

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the will, dated 28 November 1568 and proved 24 March 1569, of Thomas Blount (d. 28 November 1568), whose nephew, John Combe (buried 12 July 1614), sold 107 acres of land to William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon and bequeathed him £5 in his will.

According to Adams, the testator was Leicester's leading officer of household, and may have been Leicester's steward at Kenilworth. See Adams, Simon, *Leicester and the Court: Essays on Elizabethan Politics*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 331 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=-Nn5UY-RilEC&pg=PA331>

### ***FAMILY BACKGROUND***

Although the *ODNB* states that the testator's father, Edward Blount, was a first cousin of Leicester's mother, Jane Guildford, it would appear that the relationship was a more distant one. Thomas West, 8th Baron De La Warr (c.1457 – 11 October 1525) married, as his second wife, Elizabeth Mortimer (d. 29 June 1502), the daughter of Sir Hugh Mortimer of Martley and Kyre Ward, Worcestershire, by Eleanor Cornwall, daughter of Sir Edmund Cornwall, by whom he is said to have had five sons and six daughters, including Eleanor West, who married Sir Edward Guildford (d. 4 June 1534), by whom she was the mother of Leicester's mother, Jane Guildford. See Richardson, Douglas, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2011, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, Vol. IV, pp. 320-2.

Sir Hugh Mortimer was slain at the Battle of Wakefield on 30 December 1460. Both Sir Hugh Mortimer and Sir John Mortimer appear in Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part 3*, where they are referred to as uncles of Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York.

After the death of Sir Hugh Mortimer, his widow, Eleanor (nee Cornwall) married Sir Richard Croft (d. 29 July 1509). Their daughter, Anne Croft, married Thomas Blount of Kinlet (d.1524), by whom she is said to have had twenty children, including the testator's father, Edward Blount. Thus, although Edward Blount and Leicester's mother, Jane Guildford, were related by descent from Eleanor (nee Cornwall) Mortimer Blount, they were not first cousins, and were related by the half blood.

The testator's great-grandparents, Sir Richard Croft and Eleanor (nee Cornwall) Mortimer Croft, held important positions at court. Sir Richard Croft was governor of the future Edward IV, and later Comptroller of the Household to Henry VII, while Dame Eleanor was governess of the two young sons of Edward IV, and later of Henry VII's eldest son and then heir, Prince Arthur. See Child-Pemberton, William S., *Elizabeth Blount and Henry the Eighth*, (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1913), pp. 42-3 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/elizabethblounth00chiluoft#page/42/mode/2up>

In the will below, the testator leaves the following bequest to ‘Bridget Cornwall alias Meysey’:

*Item, I give and bequeath unto Bridget Cornwall alias Meysey, the daughter of Thomas Meysey, esquire, deceased, the lease of Sheckenhurste [=Shakenhurst] remaining in my custody according to the trust reposed in me.*

Bridget Cornwall was the illegitimate daughter of Thomas Meysey of Shakenhurst Park, three miles south of Kinlet, who married Isabel Greville, the daughter of Sir John Greville (d. 25 November 1547), but died without issue in 1564. For Sir John Greville, see his will, TNA PROB 11/32/252, and the History of Parliament entry at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/greville-john-1492-1547>

### ***Testator’s parents***

According to the History of Parliament, the testator was the eldest son of Edward Blount of Kidderminster, ‘probably by Margaret, daughter and heir of John Garneys’. See:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/blount-thomas-1568>

However it appear the testator’s mother was Joan Carne, sole daughter and heir of John Carne, son of Howel Carne of Cowbridge in South Wales by Sibyl, daughter of William Kemeys of Newport, Monmouthshire. See Vaughan, H.F.J., ‘Donington Church and Lordship’, in *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, (Shrewsbury: Adnitt and Naunton, 1883), Vol. VI, pp. 1-92 at pp. 60-3:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=iQAVAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA62>

For further details of the testator’s family, see the will of his father, TNA PROB 11/43/182, and the pedigree of Blount in *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, (London: Harrison and Sons, 1883), Vol. IV, pp. 81-2 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=dD7QAAAAMAAJ&pg=RA1-PA78>

It appears from the foregoing pedigree that the testator was a first cousin of Henry VIII’s mistress, Elizabeth Blount. From the *ODNB*:

*Blount [married names Tailboys, Fiennes de Clinton], Elizabeth (c.1500–1539x41), royal mistress, was the second daughter of John Blount of Kinlet (1484–1531) and his wife, Katherine (1483–1540), heir of Sir Hugh Peshall of Knightley and his wife, Isabel Stanley of Elford.*

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***Testator's siblings***

In his will the testator mentions two brothers still living, John and Gilbert; his deceased brother, Christopher, and Christopher's three sons, Robert, George and Fulke; and his nephew, Thomas Combe (d.1609).

The testator was the brother of Joyce Blount, the first wife of John Combe (d.1588) of Old Stratford, who from 1567-1582 was steward of the manor of Stratford for Leicester's brother, Ambrose Dudley, (c.1530–1590), Earl of Warwick. See Lewis, B. Roland, *The Shakespeare Documents*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1941), Vol. II, pp. 325-36.

By John Combe (d.1588), the testator's sister, Joyce Blount, had four sons and a daughter: Edward Combe (d.1597); Thomas Combe (d.1609), for whose will see TNA PROB 11/113/130; John Combe (buried 12 July 1614), who together with his uncle, William Combe (d.1611), sold 107 acres of land to William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon in 1602 (see SBTRO ER 27/1), and who bequeathed him £5 in his will (see TNA PROB 11/126/415); George Combe; and Elizabeth Combe.

The testator's sister, Joyce, had died by the time the testator made his will, and on 27 August 1561, John Combe (d.1588) married a second wife, Rose Clopton (buried 14 October 1579). Rose Clopton was the sister of William Clopton (1537-1592), owner of New Place, later purchased by William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon. William Clopton's daughter, Joyce Clopton (1562-1637), was a Maid of Honour to Queen Elizabeth, and on 31 May 1580 married the soldier and courtier George Carew (1555-1629), later Earl of Totnes. See Lewis, *supra*, p. 326; the *ODNB* entry for George Carew; and Bellew, J.C.M., *Shakespeare's Home at New Place, Stratford-Upon-Avon*, (London: Virtue Brothers and Co., 1863), pp. 162-6, 366-9 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=psIjAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA369>

For further details of the testator's relationship to the families of Combe and Clopton, see SBTRO ER 27/1.

***MARRIAGE AND ISSUE***

The testator married Margery Poley, the daughter of Edmund Poley (d. 31 December 1548) of Badley, Suffolk, by Mirabel Garneys (d. 25 February 1552), the daughter of John Garneys, esquire, of Kenton, Suffolk, and Elizabeth Sulyard.

The testator's niece, Elizabeth Crispe, mentioned in the will below, was the daughter of Margery Poley's sister, Constance Poley, by Nicholas Crispe. See Richardson, Douglas, *Plantagenet Ancestry*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2011, Vol. II, p. 326 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=kjme027UeagC&pg=RA1-PA326>

By Margery Poley the testator had two sons:

\* **Edward Blount** (c.1554-1630), who was in Leicester's service.

\* **Sir Christopher Blount**, who married Leicester's widow, became stepfather to her son, Robert Devereux, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Essex, took part in the Essex Rebellion in February 1601, and was executed. From the *ODNB*:

*Blount, Sir Christopher (1555/6–1601), soldier and conspirator, was the second son of Thomas Blount (b. before 1523, d. 1568) of Kidderminster, Worcestershire. Blount's early life was profoundly shaped by two key influences: devout Catholicism (especially on the part of his mother, Margery, née Poley, who was listed as a confirmed recusant in 1577); and his family's tradition of service to the Dudley family. Blount's paternal grandfather, Edward (d. 1558), had served John Dudley, duke of Northumberland (executed 1553), being a first cousin of the duke's wife. In his turn Blount's father had become comptroller to Northumberland and then a steward to the latter's son, Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester. Blount's elder brother, Edward (c.1554–1630), continued the tradition and carried a banderole at Leicester's funeral in 1588. Unlike his brother, however, who inherited substantial land around Kidderminster, Christopher needed to make his fortune through service to Leicester. He became gentleman of the horse to Leicester, who was himself master of the horse to the queen, by October 1584.*

The testator's widow, Margery, received a new lease of the manor of Forthampton in 1569, and was named as a recusant in 1577. See:

'Parishes: Forthampton', in *A History of the County of Gloucester: Volume 8*, ed. C R Elrington (London, 1968), pp. 196-208 <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/glos/vol8/pp196-208> [accessed 26 November 2015]

In the will below the testator leaves the wardship of Humphrey Coningsby, son and heir of John Coningsby, to his brother, Gilbert Blount. The testator's ward may have been Humphrey Coningsby (1567–1610/11), for whom see the *ODNB* entry and:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/52219527@N00/4686014960>

LM: T{estamentum} Thome Blounte

In the name of God, Amen. In the year of Our Lord one thousand five hundred threescore and eight and the 28<sup>th</sup> day of November, I, Thomas Blount of Kidderminster in the county of Worcester, sick in body but of sound and perfect memory, Our Lord be thanked therefore, do make and ordain this my last will and testament in manner and form following:

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First I give and bequeath my soul unto the mercy of God, hoping to possess the heavenly kingdom with all saints, and my body to be buried in the chancel of the parish church of Kidderminster aforesaid;

Item, I give and bequeath unto Edward, my son, my best chain of gold, and him do I constitute & appoint mine heir;

Item, I give and bequeath unto Margery, my wife, my lease that I have of the manor of Forthampton and Swyneley in the several counties of Gloucester and Worcester, she to enjoy the same during her natural life, and after the decease of Margery, my will is the same lease wholly to remain to Edward, my son;

Item, I give and bequeath to Christopher, my younger son, ten pounds by the year out of my lands called Dovehouse fields in the parish of Hales Owen and county of Salop;

Item, I bequeath moreover to my said son, Christopher, one lease that I have of Wedgnoock and Fernhill in the county of Warwick for and concerning the pasturing of five score beasts in the said places for and during all the term of years mentioned in the said lease and yet to come, excepting and hereby reserving out of the same lease the pasturing of twenty beasts which by this my last will I give and bequeath unto John Blount, my brother, during all the term in the said lease before mentioned;

Item, I give and bequeath unto Mary, my daughter, one hundred pounds of current English money;

Item, I give moreover to my said daughter, Mary, my part and interest which I have in a least of the manor, park and woods of Cleobury Mortimer in the county of Salop, she to enjoy the same after there shall be one hundred pounds paid out thereof unto Robert Blount, George Blount and Fulke Blount, sons to my late brother, Christopher Blount, which money I do at this present owe unto them;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my brother, Gilbert Blount, the wardship and marriage of Humphrey Conisbie [=Coningsby?], son and next heir of John Conisbe, with all commodities being or that ought to be mine by virtue of the Queen's Majesty's grant as they shall happen to be at the time of my decease;

Item, I give and bequeath moreover unto my said brother, Gilbert, the sum of six pounds 13s 4d of current English money yearly during his natural life, as well in accomplishment and discharge of the yearly sum of £3 6s 8d to him bequeathed in the last will and testament of Edward Blount, my father, deceased, as also of this my last will and testament, together with his chamber wherein he now lieth and the chamber next thereunto adjoining for and during the term abovesaid;

Item, I give and bequeath unto Elizabeth Crispe, my wife's niece, twenty pounds towards her preferment in marriage;

Item, I give and bequeath unto Bridget Cornwall alias Meysey, the daughter of Thomas Meysey, esquire, deceased, the lease of Sheckenhurste [=Shakenhurst] remaining in my custody according to the trust reposed in me;

Item, I give and bequeath unto my cousin, John Gower, one ounce of gold to make him a ring;

Item, I give and bequeath unto Nicholas Bowier, my servant, one lease to be made for the term of forty years to come for and of my mill at Hurcote for the yearly rent of eight pounds;

Item, I give and bequeath unto Thomas Craswell, my servant, the sum of £3 6s 8d above all allowances to him due;

Item, I give and bequeath in like manner to my servant, John Serieant, 40s;

Item, I give also unto Ralph Dagnet, my servant, the sum of 40s and the reversion of that my house in Kidderminster wherein John Potter now dwelleth next after the decease of the said John Potter;

Item, I give unto Ralph Smyth of Beaudeley [=Bewdley?] the sum of 40s for his painstaking in my sickness;

Item, I give unto my nephew, Thomas Combe, one rial of gold;

The residue of all my goods and chattels movable and unmovable whatsoever not bequeathed, my debts being paid and my funerals discharged, I give and bequeath unto Margery, my wife, & to Edward, my son, whom I constitute and appoint mine executors, and they therewith to dispose as to their discretions seemeth good;

Hanc vltima esse voluntate Thome Blounte defunct{is} testam{entu}n Thomas Crofte, William Bell, Ralph Smyth, John Serieant, Nicholas Bowier

Probatum fuit testamentum suprascriptum coram Mag{ist}ro Waltero Haddon legum doctore Curie prerogatiue Cantuarien{sis} commissario apud London vicesimo quarto die Marcij anno d{omi}ni Mill{es}imo Quingen{tes}imo Sexagesimo octavo Iuramento Ioh{ann}is Lloyd{?} notarij publici procurator{is} Margerie Rel{ic}te et executric{is} in testamento h{uius}mo{di} no{m}i{n}at{e} Cui com{m}issa fuit admi{n}istrac{i}o om{n}iu{m} et sing{u}lor{um} bonor{um} &c De bene &c Ad sancta dei Evangelia Iurat{e} Res{er}uata p{otes}tate similem Comissionem faciend{i} Edwardo Blounte filio et Executor{i} &c cum venerit &c admissur{i}

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[=The above-written testament was proved before Master Walter Haddon, Doctor of the Laws, Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, at London on the twenty-fourth day of March in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred sixty-eight by the oath of John Lloyd, notary public, proctor of Margery, relict and executrix named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of all and singular the goods etc., sworn on the Holy Gospels to well etc., with power reserved for a similar grant to be made to Edward Blount, son and executor etc., when he shall have come etc. to be admitted.]