

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 25 November 1555 [sic] and proved 10 April 1557, of Robert Forster (c.1482-1545), esquire, of Little Birch, Essex, whose great-granddaughter, Frances Forster, married William Strachey, author of an account widely believed to be a principal source of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

The testator's daughter-in-law, Alice Cloville, married, as her third husband, Oxford's uncle, Henry Golding.

DATE OF THE TESTATOR'S WILL

The PCC copy states that the testator made his will 'the xxvto day of November in the yere of our lord god a Thousaunde five hunderth lv', i.e. 1555. However it appears the testator died a decade earlier in 1545 (see *Easthorpe, infra* and 'Genealogy Report' *infra*), a date supported by the fact that the testator's son-in-law, Eustace Sulyard, who died 26 February 1547, was living when the testator made his will.

The likeliest explanation for the discrepancy is that the Roman numeral in the original will was 'xlv', and the scribe inadvertently omitted the 'x', thus turning '45' into '55'.

The testator's eldest son and heir, George Forster, was appointed sole executor. Although he survived the testator, he did not prove the will, and died in 1556. After his death, the will was proved by Robert Forster, one of the testator's younger sons, who was granted administration on 10 April 1557 as though the testator had died intestate.

The misdating of the will appears to have led the authors of the account of the manor of Easthorpe to conclude that there were two Robert Forsters, one of whom died in 1545, the other in 1557, both of whom had sons named George:

9. Cal. Pat. 1557-8, 67; E.R.O., T/P 195/11, no. 30, Little Birch, p. 4. Another Robert Forster (d. 1557), also had a son called George: P.R.O., PROB 11/39.

CONNECTIONS TO OXFORD

The testator's daughter-in-law, Alice (nee Cloville) Tyrrell Forster Golding, married, as her third husband, Oxford's maternal uncle, Henry Golding (d.1576). Alice Cloville's daughter, Mary Forster Waldegrave, contracted a bigamous marriage with one of Oxford's servants, William Sankey (d.1577), who was slain by another of Oxford's servants, William Weekes.

Another of Oxford's uncles, the translator Arthur Golding (1535/6-1606), was financially ruined by lawsuits over the manor of Little Birch with the testator's granddaughter, Mary Forster Waldegrave, and her putative husbands, William Sankey and Robert Cryspe. For

a discussion of the lawsuits, see Golding, Louis Thorn, *An Elizabethan Puritan*, (New York: R.R. Smith, 1937), pp. 77-81, 90-111. For the slaying of William Sankey, see his will, TNA PROB 11/60/211.

CONNECTIONS TO SHAKESPEARE

The testator's great-granddaughter, Frances Forster (1573-1620), married William Strachey (4 April 1572 – June 1621), the son of William Strachey (d.1598) and Mary Cooke (d.1587). William Strachey authored an account widely believed to be a principal source of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

The testator's grandson, William Forster (born c.1554), married Elizabeth Draper (born c.1535), whose brother, Matthew Draper, was the son-in-law of William Blackwell (.1570?) and Margaret Campion Blackwell, whose grandson, Mathy Bacon (d.1639), sold the Blackfriars gatehouse on 15 October 1604 to Henry Walker, who in 1613 sold it to William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon. Mathy Bacon, his mother, Anne Blackwell Bacon, and his grandfather, William Blackwell (d.1570?), are all mentioned in the indenture by which Shakespeare purchased from Henry Walker a dwelling-house or tenement and plot of ground in the precinct of the Blackfriars on 10 March 1613. See Folger MS Z.c.22(45) and London Metropolitan Archives CLC/522/MS03738 for the purchasers' and vendor's copies of the indenture, respectively. For the will of Mathy Bacon (d.1639), see TNA PROB 11/180/622. For the will of Mathy Bacon's grandfather, William Blackwell (d.1570?) see TNA PROB 11/52/400. For the will of Mathy Bacon's grandmother, Margaret Campion Blackwell, see TNA PROB 11/69/398.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

The testator was the only son of Thomas Forster (born 1452 in Etherstone, Durham, died c.1526 in Adderstone, Northumberland) and Jane Hilton (born c.1453 in Hilton Castle, Durham, d.1510). See 'A Genealogy Report for William Forster', (5 February 2011), p. 21, available as a pdf file online at:

shiresgenealogy.co.uk/doc/William_Forster.pdf

See also the pedigree of Forster of Sylham taken in 1561 in Metcalfe, Walter, ed., *The Visitations of Suffolk*, (Exeter: William Pollard, 1882), pp. 29-30 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationsofsuf00harvuoft#page/28/mode/2up>

MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

The testator married Margaret Tendring, the daughter of William Tendring (d.1500) of Stoke by Nayland, Suffolk, and Thomasine Sidney (d. 4 October 1485). See 'Genealogy Report', *supra*, p. 21.

Margaret Tendring was the sister of Dorothy Tendring, who married firstly Francis Southwell (d.1512) of Norfolk, Auditor of the Exchequer, son of Richard Southwell by his first wife, Amy Wichingham. See the will of Sir Robert Southwell (c.1506 – 26 October 1559), TNA PROB 11/43/577, and Gunn, Steven, *Henry VII's New Men and the Making of Tudor England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. xx at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=q4LADAAAQBAJ&pg=PR20>

Dorothy Tendring married secondly Sir(?) John Peryent (died c.1552), second son of Thomas Peryent, esquire, and Mary Brockett of Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire. See the pedigree of Perient of Digswell in Metcalfe, Walter C., *The Visitations of Hertfordshire* (London: Harleian Society, 1886), Vol. XXII, pp. 156-7 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationsofher222732cook#page/n173/mode/2up>

However according to the Brockett pedigree, *Alice* Brockett, the daughter of Edward Brockett (d.1488?) of Wheathampstead and Elizabeth Thwaytes, married Thomas Peryent, esquire. See the will of Edward Brockett, dated 20 July 1485 and proved 3 December 1488, TNA PROB 11/8/281, and Brockett, Edward J., *The Descendants of John Brockett*, (New Jersey: East Orange, 1905), p. 268 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/descendantsofjoh00inbroc#page/n301/mode/2up>

See also the Southwell pedigree in Dashwood, G.H., ed., *The Visitation of Norfolk in the Year 1563*, (Norwich: Miller & Leavins, 1878), p. 125 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=qkpFAAAAYAAJ&pg=RA4-PP14>

See also TNA E 326/6394, a Chancery suit from 1516/17 involving 'John Peryent and Robert Foster, gents, who married the daughters and heirs of William Tenderyng'.

See also Nichols, John Gough, ed., *The Topographer and Genealogist*, Vol. II, (London: John Bowyer Nichols and Sons, 1853), p. 561 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=EKhWAAAIAAJ&pg=PA561>

Gertrude, first wife of George Gyll, married 1535, ob. 1550, was daughter and coheir of Sir John Peryent, Knt., by Dorothy, widow of Francis Southwell, who deceased 1513, father of Sir Richard and Sir Robert Southwell of Woodrising, Norfolk, eldest daughter and one of the four coheirs of William Tendring (inq. p. m. 1500), of Stoke Neyland, Suffolk, and Little Birch, Essex, by Thomazine, daughter of William Sidney, sister of Nicholas Sidney, whose will was proved 11 Feb. 1515, ancestor of Sir Philip Sydney.

This Thomazine died 4 Oct. 1485. (M. I. Yoxford, Suffolk.) Sir John Peryent was made auditor in the principality of South Wales, with Francis Southwell, 30 H. 8, and 32 following he was appointed to the Court of Wards and Liveries. He died about 1552, having remarried Elizabeth daughter and heir of John Hopton of Deptford (will proved 1526).

By Margaret Tendring, the testator had five sons and five daughters:

* **George Forster** (d.1556?) eldest son and heir, who married Alice Cloville, widow of Edward Tyrrell (d. 16 June 1541), eldest son of John Tyrrell (d. 25 October 1494) of Beeches (for whose will see TNA PROB 11/10/311), by whom he had two daughters and coheirs:

-**Joan Forster**, who married firstly Henry Peryent, nephew of Sir John Peryent, *supra*, i.e. the son of George Peryent, gentleman, brother of Sir John Peryent. See the Peryent pedigree in *Visitations of Hertfordshire, supra*.

See also the will, dated 24 March 1529 and proved 17 October 1532, TNA PROB 11/24/246, of George Peryent, in which he mentions his wife, Agnes, his son, Henry Peryent, and two daughters, Elizabeth Peryent (who married, as his second wife, Sir Humphrey Stile of Beckenham, Kent), and Katherine Peryent. For the will of Sir Humphrey Stile, dated 1 May 1551 and proved 21 April 1552, see TNA PROB 11/35/127.

For the will of Thomas Peryent (d.1539) of Digswell, elder brother of George Peryent, see TNA PROB 11/27/549.

By Henry Peryent, Joan Forster had a son and daughter:

(1) **Thomas Peryent**, esquire, who married Anne Browne, the daughter of John Browne of Wickham Hall, Essex, younger brother of Wistan Browne (d.1581?). Wistan Browne (d.1581?) appears to have been the Wistan Browne who is mentioned, together with his father, George Browne (d.1559), in the inquisition post mortem taken after the death of Oxford's father, John de Vere (1516-1562), 16th Earl of Oxford. See his will, dated 16 January 1580 and proved 27 April 1581, TNA PROB 11/63/226, and the Browne pedigree in Metcalfe, Walter C., ed., *The Visitations of Essex*, (London: Harleian Society, 1878), Vol. XIII, p. 167 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=0m1KAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA167>

See also the pedigree of Browne in *Visitations of Essex, supra*, p. 362 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=0m1KAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA362>

(2) **Mary Peryent** (buried 19 April 1631), who was unmarried at the time her grandmother, Alice (nee Cloville) Tyrrell Forster Golding, made her will on 26 May

1585 (see TNA PROB 11/70/187). She married Sir Edward Burton of Eastbourne, Sussex, by whom she had fifteen children. For her monumental brass in St Mary's Church, Eastbourne, see Sperling, C.F.D., 'Monumental Inscriptions from Other Counties Relating to East Anglia', in White, C.H. Evelyn, ed., *The East Anglian*, New Series, Vol. VI, (London: Elliot Stock, 1895-6), p. 38 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=JexAAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA38>

See also:

<https://www.sussexrecordsociety.org/dbs/esm/church/930/>

See also the Burton pedigree in Bannerman, W. Bruce, ed., *The Visitations of the County of Sussex*, (London: Harleian Society, 1905), Vol. LIII, pp. 57-8 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationsofcou5354beno#page/n75>

See also the pedigree of Perient of Digswell in Metcalfe, Walter C., *The Visitations of Hertfordshire* (London: Harleian Society, 1886), Vol. XXII, pp. 156-7 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationsofher222732cook#page/n173/mode/2up>

Joan Forster married secondly Robert Spring, esquire, of Icklingham, Suffolk. In 1570, she and Robert Spring sold her moiety in the manor of Easthorpe to John Bacon, gentleman, who later sold it to Joan's stepfather, Henry Golding. See *Easthorpe, infra*, and Fitch, Marc and Frederick Emmison, eds., *Feet of Fines for Essex, Vol. V, 1547-1580*, (Oxford: Leopard's Head Press, 1991), p. 152.

Joan Forster Peryent Spring is not mentioned in the will of her stepfather, Henry Golding, and it appears likely she had died by the time he made his will in 1576. In her mother's will, dated 26 Mary 1585, TNA PROB 11/70/187, she is referred to as deceased:

I will and bequeath unto William Spring, the son and heir of Robert Spring of Icklingham in the county of Suffolk, esquire, and the son of Jane, my daughter, late his wife, deceased

For the will of Robert Spring, dated 26 November 1592 and proved 7 May 1593, see TNA PROB 11/81/337. By the time Robert Spring made his will, he had remarried. His second wife was Anne Hogan, the sister of Thomas Hogan (1521-1586). See Swales, R.J.W., 'Local Politics and the Parliamentary Representation of Sussex 1529-1558', Vol. 2, pp. 252-3, and the History of Parliament entry for Thomas Hogan at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/hogan-%28huggen-huggins%29-thomas-1521-86>

For the marriage of Joan Forster Peryent to Robert Spring, see also Howard, Joseph Jackson, ed., *The Visitation of Suffolke*, Vol. I, (Lowestoft: Samuel Tymms, 1866), p. 206 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=ExI2AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA206>

-**Mary Forster**, who married Robert Waldegrave, by whom, according to the will of her stepfather, Henry Golding (d.1576), she had a daughter, Elizabeth Waldegrave. The marriage is mentioned in the will, dated 14 September 1559, TNA PROB 11/44/318, of Robert Waldegrave's brother, Sir Edward Waldegrave (1517-1561) of Borley, a Privy Councillor under Queen Mary who died a prisoner in the Tower under Queen Elizabeth for his Catholic beliefs:

And whereas I have to my charges provided and bought a marriage for my brother, Robert Waldegrave, that is to say, one of the daughters and heirs of George Forster, esquire, deceased, by whom he shall have some inheritance for term of his life if he have issue by her, the which as yet he hath not, and for want thereof, or of other assurance to him to be made by her of her said inheritance, he should by her death be nothing advanced, therefore my mind and will is that if it shall fortune my said brother's wife to die, living my brother, without issue by him, or having not of her lands, tenements or hereditaments to the yearly value of £20 assured to him for term of his life, then I will and give unto him one annuity or yearly rent of £4 by year out of my manor of Chewton in the county of Somerset

The marriage of Margaret Tendring's granddaughter, Mary Forster, and Robert Waldegrave may have come about because Sir Edward Waldegrave's wife, Frances Neville (1518/19-1599) was a first cousin of Margaret Neville (d.1575), wife of Dorothy Tendring's son, Sir Robert Southwell (c.1506–1559). Sir Edward Waldegrave's wife, Frances Neville, was the daughter of Sir Edward Neville (b. in or before 1482, d. 1538), of Addington Park, Kent, one of the younger sons of George Neville (1436-1492), 2nd Baron Bergavenny, while Sir Robert Southwell's wife, Margaret Neville, was the daughter and heir apparent of Sir Thomas Neville (b. in or before 1484, d. 1542), another of the younger sons of George Neville (1436-1492), 2nd Baron Bergavenny. See the *ODNB* entries for Sir Edward Waldegrave (1516/17–1561) and Sir Edward Neville (b. in or before 1482, d. 1538).

According to *The Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1558-60*, p. 360, Mary (Forster) Waldegrave and her sister, Joan (Forster) Peryent, were wards of the Crown who were licensed to enter upon their lands on 2 December 1559, by which time both were already married:

The like [+licence] for Robert Walgrave and Mary his wife and Henry Peryent and Joan his wife, as in right of the said Mary and Joan, daughters and co-heirs of George Forster; issues from the time when Mary and Joan attained their full age. By bill of the Court of Wards.

After the death of George Forster, his widow, Alice Cloville Tyrrell Forster, married thirdly Oxford's maternal uncle, Henry Golding (d.1576). For the will of Henry Golding, see TNA PROB 11/59/98. For the will of Alice Cloville Tyrrell Forster Golding, see TNA PROB 11/70/187.

After his marriage to Alice Cloville Tyrrell Forster, Henry Golding purchased the estate which had been inherited by her daughters. See Golding, Louis Thorn, *An Elizabethan Puritan*, (New York: R.R. Smith, 1937), p. 74:

George Forster left two daughters, Joan and Mary, and to them he had bequeathed one-half of his estate to be divided between them and a life estate in the other half to his widow with the reversion to them. After Henry Golding married the widow he purchased the portions left the daughters as well as their reversionary rights in the portion left to their mother.

After her marriage to Robert Waldegrave, Mary Forster Waldegrave contracted a bigamous marriage with one of Oxford's servants, William Sankey (d.1577), who was slain by another of Oxford's servants, William Weekes. After William Sankey's death, Mary Forster Waldegrave contracted yet another marriage, apparently also bigamous, with Robert Crispe.

Mary Forster Waldegrave's stepfather, Henry Golding, died in 1576, and by 1579, she and her putative husbands, William Sankey and Robert Crispe, had commenced a series of lawsuits against Henry Golding's executor, the translator Arthur Golding (1535/6-1606), another of Oxford's uncles, concerning the lands which had been left to her by her father and purchased by Henry Golding. See TNA C 2/Eliz/S19/26, TNA C 2/Eliz/W26/37 and TNA C 2/Eliz/G13/6.

Moreover certain clauses in Henry Golding's will charged his executor with responsibility for a debt owed to Mary Forster Waldegrave by Henry Golding's kinsman, and Oxford's servant, Nicholas Mynne:

Item, whereas there is owing unto Mary Waldegrave by Nicholas Mynne four hundred pounds, and by myself one hundred threescore pounds, I will that my executors do pay the same unto my well-beloved wife and my cousin, William Aylofffe, to th' use of the said Mary Waldegrave, and also that till she be paid the same she be allowed ten pounds of every hundred towards her living.

Item, whereas Robert Waldegrave standeth bound unto me in one pair of indentures for the performance of certain covenants touching the said Mary Waldegrave, and hath knowledged a statute of the sum of seven hundred pounds for the performance of the covenants of the said indenture and statute to my said wife and cousin Aylofffe, praying them wisely to forsee for the safety of the said Mary Waldegrave, charging also my executor to be aiding and assisting to them, and to do whatsoever shall be meet for him to do for the furtherance of that matter.

In her lawsuit against Arthur Golding, Mary Forster Waldegrave's claimed that Nicholas Mynne had not repaid this debt. See Golding, *supra*, pp. 77-81. See also Fitch, Marc and Frederick Emmison, eds., *Feet of Fines for Essex*, vol. V, 1547-1580 (Oxford: Leopard's Head Press, 1991) p. 110.

Arthur Golding was ultimately financially ruined, in part by these lawsuits brought against him by his step-niece, Mary Forster Waldegrave, and her putative husbands. For further discussion of the lawsuits, see Golding, Louis Thorn, *An Elizabethan Puritan*, (New York: R.R. Smith, 1937), pp. 77-81, 90-111.

See also the *ODNB* entry for Arthur Golding:

In 1576 Arthur's brother Henry died, leaving the greater part of his estate to Arthur. This consisted, most importantly, of the manors of Easthorpe and Little Birch, Essex. The legacy turned out to be most unfortunate. First, the property which Arthur inherited was heavily encumbered, since Henry had pledged it as security for the debts to the crown of a friend of his, a civil servant called Thomas Gardiner. At least part of the rents on it appears thus to have become due to the crown. Second, Henry had obtained Easthorpe and Little Birch by his marriage to the widow of the previous owner, and she and her daughters with her first husband claimed rights in the property which caused Arthur a great deal of trouble and expense; he suffered in particular from litigation conducted by Henry's stepdaughter Mary and her soi-disant husband, Robert Cryspe. Difficult as these circumstances were, it is hard to believe that inheriting an estate need necessarily lead to financial ruin, and the fact that Arthur was indeed ruined within twenty years suggests that he may not have been a particularly efficient manager of his own affairs.

* **Thomas Forster**, second son. It appears he predeceased the testator, as he is not mentioned in the will below.

* **Robert Forster**, third son. In 1557 he was granted administration of the testator's will, his eldest brother, George (d.1556?), who had been appointed executor, having died before the will was proved.

* **Michael Forster**, fourth son. He is referred to in the will below as 'poor Michael, my son', and was likely the Michael Forster who witnessed the will. He is said to have married Alice Lacy(?), widow of John Smith and daughter of Thomas Lacy. He is also mentioned, together with his daughter, Agnes Forster, in the will, dated 20 July 1579, of his sister, Margaret Forster Bassett Sulyard Aylofffe, and was presumably the Michael Forster who witnessed a codicil to her will on 21 June 1586.

* **William Forster**, fifth son, who married Anne Gainsford (c.1539-1591), the daughter of Thomas Gainsford and Elizabeth Aylofffe. Thomas Gainsford was the son of Sir John Gainsford (d.1540) of Crowhurst, Surrey. Elizabeth Aylofffe was the daughter of Audrey Shaa, widow of William Aylofffe (d.1517), and daughter of Sir John Shaa, Lord Mayor of London. See the will of Sir John Shaa, TNA PROB 11/14/156, and the

Gainsford pedigree in *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, Vol. VI, (London: Wyman and Sons, 1874), p. 327 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=IEUVAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA327>

See also the will of Sir John Gainsford (d.1540), TNA PROB 11/28/264, and ‘The Family of Gainsford’, *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, Vol. III, (London: Lovell Reeve & Co., 1845), p. 60 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=B6VCAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA60>

See also the Aylofffe pedigree in Metcalfe, Walter C., ed., *The Visitations of Essex*, (London: Harleian Society, 1878), Vol. XIII, p. 141 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=JyJvAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA141>

By Anne Gainsford, William Forster had two sons and two daughters:

-William Forster (born c.1554), who married firstly, on 9 September 1572, Elizabeth Draper (buried 2 May 1605), widow of John Bowyer, esquire, of Lincoln’s Inn and Camberwell, Surrey, and daughter of Robert Draper of Camberwell, Surrey, by Elizabeth Fyfield, by whom he had a son, Matthew Forster (b.1574), and a daughter, Frances Forster (1573-1620), who married William Strachey (4 April 1572 – June 1621), the son of William Strachey (d.1598) and Mary Cooke (d.1587). William Strachey authored an account widely believed to be a principal source of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. For William Strachey, see the *ODNB* entry. For the will of John Bowyer, dated 1 July 1569 and proved 29 November 1570, in which he appoints his brother-in-law, Matthew Draper (d. 21 July 1577), as one of his overseers, see TNA PROB 11/52/505.

William Forster married secondly, on 1 July 1589 in Crowhurst, Surrey, Margaret Clerke, by whom he had no issue.

For the will, dated 20 September 1544 and proved 14 June 1547, of Robert Draper of Camberwell, Surrey, see TNA PROB 11/31/536. For the Draper family see *Collectanea Topographica et Genealogica*, Vol. III, (London: John Bowyer Nichols, 1836), pp. 150-1 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/collectaneatopog03londuoft#page/150>

For the will, dated 1 August 1574 and 16 July 1577 [sic?] and proved 28 January 1577, of Robert Draper’s fourth son, Matthew Draper, in which the testator leaves bequests to his sister, Elizabeth Forster, wife of William Forster of Crowhurst, Surrey, and to Elizabeth’s daughter, Frances Forster (later the wife of William Strachey, *supra*), see TNA PROB 11/59/439.

Matthew Draper married, on 13 June 1559, Saintes or Sence or Sens Blackwell (buried 24 August 1571), daughter of William Blackwell and Margaret Campion, whose grandson, Mathy Bacon, sold the Blackfriars gatehouse on 15 October 1604 to Henry Walker, who in 1613 sold it to William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon. Mathy Bacon, his mother, Anne Blackwell Bacon, and his grandfather, William Blackwell (d.1570?), are all mentioned in the indenture by which Shakespeare purchased from Henry Walker a dwelling-house or tenement and plot of ground in the precinct of the Blackfriars on 10 March 1613. See Folger MS Z.c.22(45) and London Metropolitan Archives CLC/522/MS03738 for the purchasers' and vendor's copies of the indenture, respectively. For the will of Mathy Bacon (d.1639), see TNA PROB 11/180/622. For the will of Mathy Bacon's grandfather, William Blackwell (d.1570?) see TNA PROB 11/52/400. For the will of Mathy Bacon's grandmother, Margaret Campion Blackwell, see TNA PROB 11/69/398.

-John Forster.

-Elizabeth Forster.

-Bridget Forster.

For William Forster's marriages and children, see also 'Genealogy Report', pp. 15, 17, 33, 38.

* **Margaret Forster** (c.1508 - 5 February 1587). She is not mentioned in the will below. She married firstly Gregory Bassett (c.1528), esquire; secondly Eustace Sulyard (d. 26 February 1547); and thirdly William Aylofffe (d.1569). For her marriages and children, see her will, TNA PROB 11/72/1. See also the will of her second husband, Eustace Sulyard, TNA PROB 11/31/508, and the will of her third husband, William Aylofffe, TNA PROB 11/51/50.

* **Bridget Forster**, unmarried at the time the testator made his will. She later married George Christmas, esquire, of Colchester. See 'Genealogy Report', *supra*, p. 18. According to one source, she was the last prioress of a nunnery at Runwell, and resided with Sir Edward Sulyard (d.1610) and his wife during her latter years. Robert Dureden recorded a visit to Runwell on 18 July 1602. See Collins, Andrew, 'The Roots of Runwell and the Running Well Mystery' at:

<http://www.andrewcollins.com/page/articles/Runwell.htm>

The nunnerie house of timber and plaister is dwelled inne by Sr Edwd. Sulliard his bay liffe, to whom I did also that same daie at Flemings paie my respectes ere I did go home. Atte the manoir is lodged by Sr Edwd and hys Ladye, Mistresse Bridgette Forster hys aunnt, though Sr Edwed avowes that she be aged fulle ninety and foure yeres. Thys Mistresse Bridgett be the laste heade or prioresse of the nunnes house and hathe even yette her pensionne of our soveraigne ladge rge Queen, albeitr a recusante and stiffe in Papystrie.

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<http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/>

* **Elizabeth Forster.** She is not mentioned in the will below. She married John Southwell, esquire, of Barham, Suffolk, eldest son and heir of Robert Southwell (d. 27 September 1514), esquire, serjeant at law, by Cecily Sharnington, daughter of Thomas Sharnington (d.1519), esquire, of Cranworth, Norfolk. For the will of Robert Southwell, dated 9 August 1514, see TNA PROB 11/18/22.

See also Lodge, John, *The Peerage of Ireland*, rev. ed., Vol. VI, (Dublin: James Moore, 1789), pp. 6-14 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=z4oUAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA6>

John Southwell of Barham, Esq., married Elizabeth, daughter of Robert Foster of Birch in Essex, Esq., by whom he had three sons and six daughters: John; Thomas; William; Elizabeth, married to John Wentworth, Esq.; Cicely, to John Cheke of Debenham in Essex, Esq.; Frances, to Thomas Kent; Margaret, (said, in Lord Southwell's Pedigree, to be the wife of Nicholas Caston; but if so, she was also married to Sir William Methwold, Serjeant at Law, appointed 28 April 1612 Chief Baron of the Exchequer in Ireland, and after Chief Justice of the King's Bench, who died 7 March 1619 . . .); Grace, fifth daughter, married John Howard; and the sixth was Prudence.

See also Carthew, G.A., *The Hundred of Launditch and Deanery of Brisley in the County of Norfolk*, (Norwich: Miller and Leavins, 1877), p. 237 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=inFEAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA237>

See also the *ODNB* entry for Sir William Sharnington:

Sharnington, Sir William (c.1495–1553), administrator and embezzler, was the first son of Thomas Sharnington (d. 1527?) of Norfolk and his wife, Katherine, daughter and heir of William Pyrton of Little Bentley, Essex.

See also the History of Parliament entry for Sir William Sharnington at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/sharnington-william-1495-1553>

* **Jane Forster**, unmarried at the time the testator made his will. In the will of her brother-in-law, Eustace Sulyard (d. 26 February 1547), she is referred to as 'Jane Forster, my wife's sister'. She and her husband, Thomas Tyrrell, and their son, Edward Tyrrell, are mentioned in the will, dated 20 July 1579, of her sister, Margaret Forster Bassett Sulyard Aylofffe.

* **Katherine Forster**, unmarried at the time the testator made his will. She is said to have married a husband surnamed Fillool.

TESTATOR'S LANDS

For the testator's manor of Easthorpe, see

'Easthorpe: Manors and other estates', in *A History of the County of Essex: Volume 10, Lexden Hundred (Part) Including Dedham, Earls Colne and Wivenhoe*, ed. Janet Cooper (London, 2001), pp. 200-202. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol10/pp200-202> [accessed 10 October 2017].

Robert Peyton, (fn. 7) who sold the manor to Sir Thomas Audley in 1536. Audley sold it in 1542 to Robert Forster and his son George. (fn. 8) Robert died in 1545 and George in 1556, leaving George's daughters, Mary and Joan, both minors, as coheirs. (fn. 9) In 1564 Mary and her husband Robert Waldegrave sold their moiety to Henry Golding and in 1570 Joan and her husband Robert Spring sold the other moiety to John Bacon who sold it in 1576 to Henry Golding. (fn. 10).

Henry Golding (d. 1576) was succeeded as lord of Easthorpe manor by his brother Arthur, translator of Ovid's Metamorphoses; they were half brothers to the countess of Oxford, mother of Edward de Vere, 17th earl of Oxford. (fn. 11) In 1577 Arthur Golding (d. 1606) sold the manor to Richard Atkins who sold it in 1594 to Sir George Kingsmill (d. 1606).

For the testator's manor of Little Birch, see:

'Birch: Manors', *A History of the County of Essex: Volume 10: Lexden Hundred (Part) including Dedham, Earls Colne and Wivenhoe* (2001), pp. 44-46. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=15146>:

The manor of Little Birch was held in 1066 by Ulwin, and in 1086 of Robert Gernon by Robert de Verley. Robert Gernon's fief escheated to the Crown, and Henry I granted it to William de Munfitchet. On Richard Munfitchet's death without issue in 1267, the overlordship passed to Evelyn (d. 1274), daughter of William de Forz count of Aumale, and wife of Edmund earl of Lancaster, who also died without issue, and from whom, presumably, the overlordship came to the de Vere family, earls of Oxford, as part of the honor of Castle Hedingham. The overlordship continued in the de Vere family and was last recorded in the 18th century.

The undertenancy was held in 1276 by Robert Verley, and from 1325 or earlier by the Tendring family. William Tendring (1435-90) was M.P. for Maldon in 1478. William Tendring (d. c. 1500) had two daughters, Margaret and Dorothy: Margaret's husband Robert Forster (d. 1545) acquired three quarters of the manor and in 1514 bought the remaining quarter from Dorothy, then Dorothy Southwell. Robert's heir was his son George Forster (d. 1556). Little Birch descended with Great Birch and Easthorpe manors until 1598 when Arthur Golding sold it to John Petre, Lord Petre.

TESTATOR'S RELATIONSHIP TO OXFORD

As noted above, the testator's widow married Oxford's maternal uncle, Henry Golding.

In addition, there was a relationship to Oxford through the testator's wife, Margaret Tendring. Oxford's friend, Francis Southwell, who was involved with Charles Arundel and Lord Henry Howard (1540-1614) in allegations against Oxford in 1581 (see TNA SP 12/151/57, ff. 118-19), was the grandson of the testator's sister-in-law, Dorothy Tendering. Dorothy Tendring married Francis Southwell (d.1512), and was the mother of Sir Robert Southwell (c.1506–1559), the father of Oxford's friend, Francis Southwell. See the *ODNB* entry for Sir Robert Southwell (c.1506-1559), and his will, TNA PROB 11/43/577.

LM Rob{er}ti ffoster

In the name of God, Amen. The 25th day of November in the year of Our Lord God a thousand five hundred 55 [sic], I, Robert Forster of Little Birch in the county of Essex, esquire, being in good mind and perfect remembrance, make this my last will and testament in manner and form as followeth:

First, I bequeath my soul to Almighty God, my Maker and Redeemer, and my body to be buried in the parish church of Little Birch aforesaid;

Item, I will that a gravestone be bought and laid over me in a place where they use to set the sepulchre, and that it might serve instead of a sepulchre;

Item, I will that the revenues and profits of my manor of Easthorpe shall come to the performance of this my last will and testament for the space of ten years after my decease according unto such covenants as is made between my son, George Forster, with others, and me;

Item, I will and bequeath unto my daughter, Bridget, two hundred marks, whereof one hundred marks remaineth in the hands of my son-in-law, Eustace Sulyard, as appeareth by a bill of his hand, to be paid at the day of her marriage;

Item, I bequeath to my daughter, Jane, one hundred marks, to be paid also at the day of her marriage;

Item, I bequeath to my daughter, Katherine, also one hundred marks, to be paid in like manner at the day of her marriage, unless my son, George, can give a longer day or agree with them when they shall chance to marry;

Item, I will and bequeath the overplus of the revenues of my manor of Easthorpe and other my goods and chattels, my said daughters being discharged and paid, to be evenly divided among my sons;

Item, I will and bequeath my tenement which one Simon Firton now farmeth, being of the yearly value of £4, and also a piece of ground called Coxslan, being of the yearly value of 40s, which my son, George, now occupieth, to my sons Robert, Michael and William, to every of them 40s yearly during their naturals [sic] lives, which the said Robert Forster have resigned freely unto myself to be distributed according unto my will and pleasure;

Item, that you(?) shall be good unto your younger brother, William, in any wise;

Item, I bequeath unto Frost, my servant, my gelding, boots, spurs, saddle and bridle, boot hosen and my hosen that I lie in;

Also I bequeath to Frost, my servant, my old coat;

Item, I will and bequeath to poor Michael, my son, my furred gown, jacket and doublet;

Item, I will and bequeath to William Forster, my son, my coat guarded with velvet;

And of the performance of this my last will and testament, I ordain and make my son, George Forster, my whole executor, the day and year above-written, these being witnesses: Henry Barrington, Michael Forster, Thomas Brande, priest, Thomas Collett, with others.

Decimo die mensis Aprilis Anno d{omi}ni mill{es}imo quingen{tesim}o lvijo emanauit com{m}issa Roberto fforster filio naturali et l{egi}timo prefati defuncti ad administrand{um} bona ip{s}ius defuncti p{er} via{m} intestati decedentis pro eo q{uod} Georgius fforster executor vnicus in h{uius}mo{d}i testamento no{m}i{n}atus morte{m} obiit anteq{uam} onus execuc{i}onis d{i}c{t}i Testamenti in se acceptauit De bene &c ad sancta dei Eu{a}ngelia Iurato

[=On the tenth day of the month of April in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred 57th a grant issued to Robert Forster, natural and legitimate son of the forenamed deceased, to administer the goods of the same deceased by way of an intestacy for that George Forster, sole executor named in the same testament, died before taking upon himself the burden of the execution of the said testament, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well etc.]