

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 4 December 1553 and proved 7 September 1557, of Sir Matthew Browne (d. 6 August 1557) of West Betchworth, whose grandson 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

The testator was the son 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 father, Elizabeth Paston had been the wife of Robert Poyning (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 Poyning.

The testator was the 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 Richardson, Douglas, *Plantagenet Ancestry*, *supra*, Vol. I, pp. 179-80, and 369-71.

MARRIAGE AND ISSUE

The testator married Frideswide Guildford, the daughter of Sir Richard Guildford (c.1450-1506) by his first wife, Anne Pympe, daughter and heiress of John Pympe, by whom he is said to have had eight sons and six daughters. 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.

In the will below, the testator mentions only six sons and one daughter:

* **Henry Browne** (d.1545?), esquire, who predeceased the testator. For his will, dated 30 July 1545 and proved 16 May 1549, see TNA PROB 11/32/421.

Henry Browne 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 Richardson, Douglas, *Plantagenet Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. I, pp. 232-7.

By Katherine Shelley, Henry Browne had a son and a daughter:

(1) Sir Thomas Browne (d. 9 February 1597), the testator's heir.

Sir Thomas Browne 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>

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

Henry Browne 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 had five sons (Richard, Roger, John, Alexander and Jasper) and two daughters (Katherine and Elizabeth). See *Plantagenet Ancestry, supra*, Vol. I, p. 413. Richard Browne, Henry Browne’s son by his third

marriage to Eleanor Shirley, 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>

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 death of Henry Browne, 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 made 4 June 1599 by Eleanor Gainsford, widow, and Edward Sackville, her son.

* **Edward Browne**, who predeceased the testator.

* **Richard Browne**, who married Anne Saunders, the sister of Margaret Saunders (see below). See *Plantagenet Ancestry, supra*, Vol. I, p. 413.

* **George Browne**, esquire. He appears to have been the George Browne who served with Sir Anthony Browne (d.1548) and Sir Thomas Cawarden (d.1559) in the suppression of the Pilgrimage of Grace. See:

<http://www.surreyarchives.org.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=Z%2f407%2f8%2f3%2f1%2f2&pos=14>

Z/407/MSLb.336

1536

Accounts of receipts and expenses of Sir Anthony Browne [on expedition to suppress the Pilgrimage of Grace] travelling through Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire, 17 Oct to 15 Dec 1536. Browne appears to have been accompanied by George Browne, Thomas Cawarden, and a number of servants. The recorded expenses are daily disbursements for food and lodging. Gilbert Campport received sums of money from the three men named above and kept the accounts. 42 folios (23 blank); outer leaves frayed at head and foot.

* **Walter Browne**.

* **Owen Browne**.

* **Agnes Browne.**

Among the testator's children not mentioned in the will below were four daughters:

* **Jane Browne**, who married firstly Sir Francis Poynings, and secondly, by May 1539, as his third wife, Sir Edward Bray (d.1558), for whom see the History of Parliament entry at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/bray-sir-edward-1492-1558>

* **Anne Browne**, who married Thomas Dannett, 'a cousin and intimate friend of Sir William Cecil', for whom see Garrett, Christina Hallowell, *The Marian Exiles*, (Cambridge University Press, 1938), pp. 139-40 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=mNZxec42AhEC&pg=PA140>

According to 'A Who's Who of Tudor Women', Anne Browne and Thomas Dannett (23 March 1517-1569) married about 1542, and had five sons and three daughters. See:

http://www.tudorwomen.com/?page_id=646

There was at least one gentlewoman named Anne Browne at court during the period from 1517 until 1522. Some sources identify the Anne Browne who took part in the revels of 1517-1518 as the daughter of Sir Matthew Browne of Betchworth Castle and Dorking, Surrey (1473-August 6, 1557) and Frideswide Guildford, but since they did not marry until 1506, Anne could have been no more than ten in 1517 and is therefore an unlikely candidate. That Anne Browne married Thomas Dannett (March 23, 1517-1569) c.1542 and had five sons and three daughters, including a son named Audley (d.c.1591). It is possible that this is the same Anne Browne, single and age 22 in 1538, who was one of the Marchioness of Exeter's gentlewomen when that lady was arrested. She was "good with the needle" and could "play well upon the virginals and lute." Anne and Thomas Dannett settled in Somerset. Dannett was arrested on suspicion of complicity in the Duke of Suffolk's second uprising and upon his release he took his family into exile from 1554-1558. The Anne Browne who was at court in 1517-18 was probably the same one who was at the Field of Cloth of Gold in 1520 and took part in revels in March 1521/2. She has been identified as the sister of Sir Wiston (or Weston) Browne, and therefore was the daughter of Thomas Browne of Rookwood Hall and Longhouse in Abbess Roding, Essex (d.1488) and Mary Charlton. At the Field of Cloth of Gold, King Francis of France singled out Sir Wiston's sister (called "my lady Browne" in one account) and danced with her on several occasions during the festivities.

* **Mary Browne**, who married, about 1539, Richard Tame. See 'A Who's Who of Tudor Women' at:

http://www.tudorwomen.com/?page_id=646

Mary Browne (c.1513-1539?) was the daughter of Sir Matthew Browne of Beckworth Castle, Surrey (1473-August 6, 1557) and Frideswide Guildford. In about 1539, she married Richard Tame or Tamewe. She is my best guess to have been one of Princess Mary's ladies in waiting, appearing on the list of October 1, 1533, shortly before the princess's household was dissolved. In 1536, when Mary was again to have a household of her own, she asked for only three persons by name from her previous households. Mary Browne was one of them, described by the princess as "sometime my maid, whom for her virtue I love and could be glad to have in my company."

* **Elizabeth Browne**, who married John Poyntz (d. 29 November 1544) of Alderley, Gloucestershire, the son of Sir Robert Poyntz (d. 5 November 1520) of Iron Acton by Margaret Woodville, the illegitimate daughter and only child of Anthony Woodville (c.1440-1483), 2nd Earl Rivers, and Gwentlian Stradling. Anthony Woodville was the brother of Queen Elizabeth Woodville, wife of Edward IV. See the *ODNB* entries for Anthony Woodville and Robert Poyntz; and Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. I, p. 341 and Vol. III, pp. 286-7. For a portrait of John Poyntz by Holbein see:

<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/338782>

After the death of Elizabeth Browne, John Poyntz married Margaret Saunders, daughter of Nicholas Saunders (d. 29 August 1553) of Charlwood, Surrey, by Alice Hungate, the daughter of John Hungate of Yorkshire. After John Poyntz' death, Margaret Saunders married James Skinner (d.1558) of Reigate. See Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. I, p. 341 and Vol. III, pp. 286-7; the will of James Skinner, proved 7 December 1558, TNA PROB 11/42A/68; the will of Margaret Saunders Poyntz Skinner, proved 4 July 1564, TNA PROB 11/47/250; the will of Sir Thomas Saunders of Charlwood, proved 7 July 1566, TNA PROB 11/48/525; and Maclean, John, *A Historical and Genealogical Memoir of the Family of Poyntz*, Part II, (Exeter: W. Pollard, 1886), pp. 113-117 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/historicalgeneal02macl#page/114/mode/2up>

See also the History of Parliament entry for Margaret Saunders Poyntz Skinner's brother, Sir Thomas Saunders (d. 18 August 1565), at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/saunders-thomas-1513-65>

See also the entries for Margaret Saunders and Alice Poyntz at 'A Who's Who of Tudor Women', *supra*.

For the testator's other children, see *Plantagenet Ancestry, supra*, Vol. I, pp. 412-13.

During the years 1541-1556 the testator was sued in Chancery by his first cousin, Eleanor (nee Browne) Fogge Kempe, who sought a one-third interest in the manors of Westbury [in Wateringbury], Kingsnoth, 'Yeffyng', Womenswold, 'Brickhills' and Moriscourt [in Bapchild] under the custom of gavelkind. See TNA C 78/6/87, TNA C 78/10/34, and TNA C 1/1240/22-26. For her will, see TNA PROB 11/43/638.

The testator's overseer would appear to have been John Caryll (d.1566), for whom see the History of Parliament entry at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/caryll-%28carrell%29-john-1566>

RM: T{estamentum} Math{e}i Browne milit{is}

[f. 242r] In the name of God Amen. The 4th day of the month of December in the year of Our Lord God a thousand five hundred 53 in the first year of the reign of our Sovereign(?) Lady Mary by the grace of God Queen of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith etc., I, Matthew Browne of West Betchworth within the parish of Dorking in the county of Surrey, knight, being of whole mind and in good and perfect remembrance, laud and praise be unto Almighty God, I forsake and renounce all my former and last wills and make and ordain and declare this my present testament containing my last will in manner and form following:

First I bequeath and commend my soul unto Almighty God, my Maker and Redeemer, and my body to be buried in the church of Dorking near unto the place where Frideswide, my late wife, lieth buried, or else where it shall please God that my body shall depart;

Item, I bequeath toward the reparation of the same church of Dorking 10s;

Item, I will and my mind and intent is that all such debts and duties as I owe of right or of conscience to any person or persons be well and truly contented and paid by mine executors hereafter in this my present will and testament named or else adyured [=adjured?], and so to be paid without any delay or contradiction;

Item, I give and bequeath to Agnes, my daughter, towards her marriage three hundred marks, which I will to be received and levied of the rents, revenues and profits of the manors of Kingsnoth and Mylton within the count of Kent, and that the issues, revenues and profits of the said manors of Kyngsnoth and Mylton aforesaid be employed to no other use until the said sum of three hundred marks be paid to my said daughter;

Item, I will that my said executors at the time of my departing distribute and give in alms to certain poor people as they shall think good by their discretions ten pound;

Item, I give and bequeath to Thomas Browne, son and heir of Henry Browne, my late son and heir apparent, deceased, whose soul Jesus pardon, all my implements of household which I have in West Betchworth, that is to say, hangings, bedstedells [=bedsteads], forms, tables, cupboards, brewing vessels, pots of iron, pans of iron and iron spits of iron [sic?], pewter vessel, latten candlesticks, tables, vats, stools, chests, trevets [=trivets?], chairs, all featherbeds, all coverlets, all bolsters, all pillows, all blankets, all pairs of linen sheets, all counterpoints, all pair of complete harness, all bills for the wars, all testers of beds, all cushions and all manner of linen and instuff(?) whatsoever it be, my chain of gold, and all my plate of silver and gilt, spoons of silver, and basin and ewer of silver;

Item, I will that my said executors pay unto my servants immediately after my decease all such wages as I owe them for their service, and I will to every of my servants being in my service at the day of my decease or departing my life from this transitory world, every one of them one quarter's wages;

The residue of all my goods and chattels not willed before written ne hereafter in this my present will and my last testament I give and bequeath to the said Thomas Browne and Richard Browne, my son, whom I ordain and make my executors, and they to pay my debts and funerals charges and to perform this my last will and testament;

Item, in my most hearty wise I desire John Caryll, esquire, to be my overseer, and him I make to be my sole overseer of this my last will, and I give him for his counsel and labour thereof 40s;

For the disposition of my lands, first I will and mine intent and mind is that Thomas Browne, son and heir of my late son, Henry Browne, my heir apparent, esquire, deceased, have, hold and enjoy all my manors, lands, tenements, rents, reversions, services and hereditaments whatsoever they be with all and singular their appurtenances situate, lying and being in the counties of Kent, Sussex, Surrey and the City of London, except and forprised out of this my will and gift the third part of all such lands and tenements, rents and services as be holden of our said Sovereign Lady the Queen's grace in chief by knight's services, and also except and forprised all such my manors, lands, tenements, rents, services and other my hereditaments whatsoever they be in the said county of Kent which be of gavelkind tenure according to the custom of the said county of Kent, to have and to hold the said manors, lands, tenements, rents, reversions, services and hereditaments with all and singular their appurtenances except before excepted to the said Thomas Browne and to his heirs males of his body lawfully begotten according and after the true meaning and intent of the last will and testament of Sir George Browne, knight, my father, and in fulfilling and performing all covenants, grants and agreements made and contained in a pair of indentures between me, the said Sir Matthew Browne, knight, on the one party, and Sir William Shelley, deceased, and Katherine, his late wife, also deceased, and daughter of the said Sir William Shelley;

And to the residue of my said manors, lands and other the premises with their appurtenances of the tenure and nature of gavelkind in the county of Kent aforesaid my very will and mind is by this my last will and testament that the said manors, lands,

tenements and all other the premises last before mentioned shall be by me, the said Sir Matthew, willed, allotted, given and declared in avoiding of debates and strifes that might hereafter come and grow amongst my children and the said Thomas Browne and one Philip Browne, son of Edward Browne, my late son;

And in avoiding of the said debates [f. 242v] and strifes between the said parties, I give and bequeath to the said Richard Browne, George Browne, Walter Browne and Olkener [sic?] Browne, my sons, and Philip Browne, every of them £10 by the year of yearly rent and annuity, to have, hold and yearly perceive the yearly rent and annuity of £10 by the year to every of the said Richard, George, Walter, Olkener and Philip Browne, their executors and assigns, during their natural lives and the longer liver of them out of all the said manors, lands, tenements and other the premises, being the gavelkind lands in the said county of Kent, at the feasts of the Annunciation of Our Blessed Lady and Saint Michael th' Archangel by even portions;

And if it happen the said yearly rent or annuity of ten pound by the year be behind unpaid to any of the said Richard, George, Water, Olkener and Philip Browne, their executors or assigns, at any of the said feasts above mentioned by the space of 20 days and lawfully asked, that then it shall be lawful for the said Richard, George, Walter, Olkyner and Philip Browne and every of them severally or jointly, their executors or assigns, to enter and distrain into the manors, lands, tenements and other the premises of gavelkind land and every part and parcel thereof, and the distresses there so taken, it to lead, drive, impark, retain and keep unto such time the said yearly rent or annuity of ten pound by the year be to every of the said Richard, George, Owen and Philip Browne, son of the said Edward, with the arrearages of the same, if any be, be fully satisfied, contented and paid;

And I give, will and allot by this my last will and testament all my said manors, lands, tenements, rents, services and hereditaments whatsoever they be, being gavelkind land, to the said Thomas Browne, his heirs and assigns, to have and to hold the said manors, lands, tenements and all other the premises called gavelkind lands with all and singular their appurtenances to the said Thomas Browne, his heirs and assigns, forever;

In witness whereof to this present my last will and testament I, the said Sir Matthew Browne, have subscribed my name and put to my seal the day and year abovesaid in the presence of (no names given). Sir Matthew Browne.

Probatum fuit h{uius}mo{d}i Testamentu{m} coram mag{ist}ro Will{el}mo Cooke Legum doctore Prerogatiue Cant{uariensis} Custode siue Commissario apud London Septimo die mens{is} Septembris Anno d{omi}ni mill{es}imo quingen{tesim}o quinquagesimo septimo Iuramento Thome Browne ex{ecutoris} Cui & Res{er}uata p{otes}tate & Rich{ard}o Browne executori in h{uius}mo{d}i no{m}i{n}at{o} & [words crossed out] enim cu{m} ven{er}it & ad missur{o} &c

[=The same testament was proved before Master William Cooke, Doctor of the Laws, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, at London on the seventh day of the month of September in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred fifty-seventh by the oath of Thomas Browne, executor, to whom etc., with power reserved etc. to Richard Browne, executor named in the same etc. [words crossed out] also when he shall have come etc. to be admitted etc.]