

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the last will and testament, dated 30 November 1580 and proved 1 March 1581, of Richard Farrant, whose lease of a house in the Blackfriars was sublet to Oxford by Henry Evans.

According to notes made by Sir William More (1520-1600) of Loseley after Easter term 1584 (see Folger MS L.b.425), More leased his house in the Blackfriars to Farrant at the request of Sir Henry Neville (c.1520–1593). Farrant converted the premises into a playhouse for the Children of the Chapel, and also sublet part of the premises, for which infraction More claimed Farrant had forfeited his lease. Before More could regain possession, 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 Bower, see TNA PROB 11/44, f. 213.

After her husband's death, and 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 to Hunnis and John Newman on 20 December 1581, 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 Smith, Irwin, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse* (New York University Press, 1964), pp. 148-52, 467-8.

LM: Testamentum Richardi ffarrant

In dei nomine amen. I, Richard Farrant, one of the gentlemen of the Queen's Majesty's Chapel, being sick in body but whole and of a perfect memory, do make this my last will land testament in manner and form following:

First I bequeath my soul to Almighty God, and my body to be buried and interred at the discretion of my executor;

Item, I give and bequeath to my wife, Anne Farrant, the lease of my house in the Blackfriars in London, which lease is in a chest at my house in Greenwich, to have and enjoy the same for and during her natural life, if she live so long as the years yet unexpired do continue, and if not, then I give and bequeath the residue of the said years unto which of my children she shall think meet and convenient;

Also I give and bequeath to my wife my house which I first purchased in Greenwich till such time as my son, Richard, come to the full age of one and twenty years, conditionally that she maintain and keep him until the said years;

Moreover I give and bequeath to my wife the little house in the garden end of Greenwich, together with the little garden impaled belonging to the same for and during her natural

life, and after her decease, the same to remain to which of my children she shall think meet;

All the rest of my goods movable and unmovable whatsoever I give and bequeath to my wife, whom I make my sole executrix;

In witness whereof I have hereunto put my hand the thirtieth day of November in the three and twentieth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Elizabeth by the grace of God of England, France and Ireland Queen, Defender of the Faith etc. Richard Farrant. Witnesses hereof: Bartholomew Mason, clerk, Nicholas Beighton, Richard Granwall, William Rodenhurste, John Skeate, clerk.

Primo die mensis Martij Anno Domini iuxta cursum et computacionem Ecclesie Anglicane Millesimo Quingentesimo Octogesimo Emanavit Commissio Anne ffarrant Relicte dicti defuncti Ad administrandum bona Iura et Credita etc iuxta tenorem Testamenti supradicti defuncti dicta Anna ex certis causis animum suum moventibus oneri execucionis dicti Testamenti expresse renuncians de bene etc In persona magistri Edwardi Barker Notarij Procuratoris sui etc Iurati

[=On the first day of the month of March in the year of the Lord according to the course and reckoning of the English Church the thousand five hundred eightieth a grant was issued to Anne Farrant, relict of the said deceased, to administer the goods, rights and credits etc. according to the tenor of the testament of the abovesaid deceased, the said Anne, for certain causes her mind moving, expressly renouncing the burden of the execution of the said testament, sworn to well etc. in the person of Master Edward Barker, notary, her proctor etc.]