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## A Possible Extension of Henslowe's and Alleyn's Sussex Network?

*In the following note, I present evidence of a relationship between Edward Alleyn and the Sherley family of Wiston in Sussex. Through an examination of local archives, Henslowe's diary, and other theatre history, the note argues that the 'Edward Allen' recorded in Anne Sherley's will could be Edward Alleyn. In so doing, it suggests a connection between Alleyn and the Sherley brothers dramatized by Day, Rowley, and Wilkins in *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* (1607), and Henry Sherley, the author of *The Martyred Soldier* (1622/3).*

Anne Sherley (ca 1542–1623) (also rendered as Shirley or Shurley) of Wiston in Sussex was the wife of Thomas Sherley, the corrupt treasurer at war during the Dutch campaign in the 1580s; the mother of Thomas, Anthony, and Robert, whose exploits in Europe and the near east were fictionalized in Day, Rowley, and Wilkins's play *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* (1607); and the grandmother of the playwright Henry Sherley, who was killed in a duel in 1627. Her 1623 will contains a bequest of a gold ring with a death's head to 'Mr Edward Allen and his wife'.<sup>1</sup> Nina Green's transcription of the will allows for 'the remote possibility'<sup>2</sup> that the Edward Allen recorded in the document is Edward Alleyn the actor. She bases this 'remote possibility' upon Alleyn's connections to Philip Henslowe, who was born in Sussex and who maintained county interests after his move to London. The following note points out connections between Henslowe and Alleyn and the Sherley family. In so doing it makes the case that Edward Alleyn the actor could have received the bequest of a ring from Anne Sherley and demonstrates possible links between Sussex's two major theatrical families.

Although Alleyn's most significant Sussex connection was his relationship with Henslowe, born in Lindfield in Sussex in 1555, Alleyn's family had interests

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in Sussex that predated Alleyn's entry into the Henslowe circle. Alleyn's father held leases to property that included the manor of Barnham, a parcel of land in the honour of Petworth, with additional land in Barnham and in Yapton.<sup>3</sup> Alleyn's father also appears to have had political connections in the west of Sussex, evident in the support provided by Henry Fitzalan, earl of Arundel, when Alleyn faced attempts to strip him of the mastership of Bedlam in 1561.<sup>4</sup> The connection between the Alleyns and branches of the Howard-Fitzalan family continued during Edward Alleyn's theatrical career and again linked Alleyn with west Sussex,<sup>5</sup> closer to Wiston than the Henslowes' interests in the east of the county.

Philip Henslowe was born in Lindfield; his father was master of the game at Ashdown Forest and Broyle Park in eastern Sussex, his sister Margaret was married to Ralph Hogg the Sussex iron master of Buxted, and his brother John was Hogg's office manager.<sup>6</sup> Philip Henslowe's diary was originally the office ledger of John Henslowe<sup>7</sup> and offers a useful record of the Sussex iron industry. Although Henslowe's diary is an invaluable resource for the study of the theatrical world of early modern London, it also provides a fascinating insight into Henslowe's other business interests. The diary and the considerable surviving correspondence of Henslowe and Alleyn reveal ongoing financial interests in Sussex and continuing relationships with people from Sussex. The most significant and recurrent Sussex figure recorded in the diary is Arthur Langworth. Henslowe's relationship with Langworth, as recounted in the diary, provides evidence of Henslowe's activities as a proto-bank/money lender, including various property transactions in Sussex. Langworth also acted as Henslowe's and Alleyn's agent during their negotiations for the reversion of the mastership of the royal game of bears, bulls, and mastiff dogs. He also potentially connects the Henslowe/Alleyn circle and the Sherleys.

Langworth borrowed more than £385 from Henslowe over a ten-year period (1594–1604).<sup>8</sup> The diary also contains the details of a number of property transactions between Langworth, Henslowe, and Alleyn, including a record of Langworth's purchase of a house and land from Henslowe with an undertaking to make payment on 16 May 1595. Edward and Joan Alleyn witnessed the agreement.<sup>9</sup> The sale to Langworth of the Sussex home of Henslowe's deceased brother and sister-in-law followed this purchase in June 1595. The cost of the property was £80, and Alleyn witnessed the sale.<sup>10</sup> A further property sale recorded on 5 July 1595 shows Alleyn agreeing to sell Langworth the lease of the parsonage at Firle, close to Broyle Park, for £3000 with payment to be made over the course of twenty years. Henslowe witnessed the proceeding.<sup>11</sup> The details surrounding this latter property transaction became increasingly convoluted; W.W. Greg describes them in his edition of the *Diary*, which was supplemented by Greg's analysis of

documents in the Alleyn-Henslowe Muniments.<sup>12</sup> These additional documents confirm Langworth's position within the Henslowe-Alleyn circle and reveal a relationship between Alleyn and Arthur Langworth's son John. Alleyn assigned a new lease for Firle parsonage to John Langworth in December 1596;<sup>13</sup> Greg suggests there was 'a regular assignment from John Langworth to Alleyn'.<sup>14</sup> The Henslowe-Alleyn archive also contains letters from John Langworth to Alleyn about land and to Henslowe about tithes.<sup>15</sup> The diary and the wider Henslowe-Alleyn documents make clear that the Langworth family sustained a financial relationship with both Henslowe and Alleyn, with Arthur Langworth acting on Alleyn's and Henslowe's behalf during their campaign to obtain the reversion of the mastership of the royal game.

In June 1598, Alleyn stayed at Langworth's home at Broyle Park. While there, he received letters from both Henslowe and Langworth reporting on the progress of the negotiations for the reversion of the mastership.<sup>16</sup> Alleyn was still at Broyle in September 1598 when he received a further letter from Henslowe discussing the mastership and informing him of the death of Gabriel Spenser as a result of his duel with Ben Jonson.<sup>17</sup> Alleyn resided in Sussex once again in October 1603 when Joan Alleyn wrote to him about the death of the Robert Browne, leader of the theatre company at the Boar's Head.<sup>18</sup> Alleyn's location on that occasion is unclear; possibly Alleyn was again at Broyle although the fragment of the address reads 'vex[ ] Susse[ ]'.<sup>19</sup> Of possible significance are the commendations in the letter to 'Mr. Chaloners [sic] and his wife'<sup>20</sup> and the information at the end of the letter that 'a youthe who said he was Mr. Francis Chalo[ ]'s man' had attempted to borrow money from Joan Alleyn,<sup>21</sup> almost certainly references to Francis Chaloner of Lindfield. If the 'Mr. Chaloner' in the letter is Francis Chaloner, then Alleyn might have been staying in Lindfield, Henslowe's home village, or was expected to see Chaloner at some stage. Either option could indicate a personal relationship between Chaloner and the Alleyns. The Chaloners were contemporaries of the Henslowes in Lindfield and Thomas Chaloner — Francis's brother — appears listed as a debtor in the diary, with money borrowed in 1592.<sup>22</sup> The Chaloners were also Arthur Langworth's in-laws: John Langworth married Thomas Chaloner's daughter Mary.<sup>23</sup> The Chaloner-Langworth connection possibly links Alleyn and the Sherleys.

Mary Chaloner, Arthur Langworth's daughter-in-law, was the great-granddaughter of Alice Sherley.<sup>24</sup> Alice Sherley was the aunt of Sir Thomas Sherley, the husband of Anne Sherley: as such, Mary Chaloner was a distant cousin of Anne Sherley's sons and grandson.<sup>25</sup> *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* dramatized Thomas, Anthony, and Robert while Henry Sherley — Thomas's son

and Anne's grandson — was the author of *The Martyred Soldier*, which was performed at the Fortune Theatre in 1623. This Sherley family involvement with the London stage therefore provides a further possible connection between Alleyn and the Sherleys.

A staging of *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* appears to have included a cameo appearance by Will Kemp. The Kemp scene is set in Venice, but this section of the play almost certainly stages the actual meeting of Kemp and Anthony Sherley in Rome in 1601.<sup>26</sup> At that meeting Kemp claimed kinship with Sherley through Anne Sherley, whose maiden name was Kempe, and who came from Ollantighe in Kent;<sup>27</sup> Will Kemp believed he was related to the Ollantighe Kempes.<sup>28</sup> Thus we have a possible familial relationship between Anne Sherley and an important player on the London stage, a relationship identified in a play performed by Queen Anne's Men at the instigation of Thomas Sherley.<sup>29</sup> Although this does not prove a direct connection between Alleyn and the Sherleys, the reference does demonstrate a relationship between Thomas Sherley and one of the London theatre companies and suggests that Kemp could help link the Sherleys and Alleyn. Kemp and Alleyn had been colleagues in Lord Strange's Men in the early 1590s. By 1601/2, Kemp was a member of Worcester's Men. Kemp is listed in Henslowe's diary for this period with entries relating to theatrical expenditure and monetary loans.<sup>30</sup> As such, from 1601 to the uncertain year of his death, Kemp can be positioned in a matrix of theatrical and Sussex associations that include the Alleyn-Henslowe network and the Sherleys.

Henry Sherley provides a similar potential theatrical connection between Alleyn and the Sherleys. Henry Sherley's only extant play, *The Martyred Soldier*, was licensed for the stage in 1622/3 for the Lady Elizabeth's Men and then for the Palsgrave's Men at the Fortune. Alleyn owned the Fortune, so Alleyn possibly knew Henry Sherley, particularly if Sherley was responsible for more plays than the one surviving text; moreover, if Alleyn already knew the Sherley family, then that relationship may have helped to facilitate Henry Sherley's entry into the London theatrical scene. The previous understanding between Thomas Sherley and the Queen Anne's Men; the possible kinship between Kemp and the Sherleys; Kemp's financial dealings with Henslowe and Alleyn; and the relationship between Alleyn, the Chaloners, and the Langworths all allow for the possibility of extending the Alleyn-Henslowe Sussex network to include the Sherleys. This in turn grants the possibility that the Edward Allen in Anne Sherley's will was Edward Alleyn the actor.

In 1622, Lionel Cranfield purchased Wiston from the Earl of Somerset, who had been gifted the estate by James I in 1615. Anne Sherley left Wiston, relocating

to nearby Parham House and splitting her final year between Parham and London.<sup>31</sup> Anne Sherley's peripatetic final years mean the Edward Allen of the will could be someone with a Sussex connection or someone in London. If it is the latter, then the number of candidates increases, while the possibility of identifying a likely or even potential candidate decreases. The sheriff of London in 1623, for example, was a man called Edward Alleyn;<sup>32</sup> in the absence of evidence to discount him absolutely, then he too must be considered as a candidate for the Edward Allen of the will. Edward Alleyn the actor must also be allowed the same potential, however, given his strong links with London as well as his connections with Sussex and potential points of contact with the Sherley family.

The geographical locations or connections of the beneficiaries in Anne Sherley's will suggest that the Edward Allen mentioned in the document was someone from Sussex or someone with Sussex links. Once Anne Sherley's relatives and servants are excluded, the remaining beneficiaries of the will are neighbours or friends from Sussex, or people with clear Sussex connections. On that basis, the will's Edward Allen might have had a similar county presence. Edward Alleyn the actor fulfils that criterion. Research into extant material in local archives reveals other potential Edward Allens/Alleyns during the period 1550–1623. The surviving Wiston archive held at West Sussex Record Office contains reference to an Edward Allen (recorded as Allin) who held land close to the Sherley estate. This Edward Allin was alive in 1601;<sup>33</sup> however, the burial record for Wiston lists the death of Edward Allin (rendered as Allen) in March 1608.<sup>34</sup> Examination of the surviving baptismal and burial records of the parishes surrounding Wiston reveal one Edward Allyne baptised in January 1577; however, the record also lists the death of the same Edward Allyne in March of 1577.<sup>35</sup> The baptismal records for parishes in Chichester, Rye, East Grinstead, Steyning, Frant, Cuckfield, and Kirdford list Edward Alleyns (or variant spellings) born after 1550 without a corresponding entry in the burial registry.<sup>36</sup> In addition, the baptismal record of St Nicholas's church in Brighton lists a George Allen the 'supposed son of Edward Allen', baptised in May 1589;<sup>37</sup> Bosham's parish records reference three children of Edward Aylin baptised in 1619, 1623, and 1625;<sup>38</sup> Mid Lavent's records list the baptism of Thomas Alin, the son of Edward, in March 1614,<sup>39</sup> and Ifield's records list the baptism in January 1619 of John Allen, the son of Edward Allen.<sup>40</sup>

If we discount those at the top end of the search range as being too young to be the Allen of Anne Sherley's will, and if we exclude those from the geographical extremes of Sussex as being unlikely candidates given the absence of an obvious connection with the Sherleys and those parts of the county, then we are left with five potential Edward Alleyns, two from Chichester, one from Bosham, one from

Mid Lavent, and one from Kirdford. The baptismal dates and locations of these five men make them candidates to be the Allen of the will. Without further evidence of their lives in Sussex or any interaction with the Sherleys, confirming or discounting them as the will's beneficiaries is impossible. To discount Edward Alleyn the actor as a candidate, however, is equally impossible. Alleyn had clear Sussex connections, and both Alleyn and Henslowe seem linked to the Sherleys via theatrical networks and local familial and economic interests. In the face of that evidence connecting Sussex's two major theatrical families, the case for Alleyn as the beneficiary in Anne Sherley's will must be considered a possibility.

## Notes

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1. National Archives Prob 11/141/330, [discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D910948](http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D910948).
2. Modern transcription spelling by Nina Green, with prefatory material, *The Oxford Authorship Site* (2009), [www.oxford-shakespeare.com/Probate/PROB\\_11-141\\_ff\\_270-2.pdf](http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/Probate/PROB_11-141_ff_270-2.pdf).
3. S.P. Cerasano, 'Edward Alleyn's Early Years: His Life and Family', *Notes and Queries*, 34.2 (1987), 240; see also Cerasano, 'The Patronage Network of Philip Henslowe and Edward Alleyn', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama*, 13 (2000), 85.
4. Cerasano, 'The Patronage Network of Philip Henslowe and Edward Alleyn', 85.
5. *Ibid.*, 82-9.
6. S.P. Cerasano, 'Philip Henslowe', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (DNB)* (2004).
7. S.P. Cerasano, 'The Geography of Henslowe's Diary', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 56.3 (2005), 331; see also R.A. Foakes (ed.), *Henslowe's Diary*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2002), xv, xix-xxiv.
8. Foakes, (ed.), *Henslowe's Diary*, 54, 60-1, 171-3, 190-1, 237.
9. *Ibid.*, 190.
10. *Ibid.*, 81.
11. *Ibid.*, 52. In his edition of the diary, Greg suggests that the sale of the parsonage was undertaken by John Langworth, Arthur Langworth's son, see W.W. Greg (ed.), *Henslowe's Diary*, 2 vols (London, 1904), 2.293.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*

- 15 See 'Letter from John Longworth to Edward Alleyn about Land Feb. 6, 1598/9', *Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project* MSS 3 9 01, <http://www.henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/images/MSS-3/Article-009/01r.html>.
- 16 'Letter from Arthur Longworth to Edward Alleyn about acquiring the reversion of the Mastership of the Royal Game of Bears, etc. June, 1598', *Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project* MSS 2 2 01, <http://www.henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/images/MSS-2/Article-002/01r.html> and 'Letter from Philip Henslowe to Edward Alleyn about acquiring the reversion of the Mastership of the Royal Game of Bears, etc., from Queen Elizabeth I, June 4, 1598', *Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project* MSS 2 1 01, <http://www.henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/images/MSS-2/Article-001/01v.html>.
- 17 Foakes (ed.), *Henslowe's Diary*, 286.
- 18 Ibid, 297–8.
- 19 Ibid, 298.
- 20 Ibid, 297.
- 21 Ibid, 298.
- 22 Ibid, 43.
- 23 John Comber, *Sussex Genealogies: Ardingly Centre* (Cambridge, 1925), 82.
- 24 Ibid, 77.
- 25 John Comber, *Sussex Genealogies: Lewes Centre* (Cambridge, 1933), 258–9.
- 26 Martin Butler, 'William Kemp', *DNB* (2004).
- 27 Anne Sherley's mother was Cecily Cheney. The Cheney family were involved in the Wealden iron industry. The 1574 list of Wealden iron masters includes Abergavenny and Darrell — both families were linked to the Cheney family through marriage. Anne Sherley's distant relative Ninian Chaloner from Cuckfield is also named on the list. Possibly, therefore, members of Anne's extended maternal family were associates of the Henslowes when the family was involved in the Sussex iron industry. For the iron master list see J.J. Goring 'Wealden Ironmasters in the age of Elizabeth', in E.W. Ives, R.J. Knecht, J.J. Scarisbrick (eds), *Wealth and Power in Tudor England*, (London, 1978), 224. For the relationship between the Lindfield and Cuckfield Chaloners, see Comber, *Sussex Genealogies: Ardingly Centre*, 68. The Wealden iron industry provides a further potential connection between the Henslowe-Alleyn circle and the Sherleys. Arthur Langworth, Francis Chaloner and Sir Thomas Sherley were all involved in the Wealden iron industry. Francis Chaloner owned the forge and furnace at Ardingly, Arthur Langworth owned the Howbourne Forge at Buxted in 1591, and the Sherleys owned the Pallingham forge. See the entries for 'Chaloner' and 'Langworth' at the *Wealden Iron Research Group Database* (Wealden, 2000), [www.wirgdata.org](http://www.wirgdata.org). There was considerable interaction

between local forge and furnace owners. The WIRG database also includes an 'Edward Allen', a fishmonger from Middlesex who owned Bugsell forge in 1611/2. This is not Edward Alleyn the actor.

28 Butler, 'William Kemp'.

29 Anthony Parr ed., *The Travels of the Three English Brothers in Three Renaissance Travel Plays* (Manchester, 1995), 8.

30 Foakes (ed.), *Henslowe's Diary* 196, 214, 215.

31 Jane Pennington, 'Sir Thomas Sherley', *DNB* (2004).

32 I am grateful to one of the anonymous readers of the original version of this paper for this information as part of their very helpful critique.

33 Wiston parish records, West Sussex Record Office (WSRO) MS 2214.

34 Wiston parish records, WSRO Lib 17695.

35 Ashurst parish records, WSRO Lib 16624.

36 Frant parish records, East Sussex Record Office (The Keep) (ESRO) PAR344 and Rye parish records, ESRO 476/1/1; Chichester (St Pancras) 16655, Cuckfield 2229, East Grinstead (St Swithun's) Lib 17814, Kirdford parish records 17821 and Steyning parish records, WSRO 17691.

37 Brighton (St Nichols) PAR 253/1/1, ESRO.

38 Bosham, WSRO 16640.

39 Mid Lavent, WSRO 16688.

40 Ifield, WSRO 17820.