

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 26 January 1573 and proved 31 January 1573, of Thomas Blackwell, esquire, of Michelham Park, Petworth, Sussex, brother of Anne (nee Blackwell) Bacon, whose husband, Thomas Bacon (d.1577), held leases of Oxford, and who was the Anne Bacon mentioned in the indenture by which William Shakespeare (1564-1616) of Stratford upon Avon purchased the Blackfriars gatehouse on 10 March 1613.

CONNECTION TO WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

The testator's father, William Blackwell (d.1570?), sister, Anne Blackwell Bacon, and nephew, Mathy Bacon (d.1639), are all mentioned in the indenture by which William 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 purchaser's and vendor's copies of the indenture, respectively.

From London Metropolitan Archives CLC/522/MS03738 at:

<http://www.shakespearedocumented.org/exhibition/document/shakespeare-purchases-blackfriars-gatehouse-copy-bargain-and-sale-signed-buyers>

. . . part of which said tenement is erected over a great gate leading to a capital messuage which sometime was in the tenure of William Blackwell, esquire, deceased, and since that in the tenure or occupation of the right honourable Henry, now Earl of Northumberland;

And also all that plot of ground on the west side of the same tenement which was lately enclosed with boards on two sides thereof by Anne Bacon, widow, so far and in such sort as the same was enclosed by the said Anne Bacon

Which said dwelling-house or tenement and other the premises above by these presents mentioned to be bargained and sold the said Henry Walker late purchased and had to him, his heirs and assigns forever of Mathie Bacon of Gray's Inn in the county of Middlesex, gentleman, bearing date the fifteenth day of October in the year of Our Lord God one thousand six hundred and four.

For the documents in a lawsuit requiring the production of evidences concerning a capital messuage and other property in the Blackfriars brought in Chancery on 26 April 1615 against the testator's nephew, Mathy Bacon, by Sir Thomas Bendish (d.1636), Edward Newport, William Thursby, Robert Dormer and Mary, his wife, William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon, gentleman, and Richard Bacon, see TNA C 2/JasI/B11/9. See also the facsimile at the Shakespeare Documented website at:

<http://www.shakespearedocumented.org/exhibition/document/sir-thomas-bendish-william-shakespeare-et-al-v-matthew-bacon-relating-title>

It appears the lawsuit concerned evidences which related to the entire Blackfriars property once owned by the Blackwells, and not solely to evidences related to the gatehouse purchased by William Shakespeare. And in fact, although William Shakespeare was joined in the lawsuit, Mathy Bacon may not have held any evidences related to the gatehouse in 1615.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

The testator was the second son of William Blackwell (d.1570), Town Clerk of London, and Margaret Campion (d.1586).

For the Blackwell family, see Jessopp, Augustus, *One Generation of a Norfolk House*, 2nd ed., (London: Burns and Oates, 1879), pp. 118-29 at:

<http://books.google.com/books?oe=UTF-8&id=fjI2AAAAMAAJ&q=blackwell#v=snippet&q=blackwell&f=false>

See also Questier, Michael C., *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 319-320. Questier states that the Blackwells were retainers of the Earls of Northumberland, and that the testator was the 7th Earl's steward and receiver. Note that Questier mistakenly states that the Archpriest George Blackwell (1547-1613) 'was one of the sons of Margaret Blackwell'. However Margaret Blackwell's son, George Blackwell, the testator's brother, is referred to as deceased in the will below.

For the will, dated 7 January 1568 and proved 17 October 1570, of the testator's father, William Blackwell, see TNA PROB 11/52/400. For the will of the testator's mother, Margaret Campion Blackwell, see TNA PROB 11/69/398.

See also the Campion pedigree in Metcalfe, Walter C., ed., *The Visitations of Essex, Part II*, (London: Harleian Society, 1879), Vol. XIV, p. 556 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=8vsUAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA556>

See also the Campion pedigree in Howard, Joseph Jackson and Joseph Lemuel Chester, eds., *The Visitation of London Anno Domini 1633, 1634 and 1635*, (London: Harleian Society, 1880), p. 134 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationoflond01stge#page/134>

For the testator's siblings, see the will of his father, *supra*.

For the will of the testator's brother-in-law, Matthew Draper, who died without issue on 21 July 1577, see TNA PROB 11/59/439. For the will of the testator's brother-in-law, Thomas Bacon (d.1577), see TNA PROB 11/59/473. For the will of the testator's brother-in-law, William Walpole (d.1587), esquire, see TNA PROB 11/71/442. For the will of the testator's nephew, Mathy or Matthew Bacon (d.1639), see TNA PROB 11/180/622.

OTHER PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE WILL

The 'James Gardyner' who witnessed the testator's will below was likely the 'James Gardiner, esquire' mentioned as a former tenant of the Blackfriars gatehouse in the indenture by which William Shakespeare purchased the Blackfriars gatehouse on 10 March 1613. See Folger MS Z.c.22(45), *supra*.

The 'James Parkinns' mentioned in the will below was likely the 'James Parkyns' mentioned as a servant of Bishop Thomas Thirlby (c.1500-1570) in the will of the testator's father, William Blackwell:

Item, I give and bequeath to the Right Reverend Father in God and my most singular good Lord, Thomas Thirlby, late Bishop of Ely, for a poor token or remembrance of good heart and will towards his Lordship one ring of gold of the value of five marks, and to my cousin, Henry Thirlby, son of my cousin Thomas Thirlby, his Lordship's brother, I give and bequeath 40s, and to every other child of my said cousin Thomas I give 10s, and to James Parkyns and Alexander Grant, my said Lord's servants, I give and bequeath 20s, viz., to either of them ten shillings.

MARRIAGE

As indicated in the will below, the testator married Alice Avenon Farrington, the widow of John Farrington (d.1569), and the daughter of Sir Alexander Avenon (d.1580?), Lord Mayor of London in 1569-70 and eight times Master of the Ironmongers. See Nicholl, John, comp., *Some Account of the Worshipful Company of Ironmongers*, (London: John Bowyer Nichols and Son, 1851), pp. 544-5 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/cu31924028067449#page/n563>

See also Nicholl, *supra*, 2nd ed., (London, 1866), pp. 518-19 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/someaccountofwo00nich#page/518>

See also the pedigree of Avenon in Howard, Joseph Jackson and George John Armytage, eds., *The Visitation of London in the Year 1568*, (London: Harleian Society, 1869), p. 3 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationoflond00cook#page/2>

For the will of John Farrington (d.1569), citizen and cloth-worker of London, see TNA PROB 11/52/101.

It appears from the will below that the testator's wife, Alice, had six children by her first husband, John Farrington.

RM: T{estamentum} Tho{me} Blackwell

In the name of God, Amen. I, Thomas Blackwell of Michelham Park in the parish of Petworth and of the diocese of Chichester, esquire, being (thanked be God therefore) of good and perfect mind and remembrance, though sick in body, do the 26th day of January in the year of Our Lord God 1572 and in the fifteenth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady the Queen's Majesty that now is, Queen Elizabeth, make my last will and testament in writing in manner and form following:

First I bequeath my soul unto Almighty God, my Creator, trusting through the death of his dearly beloved Son, my Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, to be made partaker of the joys prepared for his elect and chosen in his heavenly kingdom, and my body to be buried in Christian burial as to my executrix shall be thought meet and convenient;

Also I do will, give and devise unto my dearly beloved mother, Margaret Blackwell, widow, and to her heirs and assigns forever, all that my manor of Tuddenham with the appurtenances in the county of Norfolk, and all other my messuages, lands, tenements, rents, reversions, hereditaments, leases, profits and commodities whatsoever with their appurtenances in the said county of Norfolk, and also all my messuages, lands, tenements, rents, reversions, services, pastures, meadows, woods and hereditaments whatsoever with their appurtenances in the counties of Middlesex and Hertford which came and descended unto me as brother and next heir by, from and after the deceases of my two brethren, George Blackwell and Richard Blackwell, gentlemen, deceased, or of any of them, all such messuages, lands, tenements, rents, reversions and hereditaments, parcel of the same, which I have already granted and assured by writing unto my well-beloved brother, William Blackwell, gentleman, only excepted and forprised;

And further I do give, will and devise unto my said dearly beloved mother and to her heirs and assigns forever all my lands, tenements, reversions, services, rents, hereditaments, leases, profits and commodities whatsoever with their appurtenances situate, lying and being in the county of Surrey and Sussex or in any of them;

And whereas the right worshipful Sir Alexander Avenon, knight and alderman of London, my father-in-law, did promise and take upon him to give unto me and that I should have in marriage with his daughter, my most well-beloved wife, Alice Blackwell, late wife of John Farrington, citizen and cloth-worker of London, deceased, the sum of

two thousand pounds of good and lawful money of England, whereof already I have had and received at the hands of the same Sir Alexander threescore pounds in money and two hundred and threescore pounds or thereabouts at the hands of divers of the debtors of the said John Farrington at divers and sundry times by small portions of ten pounds, five pounds, forty shillings, twenty shillings, ten shillings and suchlike at one time, and certain plate and household stuff late of the said John Farrington's, amounting together with the abovesaid several sums of £60 and £260 in the whole at the uttermost to the sum of five hundred pounds as I judge, and not above, so that as yet there remaineth due unpaid and unanswered unto me of the said sum of two thousand pounds the sum of £1500, I do now by these presents give, will and bequeath unto my said most well-beloved wife, Alice Blackwell, all the said sum of fifteen hundred pounds;

And further I do will, give and bequeath unto her all the household stuff and all such plate as I have yet remaining unsold of the said John Farrington's, and also the said £60 and £260 which I had and received of the said Sir Alexander Avenon and of the debtors of the said John Farrington as is aforesaid, and also the value of all such plate late of the said John Farrington's as I have already sold, to be reckoned and accounted according to the rate in the inventory of the goods and chattels of the said Farrington already exhibited and put in according to the custom of the city of London, to be paid unto her, thone half thereof within one year next after my decease, and the other half thereof within half a year next after that year ended;

And further I do also will, give and bequeath unto my said well-beloved wife, Alice Blackwell, four hundred pounds of good and lawful money of England for the better relief and aid of her and her children, to be paid within two years next after the payment of the aforesaid sums of £60 and £260 and of the value of the plate by me sold, as is aforesaid, to be had and made by equal and even portions in every of the said two years;

And also I will and my mind is that my said well-beloved wife, Alice Blackwell, and her six children shall, for and during one quarter of a year next after my decease (if she will so long tarry & abide there) have their abode and meet & convenient finding of bread, drink and other food at my house in Michelham Park at the cost and charges of my executrix;

Provided always and my mind and will is that if my said most well-beloved wife, Alice Blackwell, or any other person or persons for her by her assent or in her right and name shall after my decease make any other claim, title, challenge or demand, either by the custom of the City of London or by any other ways or means other than by this my last will and testament to all or any of my leases, plate, jewels, debts, money, household stuff, oxen, kine, goods or chattels whatsoever, that then all gifts, legacies and bequests made by me unto her in and by this my last will and testament shall be utterly void and frustrate to all intents and purposes, and that she, the said Alice, upon and at the first payment or delivery of any part of the money or goods to her by me heretofore given and bequeathed, shall make, seal and deliver unto my executrix a good and perfect release of all such interest, right and demand as she shall or may have of and to my said goods and chattels

or any part of them by the custom of the said City of London or by any other way or mean whatsoever other than by this my present last will and testament;

And also I will and bequeath unto James Parkinns one annuity or yearly rent of four marks for term of his natural life, to be assured unto him and his assigns by my said dearly beloved mother out of some such lands as she shall think meet, or else forty marks of good and lawful money of England to be paid unto him within one year, to be at the choice of the said James which of them he will have;

And all other my leases, plate, jewels, debts, ready money, household stuff, horses, kine, oxen, sheep, goods and chattels whatsoever, as well real as personal, quick as dead, moveable as immoveable (my debts which I owe and legacies by me made being paid and performed), I do will, give and bequeath unto my said dearly beloved mother, Margaret Blackwell, whom I do ordain, constitute and make the sole and only executrix of this my present last will and testament, these being witnesses which are hereafter named and have written their names with their own hands. Thomas Blackwell. William Dawtry, Anthony Garnett, Richard Allington, James Gardyner, William Hellyard, William Bullman.

Probatum fuit hu{ius}mo{di} Testamentum coram D{omi}no Cant{uariensis} Apud London Vltimo Die mens{is} Ianuarij Anno d{omi}ni Mill{es}imo Quingentesimo Septuagesimo secundo Iura{men}t{o} Will{el}imi Mallowes no{tar}ij pu{bli}cj procurat{oris} Margarete Blackwell Ex{ecutri}c{is} Cui Commiss{a} fuit Administrac{i}o De bene et fidel{ite}r Administrand{o} eodem &c Ad S{an}cta Dei Evangelia Iurat{i}

[=The same testament was proved before the Lord of Canterbury at London on the last day of the month of January in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred seventy-second by the oath of William Mallows, notary public, proctor of Margaret Blackwell, executrix, to whom administration was granted, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer the same etc.]