

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the last will and testament, dated 13 August 1616 and proved 17 October 1616, of John Handford (1565 – 17 August 1616) of Woollas Hall in Eckington, Worcestershire. The testator appoints his ‘dear kinsman’, Thomas Russell (1570-1634), as one of his executors. In the same year, Thomas Russell was also appointed as overseer of the will of William Shakespeare (1564-1616) of Stratford upon Avon.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

The testator was the son of Thomas Handford and Margaret Hugford. See:

'Parishes: Eckington', *A History of the County of Worcester: volume 4* (1924), pp. 68-76.
URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42859>:

. . . until the death of John Vampage in 1548. (fn. 105) His heirs were Edmund Harewell, son of his sister Margaret (by Thomas Harewell of Besford), his sister Mary and his sister Dorothy, then wife of Thomas Winchcombe. Dorothy had previously married John Hugford of Dixton (co. Gloucs.), by whom she had a son John, then living, and a daughter Margaret, finally the sole heir of her mother. (fn. 106) John Vampage's widow Anne married Sir Thomas Baskerville, (fn. 107) and in 1561 Joyce (Jodocus) Harsey and Mary his wife, alias Mary Vampage, granted her a third of the manor. (fn. 108) In 1567 Sir Thomas Baskerville and Anne his wife granted this third to Thomas Hanford, who had married Margaret Hugford, mentioned above. (fn. 109) Thomas Hanford thus became possessed of two-thirds of the manor, which he held in 1578, when his estates were confiscated by the Crown for the payment of his fines as a popish recusant. (fn. 110) His wife Margaret died seised of a third of the manor on 18 November 1594, and was survived by her husband, (fn. 111) who, according to Habington, 'dwelled and dyed at Wollashull.' (fn. 112) The Harewells were still holding their third of the manor in 1605, (fn. 113) when Sir Edmund Harewell sold a rent from it to Sir Rowland Berkeley, but they must afterwards have conveyed it to Thomas Hanford or his son John, the latter of whom built the now existing hall in 1611, and died there on 17 August 1616. (fn. 114) His son Francis, who succeeded him, had disputes about common of pasture with Sir William Russell and with Richard and John George, and other tenants of the manor, in 1630 and 1642. (fn. 115)

MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

The Handford pedigree states that the testator married the daughter of Richard Rake, gentleman. See Phillimore, W.P.W., ed., *The Visitation of Worcester Made in the Year 1569*, (London: Harleian Society, 1988), Vol. XXVII, p. 70 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationcount02mundgoog#page/n85/mode/2up>

In the will below, the testator gives his wife's first name as Anne.

By his wife, Anne, the testator had three sons and six daughters:

* **Francis Handford**, eldest son and heir.

* **Edward Handford**, second son. In the will below he is entrusted to the care of his godfather, Edward Sheldon (1561-1643) of Beoley, and alternatively, to the care of Edward Sheldon's son, William Sheldon (1589-1659). Edward Sheldon (1561-1643) of Beoley, the son and heir of Ralph Sheldon of Beoley (d.1613), had a sister, Katherine Sheldon (d.1633?), who was the wife of Oxford's brother-in-law, Francis Trentham (d.1626). For the will of Katherine (nee Sheldon) Trentham, see TNA PROB 11/163/485. Edward Sheldon's son, William Sheldon, was the owner of the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays now known as the Burdett Coutts folio and in the possession of the Folger Shakespeare Library. For the Folio, see:

http://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/view/all/who/Burdett-Coutts,+W.+%28William%29,+b.+1851,+former+owner./when/1623/?sort=Call_Number%2CAuthor%2CCD_Title%2CImprint

* **John Handford**, third son.

* **Margaret Handford**.

* **Mary Handford**.

* **Anne Handford**.

* **Jane Handford**.

* **Dorothy Handford**.

* **Elizabeth Handford**.

TESTATOR'S CONNECTION TO THOMAS RUSSELL, OVERSEER OF THE WILL OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE OF STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

For further information concerning the testator, see Hotson, Leslie, *I, William Shakespeare, Do Appoint Thomas Russell, Esquire* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), pp. 283-8. Hotson was unable to trace the relationship between the testator and Thomas Russell (see p. 295). However the will, TNA PROB 11/17/358, of William Greville (d. 7 March 1513), Judge of the Common Pleas, and the pedigree of Handford show that William Greville was the son of Richard Greville of Lemington by a wife surnamed Herbert, and that William Greville, by his wife, Margery, had three daughters: Alice Greville, who married Robert Wye, Eleanor Greville who married Robert Vampage, and

Margaret Greville, who married Sir Richard Lygon (d. 20 March 1556). See Phillimore, *supra*, p. 69 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationcount02mundgoog#page/n83/mode/2up>

Thomas Russell was a descendant of Margaret Greville and Sir Richard Lygon, while the testator, John Handford, was a descendant of her sister, Eleanor Greville, and Robert Vampage. Sir Richard Lygon and Margery Greville had four sons and six daughters, including Elizabeth Lygon, who married Ralph Sheldon of Childswickham, Gloucestershire. See Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. III, p. 22, which states that Margaret Greville, the daughter and heiress of Sir William Greville of Arle, Judge of the Common Pleas, married Sir Richard Lygon (d. 20 March 1556) of Madresfield, the grandfather of Margaret Lygon (d.1616), who married, firstly, Sir Thomas Russell (d.1574) of Strensham, and secondly, Sir Henry Berkeley (d.1601), and by her first husband was the mother of Thomas Russell, the overseer of the will of William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon.

For Elizabeth Lygon's marriage to Ralph Sheldon of Childswickham, Gloucestershire, see also the pedigree of Sheldon in Maclean, John and W.C. Heane, eds., *The Visitation of the County of Gloucester Taken in the year 1623*, (London: Harleian Society, 1865), Vol. XXI, p. 222 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationofcoun21macl#page/n237/mode/2up>.

See also:

<http://www.sheldongenealogy.com/bigland.html>.

It would appear that the testator's widow, Anne, was a Catholic recusant, and that one of her daughters became a nun. See Hamilton, Adam, *The Chronicle of the English Augustinian Canonesses Regular of the Lateran, at St Monica's in Louvain* (London: Sands & Co., 1906), pp. 60-2, available online:

In the year of her Lord, 1628, upon the last day of February, were professed three sisters, Sister Anne More, Sister Ann Handford and Sister Mary Leeds. . . . The second, Sister Ann Handford, was daughter to John Handford, esquire, of Woolshall in Worcestershire; her mother also a good Catholic, and excessively beloved for her good housekeeping and charitable assistance to the poor neighbours either in sickness or in any other necessity. After the death of her husband, this good woman was very desirous that some of her daughters should be religious, and to see if God would give them a calling she sent them over, leaving them, notwithstanding, free to their own liking whether they would enter presently into some monastery or else board in the town until they got a mind to be religious, and this house was particularly commended to them by some friends of ours, who also writ for them to us to obtain the place. So that three of them coming hither, they were admitted, being willing to enter in presently, but the elder went forth again after some small time, and the younger about a year after, and this, who was the

middlemost, remained constant. For she it was whom Our Lord had chosen to be the honour of her kindred and joy of her mother, who made her profession on the day aforesaid with the others, being 17 years of age.

LM: T{estamentum} Iohannis Hanford

In the name of God, Amen. I, John Handford of Woollas Hall in the county of Worcester, esquire, in reasonable health of body and in my strong understanding and memory, do make this my last will and testament in manner and form following:

First, as the most excellent and principal thing, I commend and give up my soul and spirit with all cheerfulness to Jesus Christ that gave it, beseeching him for his mercy's sake at his own will and pleasure to receive it into his holy kingdom and to place it amongst his glorious angels and saints, there to sing to him honour & glory forever and ever;

Secondly and next after my soul I commend my body to the grave, there to rest in the hope of a glorious resurrection, willing and requiring my executors of this my last will to see the same buried where shall seem to them most convenient in decent and comely order, avoiding all pomp and confluence of much people for that my desire is that the same may rather be privately done in the presence of my nearest lovers and friends than by multitudes or companies of neighbours and strangers;

Thirdly, as touching that portion of lands and goods whereof my Lord God hath made me owner, I give and dispose thereof in such sort as hereafter followeth:

First, I give & bequeath unto Francis, my eldest son, the capital messuage wherein I dwell, with all the gardens, orchards, yards, barns and buildings thereunto belonging in Woollas Hall aforesaid;

Also I give and bequeath to my said son all those my manors of Woollas Hall and Nafford in the said county of Worcester, with all and singular lands, tenements, mills, meadows pastures, feedings, rents, reversions and hereditaments whatsoever unto the same or either of them belonging or appertaining, together with all lands whatsoever in the occupation of me or of any tenant of mine, whether I owe [=own] it as my free land or hold it by lease, within the precinct of the fields known by the name of Woollas Hall fields or Nafford fields, or in the furlong called Ouldeland or Wodland, with all other lands whatsoever enclosed by me and occupied as part of the demesne lands of Woollas Hall aforesaid;

Also I give and bequeath unto my said son the patronage and right of presentation to the several churches of Birlingham and Comberton in the said county of Worcester;

And also I give and bequeath unto my said son all that my meadow & meadow ground lying and being in Eckington meadow in the said county of Worcester which now is in my real and proper occupation and possession;

And also all that meadow called Gullover's meadow;

And all that piece of ground in Great Comberton aforesaid called Doddenhill Leyes late purchased by me of Thomas Deanes;

And also all that my tithes of corn and grain in Eckington aforesaid, paying for the said tithes as in this my last will is expressed;

And also the reversion and reversions of all those two tenements with their appurtenances in Woollas Hall aforesaid now in the tenure or possession of Alexander Taylor or of his assigns;

To have and to hold all and singular the said-recited premises with their and every of their appurtenances to my said son, Francis, from and immediately after he shall have attained to the age of twenty-four years, his heirs and assigns, forever;

But whereas I have certain lands, tenements and hereditaments in Eckington, Comberton, Birlingham and elsewhere in the said county of Worcester which are or are reputed to be parcel of the said manor of Woollas Hall, my intent and meaning is not that my said son, Francis, shall by any words of this my will have, challenge or demand the same, but my will is that the same be absolutely excepted and reserved from my said son;

And as touching Edward, my son, I commend him to the care and disposition of Edward Sheldon of Beoley in the county of Worcester, esquire, his godfather, according to his desire;

And because I intend not that my said son shall be any charge or burden to his said godfather further than for his care and direction for the virtuous education of my said son, I give and bequeath unto the said Edward Sheldon the sum of twenty pounds of current money to be yearly paid to him by my executors out of and with all that my annuity or rentcharge of twenty pound per annum which I have and receive at Strensham in the said county of Worcester until my said son shall attain to the age of twenty-four years;

Also I give and bequeath unto the said Edward Sheldon all my estate, right, title and interest which I have of, in and to one lease of certain tithes in Comberton in the said county of Worcester for divers years yet to come made to me by Richard Goslinge, now incumbent there;

And my intent and meaning is that if the said Edward Sheldon shall happen to die before my said son, Edward, shall have attained the said age of twenty-four years, then I devise and bequeath and my will is that William Sheldon, son and heir apparent of the said Edward Sheldon, shall have the education of my said son, and shall have and receive the

several bequests aforesaid in such sort as the said Edward Sheldon should have and receive the same;

And for the further maintenance and advancement of my said son, Edward, I do give and bequeath to my said son all that my annuity or rentcharge of twenty pound per annum aforesaid which I have and receive at Strensham aforesaid, to have and to hold from and immediately after he shall have attained to the age of twenty-four years, his heirs and assigns, forever, to be paid at such days and feasts and at such place as the same is paid to me;

Also I give and bequeath to my said son the reversion and reversions of all those lands, tenements and hereditaments with their appurtenances in Great Comberton in the said county of Worcester now in the possession of Thomas Clarke, to have and to hold to the said Edward from & after he shall have attained his said age of twenty-four years, if the said reversion shall then be fallen, his heirs and assigns, forever;

But if the said reversion shall not then be fallen into possession, then my intent is that whensoever the said reversion shall fall after my said son shall have attained such age as aforesaid, that then my said son shall enter into the same, and not otherwise;

And as touching John, my third son, I commit him to the care and education of my executors and the survivor of them until he shall likewise attain the age of twenty-four years, and I refer it to the discretion of my said executors & of the survivor of them what and how much shall be allowed yearly during the said time for his maintenance and education;

And for the advancement of my said son after he shall have attained the said age of twenty-four years, I give & bequeath unto my said son, John, one annuity or yearly rent of forty pounds to be paid to him by Francis, my son, for and in respect of the tithes of Eckington aforesaid, to have, hold and receive the same to my said son, John, his executors and assigns, at the feast of the Annunciation of Our Blessed Lady St. Mary the Virgin and the feast of St Michael th' Archangel by equal portions until one lease of the mills called Pershore mills and of the manor or farm of Binholme in the same county of Worcester and now in the possession of Richard Coxe, esquire, and Edmund Booth, gentleman, or of their assigns, for certain years yet enduring shall be expired and ended;

And after the expiration of the said lease, then my intent and meaning is that the said yearly rent of forty pound payable to my said son out of or in respect of the said tithes shall cease, and then I give and bequeath to my said son, John, all my reversion, estate, right, title and interest which I have of, in and to the said mills, manor and farm with their appurtenances, to have and to hold to my said son, his executors and assigns, for and during all the estate, term and number of years which I have or shall then have of and in the same then to come and unexpired;

And my intent and meaning is that if my said son, Francis, shall not well & truly pay to my said son, John, the said yearly rent of forty pound according to [+my?] true meaning,

then my will is and I do give, devise and bequeath to my said son, John, the said tithes of Eckington, to have and perceive the same for such time and term as he should or ought by this my last will to have received the said rent of forty pound and not longer or otherwise;

And as touching my daughters, Margaret, Mary, Anne, Jane, Dorothy and Elizabeth, I commit them also to the like care of my executors, to be by them brought up in virtue and piety;

And as touching portions for their advancement, I forbear to express & set down what or how much the same shall be, but do wholly refer it to the pleasure and discretion of my executors, both how much each of them shall have and when the same shall be paid, and do purposely forbear to allot to them their portions in certainty for that I hope my daughters will thereby be made more mindful to acknowledge their duty and respect to my executors whom I trust with them, and submit themselves to their direction;

And my meaning is that until my said daughters shall have their portions paid them or be advanced, that some competent allowance may respectively and severally be made for their maintenance out of the profits of my lands;

And because I desire that all debts which I shall owe at the time of my death may be duly and speedily paid, and that the same being done, some competent portions may be raised for the advancements of my said daughters and for the maintenance of my sons, Francis and John, until they shall accomplish their several ages of twenty-four years, my will is and I do declare and appoint that my executors and the survivor and survivors of them shall from and immediately after my death have, take, order and dispose of all my lands, tenements & hereditaments whatsoever which are not specially by this my will otherwise disposed of until my son, Francis, or such other of my sons who shall be my heir if he die, shall have attained the age of twenty-four years;

And also that my said executors or the survivor of them shall take, receive and have all the rents and profits to be had, received or paid at any time hereafter to me, my executors or assigns, out of certain lands lying in Leckhampton in the county of Gloucester and in Up Hatherley in the county of the City of Gloucester which I esteem and reckon at three hundred pounds per annum for and during the term of ten years;

And also my will is and I do hereby give full power and authority to my said executors or the survivor of them at their will and pleasure either to let and demise or otherwise to sell and absolutely to convey away the reversion and reversions of all those my lands, tenements and hereditaments whatsoever with their appurtenances which I have demised to any person whatsoever either by copy of court roll or by indenture for any estate whatsoever, excepting always all such lands, tenements and hereditaments lying and being in Woollas Hall or Nafford aforesaid, which I desire should continue with my house and posterity;

And also my desire and will is that my executors or the survivor of them shall sell or at their pleasure dispose of all my estate, right, title and interest whatsoever which I have in

and by any lease or leases of certain lands, tenements and other things from the Dean and Chapter of Westminster aforesaid and not otherwise by this my will disposed of;

And my will and desire is that with the rents and profits and by letting or by sale of the said premises respectively according to my true meaning that my executors or the survivor of them shall with all convenient speed pay such debts as I shall owe and educate my said sons, Francis and Edward, and my said daughters according to my intent and meaning, and that the surplusage and residue thereof be fully and wholly employed and disposed for portions of my said daughters in such sort as I have formerly declared;

And as touching my household stuff, plate and stock of corn and cattle, my desire is that the same may wholly remain to be used in and with the said house for the better maintenance of my dear wife and of my said children;

And my meaning and will is that Anne, my wife, shall have the full use and possession of all the same until my said son, Francis, or such other as shall be my heir if he die, shall attain to the full age of twenty-four years, and my desire is that my said wife and my said heir may then after agree and cohabit in the said house, if it may be with good liking;

And yet my will is that my executors of the survivor of them, if they so please for the speedy payment of my debts or for any other necessary occasion, shall & may sell such of my plate and vessel of silver as [sic] such of my hangings or goods as shall or may best be spared in their judgment;

And as touching legacies, I give and bequeath to my dear kinsman, Thomas Russell, esquire, my best piece of gilt plate at his election, and my best gelding at his choice;

Also I give and bequeath to my beloved brother-in-law, John Whittington, esquire, one of my silver pots with silver ears called college-pot, and my second best gelding;

Also I give and bequeath to William Langston, gentleman, my beloved kinsman, my other silver college-pot;

I give and bequeath to my loving brother-in-law, Thomas Copley, esquire, one of my silver tunnes(?) at his election;

I give and bequeath and my will is that one(?) hundred pounds worth of my plate, to be chosen out of the residue of my plate, and ten kine(?) and a third part of all my bedding, brass and pewter be delivered to Anne, my beloved wife, to be by her bestowed on such of my younger children as she shall please;

And I give and bequeath to my executors and to my loving friends following, to each of them a ring of gold of twenty shillings with this inscription, vt mihi sic meis, which I desire them to wear in remembrance of me;

And of this my last will and testament I make and ordain my most dear wife, Anne, and the said Thomas Russell, John Whittington and William Langston to be my executors in trust only for the benefit of my wife and children, desiring them to express that love to my wife and children which they have professed to me and which out of the experience of their worth and integrities I repose in them;

In witness whereof I have put my hand and seal to this my last will dated the etc.

This is the will and testament of me, John Handford, published the thirteenth of August anno domini one thousand six hundred sixteen in the presence of William Russell, Richard Goslinge, John Maynarde, Laurence Hanforde. John Handford.

This my will containing fourteen sheets was again reviewed by me, the said John Handford, and published in the presence of W. Higford, John Wakeman.

This will was reviewed and published the fifteenth of August one thousand six hundred sixteen in the presence of us, W. Higforde, John Wakemans.

Probatum fuit testamentum supra scriptum apud London coram venerabili viro domino Iohanne Benett milite legum doctore Curie Prerogative Cantuariensis magistro Custode sive Commissario legitime constituto decimo septimo die mensis Octobris anno domini millesimo sexcentesimo decimo sexto iuramento Anne Relicte dicti defuncti et vnus executorum in huiusmodi testamento nominatorum Cui commissaria fuit administratio omnium et singulorum bonorum Iurium et creditorum eiusdem defuncti de bene et fideliter administrando eadem ad sancta dei Evangelia vigore Commissionis in hac parte alias emanate iurata Reservata potestate similem Commissionem faciendi Thome Russell Iohanni Whittington et Willmo Langston executoribus etiam in huiusmodi testamento nominatis eam cum venerint petitur

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before the worshipful Sir John Bennet, Doctor of the Laws, lawfully constituted Master, Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the seventeenth day of the month of October in the year of the Lord the thousand six hundred sixteenth by the oath of Anne, relict of the said deceased and one of the executors named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of all and singular the goods, rights and credits of the same deceased, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer the same by force of a grant in that part elsewhere issued, with power reserved for a similar grant to be made to Thomas Russell, John Whittington and William Langston, executors also named in the same testament, when they shall have come to petition the same. Examined.]

Vicesimo die mensis Novembris Anno domini 1632 emanavit Commissio Francisco Handford filio naturali et legitimo dicti defuncti habentis &c ad administrandum bona iura et credita dicti defuncti iuxta tenorem et effectum testamenti ipsius defuncti per Annam Handford Relictam et vnam executorem testamenti dicti defuncti et iam etiam demortuam non plene ad ministrata de bene &c iurata examinatur

[=On the twentieth day of the month of November in the year of the Lord 1632 a grant issued to Francis Handford, natural and legitimate son of the said deceased, having etc., to administer the goods, rights and credits of the said deceased according to the tenor and effect of the testament of the same deceased by Anne Handford, relict and one of the executors of the testament of the said deceased and now also dead, not fully administered, sworn to well etc. Examined.]