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Wriothesley, Henry, second earl of Southampton

(*bap.* 1545, *d.* 1581)

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Wriothesley, Henry, second earl of Southampton (*bap.* 1545, *d.* 1581), magnate, was baptized on 24 April 1545 at St Andrew's, Holborn, the third and only surviving son of Thomas Wriothesley, first earl of Southampton and first Baron Wriothesley (1505–1550), lord chancellor, and his wife, Jane (*d.* 1574), daughter and heir of William Cheney of Chesham Bois, Buckinghamshire, and his wife, Emma. Henry Wriothesley's godparents were Henry VIII, Princess Mary, Charles Brandon, first duke of Suffolk, and Henry Fitzalan, twelfth earl of Arundel. Thomas Wriothesley was elevated to a barony on 1 January 1544, was lord chancellor from 1544 to 1547, and was promoted to the earldom of Southampton on 16 February 1547; but he fell from power and was dismissed from office on 6 March 1547. Despite his disgrace, Southampton was one of the greatest noblemen in Hampshire, with an annual landed income of at least £1466 13s. 4d. in the late 1540s. He died on 30 July 1550, when his heir was still a minor. His widow's dower was £466 13s. 4d.

The wardship of the second earl of Southampton was granted to William Herbert, first earl of Pembroke, on 14 December 1550. Southampton remained with his mother and was privately educated and brought up a Catholic. Little is known about his youth or education but he was certainly taught French. His wardship passed to Sir William More of Loseley, Surrey, in 1560. Southampton married into one of the leading Catholic families of Sussex. His wife was Mary (*b.* in or before 1552, *d.* 1607), daughter of Anthony Browne, first Viscount Montagu (1528–1592), and his first wife, Jane; the marriage took place at Montagu House in London on 19 February 1566. The couple had one son Henry Wriothesley, third earl of Southampton (1573–1624), the courtier and patron of Shakespeare, and two daughters, Jane, who died before 1573, and Mary (c.1567–1607). Southampton was admitted to Lincoln's Inn on 19 March 1566. He entertained Elizabeth I at Titchfield Place, Hampshire, in 1569 and probably spent most of his time looking after his six residences and managing his estates. His landed income was between £2000 and £3000 in the 1560s and he lived in a grand way, maintaining a large and lavish household.

Southampton was arrested on 18 June 1570 for intriguing with the Spanish ambassador, Guerau de Spes, and for suspected complicity in the contemplated marriage of Thomas Howard, fourth duke of Norfolk, to Mary, queen of Scots. He was placed under house arrest with More at Loseley from July to November 1570. Examined on 31 October 1571 for suspicion of having consulted with John Leslie, bishop-elect of Ross, as to whether he might conscientiously obey Elizabeth after the bull of excommunication, *Regnans in excelsis*, Southampton denied the allegations, but was confined to the Tower of London until 1 May 1573. During his imprisonment he was allowed to visit his father-in-law and to spend time at Montagu's seat at Cowdray Park, Sussex. Back in favour, Southampton was appointed JP for Hampshire on 12 July 1574. The dowager countess died on 15 September. The earl and countess of Southampton did not live in complete marital harmony, and their divisions caused a falling out between Montagu and his son-in-law. The countess, who was 'put away, suspected of incontinency' (*Miscellanea*, 2.183), loyally made excuses for her husband to her father, who was angry that Southampton had 'barred [her] his bord and presence' (GEC, *Peerage*, 12/1.127, n. c). Southampton expressly stated in his will of 29 June 1581 that his daughter should be brought up by either his sister, Katherine Cornwallis, or his aunt, Lawrence, insisting that she 'be not in howse with her Mother' (TNA: PRO, PROB 11/65, sig. 45). He died on 4 October 1581 at Itchel in the parish of Crondall, Hampshire, aged thirty-six, and was buried on 30 November at Titchfield, after a lavish funeral, costing over £138. Southampton also ordered that up to £1000 be spent to create a monument there for his parents and himself out of alabaster, known as the Titchfield monument. His will, proved on 7 February 1583, provides ample evidence of his Catholic friendships and religious convictions. He did not make specific provisions for his widow, only that she should not try to possess Dogmersfield, Hampshire, which was to be allotted to his heir, who inherited lands worth £1097 6s. per annum. The dowager countess married twice after his death: her second husband was Sir Thomas Heneage and her third Sir William Hervey. Her will, dated 22 April 1607 and proved on 14 November, instructed that she be buried with Southampton at Titchfield.

Sources

GEC, *Peerage*

DNB

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Archives

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BL, Harley MSS 282, 283

BL, Lansdowne MSS 2, arts. 8, 9; 16, arts. 22, 23; 17, art. 14

BL, Stowe MS 141, fol. 78

Bodl. Oxf., MS Ashmole 836, fols. 395, 427

Northants. RO, collection of letters of William Paget

Likenesses

G. Johnson, tomb effigy, 1594, St Peter's Church, Titchfield, Hampshire

H. Enworth, portrait

L. van Heere, portrait, Bridgewater House

Wealth at Death

approximately £2000–3000: will, TNA: PRO, PROB 11/65, sig. 45

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See also

Wriothesley, Thomas, first earl of Southampton (1505–1550), administrator

Browne, Anthony, first Viscount Montagu (1528–1592), nobleman and courtier

Wriothesley, Henry, third earl of Southampton (1573–1624), courtier and literary patron

External resources

National Archives [<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/c/F53980>](http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/c/F53980)

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