

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the nuncupative will, dated 7 June 1557 and proved 2 March 1560, of Edward Blount, whose grandson, John Combe (buried 12 July 1614), sold 107 acres of land to William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon and bequeathed him £5 in his will.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

The testator was the third son of Sir Thomas Blount of (1455 - 4 June 1524) of Kinlet who is said to have had twenty children by his wife, Anne or Agnes Croft (d. 27 September 1549), the daughter of Sir Richard Croft (d. 29 July 1509) of Herefordshire. See the pedigree of Blount in *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, (London: Harrison and Sons, 1883), Vol. IV, pp. 81-2 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=dD7QAAAAMAAJ&pg=RA1-PA78>

It appears from the foregoing pedigree that the testator was the uncle of Henry VIII's mistress, Elizabeth Blount. From the *ODNB*:

Blount [married names Tailboys, Fiennes de Clinton], Elizabeth (c.1500–1539x41), royal mistress, was the second daughter of John Blount of Kinlet (1484–1531) and his wife, Katherine (1483–1540), heir of Sir Hugh Peshall of Knightley and his wife, Isabel Stanley of Elford.

MARRIAGE AND ISSUE

The testator married Joan Carne, sole daughter and heir of John Carne, son of Howel Carne of Cowbridge in South Wales by Sibil, daughter of William Kemeys of Newport, Monmouthshire. See Vaughan, H.F.J., 'Donington Church and Lordship', in *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, (Shrewsbury: Adnitt and Naunton, 1883), Vol. VI, pp. 1-92 at pp. 60-3:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=iQAVAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA62>

In his will the testator mentions three sons, Thomas, John and Gilbert Blount, two unmarried daughters, Elizabeth and Katherine Blount, and a married daughter, Anne Hopton, to whom he bequeaths the goods at his house in Warwick. According to Vaughan, *supra*, Anne Blount married Edward Hopton, and was the mother of Thomas Hopton of Bitterley, Shropshire. For the will of Edward Hopton of Bitterley, dated 12 April 1579, which mentions a wife named Anne, and a son, Thomas, see TNA PROB 11/64/304.

It appears that the testator was also the father of Joyce Blount, the first wife of John Combe (d.1588) of Old Stratford, who from 1567-1582 was steward of the manor of

Stratford for Leicester's brother, Ambrose Dudley, (c.1530–1590), Earl of Warwick. See Lewis, B. Roland, *The Shakespeare Documents*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1941), Vol. II, pp. 325-36.

By John Combe (d.1588), the testator's daughter, Joyce (nee Blount), had four sons and a daughter: Edward Combe (d.1597); Thomas Combe (d.1609), for whose will see TNA PROB 11/113/130; John Combe (buried 12 July 1614), who together with his uncle, William Combe (d.1611), sold 107 acres of land to William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon in 1602 (see SBTRO ER 27/1), and who bequeathed him £5 in his will (see TNA PROB 11/126/415); George Combe; and Elizabeth Combe.

The testator does not mention his daughter Joyce in the will below, and it may be that she had died by the time the testator's will was proved in 1560 (bequests to persons who had predeceased the testator were sometimes omitted in PCC copies of the original wills). On 27 August 1561, John Combe (d.1588) married a second wife, Rose Clopton (buried 14 October 1579). Rose Clopton was the sister of William Clopton (1537-1592), owner of New Place, later purchased by William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon. William Clopton's daughter, Joyce Clopton (1562-1637), was a Maid of Honour to Queen Elizabeth, and on 31 May 1580 married the soldier and courtier George Carew (1555-1629), later Earl of Totnes. See Lewis, *infra*, p. 326; the *ODNB* entry for George Carew; and Bellew, J.C.M., *Shakespeare's Home at New Place, Stratford-Upon-Avon*, (London: Virtue Brothers and Co., 1863), pp. 162-6, 366-9 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=psIjAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA369>

According to Adams, the testator was in the service of Leicester's father, John Dudley (1504–1553), Earl of Northumberland, while the testator's eldest son, Thomas Blount (d.1568) of Kidderminster, was Leicester's leading officer of household, and may have been Leicester's steward at Kenilworth. See the will of the testator's eldest son, Thomas Blount of Kidderminster, dated 28 November 1568 and proved 24 March 1569, TNA PROB 11/51/110, in which the testator leaves a bequest to 'my nephew, Thomas Combes', i.e. Thomas Combe (d.1609); and Adams, Simon, *Leicester and the Court: Essays on Elizabethan Politics*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 331 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=-Nn5UY-RileC&pg=PA331>

For further details of the testator's relationship to the families of Combe and Clopton, see SBTRO ER 27/1.

RM: T{estamentum} Edwardi Blunte ar{migeri}

In the name of God, Amen. The 7th day of June in the year of Our Lord God a thousand five hundred fifty and seven Edward Blount of Kidderminster in the county of Worcester,

esquire, being of whole mind and perfect remembrance, ordained and made this his testament nuncupative in manner and form following:

First he bequeathed his soul to Almighty God and his body to be buried in Christian burial within the chancel of the parish church of Kidderminster;

Item, he bequeathed to John Blount, his second son, 5 marks by year during his natural life;

And unto Gilbert Blount, his youngest son, other 5 marks [=£3 6s 8d] by year during his natural life;

Item, he gave and bequeathed unto Elizabeth Blount, his daughter, £6 13s 4d by year during her life, to be paid out of his farm of Newton if the term of years thereof so long do continue, to be paid by the hands of her brother, Thomas Blount, if she be ordered by him;

Item, he gave and bequeathed unto Katherine Blount, his daughter, a hundred marks in money if she be ordered by her brother, Thomas Blount;

Item, he gave and bequeathed unto Anne Hopton, his daughter, all his household (blank) lying within his house at Warwick;

And all the rest of his lands and goods movable and unmovable, what kind soever they be of, he gave and bequeathed unto Thomas Blount, his eldest son, whom he made and ordained his sole executor, then being present Walter Blount, esquire, John Goarde(?), gentleman, William Page, yeoman, Ralph Smythe, with other.

Probatum fuit suprascriptum Testamentum coram Mag^{ist}ro Waltero Haddon Legum doctore Curie Prerogatiue Cant^{uariensis} Custode siue Com^missario apud London secundo die mens^{is} Marcij Anno D^{omi}ni Mill^{es}imo quingentesimo quinquagesimo nono Iuramento Mag^{ist}ri Roberti Warmingeton Notarij Publici Procuratoris Thome Blounte Executoris Cui Comissa fuit admiⁿⁱstracio de bene etc Ac de pleno et fidei Inventario etc exhibend^o Necnon de plano et vero Comp^{ot}o etc reddend^o Ad sancta Dei Evangelia Iuratⁱ

[=The above-written testament was proved before Master Walter Haddon, Doctor of the Laws, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, at London on the second day of the month of March in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred fifty-ninth by the oath of Master Robert Warmington, notary public, proctor of Thomas Blount, executor, to whom administration was granted, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well etc., and to exhibit a full and faithful inventory etc., and also to render a plain and true account etc.]