

SUMMARY: The document below is the indenture dated 20 December 1576 by which Sir William More (1520-1600) of Loseley leased ‘six upper chambers’ in the Blackfriars to Richard Farrant (d. 30 November 1580) for 21 years at an annual rent of £14. Had other events not intervened, the 21-year term would have expired at Michaelmas 1597.

According to notes made by Sir William More after Easter term 1584 (see Folger MS L.b.425), he had granted the lease to Farrant at the request of Sir Henry Neville (c.1520–1593), for whom see the *ODNB* entry:

*Sir Henry Neville (c.1520–1593) was the second son of Sir Edward Neville (d. 1538), alleged conspirator, of Addington Park in Kent, and his wife, Eleanor, daughter of Andrew Windsor, first Baron Windsor, and his wife, Elizabeth. He came from noble stock, and it can be said that his appointment to the privy chamber was not because of this, but rather despite it. His father was the brother of George Neville, third Baron Bergavenny, and had been at one time a favourite of the king. However, he was executed on 9 January 1539 as a consequence of the Courtenay conspiracy. His children, though, did not suffer. Henry Neville, the younger son, was the king's godson and an annuity of £20 was granted to him in October 1539, only nine months after his father's execution. It is possible that he had been destined for a diplomatic career, for in March 1542 he was with the French ambassador. However, by 1546 he was a groom of the privy chamber—a considerable prize for the son of an alleged traitor.*

Sir Henry Neville’s relationship to George Neville (c.1469-1535), 3<sup>rd</sup> Baron Bergavenny, is of interest because Margaret Poole, who had a life estate in premises in the Blackfriars, and also came into conflict with Sir William More, was the daughter of George Neville, 3<sup>rd</sup> Baron Bergavenny, by his third wife, Mary Stafford. Moreover William Brooke (1527-1597), 10<sup>th</sup> Baron Cobham, mentioned as More’s former tenant in the indenture below, married, as his first wife, Dorothy Neville (d. 22 September 1559), another daughter of Lord Bergavenny. Yet another of Lord Bergavenny’s daughters, Ursula Neville (d.1575), was the mother of Anne St Leger, who married firstly Thomas Digges (c.1546 – 24 August 1595), and secondly Thomas Russell, the overseer of the will of William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon. Sir Henry Neville, at whose request Sir William More leased to Farrant, was thus a first cousin of these three Neville sisters, Margaret Poole, Dorothy Brooke and Ursula St Leger. See Folger MS L.b.352.

The premises leased by Farrant were on the upper floor of the northern end of the western range of the Blackfriars. Four rooms there had earlier been occupied by Lord Burghley’s brother-in-law, Sir John Cheke (1514-1557). About 1545 Henry VIII converted Cheke’s lodgings, plus an additional room, into the Revels Office under Sir Thomas Cawarden, in whose occupation they remained until his death in 1559. In 1560 the Revels Office was removed to St Johns Jerusalem, and the four rooms were leased to Sir Henry Neville. During part of Neville’s tenure the four rooms, as well as others in the building, were occupied by the Company of Silk Dyers. Sir William More bought back Neville’s lease in 1568; however the four rooms continued to be used by the Silk Dyers, even after they were leased in 1571 to Lord Cobham. By then the four rooms had been divided by

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Neville into six. See Wallace, Charles William, *The Evolution of the English Drama up to Shakespeare*, (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1912), pp. 137-46.

The premises leased to Farrant on 20 December 1576 consisted primarily of these 'six upper rooms', 156 ½ feet in length, which had formerly been leased to Lord Cobham, and which are stated in the indenture below to 'abut upon the south part of the now dwelling-house of the said William, Lord Cobham', in other words, they were located just south of Lord Cobham's mansion in the former porter's lodge of the monastery. The location is confirmed by a clause in the indenture of 6 February 1571 by which More had leased the same 'six upper rooms' to Lord Cobham, granting him permission to 'break the walls' and 'make . . . convenient doors . . . to lead out of his said dwelling-house into the said chambers, rooms, lodgings and premises'.

The lease also included a 'new kitchen lately builded by Sir Henry Neville, knight, with the stair leading out of the same kitchen up into the premises before letten'. These 'great stairs' were included in the lease as well. The lease also included two rooms directly under the 'six upper chambers', but it reserved to Sir William More, whose mansion was close by, the 'great washing-house' which was directly under part of the 'six upper rooms' and adjoined the 'two rooms' just mentioned which were also directly under the 'six upper rooms'.

It thus seems that what had been the buttery when the friars had the premises, i.e. the ground floor, had been divided into two rooms plus More's washing-house, and that the six upper rooms leased by Farrant, in which the first Blackfriars theatre was situated, were directly above the same. See also Smith, Irwin, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse* (New York University Press, 1964), pp. 136-7.

As the indenture indicates, Farrant was prohibited from subletting the premises or any part thereof. However upon obtaining the lease he converted the premises into a playhouse for the Children of the Chapel, a use not envisioned by Sir William More, and also sublet part of the premises to two other persons, for which infraction More claimed Farrant had forfeited his lease. Before More could regain possession, however, Farrant died, leaving the lease in his will to his widow, Anne (nee Bower) Farrant, the daughter of Richard Bower (d.1561), Master of the Choristers of the Chapel Royal. For the will of Richard Farrant, see TNA PROB 11/63/120.

After her husband's death, and after intervention by Leicester with Sir William More on behalf of William Hunnis (d.1597), Master of the Children of the Chapel, Anne Farrant sublet the premises on 20 December 1581 to Hunnis and John Newman, who later transferred their interest to Henry Evans. Evans sold his sublease to Oxford, who granted it to his servant, John Lyly (1554-1606). More brought suit against Evans, and was granted possession of the property in Easter term 1584, and the first Blackfriars theatre was closed. See Folger MS L.b.425, and Smith, *supra*, pp. 148-52, 467-8.

For John Lyly's lease of the Blackfriars property, see the *ODNB* article:

*Lyly's use of the Blackfriars as an apparently essential part of his playwriting enterprise had been achieved by legalistic chicanery that had deprived the landlord of his rights and transferred the property to the earl of Oxford, who passed it to Lyly.*

According to Wallace, *supra*, p. 194:

*When the Farrant-Lyly theatre broke up, the lease was forfeited to More, and Lyly could not sell it.*

It should be noted, however, that Lyly held three other leases in the Blackfriars, and that he sold two of them to Henry Carey (1526-1596), 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Hunsdon, later the patron of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and another to the Italian fence-master, Rocco Bonetti (d.1587), whom Shakespeare alluded to in *Romeo and Juliet* as 'the very butcher of a silk button'. Of special interest in the indenture below is the 'quill of conduit-water issuing and running from the conduit and water of the said Sir William More', which caused Smith to identify the leases which Lyly sold to Lord Hunsdon with the Farrant lease, a view not shared by Wallace, who provides evidence establishing that of the two leases sold by Lyly to Lord Hunsdon one had already expired by 14 April 1590, while the other was to expire on 25 March 1591, whereas the Farrant lease, i.e. the lease in the indenture below, would have expired, had it not been forfeited to Sir William More in 1584, at Michaelmas 1597. See Wallace, *supra*, pp. 186-7, Smith, *supra*, p. 185, and Feuillerat, *infra*, p. 124.

The modern-spelling transcript below was prepared from the original-spelling transcript in Wallace, *supra*, pp. 132-6. See also the original-spelling transcript in Feuillerat, Albert, *Blackfriars Records*, (Oxford University Press: Malone Society, 1913), pp. 28-135 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/collectionspt102malouoft#page/28/mode/2up>.

The latter transcript differs in only a few minor respects from Wallace's.

This indenture made the twentieth day of December in the nineteenth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Elizabeth by the grace of God Queen of England, France & Ireland, Defender of the Faith etc., between Sir William More of Loseley in the county of Surrey, knight, on the one party, and Richard Farrant of New Windsor in the county of Berkshire, gentleman, on thother party:

Witnesseth that the said Sir William More hath demised, granted and to farm letten and by these presents doth demise, grant and to farm let unto the said Richard Farrant all those his six upper chambers, lofts, lodgings or rooms lying together within the precinct of the late-dissolved house or priory of the Blackfriars, otherwise called the Friars Preachers, in London, which said six upper chambers, lofts, lodgings or rooms were lately amongst other in the tenure & occupation of the right honourable Sir William

Brooke, knight, Lord Cobham, and do contain in length from the north end thereof to the south end of the same one hundred fifty and six foot & a half of assize, whereof two of the said six upper chambers, lofts, lodgings or rooms in the north end of the premises, together with the breadth of the little room under granted, do contain in length fifty & six foot & a half, and from the east to the west part thereof in breadth twenty & five foot of assize, and the four other chambers or rooms, residue of the said six upper chambers, do contain in length one hundred and ten foot, and in breadth from the east to the west part thereof 22 foot of assize, of which four chambers last recited, one of them is ceiled with wainscot on the east part, south part and a part of the west, with a great round portal contained within the same chamber and ceiling, which ceiling over and besides the said portal doth contain fourscore & fourteen yards, & the north end of the premises before letten do abut upon the south part of the now dwelling-house of the said William, Lord Cobham;

And also the said Sir William More hath demised, granted and to farm letten and by these premises doth demise, grant and to farm let unto the said Richard Farrant all the said wainscot and round portal contained within the said chamber above demised, and also all that his new kitchen lately builded by Sir Henry Neville, knight, with the stair leading out of the same kitchen up into the premises before letten, with the little void room wherein the foot of the said stairs standeth, and the wood-yard to the same kitchen adjoining, situate, lying & being together within the precinct aforesaid between the entry being under part of the premises above demised on the east part and a certain way called Water Lane leading to the Blackfriars bridge at the Thames side on the west part and the said dwelling-house of the said Lord Cobham on the north part and a certain void ground and a way of the said Sir William More leading from the said Water Lane towards and unto the dwelling-house or tenement & garden of the said Sir William More within the precinct aforesaid on the south part;

And also the said Sir William More hath demised, granted and to farm letten and by these presents doth demise, grant & to farm let unto the said Richard Farrant the great stairs lately erected and made by the said Sir Henry Neville upon part of the said void ground and way last above expressed, with the little void room under the same great stairs, which said great stairs do serve and lead into the premises before demised, and also the use & commodity of one quill of conduit-water issuing and running from the conduit and water of the said Sir William More, together with the cocks thereof set & being in the little void room at the said stair-foot before mentioned, for th' only use of the said Richard Farrant and his family within the premises before letten, and also free ingress, egress and regress to and from the said great new stairs lately erected and made by the said Sir Henry Neville in and upon the said void ground and way leading from the said way called Water Lane unto the said great new stairs;

And also the said Sir William More hath demised, granted and to farm letten and by these presents doth demise, grant and to farm let unto the said Richard Farrant all those two rooms with the two cellars directly under part of the upper chambers, lodgings or rooms above demised, which said two rooms & two cellars last above demised late were in the occupation of (blank), and do lie between the said void ground on the west part and an

entry leading from the said void ground into the garden of the said Sir William More on the north part and an entry leading from the said void ground into the said dwelling-house or tenement of the said Sir William More on the south part and the garden of the said Sir William More on the east part, with free and quiet ingress, egress and regress into & from the said two rooms and two cellars last above demised in and upon the said void ground and way leading from Water Lane aforesaid unto the same rooms;

And also the said Sir William More hath demised, granted and to farm letten and by these presents doth demise, grant and to farm let unto the said Richard Farrant one little room, sometime two little rooms, lying within the limits and bounds first above expressed, whereof one part was sometime used for a withdraught or privy, & thother part thereof was lately used for a coalhouse;

Except and always reserved unto the said Sir William More, his heirs and assigns, all that great room now used for a washing-house, being directly under parcel of the premises first above demised, and adjoining unto the said two rooms last above bounden on the east part of the same two rooms;

And also except and always reserved unto the said Sir William More, his heirs & assigns, all the leads covering the premises before demised and the use of them, saving that it shall and may be good & lawful for the said Richard Farrant, his executors and assigns, to have free ingress, egress & regress to and from the said leads to repair, maintain & amend the same as often as need shall require during the term under granted;

To have and to hold all & singular the premises before demised and letten by this indenture with their appurtenances, except before excepted, unto the said Richard Farrant, his executors and assigns, from the feast of Saint Michael th' Archangel last past before the date hereof unto th' end and term of twenty & one years from thence next ensuing & then fully to be complete & ended;

Yielding and paying therefore yearly during the said term of 21 years unto the said Sir William More, his heirs and assigns, fourteen pounds of lawful money of England at four usual terms of the year, that is to say at the feasts of the Nativity of Our Lord God, th' Annunciation of Mary, the Blessed Virgin, the Nativity of Saint John Baptist, and Saint Michael th' Archangel, or within fifteen days next after every of the same feasts by even portions yearly to be paid;

And the said Richard Farrant doth promise, covenant and grant for him, his executors, administrators and assigns, to & with the said Sir William More, his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, by these presents that he, the said Richard Farrant, his executors, administrators and assigns and every of them, at his and their own proper costs and charges shall well & sufficiently repair, amend, uphold, maintain and keep from time to time & at all time and times during the said years when and as often as need shall require all manner of reparations whatsoever to the premises above demised or letten by this indenture belonging & appertaining, and also shall repair, maintain and keep well and sufficiently all such defaults and reparations as shall at any time hereafter be in the

leads above excepted and in the timber-work and roof that beareth the same leads during this present lease and term of 21 years, and all and singular the premises before demised well and sufficiently repaired, made, amended, maintained and kept, together with the said wainscot and great round portal, in th' end of the said term of 21 years shall leave and yield up;

And also the said Richard Farrant doth covenant and grant for him, his executors, administrators and assigns, to and with the said Sir William More, his heirs, executors and assigns, by these presents that he, the said Richard Farrant, his executors, administrators and assigns, at his and their own proper costs and charges shall at all times hereafter during this present lease & term of 21 years bear & pay all manner of charges & payments from henceforth due to be paid unto the church and scavenger of and for the premises above demised or letten by this indenture, and also shall scour, cleanse and make clean the privy or withdraught being in the wood-yard aforesaid from time to time when and as often as need shall require during the said term, and the same in th' end of the said term shall leave well and sufficiently scoured, cleansed and made clean, and also shall well and sufficiently house, cover and keep dry the said privy or withdraught and as much as conveniently may be from annoying of the inhabitants there next adjoining from time to time during the said term;

And if it shall happen the said yearly rent of fourteen pounds to be behind unpaid in part or in all over or after any of the said feasts of payment thereof aforesaid in which it ought to be paid by the space of fifteen days, that then it shall be lawful unto the said Sir William More, his heirs and assigns, into all the said chambers or lodgings, kitchen and other the premises above demised with the appurtenances and to every part and parcel thereof to enter and distrain, and the distress there so taken lawfully to lead, drive, bear and carry away, and the same to detain, impark and keep until the said yearly rent of £14 and the arrearages thereof, if any be, shall be unto the said Sir William More, his heirs or assigns, fully satisfied, contented and paid;

And if it shall happen the said yearly rent of £14 by the year to be behind unpaid in part or in all over or after any of the said feasts of payment thereof aforesaid in which it ought to be paid by the space of twenty days, and lawfully demanded, that then and at all time and times after it shall be lawful unto the said Sir William More, his heirs and assigns, into all and singular the premises before demised with th' appurtenances and into every part and parcel thereof to re-enter and all the same before demised, granted or letten to have again, repossess and enjoy as in his or their former estate, and the said Richard Farrant, his executors and assigns, from thence utterly to expel, amove & put out, this indenture or anything therein contained to the contrary thereof in any wise notwithstanding;

Provided alway and it is agreed between the said parties to these indentures that it shall and may be lawful unto the said Sir William More, his heirs and assigns, to shut, lock, bar or open the gate joining upon the said way called Water Lane from time to time at such convenient hours of the night & of the morning as to the said Sir William More, his

heirs or assigns, shall seem meet & convenient during this present lease and term of 21 years;

Provided also that the said Richard Farrant, his executors, administrators or assigns, at any time hereafter during this present lease shall not alter not cut the pipe of the said conduit or water, nor by any means convey the waters aforesaid from his ordinary course, nor shall grant, demise, let, set out, assign or otherwise employ any the water aforesaid but only to the use of the said Richard Farrant & his family in the premises before letten & demised according to this present lease & grant before mentioned, nor shall suffer the same water to run to waste, but that he, the said Richard Farrant, his executors and assigns, shall do as much as may conveniently be done to spare the same for the benefit and increase of water at the common conduit of the said Sir William More there;

Provided also that the said Richard Farrant, his executors or assigns or any of them, shall not in any wise demise, let, grant, assign, set over or by any ways or means put away his or their interest or term of years or any part of the same years of or in the said premises before letten or any part, parcel or member thereof to any person or persons at any time hereafter during this present lease & term of 21 years without the special licence, consent & agreement of the said Sir William More, his heirs & assigns, first had and obtained in writing under his & their hands & seals but only by the last will & testament of the said Richard Farrant in writing to the wife of the said Richard or to his children or to one or some of them, and that the said wife or child of the said Richard so enjoying this present demise by virtue of the said will shall or may during the residue of the term aforesaid have the use and commodity of the said quill of water before demised to the said Richard in as ample and large manner as it is granted to the said Richard & his family, and not otherwise;

And further it is agreed between the said parties by these presents that the said Richard Farrant, his executors and assigns, shall & may have [+and?] keep one key for his and their only use to open and unlock the said gate joining upon the said way called Water Lane so often as occasion shall serve during this indenture, anything above written notwithstanding to the contrary;

In witness whereof the parties abovesaid to these indentures interchangeably have set their seals, given the day and year first above-written.

Richard Farrant