

SUMMARY: The document below is the last will and testament, dated 24 September 1522 and proved 15 January 1523, of John Meautys, French secretary to Henry VII and Henry VIII between 1491 and 1522, who is named as a target of the rioters in the anonymous play, *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, and whose grandson, Sir Peter Meautys, was granted the manor of Bretts, which was later owned by Oxford from 1584 until his death.

The testator's family background is unknown, although it is suggested in 'Douze siècles d'histoire normande et anglo-normande à travers la famille de Méautis de Normandie' that he was from a family long established in Normandy, and came to England about 1490:

<http://genealogie.demeautis.free.fr/page.php?page=119>.

In the will below, the testator mentions his first and second wives, Agnes and Joan, by one of whom he had a son and heir, Philip Meautys (d. 8 November 1510), who predeceased him. For the tombs of the testator's son, Philip Meautys (d. 8 November 1510), and the testator's cousin, Adwin Laverock (d.1493) of Calais, see Loftie, W.J., *Kensington Picturesque & Historical*, (London: Field and Tuer, 1888), p. 187 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/kensingtonpictur00loftuoft#page/186/mode/2up>.

The testator married thirdly Lettice Lucas, daughter of Sir Thomas Lucas of Saxham, Suffolk, Solicitor General to Henry VIII. For Thomas Lucas, see his will, proved 12 March 1532, TNA PROB 11/24/110 (or TNA PROB 11/24319; both reference numbers are currently cited in the National Archives will catalogue). After the testator's death Lettice married John Grenville, brother of Richard Grenville (d. 18 March 1550), Knight Marshal of Calais, grandfather of the naval commander, Sir Richard Grenville (1542-1591), for whose will see TNA PROB 11/33/407. For John Grenville, who was in the service of Sir Thomas More and Lord Chancellor Audley, see the History of Parliament entry at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/grenville-john-1506-62-or-later>.

See also the Lucas pedigrees in Metcalfe, Walter C., ed., *The Visitations of Suffolk*, (Exeter: William Pollard, 1882), p.51 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationsofsuf00harvuoft#page/50/mode/2up>

Thomas Lucas of Saxham, county Suffolk, esquire, married Elizabeth, daughter of (blank) Keymes of Wales, by Raglan Castle, and by her hath issue Jasper, son and heir; Henry, second son; John, third son; Anne, married to Sir Thomas Barnardiston in county Suffolk, knight; and Lettice Lucas, sister to Anne, married John Greenfield of Exeter, county Devon, esquire.

Three of the testator's feoffees were thus members of his wife's family: her father, Thomas Lucas; her brother, Henry Lucas; and her brother-in-law, Sir Thomas Barnardiston (d.1542). For Sir Thomas Barnardiston, see his will, TNA PROB 11/29/212, and the Barnardiston pedigree at:

http://freepages.family.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~londonaye/barnardiston_family.htm

The testator's wife, Lettice Lucas, was the sister of John Lucas (d. 13 September 1556), a trusted associate and counsellor of Oxford's father, John de Vere (1516-1562), 16th Earl of Oxford. For John Lucas and the 16th Earl, see his will, TNA PROB 11/38/199, and the History of Parliament entry at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/lucas-john-1512-56>.

For the testator's feoffee, Richard Fermor (d. 17 November 1551), see the *ODNB* entry.

The testator's nephews, Sir John Benolt and Thomas Benolt (d.1534) are identified, respectively, in the *ODNB* as a priest and Clarenceux King of Arms:

Benolt, Thomas (d. 1534), herald and diplomat, may have been born at Rouen; his mother's maiden name was Meautis, but his father's identity is not known. It was with Calais, however, that the family had its strongest links; Benolt is generally thought to have been a native of Calais, while his brother John, a priest, became secretary of the town. Their uncle John Meautis was secretary of the French language to Henry VII and Henry VIII. Thomas Benolt, too, took up royal service, but the attribution to him of pursuivantships under Edward IV and Richard III is unreliable; his first definite appointment was as Windsor herald on 6 May 1504. On 20 November 1510 he was promoted to Norroy king of arms, and on 30 January 1511 to Clarenceux king of arms.

Benolt married twice. His first wife was Margaret (d. 1526), widow of Henry Arnold and daughter of Richard White of Kent, with whom he had no children. His second wife was Mary, daughter of Laurence Fermor of Minster Lovell, Oxfordshire, with whom he had a son, who probably died young, and two surviving daughters. He owned a house in London within the priory of St Helen, Bishopsgate, and also one in Chiswick, Middlesex, besides a manor in Gillingham, Kent.

The testator's will indicates that his son, Philip Meautys (d.1510), had predeceased him, and that Philip's widow, Elizabeth Foxley, had married Sir George Lawson.

Furthermore I will that my said wife pay unto George Lauson [=Lawson] and Elizabeth, his wife, late wife to my son, Philip Meautys. . . .

The pedigree of Foxley of Blakesley, Northamptonshire, states that John Foxley of Foxley married Elizabeth (blank), and had, with other issue, a daughter who married Sir

George Lawson of Yorkshire. See Metcalfe, Walter C., ed., *The Visitations of Northamptonshire*, (London: Mitchell and Hughes, 1887), p. 21 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationsofnor00harvrch#page/20/mode/2up>,

Philip Meautys is said to have married Elizabeth Foxley in 1500, and to have had three sons by her, John, Philip and Peter. For the will of Sir Peter Meautys (d.1562), see TNA PROB 11/45/221.

The mother of Oxford's servant, Israel Amyce (1542-1603), was Elizabeth Lawson, the daughter of Sir George Lawson, Lord Mayor of York in 1530, Treasurer of Berwick, and Receiver of the Duchy of York, knighted in 1527. See Shaw, William A., *The Knights of England*, (London: Sherratt and Hughes, 1906), Vol. II, p. 46 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/knightsofengland02shawuoft#page/n55/mode/2up>.

See also the will of Roger Amyce (d.1574?), father of Israel Amyce, TNA PROB 11/56/394:

Item, all such debt or duty as is due or owing by our Sovereign Lady the Queen's Majesty unto me, the said Roger Amyce, as in the right of Elizabeth Lawson, my late wife, now deceased, one of the daughters of Sir George Lawson, knight, deceased

It seems likely that the Sir George Lawson who was the father of Israel Amyce's mother, Elizabeth Lawson, was the same George Lawson who married the widow of the testator's son, Philip Meautys, by 1522.

As noted above, the testator is the John Meautys mentioned in the anonymous *Book of Sir Thomas More*, thought to have been written by Shakespeare. See Pollard, Alfred W., *Shakespeare's Hand in The Play of Sir Thomas More*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), p. 203 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/shakespeareshand00polluoft#page/202/mode/2up>

*Lincol. Then gallant bloods you whoes fre sowles doo skorne
to beare the inforsed wrongs of aliens
ad rage to ressolutione fier the howses
of theis audatious strangers: This is Saint Martins
and yonder dwells Mutas a wealthy Piccarde
at the Greene Gate
de Barde Peter van Hollocke Adrian Martine
with many more outlandishe fugetiues
shall theis enioy more priueledge then wee
in our own country – lets become ther slaiues
since iustis kepes not them in greater awe
wele be ourselues rough ministers at lawe.*

*Clo. Vse no more swords nor no mor words but fier
the howses braue captaine curragious fier me
ther howses.*

The testator narrowly escaped the mob on Evil Mayday in 1517. See Strype, John, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster*, at:

http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/strype/TransformServlet?page=book2_084

Then is there a fair House, of old time called the Green Gate, by which one Michael Pistoy, Lumbard, held it, with a Tenement and nine Shops, in the Reign of Richard II. who in the 15th of his Reign, gave it to Roger Crophull and Tho. Bromeslet, Esqrs; by the Name of the Green Gate, in the Parish of St. Andrew upon Cornhill, in Limestreet Ward: Since the which time, Philip Malpas, sometime Alderman, and one of the Sheriffs, dwelled therein, and was there robbed and spoiled of his Goods, to a great Value, by Jack Cade, and other Rebels, in the Year 1449.

Afterwards, in the Reign of Henry VII. it was seized into the King's Hands. And then granted first unto John Alston, after that, unto William de la Rivers, and since by Henry VIII. to John Mutas, a Pickard, or Frenchman, who dwelled there, and harboured in his House many Frenchmen, that kalendred Wolsteds, and did other things, contrary to the Franchises of the Citizens. Wherefore on evil May Day, which was in the Year 1517, the Prentises and other spoiled his House, and if they could have found Mutas, they would have stricken off his Head. Sir Peter Mutas, Son to the said John Mutas, sold this House to David Woodrofe, Alderman, whose Son, Sir Nicholas Woodrofe, Alderman, sold it over to John Moore, Alderman, that next possessed it.

According to the *Chronicle of the Grey Friars*, the testator saved himself by hiding in the gutters of his house. See Nichols, John Gough, ed., *Chronicle of the Grey Friars of London*, (London: Camden Society, 1852), p. 30 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/chronicleofgreyf00londrich#page/30/mode/2up>

Thys yere was yell May day, that yong men and prentes of London rose in the nyght, and wolde have had James [sic] Mottas ane owte-landych mane and wolde have slayne him, but he hyde hym in hys gotters in hys howse.

For the testator as a target of the rioters as portrayed in the anonymous *Book of Sir Thomas More*, see also Greg, W.W., *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, (London: Malone Society, 1911), p. 15 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/bookofsirthomasm00brituoft#page/14/mode/2up>

See also:

<https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/11-1/more.htm>

*[W]hat Rowland calls the ‘relentlessly familiar’ topographic specificity is another important factor in the play’s representation of London (18). On the eve of the riot proper, in a scene marked for omission, Lincoln and his comrades gather at St Martins, an outlying liberty of the city near Aldersgate which was notorious – both in 1517 and in the 1590s – for its large and disorderly immigrant population (15). Here Lincoln accurately depicts the Dutch and French inhabitants of this area by naming as the rioters’ targets the distinctly non-Italian ‘Mewtas a wealthie Piccarde ... / De Barde, Peter van Hollock, [and] Adrian Martine’, along with ‘many more outlandish fugitiues’ (scene iv, lines 419-21). Probably for reasons of dramatic economy, the action against the aliens is confined in the play to St Martin’s, where the rioters are confronted by More, rather than, as actually happened, dispersed around various locations where the strangers had congregated (such as Cornhill and Blanche Appleton to the east of the city). Nevertheless, in a strikingly detailed instance of the persistence of civic memory, Mewtas’s house is correctly identified by Lincoln as ‘the greene gate’, where, according to Stow’s *Survey of London*, the former ‘harbored ... many Frenchmen, that kalendered wolstedes, and did other things contrarie to the Franchises of the Citizens’ (vol. I 152) (16).*

The testator was at one time in the service of Thomas Cromwell (d. 28 July 1540). For mention of the testator in Cromwell’s will, see ‘The Death of Thomas Cromwell’:

<https://engelskhistoria.wordpress.com/2015/07/28/the-death-of-thomas-cromwell/>

Item I gyue and bequeth to Peter mewtes my seruauntt vjⁱ xiiij^s iiiij^d.

For further mention of the testator by Cromwell, see Gairdner, Vol. XII Part II, *supra*, pp. 392 and 409 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/letterspapersfor122grea#page/392/mode/2up/>.

The testator held several offices under Henry VII and Henry VIII. For a pension paid to the testator as ‘Secretary of the King of England’, see:

‘Spain: 1519’, in *Calendar of State Papers, Spain, Volume 2, 1509-1525*, ed. G A Bergenroth (London, 1866), pp. 294-296. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/spain/vol2/pp294-296> [accessed 13 April 2016].

For a pardon granted to the testator, see Hunt, Leigh, *The Old Court Suburb or, Memorials of Kensington*, (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1855), Vol. I, p. 161 at:

http://books.google.ca/books?id=cyoJAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA161&lpg=PA161&dq=%22john+meautis%22&source=bl&ots=EqL1oOKjV0&sig=R0x3gIMAtDL_1HiawH0RzHxdtPA&hl=en&ei=eja-

S5_GIJPstQOrmYCbBQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CAYQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%22john%20meautis%22&f=false.

For leases in which the testator is described as a gentleman of the King's Privy Chamber and Master of Bethlehem Hospital, see East Sussex Record Office, DAN/1572 and DAN/1573 at:

http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?_st=adv&_ep=DAN%2F1572&_dss=range&_ro=any.

For a grant in which the testator is described as the King's Secretary for the French tongue, see TNA SP 46/123/fo107-8.

For the grant to the testator of Pontefract Priory on 1 July 1542 see Gairdner, James and R.H. Brodie, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1900), Vol. XVII, p. 695 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/letterspapersfor17greauoft#page/694/mode/2up>.

For licence granted to the testator in connection with artillery, see Gairdner, James, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1891), Vol. XII Part II, p. 227 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/letterspapersfor122grea#page/226/mode/2up/>.

For the grant to the testator of the site of the former Benedictine nunnery at Bromley (St Leonard's), see Bell, James, *A New and Comprehensive Gazetteer of England and Wales*, Glasgow: Fullarton & Co., 1836), Vol I, p. 327 at:

https://books.google.ca/books?id=ywkHAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA327&lpg=PA327&dq=%22Brompton%22+%22Mewtas%22&source=bl&ots=fWEZeuIyRq&sig=IXTodDjKivNxxLg3CuiiBkde7FA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwitkoC_ZXMAhVG5mMKHUPWBW8Q6AEIHTAA#v=onepage&q=%22Brompton%22%20%22Mewtas%22&f=false.

LM: Test{amentu}m Ioh{ann}is Meawtys

[f. 2v] In the name of Almighty God, my Maker and Redeemer, Amen. I, John Meautys of the parish of Kensington in the county of Middlesex and now of London, being of good mind and whole memory, the 24th day of September the year of Our Lord God 1522 and the 14th year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King Henry the 8th, make and ordain this my last will and testament as hereafter followeth:

First, I bequeath my soul unto my said Maker, and to that Blessed Lady and Virgin, his Mother, and to all his saints, and if I fortune to decease at Kensington, then I will my

body be there buried where mine executors shall think convenient, and I bequeath unto the high altar of the same church for tithes and offerings forgotten, 6s 8d, and to the wardens of the church for torches and other necessities to be done the day of mine interring and month's mind, 3s 4d, to the parish clerk there, 20d;

And if I fortune to decease at London, then I will my body to be interred in the Church of the Friars Augustines, unto whom then I bequeath 20s;

Also I will have there or else at Kensington sung for my soul a trental of Masses over and besides such Masses, alms and observances as shall be done there at days of my sepulture and month's mind by discretion of mine executors;

I bequeath also unto Friar Tomson, to pray and to do suffrages for my soul, 20s;

Also I will that Lettice, my wife, pay yearly out of one of my tenements at Kensington term of her life 10s to the churchwardens of the church there to have mine obit yearly in remembrance, and to pray for my soul and for my wives, Agnes and Joan, and all other my friends and benefactors;

And furthermore here I annul and revoke all other wills and testaments by me made before the date hereof;

The residue of all my goods and chattels not before given nor bequeathed, after my debts and legacies truly content and performed, I give and bequeath unto the said Lettice, my wife, whom I make and ordain my sole executrix of this my present testament, and my father-in-law, Thomas Lucas, and Henry Lucas, his son, supervisors of the same, to th' intent they may aid, succour and support my said wife in all her causes and matters requisite;

In witness whereof to this my present testament and last will, subscribed with my name and sign manual of mine own hand, I have set my seal the day and years abovesaid;

Also I give unto my servant, Elyn Freman, one of my mazers and 6 spoons of silver.

Vltima voluntas eiusdem Ioh {an} nis

And as touching the disposition of my lands and tenements, I will and my mind is as hereafter followeth:

First, as for my lands and tenements, meadows and pastures, rents, reversions and services with their appurtenances being of freehold and lying in Kensington, Fulham, Chelsea, Brompton, Hammersmith, Knightsbridge with Westbourne in the parish of Westminster or elsewhere in the county of Middlesex, whereas before this time I have enfeoffed my said father-in-law, Thomas Lucas, my brother-in-law, Thomas

Barnardiston, squire, William Walwyn, squire, Richard Fermor of London, gentleman and Merchant of the Staple, and my brother [=brother-in-law], Henry Lucas, to that use and intent that they shall perform and execute thereof the last will of me, the said John Meautys, according to the effect of a pair of indentures made between me and my said father upon the covenants of marriage had between me and the said Lettice, [f. 3r] my wife, as by the same indentures bearing date the 22nd day of August the 12th year [=22 August 1520] of the reign of King Henry the 8th, and also by the tenor of my said deed of feoffment bearing date the 9th day of July the 13th year [=9 July 1521] of our said Sovereign Lord's reign, more plainly appeareth, know all persons by these presents that th' intent, mind and last will of me, the said John Meautys, is that all the said lands and tenements and other the premises with th' appurtenances in the said towns and county above-remembered being freehold, that they be and remain unto me, the said John, and Lettice, my wife, term of our lives, and after to th' issue of our two bodies between us lawfully begotten, and in default of such issue, I, the said John Meautys, will and my plain mind is that all the same lands and tenements and other the premises with their appurtenances be and remain unto the said Lettice, my wife, to have and hold unto her and to her heirs and assigns forever more, and I will, desire and require my said feoffees that they do make and execute estates accordingly without delay after th' effect of this my last will;

And over that I will and require also mine nephew, Sir John Benolt, clerk, and Thomas Benolt, otherwise called Clarenceux, and Sir Robert Lyly, vicar of Grinbery(?) in the county of Middlesex, which were by and with me heretofore enfeoffed of trust in divers of my said lands and tenements, that they do make unto the said Lettice, my wife, a sufficient and lawful release of the same lands and tenements when and at such time as they shall be required thereunto;

Furthermore I will that my said wife pay unto George Lauson [=Lawson] and Elizabeth, his wife, late wife to my son, Philip Meautys, the annuity of £4 3s 4d which I have granted them by my writing out of my lands and tenements in Brompton for term of life of the same Elizabeth, and that she enjoy the same upon condition that she and her husband at their costs and charges cause and see all the houses and buildings upon the same lands and tenements to be sufficiently repaired without ruin, waste or decay as it was appointed between him and me, and also that the said George nor Elizabeth shall nor do not trouble, grieve nor molest in any wise the said Lettice, my wife, in or for any cause or matter concerning the premises in disturbances, breaking or interruption of this my present testament and last will;

And as touching all mine other lands and tenements, rents and services with their appurtenances holden by copy of court roll lying in the said towns and parishes and elsewhere in the said county of Middlesex, together with my lazarus-house in Hammersmith and the woods in the same whereof I have made particular surrenders as appeareth by my writings under my sign and seal, I will also and my perfect mind is that all the same lands and tenements and other the premises with their appurtenances being copyhold be, pass and remain to me and the said Lettice, my wife, term of our lives, and further with such remainders over and in like manner and form as is before specified and

remembered of my said lands and tenements of freehold, paying and yielding to the chief lords of the fee the rents and services of old time due after the customs of the manors of the same;

In witness whereof to this my last will subscribed with mine own hand I have put my seal the said 24th day of September the said year of Our Lord God 1522 and the said 14th year of the reign of our said Sovereign Lord King Henry the Eight.

Probatum fuit testamentu{m} suprascripti defuncti vna cum Vltima voluntate eiusdem Coram prefatis Com{m}issarijs in eccl{es}ia Cath{o}lica diui Pauli London xvo die mensis Ianuarij Anno D{omi}ni Mill{es}imo quingentesimo vicesimo secundo Iurament{o} Leticie Relicte & executric{is} in h{uius}mo{d}i test{ament}o no{m}i{n}at{e} Ac approbatum & insinuatum &c Et com{m}issa fuit admi{n}istracio auct{orit}at{e} p{re}fat{orum} Reu{erendissi}mor{um} patru{m} om{nium} & sing{u}lor{um} bonoru{m} Iuriu{m} & creditor{um} dict{um} defunctu{m} & h{uius}mo{d}i test{amentu}m concernen{tium} prefate executrici De b{e}n{e} & fidel{ite}r admi{n}strand{o} Ac de pleno In{uenta}rio citra festu{m} s{an}c{t}i Blasij Ep{iscop}i prox{imum} futur{um} exhi{ben}d{o} necnon de plano & vero compoto reddend{o} Ad s{an}c{t}a dei Eu{a}ngelia Iurat{e}

[=The testament of the above-written deceased together with the last will of the same was proved before the forenamed Commissioners in the Cathedral Church of Saint Paul, London, on the 15th day of the month of January in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred twenty-second by the oath of Lettice, relict & executrix named in the same testament, and probated & entered etc., and administration was granted by the authority of the forenamed Most Reverend Fathers to the forenamed executrix of all the goods, rights & credits concerning the said deceased & the same testament, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well & faithfully administer, and to exhibit a full inventory before the feast of Saint Blaise, Bishop, next to come, and also to render a plain & true account.]