee simple properties owned by Nicholas Brend, including the Globe playhouse. See the will of Sir Matthew Browne, TNA PROB 11/111/273.

### ***Testator's third marriage***

The testator married thirdly, on 2 January 1581, Joan Hubberd, sister of Oxford's onetime receiver-general, Edward Hubberd (d.1602), one of the Six Clerks of Chancery, by whom he had no issue. See the above-noted lawsuit in Chancery brought by the testator and his third wife against Edward Hubberd, TNA C 3/251/104. For the will of Edward Hubberd, see TNA PROB 11/99/364.

### ***TESTATOR'S LANDS***

For the fine in the Court of Common Pleas dated 29 June 1579 by which clear title to the manors of Wennington and Kennington in Essex passed from the testator to William Aylofffe for £680, see TNA CP 25/2/131/1674/21ELIZITRIN, Item 12.

According to the 16<sup>th</sup> Earl's indenture of 2 June 1562, the testator held only a life estate in these manors, with reversion to Oxford and his heirs (see TNA C 54/626 and WARD 8/13). It is not clear from the fine how Oxford's reversionary interest was dealt with, but it would appear that an agreement was reached between Oxford and the testator for the sale of these lands.

See also TNA CP 25/2/131/1675/21/22ELIZITRIN, Item 10, for a fine which deals with Oxford's interest in 40 acres of salt-marsh pertaining to the same lands.

RM: T{estamentum} Roberti Veer

In the name of God, Amen. The first day of February Anno Domini one thousand five hundred ninety-four, and in the seven and thirtieth 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, Robert Vere of Wricklesmarsh in the parish of Charlton in the county of Kent, esquire, being of perfect and good memory, and calling to remembrance how feeble the life of man is, and that the hour thereof is most uncertain, do therefore make and declare this my present testament containing therein my last will in form ensuing, that is to say:

First, I bequeath my soul unto God and unto his mercy, believing that by his grace and the merits of Jesu Christ, and by the virtue of his passion and resurrection, I have remission of all my sins and resurrection of body and soul according (as it is written) I believe that my Redeemer liveth, and that in the last day I shall rise out of th' earth and in my flesh shall see my Saviour;

And as touching my body, I recommend the same unto the earth, choosing my sepulture within the parish church of such parish where it shall happen me to decease this life;

And as touching the disposition of all such goods, household stuff, cattles, money, chattels, rights and things which I have, as well in mine own hands and possession as in the possession and hands of any other person or persons, I fully and wholly give and bequeath the same unto Joan Vere, my well-beloved wife, whom I make my sole and only executrix of this my testament;

And I utterly revoke and make void all former wills, legacies, gifts, bequests, touching any my goods, chattels and debts by me heretofore made, willed and bequeathed, and my very will and mind is that this shall stand and be as my last will and testament as touching my said goods, chattels and debts, and no other or otherwise;

In witness whereof I, the said Robert Vere, have hereunto set my seal, given the day and year first above-written;

Item, I give to the poor people of the parish of Charlton twenty shillings to be distributed unto them the day of my funeral. Robert Vere.

In the presence of William Correy, William Taylor, William Eling, Henry Musgrove his mark.

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum apud London Coram venerabili viro magistro Iohanne Gibsonne Legum Doctore, Curie prerogatiue Cantuariensis magistro Custode siue Comis{s}ar{io} legitime Constituto vicesimo Septimo die mensis maij Anno Domini millesimo Quingentesimo nonagesimo Octauo Iuramento prefate Iohanne Veer Relicte dicti Defuncti, et Executricis in huiusmodi Testamento nominat{e} Cui

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comis{s}a fuit administratio bonoru{m} Iuriu{m} et Creditor{um} eiusdem defunct{i}  
De bene et fideliter administrand{o} &c Iurat{e}.

[=The above-written will was proved at London before the worshipful Master John Gibson, Doctor of the Laws, lawfully constituted Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the twenty-seventh day of the month of May in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred ninety-eighth, by the oath of the forenamed Joan Vere, relict of the said deceased and executrix named in the same will, to whom administration was granted of the goods, rights and credits of the same deceased, sworn to well and faithfully administer the same etc.]