

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 14 May 1595 and proved 19 February 1596, of Thomas Hampton. The testator mentions ‘all my lands and leases with their appurtenances whatsoever which I bought of my Lord of Oxford’, and it thus seems all but certain that the testator was related to the Thomas Hampton who was Oxford’s solicitor, and participated in the frauds against Oxford of both Thomas Skinner (d.1596) and Roger Harlakenden (d.1603).

Oxford’s servant, Thomas Hampton was still living on 3 March 1600, when he gave a deposition in which he described himself as ‘Thomas Hampton of London, gentleman, of th’ age of 58 years or thereabouts’. See TNA C 24/277/35.

For documents mentioning Oxford’s servant, Thomas Hampton, and his participation in the Skinner and Harlakenden frauds, see BL Lansdowne 68/6, ff. 12-13; BL Lansdowne 68/11, f. 24; TNA C 24/239/46; TNA C 24/275/77; TNA REQ 2/276/62; TNA SP 46/35, f. 28; TNA WARD 9/118, ff. 234v-235; ERO D/DPr/161; and ERO D/DPr/262.

The testator’s statement that ‘I have a bill of venture with Sir John Hawkins and Sir Francis Drake of fifty pounds’, indicates that he was an investor in Hawkins and Drake’s final voyage. From the entry for Sir John Hawkins (1532-1595) in the *ODNB*:

1595 saw Hawkins, with Drake, embarking on his final expedition, which aimed to follow up John Oxenham's abortive attempt of 1576–7 and land at Nombre de Dios, cross the isthmus, and capture Panama, thereby choking off supplies of Peruvian silver from Spain. It was clearly a mistake to give Hawkins and Drake equal command: they were temperamentally unsuited to co-operation. Hawkins worked with foresight and careful planning; Sir Thomas Gorges reported from Plymouth on 16 July that Hawkins ‘sees all things done properly’ (Harrison, 1.308). By contrast Drake disliked administration, rarely thought ahead, and was mercurial in his changes of plan. The choice of Hawkins may have represented the influence of the queen, to provide a moderating influence on the impetuous Drake; or it may have been a temporary alliance between competing privateering factions. The two commanders were each to take a third of any booty. The queen, who provided 6 ships, was to receive the rest. By the beginning of March, reports of the preparations had reached Spain; by early in May the ships were in Plymouth, ready to depart, with 2500 men on board (half of them soldiers). But a long delay, for which the queen personally blamed them, allowed a Spanish raid from Brittany (23 July) to burn three Cornish ports. Elizabeth, to the fury of her commanders, frequently changed her mind, ordering them to cruise off the Irish and Spanish coasts—to forestall a further Spanish armada, aimed at Ireland or England—then banned them from sailing at all.

When Hawkins and Drake finally departed, it was only on condition that they returned within six months, to counter the Spanish invasion envisaged in 1596. This was hardly enough time in which to capture Panama, and clearly reduced the expedition to a mere hit-and-run treasure hunt. Before the 27-strong fleet finally left Plymouth on 28 August, with Hawkins in the 660 ton Garland, built in 1590, they had learnt that the plate fleet

was already in Spain, apart from its bullion-laden but crippled flagship, lying at San Juan, Puerto Rico; this Drake aimed to capture. Since Drake and Hawkins sailed on different ships, often out of communication for days on end, factional disputes were liable to occur. Hawkins agreed only reluctantly to a time-wasting and ultimately abortive diversion to Gran Canaria (27 September) for further victualling of Drake's ships. The delay allowed Philip to send ships to the Caribbean, which captured the Francis off Guadeloupe, so discovering the fleet's destination. They then moved to strengthen the defences at Puerto Rico. On 31 October 1595 Hawkins became ill; by 2 November he was unable to leave his bed, and at about 3 p.m. on the 12th he died. He was buried at sea off Puerto Rico.

The fleet returned with a fifth of the complement dead, including Drake, and a pitiful £5000 in booty. 'It represented the nadir of Elizabethan strategy' (Andrews, Trade, Plunder and Settlement, 241).

LM: T{estamentum} Thome Hampton

In the name of God, Amen. The fourteenth day of May 1595, I, Thomas Hampton, being in perfect memory and health of body, do make and ordain this my last will and testament, renouncing all other former wills and testaments whatsoever heretofore made, in manner and form following as followeth:

Firstly I commend my sinful soul into the hands of Almighty God and to the bountiful [-and] mercies of my only Lord and Redeemer, hoping and trusting to have and receive through his death and passion forgiveness of my sins and life everlasting, and my body to be brought into Christian burial, there to remain until my Lord Jesus Christ, my Redeemer, shall cause the same, and unite both body and soul, to be partakers of a glorious resurrection;

Item, I give unto James Barons, which married with my daughter, Margaret Grave, all my lands and leases with their appurtenances whatsoever which I bought of my Lord of Oxford, to him and his heirs in fee forever;

More, I give unto the said James Barons and his heirs which he had by my daughter all my lands and leases with their appurtenances which lieth within the borough of Plymouth whatsoever, and for want of heirs, unto the heirs of Thomas Grave;

More, I give unto Francis Barons, which he had by my daughter, twenty pounds;

And more, unto Bess Barons, his sister, twenty pounds, to be paid unto her at one and twenty years of age or at her day of marriage;

Next, I give unto George Grave twenty pounds;

And next, unto his brother, Arthur Grave, twenty pounds, not to be delivered to any of the three boys until they be twenty-one year of age;

And if any one of them die before he be of age, that then his or her part shall be divided between them that be alive, Joan Southcott excepted;

More, I give unto Audyth Grave threescore pounds at the age of one and twenty years or at her day of marriage;

More, I give unto three sisters, one Anne Menard, which dwelleth in Plymouth, and one Margaret English, and one Bess Lichfield, which dwells in Totnes, forty pounds apiece to each one of them;

More, I give unto my cousin, John Hampton, my best gown and my best cloak which is lined before with black velvet;

And more, I give unto him my best musket with his flask and touch-box;

I give unto Sir John Hawkins my best ring which I wear upon my forefinger with a seal;

I give unto Sir William Courtney my best horse or gelding which I have at my hour of death;

And also I give unto my good Lady, his wife, my gold ring which I wear upon my little finger with a globe in the inside of him;

More, I give unto Richard Hawkins a gold ring with a ruby in him;

More, I give unto all the alms-houses within the county [sic?] of Exeter five shillings apiece;

And to the Maudlin five shillings;

And to the high gaol five shillings;

And to the gaol of the city, two shillings six pence;

And to the poor of Exeter five pounds, which money I will have it to be delivered to the mayor, and he to appoint some trusty honest man to give it unto such poor householders as have most need, and not to any one house above twelve pence, and to have for his pains two shillings six pence;

More, I will have sent to Plymouth forty-one shillings to the mayor, requesting him that he will appoint some trusty man to distribute forty shillings to such poor householders as have most need, and not to any one above twelve pence, and he to have for his pains twelve pence;

I will that twenty shillings in bread shall be after my burial given among the poor in penny bread, to each one a penny loaf;

I do desire Mr Jasper Bridgman and Mr Thomas Chaffe to be my overseers, and do put them in trust to see this my last will and testament to be truly performed with as much convenient speed as those debts may be recovered which is owing unto me, and to either of them forty shillings for his pains;

The things performed which I have given as above-written, all the rest of my goods and chattels I give unto Thomas Southcott which married with Joan, which is my daughter's daughter, all the rest, and make him my whole executor;

In witness hereof I have written this my last will with mine own hand, and hereunto have set to my hand and seal, dated the day and year above-written. Thomas Hampton.

Here enclosed you shall find a sheet of paper wherein you shall find it written with mine own hand of whom and where this money is to be had which I have given in this my last will. Thomas Hampton.

Whereas I have a bill of venture with Sir John Hawkins and Sir Francis Drake of fifty pounds, this my last will is that if God shall call me to his mercy before their return, that then my will is that whereas I have given upon my will to eight several persons, to some more and some less as I have thought good, to the sum of two hundred fifty pounds, and out of that two hundred fifty pounds I have ventured fifty pounds with Sir John Hawkins and Sir Francis Drake, and if any gains come at their return, it shall be divided amongst them eight, and whatsoever loss cometh, they shall bear among them;

Whereas my executor was by my will to pay two hundred fifty pounds, now he is to pay them but two hundred pounds, and this my last will is that my executor shall pay my legacies with as much convenient speed that may be recovered;

Further, my will is that James Barons shall pay or cause to be paid unto his mother-in-law, Margaret Dyer alias Hampton, after my death during her life out of my leases which I now have there now in Plymouth the sum of four marks by the year, to be paid quarterly and within one fifteen days after every quarter, and for want of payment she or her assigns from time to time to strain upon all my land and leases in Plymouth. Thomas Hampton. Richard Rowe, Robert Hynde, Robert Alford.

Probatum fuit Testamentu{m} suprascriptu{m} apud London coram venerabili viro Mag{ist}ro Will{el}mo Lewin Legum Doctore Curie Prerogatiue Cantuar{iensis} Mag{ist}ro Custode siue Com{m}issario Decimo nono die Mensis ffebruarij Anno Domini iuxta Computac{i}o{n}em eccl{es}ie Anglicane Millesimo Quingentesimo Nonogesimo Quinto Iuramento ffrancisci Clerke notarij publici Procur{ator}is Thome

Southcott Executoris in huiusmodi testamento nominat{i} Cui com{m}issa fuit
admi{ni}stracio Bonoru{m} Iuriu{m} et Creditoru{m} dicti defunct{i} De bene et
fideliter admi{ni}strand{o} &c Ad sancta dei Evangelia Iurat{i} Ex{aminatum}

The above-written testament was proved at London before the worshipful Master William Lewin, Doctor of the Laws, Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the nineteenth day of the month of February in the year of the Lord according to the reckoning of the English Church the thousand five hundred ninety-fifth by the oath of Francis Clerke, notary public, proctor of Thomas Southcott, executor named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of the goods, rights and credits of the said deceased, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer etc. Examined.