

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the last will and testament, dated 5 January 1576/7 and proved 13 October 1581, of Blase Saunders, son of Thomas Saunders (d. 1528) of Sibbertoft, Northamptonshire, and Margaret, daughter of Richard Cave (d.1538) of Stanford, Northamptonshire and his first wife, Elizabeth Mervin (d. 9 August 1493), and grandson of Edward Saunders of Harrington and his wife, Joan Makerneys, the daughter of Richard and Felice Makerneys of Wolfhampcote. See the pedigrees of Saunders in Metcalfe, Walter C., ed., *The Visitations of Northamptonshire*, (London: Mitchell and Hughes, 1887), pp. 44-5 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationsofnor00harvrich#page/44/mode/2up>.

See also the pedigree in Winchester, Barbara, *Tudor Family Portrait*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955), p. 17.

See also Agutter, Doreen, 'Edward Saunders of Harrington and Rothwell, Northamptonshire', *Monumental Brass Society*, Bulletin 115, (September 2010), pp. 288-9, at:

<http://www.mbs-brasses.co.uk/Bulletin.html>.

For the testator's family background, see also the will of the testator's uncle, Lawrence Saunders (d.1544), TNA PROB 11/30/232; the will of the testator's uncle, Thomas Saunders (d.1528), TNA PROB 11/22/481; the will of the testator's uncle, William Saunders of Welford, TNA PROB 11/28/488; the will of the testator's aunt, Dorothy (nee Yonge) Haddon Saunders Dayrell (d. 18 January 1574), TNA PROB 11/56/39; the will of the testator's first cousin, Francis Saunders, TNA PROB 11/68/442; the will of the testator's brother, Robert Saunders (c.1514-1559), TNA PROB 11/43/474; the will of the testator's brother, Sir Edward Saunders (1506-1576), Chief Baron of the Exchequer, TNA PROB 11/58/517; the will of the testator's brother, Ambrose Saunders (d.1586), TNA PROB 11/69/469; and the *ODNB* article on the testator's brother, the Protestant martyr, Lawrence Saunders (d.1555).

The testator was a first cousin of George Saunders, murdered on 25 March 1573 by Oxford's former servant, George Browne. The murder was the subject of a pamphlet by Oxford's uncle, Arthur Golding (1535/6-1606), *Brief Discourse of the Late Murther of Master George Saunders*, and an anonymous play, *A Warning for Fair Women*, performed by the Lord Chamberlain's Men.

The testator's wife and sole legatee, Elizabeth Saunders, died shortly after the testator. The register of St. Helen's, Bishopsgate, states that Blase Saunders was buried 12 October 1581, and that Elizabeth, his wife, was buried 14 October 1581. See Bannerman, W. Bruce, *The Registers of St. Helen's, Bishopsgate, London*, (London: Harleian Society, 1904), p. 254, available online. For the will of Elizabeth Saunders, dated 12 October 1581 and proved 1 February 1581/2, see TNA PROB 11/64/50.

The testator's wife, Elizabeth Saunders, was related to Sir Francis Walsingham (c.1532-1590). It would appear that Elizabeth Saunders was the daughter of Sir Thomas Saunders (d.1565), of Charlwood by his wife Alice, daughter of Sir Edmund Walsingham (c.1480-1550), Lieutenant of the Tower of London, and his wife, Katherine Gunter (c.1495-c.1526), the daughter of John Gunter of Chilworth and widow of Henry Morgan of Pen-coed, Monmouthshire. Sir Edmund Walsingham (c.1480-1550) was the uncle of Sir Francis Walsingham (c.1532-1590), and Sir Francis Walsingham and Elizabeth Saunders' mother, Alice (nee Walsingham) Saunders, were thus first cousins. See the entry for Sir Edmund Walsingham in the *ODNB*. See also:

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=59959>

I. 279. Letter from William, Lord Burghley to the Lord Mayor, stating that he had understood that by the death of Blase Saunders, who held by lease the office of Garblership of London, the same had become vacant, and that the appointment rested with him and the Aldermen, and requesting them to stay proceeding in the matter until he communicated with them further, as he meant to be a suitor to them for the office for a friend of his.

10th October, 1581.

I. 280. Letter from Sir Francis Walsingham to the Lord Mayor, stating that he understood some steps had been taken to wrest from his cousin, the widow of Mr. Blaze Saunders, the lease of the office of Garbler, which he held for certain years unexpired, and desiring to be informed of any such practice or attempt, in order that he might assist her therein.

11th October, 1581.

For Elizabeth Saunders' father, Sir Thomas Saunders (d.1565), see the History of Parliament biography at:

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

The fact that the Saunders family was related through this marriage to Sir Edmund Walsingham is of interest in light of Sir Edmund Walsingham's second marriage to Anne Drury. From the *ODNB*:

Between 1535 and 1543 Walsingham married Anne Drury (d. 1559), daughter of Edward Jerningham of Somerleyton, Suffolk, and his wife, Mary. She had been widowed four times.

A woman named Anne Drury was implicated in the murder of the testator's first cousin, George Saunders (see above), and although this was not Sir Edmund Walsingham's second wife, Anne Drury (d.1559), there was evidently a connection between the Drury, Walsingham and Saunders families through Sir Edmund Walsingham's second marriage. For Sir Edmund Walsingham's second wife, Anne Drury (d.1559), see:

<http://www.kateemersonhistoricals.com/TudorWomenI-J.htm>.

For the testator see also Winchester, *supra*, pp. 63, 270, 283; Orlin, Lena Cowen, *Locating Privacy in Tudor London*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 209; and Willan, T.S., *The Muscovy Merchants of 1555* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1953), pp. 121-2.

RM: T{estamentum} Blasij Saunders

[f. 271r] In the name of God Amen. 1576, the fifth day of January. I, Blase Saunders, Merchant of the Staple of England and Grocer of the City of London, being at this present fifth day of January Anno Domini 1576 in health of body and of perfect mind (thanks be to God), do ordain and make this my last will and testament in manner and form following:

First I give and commend my soul unto Almighty God, believing steadfastly that by the only merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ I shall in body and soul come to the life everlasting;

My body I will in any wise to be buried within four and twenty hours after my death at the farthest, with as little charge as may be conveniently, but in no wise to have any ringing of bells the day of my burial;

My house in the parish of Saint Ellen [=Helen] within Bishopsgate in London wherein I now dwell, and the tenement thereunto adjoining wherein my cousin Holmes now dwelleth, and my house in Flore in Northamptonshire where Marmaduke, a carpenter, now dwelleth, and all other houses, lands, goods, debts, plate, leases, ready money, household stuff, apparel and all other goods of what kind soever there are that do at this day [f. 271v] or at the time of my death shall in any manner of wise appertain unto me, I do by this present my last will and testament give and bequeath unto my loving and faithful wife, Elizabeth Saunders, with all manner of writing concerning the purchasing of my said houses, in as full and ample manner as they are mine, she to do with the same at her will and pleasure, putting no doubts but she will set order for the payment of my debts as she may conveniently in time;

In witness whereof I have written this present with mine own hand and subscribed my name and set to my seal, making my said wife, Elizabeth Saunders, my sole and full executrix the fifth day of January Anno Domini 1576, renouncing all former wills that before this day I have made. By me, Blase Saunders.

The twentieth day of March 1578 I do affirm this my last will to stand in all points, and if there be any ambiguity or doubt of my meaning therein by reason of any words not well placed, I will the same to be expounded by my said wife, Elizabeth Saunders. By me, Blase Saunders.

Probatum fuit suprascriptum testamentum apud London Coram venerabili viro magistro Will^{el}imo Drury legum Doctore curie prerogatiue Cantuarien^{sis} commissario etc Decimo tertio die mensis Octobris Anno Domini mill^{es}imo quingentesimo octogesimo primo Iuramento Lawrentij Swynborne notarij publici procuratoris Elizabeth Saunders relic^te et executric^{is} etc Cui commiss^a fuit administracio etc De bene &c Iuratⁱ

[=The above-written will was proved at London before the worshipful Master William Drury, Doctor of the Laws, Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury etc., on the thirteenth day of the month of October in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred eighty-first by the oath of Lawrence Swynborne, notary public, proctor of Elizabeth Saunders, relict and executrix etc., to whom administration was granted etc., sworn to well etc.]