

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 18 December 1558 and proved 24 April 1560, of George Newport, first cousin of Sir Richard Newport (d. 12 September 1570), owner of a copy of Hall's *Chronicle* containing annotations thought to have been made by Shakespeare. The volume was formerly Loan 61 in the British Library, and is now in the hands of a trustee, Lord Hesketh. See Keen, Alan and Roger Lubbock, *The Annotator*, (London: Putnam, 1954).

The History of Parliament entry for the testator, which states that he was born by 1532, the son of George Newport of Droitwich and his wife Joan, that he married, before 1554, Elizabeth Blount, the daughter of Peter Blount of Sodington Hall in Mamble, Worcestershire, and that by her he had four daughters, appears to contain several errors. See the History of Parliament entry at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/newport-george-1532-5860>.

The principal document contradicting the History of Parliament entry is a lawsuit, TNA C 1/1041/30-31, brought by the testator between 1538-1544 against William Newport (d.1559) of Rushock, Worcestershire. This lawsuit states that the testator was the eldest son and heir apparent of William Newport (not George), and that his marriage to Elizabeth Blount took place, at the latest, by 1544 (not 1554):

C 1/1041/30-31

*Short title: Newporte v Newporte.*

*Plaintiffs: George, son and heir apparent of William NEWPORTE, esquire.*

*Defendants: the said William NEWPORTE.*

*Subject: Refusal to complete a settlement on complainant at his marriage with Elizabeth, sister of Thomas Blount, esquire, including a messuage and 'fates wallyng' in Droitwich partly with 'sele, vyne, and crybbe,' and the farm of Rushock. Worcestershire. 1538-1544*

For the will, dated 23 March 1559 and proved 8 September 1559, of the testator's father, William Newport, who held a lease of Rushock, see TNA PROB 11/42B/459. The testator made his will on 18 December 1558, three months before his father, William Newport, made his will, and although the testator's will was not proved until 24 April 1560, it seems likely that he predeceased his father. The will of the testator's father mentions the testator several times, but he neither leaves him a bequest nor appoints him as executor. Rather, he leaves bequests to the testator's son and heir, Thomas Newport (d.1559), and although he does not state that the testator is deceased, the nature of the bequests suggest that the testator had, in fact, predeceased him:

*Item, I bequeath to Thomas Newport, my son George's son, the best chamber in my house and 6 oxen and 6 kine, with a wain and a plough and that that belongeth to them, & a gelding.*

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*Item, I bequeath to John Newport [ADDED IN MARGIN: George Newport's] son, ten marks in money or in cattle;*

*Item, I bequeath to Margaret Newport, George Newport's daughter, £20.*

*Item, I bequeath to Thomas Newport, son and heir to George Newport, my farm of Rushock during his life, and after his life to his heirs male.*

It should also be noted that the will, TNA PROB 11/42B/695, of the testator's son, Thomas Newport, is dated 8 November 1559, and was proved three weeks later on 29 November 1559. When these dates are compared with those of the will of William Newport (dated 23 March 1559 and proved 8 September 1559), it appears that Thomas Newport survived his grandfather by less than a year, and perhaps by only a month. Thomas Newport left a wife and children, and after his death his wife, Mary Purslow, married Francis Brace (d.1599), for whom see the will, TNA PROB 11/165/424, of Thomas Russell (1570-1634), overseer of the will of William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon.

The name of the testator's mother is not known with certainty. For identification of her as Philippa Boteler, see the will of the testator's father, *supra*.

According to the will of the testator's father, *supra*, the testator's brother, Robert Newport, married and had issue, and according to the same will the testator had a sister, Margaret Crokar, perhaps the Margaret Crowker who was a defendant, together with Robert Newport, in a lawsuit brought by John Croker, senior. See TNA C 4/41/49.

As noted above, the testator's father bequeathed his lease of Rushock, not to the testator, but to the testator's son, Thomas Newport (d.1559). For further details concerning the lease of Rushock, see the will of Thomas Russell (1570-1634), *supra*.

According to the lawsuit, *supra*, the testator married Elizabeth Blount, the sister of Thomas Blount and the daughter of Peter Blount of Sodington, Worcestershire, and Anne Cornwall. Her sister, Katherine Blount, married the testator's uncle, John Boteler of Droitwich, brother of Philippa Boteler, said to have been the testator's mother. See the will of Elizabeth and Katherine Blount's brother, Thomas Blount, dated 19 December 1562, TNA PROB 11/46/220; and the Blount pedigrees in Phillimore, W.P.W., ed., *The Visitation of the County of Worcester Made in the Year 1569*, (London: Harleian Society, 1888), Vol. XXVII, pp. 17-18 and 22. In the Blount pedigree on p. 17, Elizabeth Blount's husband is erroneously identified as 'Thomas Newport':

<http://www.archive.org/stream/visitationcount02mundgoog#page/n31/mode/2up>.

He is correctly identified as 'George Newport' in the pedigree on p. 22 of the same volume:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationcount02mundgoog#page/n37/mode/2up>.

In the will below, the testator names four daughters, Margaret, Elizabeth, Mary and Jane. Although the will of the testator's father is not entirely clear in that regard, it appears to indicate that the testator had two sons, Thomas Newport (d.1599) and John Newport, and five daughters, Margaret, Elizabeth, Mary, Anne and Jane.

It should be noted that there is no mention in the will below of the testator's son, Thomas Newport (d.1559). In that regard, it should be noted that the testator's will, although dated 18 December 1558, was not proved until 24 April 1560, by which time the testator's son, Thomas Newport, had died. Bequests to deceased persons which had been struck out or amended in an original will were sometimes omitted when the PCC copy was transcribed, and this may have been the case with the testator's will, and would account for the lack of mention of his son. For an example of this PCC practice, see the will of Dorothy (nee Yonge) Haddon Saunders Dayrell (d. 18 January 1574), TNA PROB 11/56/39.

It is unclear whether the testator actually had a son named John. In the will of the testator's father, the bequest to John Newport is in the body of the will, but the identification of him as the son of George Newport consists of a note in the margin:

*Item, I bequeath to John Newport [ADDED IN MARGIN: George Newport's] son, ten marks in money or in cattle.*

The testator's daughter, Margaret Newport, married Thomas Copley of Bredon's Norton, Worcestershire, who after her death married Eleanor Middlemore, sister of John Middlemore (d. 7 June 1597), and daughter of William Middlemore (d.1549) of Hawkesley in King's Norton, Worcestershire and Margaret Gatacre. See the will of William Middlemore, TNA PROB 11/32/606; the Copley pedigree, p. 45 in Phillimore, *supra*; and the Middlemore pedigree in Crisp, Frederick Arthur, ed., *Visitation of England and Wales*, Vol. 8, 1909, pp. 22-3 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationofengl29howa#page/22/mode/2up>.

See also the will, TNA PROB 11/53/434, of Thomas Lewknor (d.1571), stepfather of William Combe (d.1610), who in 1602 sold land to William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon (see SBTRO ER 27/1), who appointed John Middlemore and Thomas Copley as his overseers:

*And I make overseers Mr John Middlemore of Hawkesley, Mr John Lewes, parson of Alvechurch, and Mr Thomas Copley of Bredon.*

The History of Parliament entry, *supra*, suggests that the testator's 'cousin', Mary Bedell, may have been related to the testator's fellow bailiff in Droitwich, Roger Bedell. Mary Bedell is also mentioned in the will of the testator's father, *supra*.

The testator's daughter, Margaret Newport, is also mentioned in both wills, as are Fulke Newport and Thomas Moulton/Multon (the latter in both cases being referred to as the testator's servant).

LM: T{estamentum} Georgij Newporte

In the name of God, Amen. The 18<sup>th</sup> day of December Anno Domini 1558, I, George Newport, being sick in body but in perfect memory, make my last will and testament in manner and form following, that is to say:

First I bequeath my soul to Almighty [+God?] and to the holy company of heaven, my body to be buried in the churchyard by my grandfather;

Also I bequeath unto Elizabeth, my wife, my fats walling which my cousin, Marie Beddill [=Mary Bedell], now hath in occupation;

Also I bequeath to Fulke Newport my lease that I have of Mr Weste;

Also I bequeath to Margaret Newport, my daughter, my lease of the mill that I have of the Queen;

Also I bequeath to all my daughters, Margaret, Jane, Elizabeth and Mary, such sums of money as my brother and Gilbert Dedicke shall think good;

Also I bequeath to Thomas Moulton, my servant, my best gown, my black mare and my saddle;

Also I bequeath to my brother, Robert, my best horse;

Also I do make my brother, Robert, and Gilbert Dedicke my true and lawful executors of this my last will and testament;

In witness whereof I have put to my hand and seal, these being witness: my brother, Robert Newport, Fulke Newport, Margaret Newport, Thomas Moulton and Walter Hill, with others.

Probatum fuit h{uius} mo{d}i testamentum coram Mag{ist}ro Waltero Haddon Legu{m} Doctore Curie prerogatiue Cant{uariensis} Custode siue Com{m}issario xxiiijto die mens{is} Aprilis Anno D{omi}ni Mill{es}imo quingentesimo sexagesimo Iuramento Georgij Harrison Notarij publici procu{rato}ris Roberti Newport Executoris Cui com{m}issa fuit administrac{i}o bonor{um} iuriu{m} et creditor{um} etc De bene etc Iurat{o} Reseruata p{otes}tate si{mi}lem Com{m}issionem faciend{i} Gilberto

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Dethicke executori etiam in h{uius}mo{d}i test{ament}o no{m}i{n}at{o} cum venerit  
eam in assumptur{o}

[=The same testament was proved before Master Walter Haddon, Doctor of the Laws, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the month of April in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred sixtieth by the oath of George Harrison, notary public, proctor of Robert Newport, executor, to whom administration was granted of the goods, rights and credits etc., sworn to well etc., with power reserved for a similar grant to be made to Gilbert Dethick, executor also named in the same testament, when he shall have come to take upon himself the same.]