

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 18 May 1621 and proved 29 May 1621, of Edward Overy, one of the witnesses to the indenture by which William Shakespeare (1564-1616) of Stratford upon Avon purchased the Blackfriars gatehouse from Henry Walker (d.1616) on 10 March 1613. For the will of Henry Walker, see TNA PROB 11/128/230.

Among the bequests in the will below is a gift of £5 to John Jackson (d.1625), one of the three trustees involved in William Shakespeare's purchase of the Blackfriars gatehouse:

Item, I give to my kind friend, Mr John Jackson, five pounds, and to his wife for a ring, forty shillings.

According to the Shakespeare Documented website:

<https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/shakespeare-purchases-blackfriars-gatehouse>

Literary scholar Leslie Hotson has identified all four witnesses for the 1613 transactions. Robert Andrewes and Henry Lawrence identify themselves as scriveners, while Edward Overy is known from other documents as yet another scrivener. William Atkinson, gentleman, of the parish of St. Mary Aldermanbury, was a clerk of the London Company of Brewers. Gregory Donhault, a witness to the enrollment of the indenture of bargain and sale, was one of twelve Masters in Chancery, and a member of the same parish.

Two of the witnesses may have represented Henry Walker's interests, two the interests of William Shakespeare. As Walker would later make Edward Overy one of two executors of his will (TNA PROB 11/128/230), it is likely that Overy and Atkinson represented Walker, while Andrewes and Lawrence (master and servant) represented Shakespeare. This supposition is consistent with the fact that Lawrence impressed his own seal-ring on the seals which secured the labels and signatures of Shakespeare and Johnson.

For a facsimile of the purchasers' copy of the indenture by which Shakespeare purchased the Blackfriars gatehouse, Folger MS Z.c.22(45), signed by Henry Walker, see the Shakespeare Documented website at:

<https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/exhibition/document/shakespeare-purchases-blackfriars-gatehouse-copy-bargain-and-sale-signed-vendor>

For a facsimile of the vendor's copy, London Metropolitan Archives CLC/522/MS03738, signed by Shakespeare, Johnson and Jackson, see the Shakespeare Documented website at:

<http://www.shakespearedocumented.org/exhibition/document/shakespeare-purchases-blackfriars-gatehouse-copy-bargain-and-sale-signed-buyers>

TESTATOR'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE HICKES FAMILY

As noted above, the testator was a scrivener, and in the will below refers to the London scrivener, William Hickes, as his master:

All the rest of my goods (my debts paid and funerals discharged) I give to my said master, Mr William Hickes, whom I nominate and appoint my sole and only executor, and put in trust to see all these things duly performed.

For the will of William Hickes, citizen and scrivener of London, dated 25 September 1622 and proved 30 September 1622, see TNA PROB 11/140/270, and the transcript at:

https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Space:Will_of_William_Hicks_or_Hickes%2C_Scrivener_of_London_1622

Hotson has noticed connections between Henry Walker (d.1616), from whom William Shakespeare purchased the Blackfriars gatehouse, and members of the Hickes family:

As for the vendor, Henry Walker, he was born at Kington, Herefordshire, on the border of Wales; a member of the Minstrels' or Musicians' Company of London; lived in a house in St. Martin Ludgate belonging to William Hickes, and took Hickes's son Samuel as one of his apprentices. That he was a man of considerable property appears by his will, proved August 30, 1616 (P.C.C. 94 Cope). Both Hickes and Overy witnessed it. . . .

See Hotson, Leslie, *Shakespeare's Sonnets Dated*, (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1949), p. 215.

Given the connections between the testator and William Hickes, and Henry Walker and William Hickes, it may be significant that Mathy Bacon (d.1639), who sold the Blackfriars gatehouse in 1604 to Henry Walker, left the residue of his goods to his kinswoman, Elizabeth Hickes, and appointed her husband, John Hickes, as one of the overseers of his will:

All the rest and residue of my goods, chattels, money, leases, plate, household stuff, debts to me owing and other estate whatsoever not hereinbefore bequeathed, my debts, legacies and funeral charges being paid and discharged, I do will, give and bequeath unto my said loving kinswoman Elizabeth Hickes, the now wife of the said John Hickes. . . .

And I do also entreat my said cousins, Mr Edward Campion and Mr John Hickes, to be the supervisors or overseers of my said will, and to advise, help and assist my said executors the best they can in the due performance thereof.

LM: T{estamentum} Edwardi Overye

In the name of the holy and unseverable Trinity the eighteenth day of May in the year of Our Lord God one thousand six hundred twenty-one, I, Edward Overy, at this present visited with sickness of body yet in good and perfect memory, for which and all other the good gifts and graces of the Almighty conferred and continued upon me, most unworthy the least part of any of them, I yield that unfeigned thanks my heart can possibly conceive, to whose blessed name be given all honour, praise and glory forever, hoping after this life ended of life eternal in the kingdom of heaven, do therefore in his name and in that assured faith and hope make and declare my testament and last will as hereafter followeth:

LM: Hu{ius}mo{d}i test{ament}um pronunt{ur} pro nullo p{er} S{ente}nciam diff{inituam} lat{em} 2do Assen(?) 1624 et ad ab(?) intestato eodi(?) die commiss{um}(?)

First and before all things I acknowledge and declare that I faithfully and assuredly believe that I am redeemed by the unconceivable and incomprehensible mercy and love of my Creator and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, by and through the shedding of his most precious blood, death and passion, my body to the earth in decent manner to be interred at the discretion of my executor hereafter named, and my temporal estate wherewith it hath pleased God to bless me, I give and dispose in form as followeth:

Item, I give to the repair of the highway leading to the Spital at Highgate fifty pounds;

Item, I give and bequeath to William Overy, my brother, if he continue his tanner's trade, the sum of one hundred pounds;

Item, I give to William, his son, two hundred pounds if he continue his grandfather's trade of a tanner; if he continue not, then I will and my meaning is he shall only have one hundred pounds, and that to be paid him at his age of five and twenty years and not sooner;

Item, I give to Edward Overy, my godson, all that capital messuage and two other tenements adjoining to the same in Wood Street in London, to hold to him at his age of five and twenty years and not before, and then to him and the heirs males of his body lawfully begotten, and for default of such issue male on [sic] his body lawfully to be begotten, then I will the same capital messuage and two tenements to Randall Hicke and to the heirs of his body lawfully begotten, and for want of such issue to Elias Hicke and to his heirs forever;

Item, I give to Jane Rolfe, my sister, one hundred pounds to be paid her within one year next after the decease of John Rolfe, her husband (if she overlive him);

Also I give a further portion of twenty pounds apiece to their children than by conveyance is limited to them, to be paid to them at their several ages of five and twenty years without use expecting for the same;

Item, I give to Elizabeth Hickes, my mistress, to buy her a pair of bracelets, twenty pounds;

To every of the sons and daughters of my said master and mistress twenty pounds apiece;

Item, I give to my cousin, Thomas Hickes, twenty pounds, and to his wife for a ring, forty shillings;

Item, I give to my cousin, Robert Hickes, ten pounds, and to his wife for a ring, five pounds;

To my cousin, Edward Hickes, ten pounds;

Item, I give to Mr Edward Watkinson, for a ring, forty shillings;

To my goddaughter, Alice Hickes, ten pounds;

To my goddaughter, Hester Marshe, five pounds;

To my cousin, Robert Gill, ten pounds, and to his wife, five pounds;

Item, I give to my cousin, Nicholas Laurensen, and his children, fifty pounds;

Item, I give to the Counters in the Poultry and in Wood Street and to Ludgate towards the releasing of five poor men prisoners out of each prison, in the whole the sum of twenty pounds;

Item, I bequeath unto Mr Purchase five pounds, and to him and his successors, parsons of the parish of St Martin's, Ludgate, for the better exhibition and continuance of a lecture in the same church the rent of a house in the Goldsmiths' Alley there in the tenure of one Wolley for the term of years I have thereof;

Item, I give to my kind friend, Mr John Jackson, five pounds, and to his wife for a ring, forty shillings;

And to Mr Warden Smalle(?) forty shillings for a ring;

Item, I give to my loving and kind friend, Mr Pye, to make him a ring, forty shillings;

And to Thomas Clarke's child, my godson, five pounds;

Item, I give to my father-in-law, Benet Mountslowe [=Benedict Mounslow?], ten pounds and my long black cloak;

And to Mrs Croshowe twenty pounds;

To Mr Puttoe(?) for a ring, forty shillings;

Item, I give to Mr Ellice [=Ellis?] Jones of Fenstanton for a ring three pounds six shillings eight pence;

Item, I give to Randall Hickes my lease and interest in one house in the Strand of the yearly rent of ten pounds during the remain of the years to come;

Item, I give to my master, Mr William Hickes, my tenement and lands in Shear Lane, and after his decease to his son, Elias Hickes, and his heirs forever;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my dear friend, Eliza Tresham, the sum of two hundred pounds of lawful English money;

I give to Margaret, my master's maid-servant, three pounds, and to and amongst his other servants, at his dispose, seven pounds, whereof to Hugh Pinge(?), the boy in the shop, towards his better appareling, forty shillings;

Item, to Doctor Moore five two and twenty shilling pieces which I intended to give him so soon as I shall have received the debt due by the Lord Ridgeway;

Item, I give to Anne Rose and Alice Tresham forty shillings apiece to make them seals;

All the rest of my goods (my debts paid and funerals discharged) I give to my said master, Mr William Hickes, whom I nominate and appoint my sole and only executor, and put in trust to see all these things duly performed;

In witness whereof I have set my hand and seal the day and year first above-written. Edward Overy. Sealed, delivered & acknowledged the day and year aforesaid, being this eighteenth day of May one thousand six hundred twenty-one, in the presence of us, Robert Gill, Elizabeth Gill, the mark of Margaret Griffin, servant to William Hickes and attendant on the testator in all the time of his sickness.

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum apud London coram Magistro Edmundo Pope legum doctore Surrogato venerabilis viri d{omi}ni Iohannis Benet milit{is} legum etiam doctoris Curie Prerogatiue Cantuariens{is} magistri Custod{is} siue Co{mm}issarij legitime constituti vicesimo nono die Mens{is} Maij Anno D{om}ni Millesimo sexcentesimo vicesimo primo Iuramento Will{el}mi Hick{es} Executoris in eodem testamento nominat{i} Cui commiss{a} fuit Administrac{i}o bonorum Iurium et Creditorum dicti defuncti de bene et fideliter administrand{o} &c ad sancta dei Evangelia Iurat{i}

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before Master Edmund Pope, Doctor of the Laws, Surrogate of the worshipful Sir John Bennet, knight, also Doctor of

the Laws, lawfully constituted Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the twenty-ninth day of the month of May in the year of the Lord the thousand six hundred twenty-first by the oath of William Hickes, executor 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.]