

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 19 [sic?] and 28 December 1596 and proved 9 June 1597, of Thomas Skinner, third husband of the poet Thomas Watson's stepsister, Blanche (nee Watson) Skinner, who died on 23 April 1593. For the will of Blanche (nee Watson) Skinner's first husband, Dunstan Walton (d.1572), see TNA PROB 11/54/133. For the will of Blanche (nee Watson) Skinner's second husband, John Lambert (d.1582?), see TNA PROB 11/64/19. For the inquisition post mortem setting out the relationship between Blanche, her mother, Jane (nee Stanney) Watson, her father, William Watson (d.1559), her first husband, Dunstan Walton (d.1572), her second husband, John Lambert (d.1582?), her third husband, Thomas Skinner (d.1596), and her maternal aunt, Dame Blanche (nee Stanney) Forman (d.1563), see 'Inquisitions: 1593-4', *Abstracts of Inquisitiones Post Mortem for the City of London: Part 3* (1908), pp. 171-219, available online at: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=65901>.

Oxford's financial dealings with Thomas Skinner were extensive. In 1575, Oxford owed the very large sum of £918 to 'Thomas Skinner, mercer' (see ERO D/Drg/2/25). If this debt of £918 was still outstanding in 1580, and had perhaps even increased by that date, it seems possible that Skinner required Oxford to guarantee it by a recognizance for 2000 marks [=£1333 6s 8d] which Oxford entered into on 17 September 1580, one day after he had sold his manors of Castle Camps and Fowlmere to Skinner. See TNA 30/34/14, No. 3 for the recognizance for 2000 marks, and TNA C 43/10/340 for the judgment against Oxford granted to Skinner on the recognizance in 1590.

Skinner was also involved in the sale of Oxford's manors in Cornwall to Sir John Arundel (d.1590) of Lanherne in 1576 (see CRO AR//860/1&2).

Moreover, as indicated in the will below, Skinner ended his life as owner of Oxford's manors of Castle Camps (which the Earls of Oxford had owned for 500 years) and Fowlmere in Cambridge, and Overhall and Netherhall in Lavenham, Suffolk. He was thus the most substantial purchaser of Oxford's estates.

For Oxford's sale of his manors of Castle Camps and Fowlmere to Skinner on 16 September 1580 for £5000, see TNA C 54/1176. For Oxford's recognizance to Skinner for £7000 of the same date guaranteeing Skinner's indemnification against possible extents by the Queen in connection with the sale of Castle Camps and Fowlmere, see TNA 3/34/14 No. 3. For the fine of 9 February and 12 April 1581 by which clear title to Castle Camps and Fowlmere passed from Oxford to Skinner, see TNA CP 25/2/260. For the indenture of 13 November 1582 which granted Oxford the right to repurchase the manors of Castle Camps and Fowlmere, see TNA C 54/1159. For the deed made between Oxford and Skinner on 6 February 1584 by which Oxford relinquished his right to repurchase the manors of Castle Camps and Fowlmere from Skinner, see TNA C 54/1176.

For Skinner's fraud against Oxford in connection with the plan by purchasers of Oxford's lands to repay his debt to the Court of Wards in order to safeguard their properties against

extents by the Queen, see Oxford's letter to Lord Burghley dated 8 September 1590, BL Lansdowne 63/76, ff. 191-2, and Oxford's letter to Lord Burghley dated 30 June 1591, BL Lansdowne 68/11, ff. 22-3, 28.

Thomas Skinner did not purchase Oxford's manors of Overhall and Netherhall directly. He used as intermediaries Richard Peacock and Rowland Martin, leather-sellers. For the fine by which Oxford transferred clear title to the manors of Overhall and Netherhall to Peacock and Martin on 20 January 1583 for £800, see TNA C 146/6976. For the deed of 9 December 1583 in fulfilment of indentures into which Oxford had entered on 30 November 1583 with Peacock, Martin and Skinner for the sale of his manors of Overhall and Netherhall, Lavenham park, and the advowson of the church of Lavenham, see TNA C 147/152. For Oxford's acknowledgement on 30 November 1583 of the receipt of £13,400 from Peacock, Martin and Skinner for the sale of the manors of Overhall and Netherhall and the park of Lavenham in Suffolk, as well as the manors of Castle Camps and Fowlmere in Cambridge, see TNA C 146/7040. For the indenture tripartite of 4 January 1585 providing for a recovery by which the manors of Overhall and Netherhall would be held to the use of the heirs of Thomas Skinner, see TNA C 147/231.

Skinner's use of Richard Peacock as one of his intermediaries is of interest in that Thomas Haselfoote, the husband of Blanche Skinner's stepsister, Barbara (nee Watson) Haselfoote, was the grandson of Sir Stephen Peacock, former Lord Mayor of London, to whom Richard Peacock was likely related. In his will Thomas Skinner bequeaths £40 to a William Haselfoote, suggesting that he had maintained a relationship with this branch of his wife's family.

As noted in the will, the testator bequeathed Oxford's former manors of Overhall and Netherhall to his second son, Thomas Skinner:

Item, I give and devise to my son, Thomas Skinner, my manors of Overhall and Netherhall and Lanam alias Lavenham in the county of Suffolk, with th' advowson thereof, and all other hereditaments to the same belonging, and also all other my lands, tenements, rents, reversions and hereditaments in Lavenham and elsewhere in the county of Suffolk, and all my evidences concerning the same premises in the county of Suffolk, to have and to hold the same to the said Thomas Skinner, my son, and to his heirs forever, and I do declare that the use and all the uses of all and singular the said manors, lands and premises in the said county of Suffolk shall be to my said son, Thomas Skinner, and to his heirs forever.

For the inheritance of the manors of Overhall and Netherhall by Thomas Skinner the younger, see also Shipley, N.R., 'The History of a Manor: Castle Campes, 1580-1629', *Bulletin of The Institute of Historical Research*, Vol. 47, (University of London: Institute of Historical Research, 1974), p. 164, citing Charterhouse Muniments L5/6.

For the bill of complaint dated 9 February 1602 filed by the testator's second son, Thomas Skinner, in the Court of Chancery against Anne Bacon, Robert Bacon and George Ruggle concerning leases granted to them by Oxford of the manors of Overhall

and Netherhall, see TNA C 3/290/19. For the will of Anne Bacon's husband, Thomas Bacon (d.1577), through whom she inherited the leases, see TNA PROB 11/59, ff. 271-2:

Item, I give and bequeath unto Anne, my said wife, and to her heirs forever, all my leases whatsoever and not afore disposed that I have and hold by the grant as well of the right honourable the Earl of Oxenford that now is as also by the grant of his right honourable father, the Earl of Oxenford that dead is, as well of all those grounds whatsoever as is commonly known, reputed and taken by the name of Brome park, situate within the parish of Lavenham, as of all and every parcel and parcels of grounds whatsoever as are included within every or any of all the said leases that either I hold in possession or reversion by virtue and force of any of the said leases, except before excepted. . . .

Robert Bacon, named as a defendant in the bill of complaint, had also inherited, under the will of his father, Thomas Bacon (d.1577), a lease granted by Oxford:

Item, I give unto my said son, Robert Bacon, all my lease and whole term of years that I have in reversion of all the lands, meadows, pastures, feedings, and commonly called and known by the names of Baylie Brooke and Nether Hall, which lease and term of years I hold of the grant of the right honourable th' Earl of Oxenford, to be begun after the expiration and determination of the term of years that one Robert Symond of Lanam now hath in the same lands by virtue of a former lease in possession.

Mention of the testator's house and warehouse called 'The Sign of the Three Kings' in Westcheap can be found in the records of the Salters' Company, available online at: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/A2A/records.aspx?cat=2155-h1&cid=-1&Gsm=2008-06-18#-1>.

For the testator's daughter, Elizabeth (nee Skinner) Smith, to whom the testator leaves £300 in the will below, see the pedigree of Smith alias Harris in Fetherston, John, ed., *The Visitation of the County of Leicester in the Year 1619*, (London: Harleian Society, 1870), pp. 66-7, which shows that she married Sir William Smith, the son of Queen Elizabeth's silkman, Ambrose Smith (d.1584), and his wife Joan Coe, the daughter of John Coe of Coggeshall, Essex. Through this marriage, Elizabeth (nee Skinner) Smith was the niece of Lord Burghley's sister, Margaret (nee Cecil) Cave Smith, who married as her second husband Ambrose Smith's brother, Erasmus Smith. Thomas Skinner's relationships to the Queen and Lord Burghley through the Smith family perhaps explain why Skinner was not prosecuted for his fraud noted above in connection with the plan by purchasers of Oxford's lands to repay his debt to the Court of Wards.

The definitive sentence in Latin which records a dispute between the testator's heir and the testator's executor, William Stone, has not been transcribed.

RM: T{estamentum} Thome Skinnar

In the name of God, Amen. The eight and twentieth day of December one thousand five hundred ninety-six and in the nine and thirtieth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Elizabeth by the grace of God Queen of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith etc., I, Thomas Skinner, Lord Mayor of the City of London, being sick in body and yet nevertheless of good and perfect mind and memory (laud and praise be given unto Almighty God therefore) do make, ordain and declare this my present testament containing therein my last will in manner and form following, that is to say:

First and principally I commend my soul into th' hands of Almighty God, hoping and steadfastly believing to be saved and to have free remission and forgiveness of all my sins and offences and to inherit everlasting life in the kingdom of heaven only by the merits and most precious death and passion of Jesus Christ, my only and alone Saviour, and my body I will shall be buried in Christian manner within the parish church of St Mary Magdalen in Milk Street, London, by the good discretions of my executors;

And as concerning the disposing of all and singular my manors, lands, tenements and hereditaments, I leave, will and devise the same as followeth, viz:

Inprimis, I leave to descend all that my lordship and manor of Camps in the counties of Cambridge and Essex, with all the lands, tenements and hereditaments to the same belonging, together also with th' advowson thereof and all other my lands, tenements and hereditaments in Camps in the counties aforesaid to my son, John Skinner, and to his heirs forever;

Item, also I leave to descend to the said John Skinner, my son, the parsonage of Amwell in the county of Hertford, to him and to his heirs forever, to the intent the Queen's Majesty shall be truly answered of her primer seisin and relief of all my lands, tenements and hereditaments;

Item, I give and devise to my son, Thomas Skinner, my manors of Overhall and Netherhall and Lanam alias Lavenham in the county of Suffolk, with th' advowson thereof, and all other hereditaments to the same belonging, and also all other my lands, tenements, rents, reversions and hereditaments in Lavenham and elsewhere in the county of Suffolk, and all my evidences concerning the same premises in the county of Suffolk, to have and to hold the same to the said Thomas Skinner, my son, and to his heirs forever, and I do declare that the use and all the uses of all and singular the said manors, lands and premises in the said county of Suffolk shall be to my said son, Thomas Skinner, and to his heirs forever;

Item, I give and devise to my son, Richard Skinner, and to his heirs all my lands, tenements and hereditaments at Woodford in the county of Essex, and also I give and devise to the said Richard Skinner, my son, my manor of Fowlmere with th' appurtenances in the county of Cambridge, and all my lands, tenements and hereditaments in Fowlmere, and also all my lands, tenements and hereditaments in Preston Andernes in the county of Lancashire, and all my evidences concerning the premises to him devised, to have and to hold to the said Richard Skinner and to his heirs

forever, and I declare that the use and all the uses of all and singular the premises to the said Richard devised shall be to the said Richard Skinner and his heirs forever;

And as concerning the disposing of my goods and chattels, item, I give and devise all my interest and term of years which I have in my house called the Three Kinges situate in Cheapside in London and of and in the warehouses and rooms now occupied with the same unto William Stone, cloth-worker, and Rowland Martin, leather-seller, citizens of London, with all household stuff, plate, tapestry, linen and all other things in the said house excepting the debts, silks, wares and merchandise and the stock in the shop and warehouses of the said house, and also except all debts that are or shall grow due for any of the said stock, wares and silks or merchandises that now are or heretofore were in the said shop or warehouses;

And further I give unto the said William Stone and Rowland Martin all my plate, goods and chattels whatsoever which now are in or about the house wherein I do now dwell within the said city of London, nevertheless upon trust and confidence that they shall employ and convert the same to the best use of my daughter, Anne Barnes, in such sort as the same shall not be taken, used or spent by her husband, John Barnes;

Item, I give to my daughter, Elizabeth Smith, three hundred pounds;

Item, I give to my daughter, Julian Winn [=Wynne?], the sum of five hundred pounds;

Item, I give to the children of my sister, Katherine, each of them one hundred pounds apiece;

Item, I do give to the relief of the poor children harboured in Christ's Hospital in London forty pounds, and of the poor people in Saint Thomas' Hospital in Southwark forty pounds, and of the poor people in Bridewell forty pounds, and to the relief of the poor prisoners in the two Counters and Ludgate of London to each of the said prisoners [sic?] ten pounds apiece;

Item, I give to my son, John Skinner, the sum of two thousand pounds;

Item, I give to my son, Thomas Skinner, the sum of two thousand pounds;

Item, I give to my son, Richard Skinner, the sum of two thousand pounds;

Item, I give to every child of the foresaid William Stone, namely Thomas, Elizabeth, Anne and Suzan, every one of them two hundred pounds apiece;

Item, I give to the relief of the poor people of St Mary Magdalen's in Milk Street of London twenty pounds;

Item, I give to William Haselfoote forty pounds;

Item, I give to Margery, my maidservant, forty pounds;

Item, I give to Joyce, my maidservant, fifty pounds; to my servants Godlie and Katherine, ten pounds apiece; to my servant Alice Foxe, ten pounds; to Gregory, my manservant, ten pounds; to my servant Allen, twenty pounds; to my servant Farrell, ten pounds; to my servant Winn, twenty pounds, and to Boone and his sister, my servants, ten pounds apiece;

The residue of all my goods, chattels and debts afore unbequeathed, my debts, legacies and funerals being first paid, I do give and bequeath unto and amongst all my said children, as well sons as daughters, equally to be divided between them;

Provided always that if any of my children shall claim any further part or portion of my goods, chattels or debts by reason of any custom, covenant, bond or otherwise, that then my meaning and will is that all my legacies and benefit that he, she or they so making claim of any further part or portion may claim or have by virtue of this my last will and testament shall be utterly void to him or them that shall so offend or break my will;

And my meaning and will is that my executors at their discretions shall consider my friends whom I have not remembered with any legacy;

And I do ordain and make the said William Stone and Rowland Martin my sole executors of this my last will and testament, and overseers of the same I do nominate and make my loving friends Mr Justice Owen and Mathew Dale, esquires, desiring either of them to be assistant to my executors in the due execution of this my will;

Provided furthermore, for that I can devise but two third parts of my land and hereditaments to my younger children for that some part thereof is holden in chief, therefore if my eldest son or his heirs shall disturb any of my younger sons of or in any of the manors, lands, tenements or hereditaments that I have devised or limited unto them or either of them, then I devise two third parts of my foresaid manor and lordship of Camps & of all other my lands, tenements and hereditaments in Camps unto my two younger sons, Thomas and Richard Skinner, and to their heirs, to be equally divided between them;

And I do further by this my last will and testament utterly repeal, revoke and annul all former conveyances, assurances and wills whatsoever heretofore made of any my lands, tenements or hereditaments, goods or chattels;

In witness whereof to this my last will and testament I, the said Thomas Skinner, have set my hand and seal given the day and year first above-written. Thomas Skinner, Mayor.

Sealed, subscribed and published by the said Thomas Skinner the nineteenth [sic?] day of December one thousand five hundred ninety-six, Annoq{ue} tricesimo Nono Elizabthe Regine in the presence of us.

Memorandum: that before the publication of this will these words in the first leaf of this will were interlined, viz, 'Milk Street' and this word 'leave', and these words 'I leave to descend all that my lordship', and also these words 'tenements and hereditaments', and likewise these words 'I leave to descend', and also this word 'truly'. And in the second leaf these words are likewise interlined before the said publication of this will, viz., 'and all my evidences concerning the same premises in the county of Suffolk', and these words 'and all my evidence concerning the premises to him devised', and also these words 'and I declare that the use and all the uses of all and singular the premises to the said Richard devised shall be to the said Richard Skinner and his heirs forever'. And in the fourth leaf these words were likewise interlined, viz., 'and my meaning and will is that my executors at their discretion shall consider my friends whom I have not remembered with any legacy'. Nicholas Balgaye, Rowland Smart, James Smith, William Ottley, Thomas Irelande, William Heines. Signum Will{el}imi Angle.

Probatum ac per Sententiam Diffinitivam approbatum et insinuatum fuit Testamentum suprascriptum apud London coram venerabili viro magistro Will{el}imo Lewyn Legum Doctore Curie Prerogative Cantuariensis magistro Custode siue Commissario Nono die mensis Iunij Anno Domini Millesimo Quingentesimo Nonagesimo Septimo Iuramento Galfridi Clarke notarij publici procuratoris Will{el}imi Stone vnius Executorum in huiusmodi Testamento nominatorum Cui commissa fuit administratio bonorum Iurium et creditorum dicti defuncti De bene et fideliter administrando &c Ad sancta Dei euangelia Iurat{i} Rowlando Martin Executore etiam in huiusmodi Testamento nominato demortuo Examinatum

[=The above-written testament was proved and by definitive sentence probated and entered at London before the worshipful Master William Lewin, Doctor of the Laws, Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on the ninth day of the month of June in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred ninety-seventh by the oath of Geoffrey Clarke, notary public, proctor of William Stone, one of the executors 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., Rowland Martin, executor also named in the same testament, having died. Examined.]