

SUMMARY: The document below is an answer by Sir William More (1520-1600) of Loseley to a claim made by Francis Kempe to the Parliament chamber which was partly situated over the former monastic infirmary in the Blackfriars. The Parliament chamber later became the site of James Burbage's Blackfriars theatre.

For the grant of the infirmary and other property in the Blackfriars to Lady Mary Kingston (d. 25 August 1548), see TNA C 66/768, mm. 23-4. A document prepared c.1555/6 by Sir Thomas Cawarden also describes the extensive holdings in the Blackfriars, including the infirmary, which Sir Henry Jerningham (d. 6 September 1572) inherited from his mother, Lady Kingston:

*Sir Mr [sic] Jerningham fee [sic for 'Vice'?] Chamberlain to the Queen's Highness, hath his house, the great and upper library, the half of the nether library, the south cloister & cloister-yard, the fermery, the brewhouses, the bakehouse & the stable, with certain gardens, worth by year (no value given), besides other edifices which he holdeth are not granted by any letters patents.*

See Feuillerat, Albert, *Blackfriars Records*, (Oxford University Press: Malone Society, 1913), p. 3 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/collectionspt102malouoft#page/2/mode/2up>.

According to Feuillerat, Sir William More was involved in a dispute with Sir Henry Jerningham concerning the wash-house, mill-house, plumbers' room, stable and other smaller adjoining houses in the Blackfriars. One of the documents relating to the dispute between More and Jerningham is endorsed 'Mr Jerningham for the houses in controversy'.

Feuillerat notes that 'upon this dispute was grafted another contestation between More and one Mr Kempe, the latter as 'buyer of titles'. See Feuillerat, *supra*, p. 105 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/collectionspt102malouoft#page/104/mode/2up>.

Smith concludes that 'Mr Kempe' was Anthony Kempe; that Anthony Kempe had purchased the infirmary from Sir Henry Jerningham by 1562; and that the dispute between Anthony Kempe and Sir William More took place circa 1562. Smith also concludes that Anthony Kempe later sold the former monastic infirmary to Sir George Carey. See Smith, Irwin, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse*, (New York: New York University Press, 1964), pp. 91, 95, 104, 124, 158, 450, 457-8.

Smith appears to be in error on all these points. Despite Sir William More's use of the word 'purchase' in the document below, Sir Henry Jerningham leased, rather than sold, the former monastic infirmary by indenture dated 20 November 1565 to Francis Kempe for 21 years. See SRO D641/3/E/1/7/1. The dispute between Kempe and More must therefore date from 1565 or later, and 'Mr Kempe' in More's answer must be Francis

Kempe, not Anthony. Moreover Sir George Carey did not purchase the infirmary; he leased, then eventually purchased, the Jerningham mansion in the Blackfriars, which was a structure near, but separate from, the infirmary. See SRO D641/3/E/1/7/2.

It should be noted, however, that Sir William More's language concerning the date of the dispute between himself and 'Mr Kempe' is confusing. More states that:

*Also Sir Thomas Cawarden, having the same granted unto him and his heirs by King Edward in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of his reign, did quietly enjoy the same during his life, as I have done ever since until this present, so that almost these fourteen years and since the Lady Kingston's grant there was never any title made to the same.*

The grant to Lady Mary Kingston was made on 5 September 1545 (see TNA C 66/768, mm. 23-4), while the grant to Sir Thomas Cawarden was made on 12 March 1550 (see TNA C 66/831, mm. 32-3). Sir William More acquired Sir Thomas Cawarden's property in the Blackfriars after the death of Cawarden's widow, Elizabeth, whose will was proved 21 October 1560 (see TNA PROB 11/43/540). It thus appears that when Sir William More says 'almost these fourteen years', he is referring, not to the grant to Lady Kingston nor to the grant to Sir Thomas Cawarden, but to his own acquisition of Lady Cawarden's interest at some time after her will was proved in October 1560.

A letter dated 24 August 1566 indicates that renovations were at that time being undertaken on 'Mr Kempe's house' (see Feuillerat, *supra*, p. 105), and since the 1565 lease of the infirmary granted Francis Kempe the right to take down 'partitions, doors, windows and chimneys', it would appear that he undertook renovations to the infirmary shortly after having been granted the lease.

According to Feuillerat 'by colour of this grant of the fermery and of the building etc. above and beneath', Kempe claimed 'a great room called the Parliament chamber', giving rise to Sir William More's answer in the document below.

For Francis Kempe and Anthony Kempe, see the wills of their parents, Sir William Kempe and Eleanor Browne Kampe, TNA PROB 11/27/500 and TNA PROB 11/43/638; the will of Anthony Kempe, dated 16 March 1598 and proved 5 February 1599, TNA PROB 11/94/3; and the History of Parliament entry for Francis Kempe at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/kempe-francis-1534-97-or-later>.

Although it is clear that the infirmary was leased in 1565 to Francis Kempe, Anthony Kempe was assessed £40 on lands in the Blackfriars in 1576 (see Feuillerat, *supra*, p. 124), and referred in his will to his property in the Blackfriars. Anthony Kempe's niece, Anne Kempe (c.1542-1623), had married Sir Thomas Shirley (c.1542-1612) the elder, and in his will Anthony Kempe left them the occupancy of his Blackfriars mansion house for a year:

*Item, my will is that my nephew, Sir Thomas Shirley, and my niece his wife, shall have and quietly enjoy my mansion house in the Blackfriars for one whole year after my decease, paying nothing for the same house for the said year, and after the end of the said year, my will is that my executors shall not put them out, but use them with all kindness for the rent thereof.*

Anthony Kempe is said to have been ‘something of a court favourite’, and to have been present at ‘most of the court ceremonies of his times’. He may have acquired his brother’s lease in the Blackfriars infirmary at some point in time, and may have eventually purchased the infirmary outright from the Jerninghams.

See also Hitchin-Kemp, Frederick, *A General History of the Kemp and Kempe Families*, (London: The Leadenhall Press, 1902), pp. 20-1; Questier, Michael C., *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 112, 524; and Cokayne, G.E., *The Complete Peerage*, (London: St Catharine Press, 1913), Vol. III, p. 405.

The document transcribed below is here cited as Folger Library MS L.b.426(2), which is the citation given in Holder, Nick, ‘The Medieval Friaries of London’, PhD thesis, University of London, August 2011, p. 284. Feuillerat, who first transcribed the document, refers to it in *Blackfriars Records*, pp. 105-6, as Loseley MS 424, part of ‘Bundle 424 of the Loseley manuscripts’, and states that L.b.426(2), endorsed ‘Answers to Mr Kempe’s demands’, is in almost all respects a duplicate. In the current Folger Library catalogue, however, a different document has the reference number L.b.424, so to avoid confusion with that document, the citation L.b.426(2) has been used here. The writer of this summary was advised by the Surrey History Centre that some of the Loseley manuscripts were sold in the 1920s and 1930s, and it thus seems possible that the original of the document transcribed below, as well as most of the remaining items in Bundle 424, are now lost.

The modern spelling transcript below was prepared from the original spelling transcript in Feuillerat, *supra*, pp. 105-6 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/collectionspt102malouoft#page/104/mode/2up>.

First, the fermery had a room above the same which was a lodging for those that were sick, and also one other room beneath the fermery, all which Mr Kempe hath.

Also the Parliament chamber did never pertain to the fermery, and is 3 times as big as the said fermery.

[Variant in duplicate document mentioned above: *The Parliament chamber, whereof part is over the room above the fermery, did never pertain to the fermery, being also 3 times as big as the said fermery.*]

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Also there never was any way or passage to go out of the fermery to the said chamber.

Also the said chamber was not rented at the time of the grant, nor long after, to any person, but kept in the King's hands to the use of the Revels.

Also it was never in the tenure of Sir William Kingston.

Also King Henry the 8<sup>th</sup> possessed it during his life.

Also King Edward did the like until the second year of his reign, at which time he let it by lease to Sir Thomas Cawarden.

Also the chamber is covered all with lead, being more worth than all the money he paid for the purchase.

Also Sir Thomas Cawarden, having the same granted unto him and his heirs by King Edward in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of his reign, did quietly enjoy the same during his life, as I have done ever since until this present, so that almost these fourteen years and since the Lady Kingston's grant there was never any title made to the same. If Sir Henry Jerningham had thought he had had any interest in it, he would in Queen's [sic?] Mary's time have sought the same, being then Vice-Chamberlain and of the Privy Council, and Sir Thomas Cawarden in disgrace and committed to the Fleet, and afterwards committed to his house.