

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 9 April 1597 and 9 December 1599, and proved 18 January 1600, of the London mercer, Anthony Marler (d.1599?), whose aunt resided in Oxford's former mansion at London Stone.

The Marler family's connection to Kent suggests that the playwright, Christopher Marlowe, may have been a relation. The family surname is spelled variously Marler, Marlar, Marley, Marloe, Marlowe etc.

CONNECTION TO OXFORD

Either the testator or his father was an investor with Oxford in the Frobisher voyages of 1576-1578 in which Oxford suffered heavy losses. See TNA E 164/36, pp. 171-3, TNA E 164/36, pp. 317-23, and TNA SP 12/126/56, ff. 166-7.

For many years the testator's aunt, Elizabeth (nee Shakerley) Elkyn Marler Nicholas (d.1583), the widow of the testator's uncle, Walter Marler (d.1561), resided in Oxford's former mansion at London Stone, which her third husband, Sir Ambrose Nicholas (d.1578), had purchased from Oxford. See the will of Sir Ambrose Nicholas, TNA PROB 11/60/296:

First I will, and my mind and intent is, that all the great capital messuage or mansion-house wherein I do now inhabit and dwell, sometime or of late commonly called or known by the name of Oxenforth Place. . . situate, lying, and being in the parish of St. Swithin near unto London Stone aforesaid, together with the advowson or right of patronage of the parish church of St. Swithin aforesaid, all which I lately purchased and bought to me, my heirs and assigns, forever of the right honourable Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxenforth. . . .

Sir Ambrose Nicholas purchased the mansion from Oxford in 1573, as evidenced by a recognizance for purposes of indemnification given by Oxford to Nicholas in that year in the amount of £2000 (see TNA PRO 30/34/14 and TNA C 54/922, Part 27). Sir John Harte (d.1604) may have purchased the mansion from the executors of Sir Ambrose Nicholas, or there may have been intermediate purchasers. Both men kept their mayoralties there, Sir Ambrose Nicholas in 1575-6, and Sir John Harte in 1589-90:

On the north side of this church [=St. Swithin's] and churchyard is one fair and large built house, sometime pertaining to the prior of Tortington in Sussex, since to the Earls of Oxford, and now to Sir John Hart, alderman, which house hath a fair garden belonging thereunto, lying on the west side thereof. On the back side of two other fair houses in Walbrook, in the reign of Henry VII, Sir Richard Empson, knight, chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, dwelt in the one of them, and Edmond Dudley, esquire, in the other; either of them had door of intercourse into this garden, wherein they met and consulted of

matters at their pleasures. In this Oxford place Sir Ambrose Nicholas kept his mayoralty, and since him the said Sir John Hart.

On the south side of this high street, near unto the channel, is pitched upright a great stone called London stone, fixed in the ground very deep, fastened with bars of iron, and otherwise so strongly set, that if carts do run against it through negligence, the wheels be broken, and the stone itself unshaken.

The cause why this stone was set there, the time when, or other memory hereof, is none, but that the same hath long continued there is manifest, namely since (or rather before) the Conquest. . . .

See Thoms, William J., ed., *A Survey of London Written in the Year 1598 by John Stow*, (London: Whittaker, 1842), pp. 84-5 at:

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044021198916&view=1up&seq=106>

For Sir John Harte's will, proved 23 January 1604, in which he leaves a life estate in the mansion to his second wife, Anne (nee Haynes) Hudson Cage Harte (d.1625), see TNA PROB 11/103/59.

CONNECTION TO WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE OF STRATFORD UPON AVON

The testator's aunt, Elizabeth (nee Shakerley) Elkyn Marler Nicholas (d.1583), was the stepmother of Daniel Nicholas, who was a witness in the *Belott v Mountjoy* lawsuit, and is stated therein to have had a personal conversation with William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon. See TNA REQ 4/1/3 on this website. See also Nicholl, Charles, *The Lodger Shakespeare; His Life on Silver Street*, (New York: Viking, 2008), p. 64:

Sir Ambrose Nicholas, a salter by trade, served as Lord Mayor in 1575-6. He died a couple of years later, so Shakespeare would not have known him, but he certainly knew his son, Daniel Nicholas (born about 1560). This was the friend of Stephen Belott, who testified in 1612 that he had visited Shakespeare 'to understand the truth' about the disputed dowry.

See also the facsimile of Daniel Nicholas' deposition on the Shakespeare Documented website at:

<https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/exhibition/document/bellott-v-mountjoy-first-set-depositions-bellotts-behalf-including-shakespeares>

Witnesses in this first round of depositions were to answer a list of five questions, called interrogatories, on behalf of Bellott, the complainant. The third interrogatory asked whether the defendant did send "anie person" to persuade the plaintiff to marry the defendant's daughter Mary. The first two deponents, Joan Johnson and Daniel Nicholas,

identify that person as “Mr Shakespeare,” while the third deponent, William Shakespeare himself, agreed that he had played that role. . . .

The second witness was Daniel Nicholas, gentleman, of the parish of St. Alphage, Cripplegate, 52 years of age. Nicholas’ deposition is now bound third. Nicholas asserts that he “herd” one William Shakespeare say that he had been involved in persuading the plaintiff to marry the defendant’s daughter. Nicholas thus reports hear-say evidence rather than testifying from his own knowledge. But what he heard, he heard from William Shakespeare personally, who told him that £50 and “certain household stuff” were promised to Bellott as a dowry. (Nicholas was also interrogated in the second round of depositions, where he is identified as 62 years of age.)

FAMILY BACKGROUND

For the Marler family of Essex, see Metcalfe, Walter C., ed., *The Visitations of Essex*, (London: Harleian Society, 1878), Vol. XIII, p. 74 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=0m1KAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA74>

Testator’s grandparents

The testator was the grandson of the London haberdasher, William Marler (d.1527), and his wife, Alice (buried 14 September 1544). See the will of William Marler, proved 17 July 1527, TNA PROB 11/23/2; the will of Alice Marler, proved 9 October 1544, TNA PROB 11/30/216; and:

D J Keene and Vanessa Harding, 'Index of Persons - M', in *Historical Gazetteer of London Before the Great Fire Cheapside; Parishes of All Hallows Honey Lane, St Martin Pomary, St Mary Le Bow, St Mary Colechurch and St Pancras Soper Lane* (London, 1987), *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/london-gazetteer-pre-fire/m> [accessed 22 July 2019].

Testator’s parents

The testator was the son of Anthony Marler (living 1561) and Elizabeth Gonson, the daughter of the naval administrator, William Gonson (d.1544). See the *ODNB* entry for William Gonson, and the Marler pedigree in Hovenden, Robert, ed., *The Visitation of Kent, Taken in the Years 1619-1621*, (London: Harleian Society, 1898), Vol. XLII, pp. 165-6 at:

<https://archive.org/details/visitationofkent00camd/page/164>

See also the Gonson pedigree in Howard, Joseph Jackson, ed., *Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica*, Vol. I, Second Series, (London: Mitchell and Hughes, 1888), p. 124 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=WVRIAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA124>

For the career of the testator's father, see also Blayney, Peter W.M., *The Stationers' Company and the Printers of London 1501-1557*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=SLGkAgAAQBAJ&pg=PT593>

The testator's father was appointed by Henry VIII by order dated 25 April 1541 to sell the Great Bible. See Condit, Blackford, *The History of the English Bible*, (New York: A.S. Barnes & Company, 1882), p. 211 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=7wsXAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA211>

See also Dixon, Richard Watson, *History of the Church of England From the Abolition of the Roman Jurisdiction*, Vol. II, (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1881), p. 263 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=B5UoAQAAIAAJ&pg=PA263>

For the testator's father, see also:

Edward Hasted, 'Parishes: Crayford', in *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent: Volume 2* (Canterbury, 1797), pp. 263-285. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-kent/vol2/pp263-285> [accessed 22 July 2019].

Anthony Marler, gent. was of Crayford in the beginning of queen Elizabeth's reign, as was his eldest son George, who dying s.p. was succeeded in the estate he possessed in this parish, in the reign of king Charles I. by his kinsman, Robert Marler, (fn. 31) who was living here in the year 1633. . . .

The testator's uncle, Walter Marler (d. 22 June 1561) married firstly, on 12 May 1545, Mary Dale, the daughter of the London haberdasher, Matthew Dale (d.1550), and secondly Elizabeth Shakerley (d.1583), widow of Richard Elkyn (d.1559). For the will of Walter Marler, see TNA PROB 11/44/277. For the will of Elizabeth Shakerley, see TNA PROB 11/65/520.

After the death of Walter Marler, Elizabeth Shakerley married thirdly Sir Ambrose Nicholas (d.1578), Lord Mayor of London, who purchased Oxford's mansion at London Stone (see above).

Testator's siblings

For the testator's siblings, see the Marler pedigree in Hovenden, *supra*, p. 166, and the will of the testator's uncle, Walter Marler, *supra*.

MARRIAGE AND ISSUE

The testator married Anne Lawrence, by whom he had two sons and three daughters:

* **George Marler**, eldest son, who married Elizabeth Wodhull, the daughter of Rowland Wodhull of London.

* **Anthony Marler**, second son.

* **Elizabeth Marler**, who married Nicholas Goldsmith of Crayford.

* **Jane Marler**, who married George Jackson of London.

* **Sybil Marler**.

OTHER PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE WILL

The London alderman, Matthew Field, from whom the testator purchased a house in St Lawrence Lane, was also an investor in the Frobisher voyages of 1576-1578 together with Oxford and the testator (or the testator's father of the same name). See TNA E 164/36, pp. 317-23; and Brenner, Robert, *Merchants and Revolution; Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653*, (London: Verso, 2003), p. 20 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=amFQ3gq-SjQC&pg=PA20>

RM: T{estamentum}Anthonij Marler

In the name of God, Amen. I, Anthony Marler, citizen and mercer of London, being whole of mind and memory, thanks be to God, do make this my last will and testament in manner and form following:

First I give and bequeath my soul to Almighty God, my only Saviour and Redeemer, and my body to the earth where God shall appoint;

And for all and singular my lands, tenements and hereditaments, goods, chattels and others whatsoever, I will and bequeath them in manner and form following:

I give and bequeath to George Marler, my eldest son and his heirs, my mansion house at Crayford with all the lands, tenements and hereditaments which came to me by the death of my late brother, George Marler, deceased;

Provided always that he suffer my loving wife, Anne Marler, to have and enjoy the same during her natural life, she paying unto my son, George Marler, immediately after the age of twenty-one years, twenty pounds lawful English money yearly, and unto Anthony Marler, my second son, ten pounds lawful English money yearly immediately after the age of twenty-one years so long as she enjoyeth the said lands;

And also that the said George Marler answer and pay unto my younger son, Anthony Marler, out of the said lands & immediately after the age of twenty-one years, the said lands being in his possession by virtue of this will, twenty pounds lawful English money yearly or so soon as there [sic for 'they'?] shall come to his possession during the natural life of the said Anthony Marler;

And if it happen the said George Marler to depart this life without heir male of his body lawfully begotten, then for want of such heirs I will and bequeath all the said lands, houses and &c to Anthony Marler, my younger son, and his heirs;

And for lack of heirs male of his body lawfully begotten, I give the same to the heirs of my eldest son, George Marler;

And so to my next heirs orderly from one to the other as it shall descend by course of law;

Provided always if any of my said heirs make any offer or sale or devise for cutting of [=off?] this entail, then this present gift to be void, and my lands to descend according to the law of the realm;

More, I will that my house in St Lawrence Lane bought of the heirs of Matthew Field be sold by my executrix and overseers for so much money as can be made thereof, which money I give and bequeath as [f. 15v] followeth:

To Elizabeth Marler, my eldest daughter, two hundred pounds lawful English money;

To Anthony Marler, my youngest son, two hundred pound more of said money;

To Jane Marler, my second daughter, and Sybil Marler, my youngest daughter, the residue of all the money that shall remain thereof equally to be divided between them, to be paid them at the day of marriage or age of one and twenty years;

And for all the rest of my goods, chattels and others whatsoever, my funeral and debts discharged, I give one third part thereof to my loving wife, Anne Marler;

The other two third parts to my five children, George, Anthony, Elizabeth, Jane and Sybil Marler, equally to be divided;

And further my will and meaning is, both for the money that shall proceed of my house in Saint Lawrence Lane aforesaid and for the two thirds of my goods and chattels aforesaid, if any of my children die and depart this life before marriage or the age of one and twenty years, then the portion of such as shall so depart to be equally divided among all the rest of my children then living;

And I make and ordain my loving wife, Anne Marler, my executor;

And my loving brother [=brother-in-law?], Thomas Rowe, and my good friend, Benjamin Derrow, overseers, and for their pains I give each of them a ring of three pounds English money in value;

In witness whereof I have written this my last will and testament with my own hand and have set to my hand and seal the sixth day of April one thousand five hundred ninety-seven 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. By me, Anthony Marler, mercer.

Memorandum: That these words, viz., ‘by my executrix and overseers’ interlined in the thirtieth line, and these words, viz., ‘five – George’ interlined in the nine and thirtieth line was interlined by the appointment of me, Anthony Marler, the ninth of December one thousand five hundred ninety-nine, and this my will then published. Anthony Marler. Published with this postscript in the presence of us, John Woodward, Ralph Wilkinson, R{ichardus}{?} Wright.

Probatum fuit h{uius}mo{d}i testamentum apud London coram mag{ist}ro Iohanne Hone Legum Doctore Surrogato ven{er}abilis viri mag{ist}ri Ioh{ann}is Gibson legum etiam Doctoris Curie Prerogative Cant{uariensis} m{agist}ri Custodis sive Com{m}issarij l{egi}time deputat{i} decimo Octavo Die mens{is} Ianuarij Anno Domini iuxta cursum et Computac{i}o{n}em Eccl{es}ie Anglicane mill{es}imo quingen{tesim}o nonagesimo nono Iuramento m{agis}tri Ioh{ann}is Keene no{ta}rij publi{ci} procur{ator}is Anne Marler rel{i}c{t}e et executric{is} in h{uius}mo{d}i testamento no{m}i{n}ate Cui Comissa fuit ad{ministraci}o &c De bene &c Iurat{i}

[=The same testament was proved before Master John Hone, Doctor of the Laws, Surrogate of the worshipful Master John Gibson, also Doctor of the Laws, lawfully deputed Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the eighteenth day of the month of January in the year of the Lord according to the course and reckoning of the English Church the thousand five hundred ninety-ninth by the oath

of John Keene, notary public, proctor of Anne Marler, relict and executrix name in the same testament, to whom administration was granted etc., sworn to well etc.]