

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the last will and testament, dated 3 October 1558 and proved 27 August 1560, of Robert Saunders of Flore, Northamptonshire.

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.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

Testator's grandparents

The testator was the grandson of Edward Saunders of Harrington by Joan Makerneys, the daughter of Richard and Felice Makerneys of Wolfhampcote. See the pedigree of Saunders of Little Bowden in Metcalfe, Walter C., ed., *The Visitations of Northamptonshire*, (London: Mitchell and Hughes, 1887), p. 44 at:

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

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 wills of the testator's uncles, Lawrence Saunders (d.1544), TNA PROB 11/30/232; Thomas Saunders (d.1528), TNA PROB 11/22/481; and William Saunders (d.1541?), TNA PROB 11/28/488. See also the will of the testator's aunt, Dorothy (nee Yonge) Haddon Saunders Dayrell (d. 18 January 1574), TNA PROB 11/56/39; and the will of the testator's first cousin, Francis Saunders, TNA PROB 11/68/442.

Testator's parents

The testator was the second son of Thomas Saunders (d. 1528) of Sibbertoft, Northamptonshire, and Margaret Cave, daughter of Richard Cave of Stanford, Northamptonshire.

Testator's siblings

For the testator's siblings, see the wills of the testator's brothers, Sir Edward Saunders (1506-1576), Chief Baron of the Exchequer, TNA PROB 11/58/517; Blase Saunders, TNA PROB 11/63/486; and Ambrose Saunders (d.1585?), TNA PROB 11/69/469; and the *ODNB* entry for the testator's brother, the Protestant martyr, Lawrence Saunders (d.1555).

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

For the testator's biography, see the History of Parliament entry at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/saunders-robert-1514-59>.

MARRIAGES AND ISSUE

The testator married firstly, Margaret Staunton, the daughter and heir of Thomas Staunton of Staunton, Gloucestershire, by whom he is said to have had two sons and one daughter. See MacLean, John, 'History of the Manor and Advowson of Staunton, in the Forest of Dean', *Transactions of the Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, Vol. VII, (Bristol: C.T. Jefferies and Sons, 1882-3), p. 237); and the pedigree of Saunders of Flore in Metcalfe, *supra*, p. p. 195-6 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationsofnor00harvrich#page/194/mode/2up>

The testator married, secondly, Joyce Goodwin, the sister of both Sir John Goodwin (d.1596/7), named in the will below as 'Mr John Goodwin, my brother-in-law', and Mary Goodwin, wife of the testator's brother, Ambrose Saunders (d.1586). After the testator's death, Joyce Goodwin married Anthony Carleton (d. 18 January 1576), for whose will see TNA PROB 11/58/192.

In the History of Parliament entry, the testator's second wife, Joyce Carleton, is erroneously stated to be the daughter of *Sir* John Goodwin. However, her father was never knighted (see his will, TNA PROB 11/40/259). See also the will of her brother, Sir John Goodwin, TNA PROB 11/90/520, in which he leaves bequests to 'my sister, Mrs Joyce Carleton, widow', and 'my sister, Mrs Mary Saunders, widow'.

For the testator's monument, which mentions his two wives, see *The History of Northampton and its Vicinity*, 2nd ed. rev., (Northampton: James Birdsall, 1831), p. 87 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/historyofnortham00nor#page/86/mode/2up>

As noted above, after the testator's death, his widow married Anthony Carleton. Anthony Carleton and Joyce (nee Goodwin) Saunders Carleton were the parents of Bridget Carleton, who married Sir Hercules Underhill, from whom William Shakespeare

of Stratford purchased New Place, and of the diplomat, Sir Dudley Carleton (1574-1632), Viscount Dorchester. See the Carleton pedigree in Turner, William Henry, ed., *The Visitations of the County of Oxford*, (London: Harleian Society, 1871), pp. 122-4, and the *ODNB* entry for Sir Dudley Carleton. A letter from John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton indicates that Joyce (nee Goodwin) Saunders Carleton was still alive on 23 October 1602 (see Williams, Sarah, *Letters Written by John Chamberlain*, (Camden Society, 1841), p. 171).

RM: T{estamentum} Roberti Saunders

[f. 342r] In the name of God Amen. The third day of October in the year of Our Lord God 1558, I, Robert Saunders of Flore in the county [f. 342v] of Northampton, being this day sick of body but, thanks be unto Our Lord, of perfect memory, do ordain and make my last will and testament in manner and form following:

First I bequeath my soul unto Almighty God, trusting to be saved by the merits of Christ's passion, and my body to be buried as shall be thought good to mine executors;

And I bequeath towards the repairing of the chancel and for the ornaments for the parish church of Flore 20s;

Item, I bequeath to the poor of my parish 20s;

Item, I give unto every manservant in my house besides their wages 5s;

Item, I bequeath unto James Hampstone a tenement in Flore with a yardland for the term of 12 years, paying yearly therefore 20s;

Item I bequeath unto Joan Colleys and Elizabeth Kyllsbye 40s between them;

Item, I bequeath to every of my other maidens not named 3s 4d besides their wages;

Item, I bequeath to my Lord Chief Justice, my brother, my best gelding;

Item, I bequeath to my brother-in-law, Mr John Goodwin, my best harness, and unto my brother, Ambrose Saunders, my best harness next unto that;

Also I bequeath more unto my brother, Ambrose Saunders, £6 13s 4d;

All the rest of my goods, leases and cattle I give and bequeath unto my brother, Blase Saunders, and Joyce, my wife, to the use and intent following, that is to say, that all my debts may be paid and all my children may be brought up in learning until the time of their full ages or marriage, and then being ordered by such of my brethren as shall be then living, every one of them to have such portion of my goods as to the same shall amount

unto and as to my said brethren shall be thought meet, so that my wife be sufficiently provided for out of the whole stock;

And for executors of this my will I ordain and make my brother, Blase Saunders, and Joyce, my wife;

And I desire my brother, my Lord Chief Justice, and Mr John Goodwin, my brother-in-law, to be overseers thereof, trusting that they will call upon mine executors to fulfil such trust as I do herein put them;

And in witness hereof I have subscribed this my last will the day and year above-written. Robert Saunders. Ambrose Saunders, Joyce Thomare, Henricus Cox.

Probatum fuit h{uius}mo{d}i Testamentum coram mag{ist}ro Waltero Haddon Legum doctore Curie prerogatiue Cant{uariensis} Comissario apud London vicesimo septimo die Mensis Augusti Anno Domini mill{es}imo quingentesimo sexagesimo Iuramento blasij Saunders vnus Executorum in h{uius}mo{d}i Testamento nominat{i} Cui comissa fuit administrac{i}o &c de bene &c Ac de pleno Inventario Necnon de vero et plano computo Reddend{o} Ad sancta Dei Evangelia Iurat{i} Res{er}uata potestate Iocose Rel{i}c{t}e et Executric{is} cum venerit.

[=The same testament was proved before Master Walter Haddon, Doctor of the Laws, Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, at London on the twenty-seventh day of the month of August in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred sixtieth by the oath of Blase Saunders, one of the executors named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted etc., sworn on the Holy Gospels to well etc., and to render a full inventory and also a true and plain account, with power reserved to Joyce, relict and executrix, when she shall have come.]