

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the last will and testament, dated 18 August 1601 and proved 3 October 1601, of Helen Harding Knyvet Browne, whose second husband, Sir Thomas Browne (d. 9 February 1597), signed Lady Russell's petition against James Burbage's Blackfriars theatre.

The testatrix was born on St Helen's day in 1537, as attested in a manuscript which records the dates of birth of the testatrix and her sisters, and the names of their godparents:

Thus to 2(?) day of May a{nn}o 1437 [sic]

Ellen Harding was born upon Saint Ellen's day the day and year abovesaid., born on(?) Thursday about 7 o'clock in the morning, and Sir John Gresham, mercer, her uncle, was godfather, and Mistress Eleanor Marshe, her granddam, and Elizabeth Pakington, her aunt, and Mary Gresham, those were her godmothers. And God make her a good old woman.

Frances Harding, my daughter, being the third child, was born (blank) day of May anno 1440 [sic], born Saturday, and Mistress Eleanor Marshe, her granddam, and Mistress Margaret Clement and Winifred Clement, these were her godmothers, and John Marshe, her uncle, was godfather. And God have mercy upon her soul. Buried in July(?).

Katherine Harding, my fourth child, was born upon Saturday the first day of July 1442 [sic], and my Lady Katherine Gresham, wife to Sir John Gresham, and Mistress Southwood and Katherine Lok, these were her godmothers, and Master William Lok, mercer, was her godfather.

See Howard, Joseph Jackson and Frederick Arthur Crisp, eds., *Visitation of England and Wales*, Vol. I, 1896, p. 76 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationofengl22howa#page/76/mode/2up>.

It is unclear why the testatrix' godfather, Sir John Gresham (c.1495–1556), is said to have been her uncle. For her godmother, Elizabeth (nee Harding) Pakington, see her will, TNA PROB 11/46/444.

The testatrix was the elder of the two surviving daughters and co-heirs of the London mercer William Harding (d. 7 September 1549) by Cecily Marshe, daughter of the London mercer Walter Marshe (d.1540) by his wife, Eleanor, and sister of John Marshe (c.1516–1579), Governor of the Company of Merchant Adventurers. For the will of William Harding, see TNA PROB 11/32/553. For John Marshe, whose wife, Alice Gresham, was a first cousin of Sir Thomas Gresham (c.1518–1579), founder of the Royal Exchange, and the only child of the mercer William Gresham (d.1547) by his wife Ellen Bodley, see the *ODNB* article on John Marshe; the will of Walter Marshe (which mentions his son, John Marshe, and daughter, Cecily Harding), TNA PROB 11/28/26; the

will of William Gresham (d.1548), brother of Sir John Gresham (c.1495–1556), TNA PROB 11/32/156; the will of Ellen Gresham, TNA PROB 11/36/194; Leveson Gower, Granville, *Genealogy of the Family of Gresham*, (London: Mitchell & Hughes, 1883), pp. 86-7, 150, 161; and the History of Parliament entry for John Marshe at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/marshe-john-1516-79>

The marriage of the testatrix' uncle, John Marshe, to Alice Gresham likely explains the testatrix' choice of Sir Nicholas Bacon as one of her trustees, as mentioned in the will below. The testatrix' trustee, Sir Nicholas Bacon (c.1543–1624), was the son of Lord Burghley's brother-in-law, the Lord Keeper Sir Nicholas Bacon (1510–1579), by his first wife, Jane Ferneley (d.1552), whose sister, Anne Ferneley (d.1596), married Sir Thomas Gresham, founder of the Royal Exchange. See Leveson Gower, *supra*, pp. 11-12, 152, and the *ODNB* articles on Sir Nicholas Bacon and Sir Thomas Gresham, and *Visitation of England and Wales*, Vol. I, p. 76 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationofengl22howa#page/76/mode/2up>.

After the death of William Harding, the testatrix' mother, Cecily Marshe, married Robert Warner (d.1575), esquire, of Norwich, by whom she had a son, Henry Warner (died c.1616), mentioned by the testatrix as her brother in the will below. The will of Robert Warner, dated 1 August 1575, establishes that by that date the testatrix had married her second husband, Sir Thomas Browne, since in his will Robert Warner refers to his daughters Warner, Browne and Onslowe. See Dashwood, G.H., ed., *The Visitation of Norfolk in the Year 1563*, (Norwich: Miller & Leavins, 1878), Vol. I, p. 18, available online.

The testatrix' sister, Katherine Harding (d.1599), married Richard Onslowe (d. 2 April 1571), by whom she had two sons and five daughters, including the testatrix' trustee, Sir Edward Onslowe (d.1615), mentioned in the will below. See the will of Sir Edward Onslowe, TNA PROB 11/126/380; the will of Richard Onslowe, TNA PROB 11/53/193; and the *ODNB* article on Richard Onslowe:

His will mentions lands in Buckinghamshire, Gloucestershire, Kent, Middlesex, Shropshire, Surrey, Sussex, Warwickshire, and Wiltshire, and a house in the Blackfriars, London, which his widow had as part of her jointure. Among his bequests were a standing cup and cover for the earl of Leicester, to whom he was 'most bounden', and a gilt bowl for Lord Burghley. His second son (and eventual heir), Sir Edward Onslow (d. 1615), was the father of Sir Richard Onslow (d. 1664) and ancestor of the earls of Onslow.

See also the History of Parliament entry for Richard Onslowe at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/onslow-richard-152728-71>.

Although the *ODNB* entry above states that Richard Onslowe's property in the Blackfriars was part of his widow's jointure, it appears from his will that he left two-thirds of his lands, including the Blackfriars property, to his widow for life towards the preferment in marriage of his five daughters, rather than as her jointure. It is possible that the testatrix purchased the rights of her five nieces, since she states in the will below that 'I have heretofore purchased th' inheritance of the house, gardens, wharf and buildings in the Blackfriars, London, now in my own use and possession'. On 26 April 1561, Sir William More (1520-1600) of Loseley leased to Richard Onslowe, esquire, and Katherine, his wife, a little garden plot formerly occupied by Sir Philip Hoby, and on 28 May of the same year quitclaimed the property to them. See LM/348/15/1 and LM/348/15/2. The identification of this property is of particular interest since the testatrix' second husband, Sir Thomas Browne (d.1597), signed Lady Russell's petition against James Burbage's Blackfriars theatre, and Sir Philip Hoby (d. 9 May 1558) was Lady Russell's brother-in-law by her first marriage, and she and her husband, Sir Thomas Hoby (1530-1566), inherited Sir Philip Hoby's Blackfriars property at his death.

After Richard Onslowe's death, the testatrix' sister, Katherine, married Richard Browne, half-brother of the testatrix' second husband, Sir Thomas Browne (d. 9 February 1597). See the History of Parliament entry for Richard Browne at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/browne-richard-i-1614>.

The testatrix married firstly the Gentleman Pensioner Richard Knyvet (d. 1 November 1559), cousin of the half blood of Sir Henry Knyvet (died c.1546), soldier and Gentleman of the Privy Chamber, grandfather of Oxford's mistress, Anne Vavasour, and father of Sir Thomas Knyvet (1546 – 27 July 1622), who fought with Oxford over the 'quarrel of Anne Vavasour', an altercation in which Oxford was hurt and his man 'Gerret' slain, according to an entry in the diary of Richard Madox for 1-3 March 1582 (see BL MS Cotton, Appendix 47, f. 7v). See the will of Sir Henry Knyvet, TNA PROB 11/32/4, and the will of his wife, Anne (nee Pickering) Weston Knyvet Vaughan (1514 – 25 April 1582), TNA PROB 11/64/217.

The testatrix' first husband, Richard Knyvet, was the eldest son of Charles Knyvet (died c.1528), esquire, by Anne Lacy (d.1562), the daughter of Walter Lacy. Richard Knyvet's half-sister, Elizabeth Knyvet, married Richard Fitzwilliam (died c.1559), the brother of Lady Burghley's mother, Anne Fitzwilliam. See Richardson, Douglas, *Plantagenet Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. II, pp. 109-110, 186-8 at:

https://books.google.ca/books?id=kjme027UeagC&pg=RA1-PA188&lpg=RA1-PA188&dq=%22Plantagenet+Ancestry%22+%22Charles+Knyvet%22&source=bl&ots=qvFiKE-fml&sig=E4CJvl_7iIKhm8c-s7JFmU0klD8&hl=en&sa=X&ei=-iIVavJBsPUoATcy4GwCQ&ved=0CB0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%22Plantagenet%20Ancestry%22%20%22Charles%20Knyvet%22&f=false

By her first husband, the testatrix had a son, Henry Knyvet, and a daughter, Mary Knyvet, who married Sir Henry North (1556-1620), third son of Roger North (1531-1600), 2nd Baron North, by Winifred Rich (d.1578), the daughter of Richard Rich (1496/7–1567), 1st Baron Rich, and widow of Leicester's elder brother, Sir Henry Dudley. The testatrix' son-in-law, Sir Henry North (1556-1620), was the younger brother of Sir John North (c.1550–1597), who petitioned Sir William More on behalf of the Italian master of fence, Rocco Bonetti (d.1587) concerning premises in the Blackfriars. See SHC LM/COR/3/382; the *ODNB* entries for Roger North, 2nd Baron North, and Sir John North; and the History of Parliament entry for Sir Henry North at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/north-henry-1556-1620>.

For the testatrix' first husband, Richard Knyvet, whose funeral was recorded in Machyn's *Diary*, see also:

<http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=johanson&id=I28618>.

In the will below the testatrix mentions her children and grandchildren by her first marriage, i.e., her son, Henry Knyvet, and his two daughters, Katherine and Eleanor, and her daughter, Lady Mary North, and her children.

The testatrix married secondly Sir Thomas Browne (d. 9 February 1597) of Betchworth Castle, Surrey, by whom she had one son, Richard Browne, to whom she leaves her Blackfriars property in the will below. For Sir Thomas Browne, see also Laoutaris, Chris, *Shakespeare and the Countess: The Battle That Gave Birth to the Globe*, (London: Fig Tree, 2014), pp. 121, 123, 130, 176-7, 277-8.

The testatrix' stepson, Sir Matthew Browne, was one of the trustees of Nicholas Brend (d. 12 October 1601), who leased the ground on which the Globe was built by lease dated 21 February 1599 to Richard Burbage, Cuthbert Burbage, William Kempe, Augustine Phillips, Thomas Pope, John Heminges and William Shakespeare (1564-1616) of Stratford upon Avon (see TNA REQ 4/1/2):

for the said gardens and grounds whereupon the said playhouse & galleries were afterwards builded were demised & letten by the said Nicholas Brend by his indenture of lease tripartite bearing date in or about the 21st day of February in the 41st year of the reign of the late Queen Elizabeth [=21 February 1599] unto Cuthbert Burbage, Richard Burbage, William Shakespeare, the said Augustine Phillips, Thomas Pope, the said John Heminges, one of the said defendants, and William Kempe, to have and to hold the one moiety of the said garden plots and ground to the said Cuthbert Burbage and Richard Burbage, their executors, administrators & assigns, from the feast of the birth of Our Lord God last past before the date of the said indenture [=25 December 1598] unto the end & term of 31 years from thence next ensuing [=24 December 1629] for the yearly rent of seven pounds & five shillings, and to have & to hold the other moiety of the said garden plots & grounds unto the said William Shakespeare, Augustine Phillips, Thomas

Pope, the said John Heminges, one of the said defendants, & William Kempe, their executors, administrators & assigns, from the said feast of the birth of Our Lord God then last past before the date of the said indenture unto the said full end & term of 31 years from thence next ensuing for the like yearly rent of seven pounds & five shillings.

For the will of the testatrix' stepson, Sir Matthew Browne, see TNA PROB 11/111/273.

For the will of Nicholas Brend, in which he names Sir Mathew Browne as one of his overseers, see TNA PROB 11/98/348.

For the inquisition post mortem taken on 17 May 1599 after the death of Nicholas Brend's father, Thomas Brend (d.1598), see TNA C 142/257/68. In the inquisition the Globe is described as:

one house newly built with a garden to the same appertaining in the parish of Saint Saviour's aforesaid in the county of Surrey aforesaid in the occupation of William Shakespeare and others.

For a discussion of the financial arrangements made by Nicholas Brend with Sir Matthew Browne, John Collett and John Bodley prior to his death which involved, inter alia, the ground on which the Globe was built, see Berry, Herbert, *Shakespeare's Playhouses*, (New York: AMS Press, 1987), pp. 87-8. For Nicholas Brend's indenture of 7 October 1601 by which, in consideration for payment of his debts of £1478 and for £250 paid to him by John Collett, he conveyed certain properties in Southwark in Surrey, including the land on which the Globe was built, in trust to Sir Mathew Browne and John Collett, see TNA C 54/1722, mm. 5-7. For Nicholas Brend's recognizance in the amount of £2500 acknowledged to Sir Mathew Browne and John Collett on 8 October 1601 as security for the performance of the indenture of 7 October 1601, see TNA C 54/1705, mm. 24-5. For Nicholas Brend's indenture of 10 October 1601 by which he conveyed certain properties in Bread Street in London as well as the properties in Southwark in Surrey, including the land on which the Globe was built, in trust to Sir Mathew Browne and John Collett, see TNA C 54/1682, mm. 10-11. As a result of these indentures, the testatrix' stepson, Sir Mathew Browne, was from 1601 until his death in 1603 effectively a co-owner, with John Collett, of the Globe, and as such was William Shakespeare of Stratford's landlord.

The testatrix names her nephew, Henry Gawdy, as one of her trustees. Sir Nathaniel Bacon (d. 7 November 1622), brother of the testatrix' trustee, Sir Nicholas Bacon, married Anne Gresham, the illegitimate daughter of Sir Thomas Gresham (c.1518–1579), founder of the Royal Exchange, by whom he had three daughters: Anne Bacon, who married Sir John Townshend of Rainham, Norfolk; Elizabeth Bacon, who married Sir Thomas Knyvet of Ashwellthorpe, Norfolk; and Winifred Bacon, who married Sir Robert Gawdy of Clayton, Norfolk. See the *ODNB* entry for Sir Nathaniel Bacon, and Leveson Gower, *supra*, pp. 11-12.

RM: T{estamentum} D{omi}ne Helene Browne

[f. 168r] In the name of God, Amen. I, Lady Helen Browne, widow, late wife of Sir Thomas Browne late of Betchworth Castle in the county of Surrey, knight, deceased, calling to mind the uncertainty of the time of my death, and how certain it is that I must die, now being of good and perfect memory but weak in body (I humbly thank Almighty God), do ordain and make this my last will and testament in manner and form following:

First of all things I most humbly recommend my soul unto the one, only, eternal and everlasting God the Father who created me, God the Son by whose merits and mediation I undoubtingly hope to have remission and pardon of all my sins and transgressions and to enjoy everlasting joy provided for the elect of God, and to God the Holy Ghost who sanctified me and preserves me;

My body I will to be buried in good and seemly sort as to my executor shall seem convenient;

And whereas heretofore I have heretofore purchased th' inheritance of the house, gardens, wharf and buildings in the Blackfriars, London, now in my own use and possession, and caused the same to be conveyed unto divers of my loving friends, Sir Nicholas Bacon, knight, Henry Gawdy, esquire, my nephews, Edward Onslowe and Humphrey Winche, and their heirs upon special trust and confidence that such or so many of my said friends which shall be living at the time of my decease shall convey, assure and dispose of the said house with the appurtenances and of the inheritance thereof in such sort as I by my last will in writing or otherwise shall devise, limit or appoint;

Now I do hereby declare my full mind and intent to be that the whole fee simple of the said house, gardens, buildings and profits thereunto belonging shall be by my said friends or the survivor of them or their heirs immediately after my decease conveyed and assured to and for the use of my son, Richard Browne, or his heirs, if he be then living at the time of my decease;

So that my said son or they to whom the said conveyance shall be so made do upon or before such assurance or conveyance so made give unto my said friends from whom the said assurance or conveyance shall be so made sufficient and good assurance by obligation or otherwise for the true payment of two hundred pounds of lawful English money within one year [f. 168v] [-year] after my decease unto my daughter, Lady Mary North, or to such others as she shall limit and appoint, if she shall be then living, or if she shall be then dead, unto the children of my said daughter equally to be divided;

And also do give good security to my said friends for the true payment of the full sum of five hundred pounds of lawful English money unto the two daughters of my son, Henry Knyvet, named Katherine and Eleanor, to be equally divided betwixt them at their several ages of twenty years or at the time of their several marriages, if they be married before their said ages with the consent of my brother, Henry Warner, my said son, Richard

Browne, and of my nephew Humphrey Winche, or any two of them, or so many of them as shall be then living at any of their said marriages;

And my mind and full will is that until the time of payment of the said several portions to the said two daughters of my son, Henry Knyvet, that my said son, Richard, to whom the said house with th' appurtenances shall be conveyed, shall pay or cause to be paid towards the keeping & bringing up of the said two daughters of my son, Henry Knyvet, yearly ten pounds a piece;

And that my said friends which shall make assurance or conveyance of the said house with th' appurtenances shall likewise take or cause to be taken sufficient or good assurance for the true payment of the said several sums of ten pounds yearly according to my true meaning before expressed before they or any of them grant or convey the said house or other the premises or any part thereof unto my said son;

And if my said son shall refuse to give security for payment of the said several sums as aforesaid, or if he shall be deceased in my lifetime, my will and mind is that such of my friends which have or shall then have the inheritance of the same house shall absolutely sell the same house with all the appurtenances for the best price they can, and with the money thereof coming shall pay the said portions to the said two daughters of my son, Henry Knyvet, and two hundred pounds of the residue of the money of the said sale shall give unto my said daughter, if she be living, or to her children, if she be not then living, and of the profit of that five hundred pounds the said daughters of my son Knyvet to be maintained, as is before mentioned, and the overplus of the money that shall come of the said sale, if any shall be, to give and bestow betwixt the children of my son, Richard Browne;

If any of the said two daughters of my son Knyvet do die before the several times limited for the payment unto them of their said parts of the said five hundred pounds, my will and mind is that she that doth survive & live until the age aforesaid or until marriage, as is before limited, shall have three hundred pounds of the said five, and thother two hundred pounds to be paid unto Mary Browne, daughter of my son, Richard Browne, and that then the overplus of the said sale over and above that five hundred pounds and the two hundred pounds to my daughter North or her children shall be unto John Knyvet, the son of my son, Henry Knyvet;

And if the daughters of my son Knyvet both die before the said time of payment of the said money, my will and mind is that the said five hundred pounds so limited to the said two daughters of my son Knyvet be thus bestowed, viz., one hundred pounds thereof to the said John Knyvet, and the other four hundred pounds to be equally divided between my daughter North her children, and my son Richard Browne his children;

And thereby I do declare my full mind and intent to be that neither my son Knyvet nor his wife shall have any meddling or dealing with the portion or portions by me appointed [f. 169r] to the said three children of my said son Knyvet, but I do hereby desire my said

friends and my son, Richard Browne, to order and dispose of the said portions for the purposes in this my will declared;

And further I do devise the hundred pounds which is to be paid unto my executor the next half year after my decease by the tenants and farmers of Radford Semele in the county of Warwick or by William Browne to John Knyvet, the youngest son of my son, Henry Knyvet, to be employed for his maintenance by my executor until he come to twenty-one years of age;

And if he die before he come to the age of twenty-one years, I give it to the two daughters of the said Henry Knyvet, if they or any of them shall be living at the death of the said John Knyvet;

If they all shall die, then I give it to my executor;

The whole inheritance of my house in Dorking which I purchased in my son Richard Browne his name, being of the yearly rent of four nobles, I do devise to John Browne, son of my son, Richard Browne, and his heirs;

I ordain and make my son, Richard Browne, my only executor of this my last will, hoping that he will truly and faithfully perform and execute the same, and pay such legacies as I shall in or unto this my will set down or bequeath in writing, or otherwise give or bequeath by any other writing;

And I desire my brother, Henry Warner, and my nephew, Humphrey Winche, to be overseers for the true performance of this my will;

I witness whereof I, the said Lady Helen Browne, have set to my hand the eighteenth day of August anno Domini one thousand six hundred and one in the three and fortieth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth;

Memorandum: My full mind and intent is that my executor shall not give any blacks for my funeral, neither to any of my children, nor to any other.

Helen Browne. Richard Nichollson, Humphrey Winche, Richard Browne, servant to the Lady Browne.

Probatum fuit Testamentu{m} sup{ra}scriptum apud London Cora{m} dilecto viro magistro Iohanne Hone legum doctore Surrogato venerabilis viri magistri Iohannis Gibson legum etiam doctoris Cur{ie} Prerogatiue Cantuariens{is} magistri custodis siue Comissarij legitime constitut{i} Tertio die mens{is} Octobris Anno Domini Millesimo Sexcentesimo primo Iuramento Galfridi Clarke notarij publici procuratoris Richardi Browne filij dicte defunct{e} et Executor{is} in huiusmodi Testament{o} nominat{i}

Cui comissa fuit Administratio bonorum Iurium et creditoru{m} eiusdem defunct{e} De bene et fideliter Administrand{o} &c Ad sancta dei Evangelia Iurat{i}

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before the worshipful Master John Hone, Doctor of the Laws, Surrogate of the worshipful Master John Gibson, also Doctor of the Laws, lawfully constituted Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the third day of the month of October in the year of the Lord the thousand six hundred first by the oath of Walter Clarke, notary public, proctor of Richard Browne, son of the said deceased and executor named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of the goods, rights and credits of the same deceased, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer etc.]