

Photographed at Huntingdon Archives on the 6th August 2021. Artificial Intelligence was used to translate this document

This document is a formal **court deposition or set of responses** regarding a tithe dispute from **August 1625** involving the famous metaphysical poet **John Donne** (referred to here by his ecclesiastical title, "Mr. Doctor Dunne," Rector of Keyston).

This historical document is written in Early Modern Latin, using a 16th or 17th-century secretary hand. It contains highly abbreviated legal and ecclesiastical phrasing commonly found in English church court records.

English Translation

The personal answers of Thomas Hilles of Sharnbrook in the county of Bedfordshire, given in court before the venerable Thomas Morrison, Bachelor of Laws made to the positions and articles of a libel alleged against him by the magistracy, on the part of the venerable man, the Master John Dunne Doctor of Divinity, Parson of Keyston, curate of the diocese of Lincoln, in a certain cause of subtraction of tithes or other ecclesiastical rights against the said Thomas Hilles, which follow, viz.

To the first article of the lawsuit, he believes that for one of the years mentioned, namely that in the year 1620 he knew the aforesaid Dunne, Doctor in Divinity, was commonly accounted and reputed to be Parson of Keyston. And otherwise, he does not know the article to be true in any respect.

To the second and third articles of the lawsuit, he answers by referring himself to his composition [agreement] made in the first article of the lawsuit, and otherwise does not believe the article to be true.

To the fourth and fifth articles of the lawsuit, he answers that he knows that in the said year 1620, he, this deponent, did harvest, collect, and occupy within the Parish of Keyston aforesaid 912 acres of meadow and pasture ground, and no more.

50 acres of the said meadow and pasture, which he, this deponent, did mow and convert to hay, being worth in the said year 8 shillings of legal money for every acre, one with another (as he knows), and no more. And the other 862 acres of the said meadow and pasture, which he did feed and graze down with cattle, being worth in the said year 6 shillings of legal money for every acre, one with another (as he knows), and no more. The tithes of the said 50 acres mowed and converted to hay as aforesaid, he, this deponent, did duly pay unto the Farmer or Deputy of the said Mr. Doctor Dunne.

And for the tithe of the said 862 acres fed and grazed with cattle as aforesaid, he, this deponent, doth believe that he ought not to pay or be troubled for any tithes thereof. This is because Lady Wingfield and her son Sir James Wingfield, leased the 912 acres to him completely tax-free. They also took on the responsibility to pay Dr. Dunne for the taxes owed on those 912 acres. And otherwise, he does not believe these articles to be true in any part.

To the sixth [item], they respond that, by their own false accounts previously believed, they believe the article to be good [valid].

To the seventh, they respond that they do not believe the article to be good in any way.

To the eighth, they respond that they believe the article to be good.

To the last, they respond that they believe in all things previously believed, and they deny what has been denied.

And otherwise, they do not believe the article to be good in any way.

Signatures & Date

Executed on the [blank] day of August, in the Year of our Lord 1625.

By me, Thomas Hills

Witnessed by me: Thomas Morrison

[Handwritten Latin text, likely a legal or ecclesiastical document, written in a cursive script. The text is arranged in several paragraphs, with some lines indented. The handwriting is dense and characteristic of the early 17th century.]

[At the bottom of the page, there are two signatures and a date:]

[Signature: Thomas Hills]
[Signature: Thomas Morrison]
[Date: 1625]