

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 30 July 1545 and proved 16 May 1549, of Henry Browne (d.1545), whose son and heir, Sir Thomas Browne (d. 9 February 1597), signed Lady Russell's petition against James Burbage's Blackfriars theatre.

The testator's great-grandson, Sir Matthew Browne (died c.1603), was one of the trustees of Nicholas Brend (d. 12 October 1601), who leased the ground on which the Globe theatre was built by lease dated 21 February 1599 to Richard Burbage, Cuthbert Burbage, William Kempe, Augustine Phillips, Thomas Pope, John Heminges and William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon (see TNA REQ 4/1/2). See the will, dated 2 August 1603 and proved 19 April 1608, TNA PROB 11/111/273, of Sir Matthew Browne (died c.1603).

FAMILY BACKGROUND

Testator's grandparents

The testator was the grandson of Sir George Browne (beheaded 4 December 1483) and Elizabeth Paston (d. 1 February 1488), daughter of Sir William Paston (1378-1444), Justice of the Common Pleas, by Agnes Barry (d.1479). Before marrying the testator's grandfather, Elizabeth Paston had been the wife of Robert Poynings, slain 3 February 1461 at the Second Battle of St Albans. See Richardson, Douglas, *Plantagenet Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. I, pp. 412-13, and the *ODNB* entry for Robert Poynings.

The testator was the great-nephew of Anthony Browne (d.1506), who, by his second wife, Lucy Neville (d.1534), was the great-grandfather of Mary Browne (c.1552-1607), mother of Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, the dedicatee of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), and of Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594). By his first wife, Sir Anthony Browne (d.1506) had a daughter, Anne Browne, who was the first wife of Charles Brandon (c.1484-1545), Duke of Suffolk, who married, as his fourth wife, Katherine Willoughby (1519-1580), later the mother-in-law of Oxford's sister, Mary de Vere (d.1624). See *Plantagenet Ancestry*, *supra*, Vol. I, pp. 179-80, and 369-71.

Testator's parents

The testator was the son of Sir Matthew Browne (d. 6 August 1557) of Betchworth, Surrey, and Frideswide Guildford, the daughter of Sir Richard Guildford (c.1450-1506) by his first wife, Anne Pympe, daughter and heiress of John Pympe. See *Plantagenet Ancestry*, *supra*, Vol. I, pp. 412-13. See also the *ODNB* entry for Sir Richard Guildford (d.1506) and his will, TNA PROB 11/17/381.

Testator's siblings

The testator is said to have had seven brothers and six sisters, for whom see *Plantagenet Ancestry, supra*, Vol. I, pp. 412-13, and the will of the testator's father, Sir Matthew Browne, TNA PROB 11/ 39/371.

MARRIAGES AND ISSUE***Testator's first marriage***

The testator married firstly Katherine Shelley, the daughter of Sir William Shelley (d. 4 January 1549) of Michelgrove (in Clapham), Sussex, and Alice Belknap, the daughter of Henry Belknap (d. 3 July 1488), esquire. For the will of Henry Belknap, proved 2 December 1488, see TNA PROB 11/8/280. Alice Belknap's sister, Elizabeth Belknap, married Sir Philip Cooke (c.1454 - 7 December 1503) of Gidea Hall (in Havering), Essex, by whom she was the grandmother of Sir Anthony Cooke (d. 11 June 1576), and the great-grandmother of Sir Anthony Cooke's five daughters, including Lady Burghley, Lady Bacon and Lady Russell. See *Plantagenet Ancestry, supra*, Vol. I, pp. 232-7.

By Katherine Shelley, the testator had a son and a daughter:

* **Sir Thomas Browne** (d. 9 February 1597), who married firstly, before 16 December 1558), Mabel Fitzwilliam, eldest daughter and co-heiress of Sir William Fitzwilliam (d. 3 October 1559) and his second wife, Jane Roberts (born c.1540), daughter and co-heiress of John Roberts of Mayfield, Sussex, by whom he was the father of Sir Matthew Browne (died c.1603), the trustee of Nicholas Brend, owner of the land on which the Globe Theatre was built. See *Plantagenet Ancestry, supra*, Vol. I, p. 414. For Sir William Fitzwilliam, see his will, TNA PROB 11/42B/624, and the History of Parliament entry at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/fitzwilliam-sir-william-i-1559>

For Sir William Fitzwilliam, see also Nichols, John Gough, ed., *The Topographer and Genealogist*, Vol. III, (London: John Bowyer Nichols and Sons, 1858), p. 406 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=Nh0IAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA406>

See also the will of Jane (nee Roberts) Fitzwilliam, TNA PROB 11/57/533.

Sir Thomas Browne married secondly, by 1 August 1575, Helen Harding (1537-1601), widow of Richard Knyvet and daughter and heiress of William Harding, by whom he had one son, Richard Browne. See the will of Helen Harding, TNA PROB 11/98/226.

In 1596 Sir Thomas Browne signed Lady Russell's petition against James Burbage's Blackfriars theatre. See Laoutaris, Chris, *Shakespeare and the Countess*, (London: Fig Tree, 2014), pp. 121, 123, 130, 176-7, 277-8, 324:

The Blackfriars tutelary lord William More had been seeking a patent to establish his own legal court and appoint Justices of the Peace to enforce law in the district. [Lady Russell's] brother-in-law Sir Nicholas Bacon was drawn into the scheme and was sent a list of gentlemen who could be appointed as 'commissioners for the peace within the precinct'. A further list included . . . one Thomas Browne. . . . Sir Thomas Browne, who was not merely [Lady Russell's] neighbour in the Blackfriars but her kinsman, related to both the Cooke and Fitzwilliam families. He must have been the very same who would feature as a signatory on her petition. This is made all the more likely by the fact that he was a resident of St Anne's, where [Lady Russell] worshipped in the church just south of her own house. This was the same parish that many of her other co-signatories called home. A few years later Sir Thomas would be involved with Elizabeth's close friend and kinsman Sir Henry Neville in the equipping of the 'trained shot' in Berkshire, the troops pressed into the service of the Crown during the attack of the Spanish Armada in 1588. . . . As well as his property in the Blackfriars, Browne also owned an estate in Surrey, Betchworth Castle, making him a neighbour of William More twice over.

Thomas Browne gave further ratification to the 1580 list of commissioners by appending his name for a second time to the base of the document, where it appears alongside those of William More and Lord Cobham. . . .

When [Sir Thomas Browne] put his name to [Lady Russell's] petition he had less than a year to live. When he died, in 1597, his Blackfriars property passed to his second wife, Helen Harding. The 1599 Subsidy Rolls confirm that the man who was present in the Blackfriars in 1596 and signed [Lady Russell's] petition must be this same Thomas Browne, for his name is replaced on the list of tax assessments by that of "Lady Browne". The intriguing document suggests some telling neighbourly associations, for next to her own name, and placing them as the Brownes' immediate neighbours in the parish of St Anne's, are those of 'Doctor Paddy' and 'Cuthbert Burbage'. . . .

The land on which the Globe would be built was leased from Nicholas Brend, who would later pass it on to [Lady Russell's] kinsman Sir Matthew Browne, son of the Sir Thomas Browne whose signing of [Lady Russell's] petition had helped bring them to this shift.

(2) Mary Browne, who married Cuthbert Blagden, gentleman, of Dorking, Surrey. He may have been related to the Cuthbert Blagden who was Serjeant of the King's Confectionary. See TNA STAC 2/5, f. 15. See also the pedigree of Fleete in Howard, Joseph Jackson and Joseph Lemuel Chester, eds., *The Visitation of London*, (London: Harleian Society, 1880), Vol. XV, p. 277 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=HPwUAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA277>

Testator's second marriage

The testator married secondly Mary Fitzherbert, the daughter of John Fitzherbert, by whom he had no issue.

Testator's third marriage

The testator married thirdly, before 21 September 1534, Eleanor Shirley, the daughter of Thomas Shirley (d. 28 April 1544?) of West Grinstead, Sussex, and Elizabeth Gorges, the daughter of Marmaduke Gorges, by whom he is said to have had five sons and two daughters:

* **Richard Browne**, who married Katherine Harding (d.1599), sister of Helen Harding (see above). See also the History of Parliament entry for Richard Browne at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/browne-richard-i-1614>

* **Roger Browne**.

* **John Browne**. He is not mentioned in the will below.

* **Alexander Browne**.

* **Jasper Browne**.

* **Katherine Browne**, who married a husband surnamed Hill. She is not mentioned in the will below.

* **Elizabeth Browne**. She is not mentioned in the will below.

See *Plantagenet Ancestry, supra*, Vol. I, p. 413.

See also the will of Thomas Shirley, TNA PROB 11/39/383, and the History of Parliament entry at:

<https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/shirley-thomas-1489-1544>

After the testator's death, Eleanor Shirley married secondly, by licence dated 15 February 1546, William Sackville (d. 19 May 1556), eldest son of Edward Sackville of Bletchingley and Jane Kynaston, daughter of Sir Roger Kynaston, by whom she had a son, Edward Sackville, and a daughter, Mary Sackville, who married Thomas Dannett, esquire. After the death of William Sackville, Eleanor Shirley married a husband surnamed Gainsford. See *Plantagenet Ancestry, supra*, Vol. I, p. 413, and Surrey History Centre LM/1036/61, depositions dated 4 June 1599 by Eleanor Gainsford, widow, and Edward Sackville, her son.

RM: Henrici Browne Armigeri

In the name of God, Amen. The 30th day of July in the year of Our Lord God a thousand five hundred forty and five and of the reign of our Sovereign Lord Henry the Eight by the grace of God King of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith and in Earth of the Church of England and Ireland the Supreme Head 37th, I, Henry Browne, esquire, being whole of mind and perfect memory, laud and thanks be to Almighty God, make my last will and testament in the manner and form following:

First of all I bequeath my soul to Almighty God, and my body to be buried within the parish church where my soul shall depart from my body in such manner and form as mine executrix underwritten shall think good;

Also I give, will and devise to Eleanor, my right well-beloved wife, all my messuages, lands, tenements, rents, reversions and services and all other mine hereditaments wheresoever they lie, as well in the parish of Betchworth as elsewhere within the counties of Surrey & Sussex, to have and to hold to my said wife during the term of her life;

And after her decease, I will that all my said hereditaments to my wife before devised and given shall remain and be to my son, Richard Browne, and to the heirs males of his body lawfully begotten;

[f. 225v.] And for default of such issue, the remainder thereof to be to my son, Roger Browne, and to the heirs males of his body lawfully begotten;

And for default of such issue the remainder thereof to be to my son, Alexander Browne, and to the heirs males of his body lawfully begotten;

And for default of such issue the remainder thereof to be to my son, Jasper Browne, and to the heirs males of his body lawfully begotten;

And for default of such issue the remainder thereof to be to mine eldest son, Thomas Browne, and to the heirs males of his body lawfully begotten;

And for default of such issue the remainder thereof to my right heirs forever;

Also I give, devise and bequeath to my said wife all my several possessions, interests and terms of years which I have yet to come, as well of and in my mansion house and all the lands and tenements to the same belonging set and lying in Dorking in the said county of Surrey as also of and in the rectory and parsonage of Dorking aforesaid with all the tithes, oblations, obventions, emoluments and profits to the said parsonage pertaining or in any wise belonging, to have, hold and enjoy to my said wife during all the several terms therein to come if she shall so long live;

And if it shall fortune my said wife to die before any of the said terms expired or ended, then I will and bequeath all the residue of the years in both the said leases then to come to my said son, Richard, to occupy and dispose to his best advantage and most commodity;

All the residue of my goods and chattels before not devised nor bequeathed I freely give to my said wife whom I ordain and make my sole executrix of this my last will and testament;

And by this my last will and testament I do utterly revoke and repel all other testaments by me heretofore made, and this to stand in only force and effect, these being present: Richard Atkyns, esquire, Mr Owyn, Doctor of Physic, John Darnall of the King's Exchequer, gentleman, Thomas Mowndes of London, gold wire-drawer, and Richard Smyth, clerk.

Probatum fuit h{uius}mo{d}i testamentu{m} coram d{omi}no Cant{uariensis} Archiep{iscop}o apud London xvjo die Maij Anno d{omi}ni Mill{es}imo quingentesimo xlixo Iurament{o} Iohan{n}is Lewes procur{atoris} Elenore Rel{ic}t{e} et ex{ecutri}c{is} in h{uius}mo{d}i testamento no{m}i{n}at{e} Cui com{m}issa fuit admi{n}istrac{i}o o{mn}i{u}m bonor{um} &c De bene &c Ac de pleno Inuentario &c exhibend{o} Ad sancta dei eu{a}ngelia Iurat{e}

[=The same testament was proved before the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury at London on the 16th day of May in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred 49th by the oath of John Lewes, proctor of Eleanor, relict and executrix appointed in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of all the goods etc., sworn on the Holy Gospels to well etc., and [+to exhibit?] a full inventory etc.]