

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 18 June 1561 and proved 25 August 1561, of Richard Bower.

For an original spelling transcript, see Honigmann, E.A.J. and Susan Brock, *Playhouse Wills 1558-1642*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 41 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=LM7BAAAIAAJ&pg=PA41>

CONNECTIONS TO THE EARLS OF OXFORD

On 20 December 1576 Sir William More (1520-1600) of Loseley granted the testator's son-in-law, Richard Farrant, a 21-year lease of 'six upper chambers' in the Blackfriars. For the lease, see Folger MS L.b.350, and Wallace, Charles William, *The Evolution of the English Drama up to Shakespeare*, (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1912), pp. 132-6.

According to notes made by Sir William More after Easter term 1584 (see Folger MS L.b.425), he granted a lease to Farrant at the request of Sir Henry Neville (c.1520–1593). Farrant converted the premises into a playhouse for the Children of the Chapel, and also sublet part of the premises to two other persons, for which infraction More claimed Farrant had forfeited his lease. Before More could regain possession, however, Farrant died, leaving the lease in his will to his widow, the testator's daughter, Anne (nee Bower) Farrant (died c.1582).

After her husband's death, and after intervention by Leicester with Sir William More on behalf of William Hunnis (d.1597), Master of the Children of the Chapel, Anne Farrant sublet the premises to Hunnis and John Newman on 20 December 1581, who later transferred their interest to Henry Evans. Evans sold his sublease to Oxford, who granted it to his servant, John Lyly (1554–1606). More brought suit against Evans, and was granted possession of the property in Easter term 1584, and the first Blackfriars theatre was closed. See Wallace, *supra*, pp. 147-77; and Smith, Irwin, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse*, (New York University Press, 1964), pp. 135, 148-53, 467-8.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

The testator's family background is unknown.

MARRIAGE AND ISSUE

The testator married a wife named Joan, by whom, according to the will below, he had two sons and three daughters:

* **Steven Bower.**

* **Ralph Bower.**

* **Anne Bower** (died c.1582), who married Richard Farrant (d.1580), for whose will see TNA PROB 11/63/120.

* **Katherine Bower.**

* **Elizabeth Bower.**

TESTATOR'S OVERSEERS

For William Roper (d.1578) of Eltham, who married Margaret More, the daughter of Sir Thomas More, see his will, TNA PROB 11/60/365, the *ODNB* entry, and the History of Parliament entry at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/roper-william-149596-1578>

For the musician and composer, Thomas Tallis (c.1505-1585), see his will, TNA PROB 11/68/662, and the *ODNB* entry.

RM: T{estamentum} Richardi Bower

In the name of God, Amen. This is the last will and testament of me, Richard Bower, made the 18th day of June in the year of Our Lord 1561:

First I commend my soul into the hands of Almighty God, and my body to be brought to Christian burial with priests and clerks of the parish where I shall end my life;

Item, I bequeath to Joan, my wife, my house with th' appurtenances in East Greenwich within the county of Kent, to have to her during her natural life;

And after her decease I will that Steven Bower, my eldest son, shall have the same to him during his natural life;

And after his decease to same to remain to his eldest issue male of his body begotten and to the heirs males of the body of the same eldest issue male;

And for lack of such issue male of that eldest issue male begotten, then I will my son, Ralph Bower, have it to him and to his heirs males of his body lawfully begotten;

And if it fortune him to have no such heir, then I will and bequeath the same to my daughter, Anne Farrant, and to her heirs males of her body lawfully begotten;

And if she have no such heir, then I will that my daughter, Katherine Bower, have it to her and to her heirs males of her body lawfully begotten;

And for lack of such heir male, then I will the same to my daughter, Elizabeth Bower, and her heirs males [f. 216v] of her body lawfully begotten;

And for lack of such heir male, then I will that Blase Latton of Ware, beer-brewer, have the same to him and his heirs forever;

Item, I bequeath to my eldest son, Steven Bower, a bedstead, a featherbed, a bolster, a pillow, a pair of sheets, a pair of blankets and a coverlet;

Item, I bequeath to Ralph Bower a carved bedstead that was his aunt's, a featherbed, a bolster, a pillow, a pair of blankets, a pair of sheets and a coverlet;

Item, I bequeath to my daughter, Katherine Bower, a bedstead, a featherbed, a bolster, a pillow, a pair of blankets, a pair of sheets and a coverlet;

Item, I bequeath to my daughter, Elizabeth, a bedstead, a featherbed, a bolster, a pillow, a pair of sheets, a pair of blankets and a coverlet;

Provided always that my wife shall appoint each of their said stuff here rehearsed according to her discretion;

Item, I bequeath to Katherine Bower, my daughter, 2 gilt pots of silver;

And to my daughter, Elizabeth, my gilt salt of silver and my six silver spoons with th' Apostles at th' end, gilt;

Item, I bequeath to Joan, my wife, the yearly rent of £33 6s 8d by year which I have of a lease for term of years yet continuing within the Isle of Thanet in the county of Kent, she paying yearly after my decease to Steven Bower £5, to Ralph Bower £5, to Katherine Bower £5, and to Elizabeth Bower £5 until each of them have received the full sum of £20;

And if it fortune that any of them, my children, to die before they be paid their said several sums of £20, then that which shall remain to be paid to every of them as is aforesaid shall be divided equally amongst them that fortune to overlive;

Item, I will that my wife shall have of the £33 6s 8d, £13 6s 8d during the term of years yet to come if she so long shall fortune to live;

And the rest of the rent that shall remain of the same £33 6s 8d after that my four children aforesaid have every of them received their before bequeathed £20 as is aforesaid, then I will that my said wife shall yearly pay to my five children hereafter expressed the residue of the said £33 6s 8d that shall remain over and above the said £13 6s 8d to my said wife before bequeathed equally to be divided amongst the same my five children, that is to say, Steven Bower, Ralph Bower, Agnes Farrant, Katherine Bower and Elizabeth Bower;

And if it fortune my said wife to die before the lease expired, then I will that all my said children then living shall during the said term have equally amongst them all the said rent of three and thirty pounds 6s 8d;

The residue of all my goods and chattels I bequeath to Joan, my wife, whom I make sole executrix, charging her first to see all my debts paid;

Item, I will there be given in alms to poor folks at the day of my burial (blank);

And of this present will I make (blank) overseers William Roper of Eltham in the county of Kent, esquire, and Thomas Tallis, one of the Gentlemen of the Queen's Majesty's Chapel;

In witness whereof I have to this my present will put my hand the day and year above-written. By me, Richard Bower, Robert Paternoster, Thomas Tallis. By me, William Mihell.

Probatum fuit h{uius}mo{d}i Testamentum coram Mag{ist}ro Waltero Haddon Legum Doctore Curie prerogatiue Cant{uariensis} Comissario apud London vicesimo quinto die Mensis Augusti Anno Domini mill{es}imo quingentesimo sexagesimo primo Iuramento Richardi ffarrant p{ro}curatoris Iohanne Relicte et executric{is} in h{uius}mo{d}i Testamento nominat{e} Cui comissa fuit admi{n}istrac{i}o etc de bene etc Ac de pleno Inuentario Necnon de vero et plano computo Reddend{o} Ad sancta Dei Evangelia Iurat{i}

[=The same testament was proved before Master Walter Haddon, Doctor of the Laws, Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, at London on the twenty-fifth day of the month of August in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred sixty-first by the oath of Richard Farrant, proctor of Joan, relict and executrix named in the same testament, to whom administration etc., sworn on the Holy Gospels to well etc., and [+to exhibit?] a full inventory, and also to render a true and plain account.]