

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 29 July 1602 from King James to Oxford. For an earlier letter from King James to Sir Robert Cecil in which the King refers to Oxford as “40” see CP 135/63.

According to Akrigg, the code numbers used by King James, Sir Robert Cecil and Lord Henry Howard in their secret correspondence from early 1601 to early 1603 refer to the following individuals:

0 = The Earl of Northumberland  
2 = Sir Walter Raleigh [?]  
3 = Lord Henry Howard  
7 = Lord Cobham  
8 = Edward Bruce  
9 = David Foulis  
10 = Sir Robert Cecil  
20 = The Earl of Mar  
24 = Queen Elizabeth  
30 = King James  
40 = The Earl of Nottingham [?]

Akrigg comments:

*Despite several risky moments, Queen Elizabeth never learned of the arrangements between King James and Cecil, and when she died on 24 March 1603, James succeeded to her throne as easily as he could have desired.*

See Akrigg, G.P.V., ed., *Letters of King James VI & I*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 10.

With respect to the identity of “40”, Akrigg comments:

*At this point a new figure appears in the group, headed by Cecil, pledged to secure the accession of James. The identity of this new recruit, “40”, has never been established. The most likely conjecture is that he was the Earl of Nottingham, who, as Lord High Admiral, would obviously have been a valuable member. . . .*

[In the letter below] *King James assures the new recruit that he gratefully accepts his services. If that new recruit was Nottingham, this letter must have made him the more confident that James, who regarded Essex as his “martyr”, did not hold it against him that he had commanded the force that had put down the Essex Rebellion.*

It seems highly unlikely that at the date of this letter King James had forgiven Charles Howard, Earl of Nottingham, for his role in Essex’ downfall. For numerous reasons, Oxford appears to be a more likely candidate for the recipient of this letter than Nottingham.

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The hypothesis that Oxford was “40” provides perspective on his role in sounding out the views of Henry Clinton (1539-1616), 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Lincoln, concerning the succession. See TNA SP 14/4/14, ff. 27-9 and TNA SP 14/3/77 f. 134.

For Oxford’s office of Lord Great Chamberlain referred to in the letter below, see Paul, Christopher, ‘The 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford’s “Office” Illuminated’, *Brief Chronicles*, Vol. II, 2010, pp. 171-211.

For the practice at the time by which monarchs referred to members of the nobility as ‘cousin’, see the *OED*.

Akrigg identifies the King’s ‘servant Ashton’ as Roger Aston, a native of Cheshire who had lived in Scotland since boyhood. Aston had some private business to attend to in England in 1591, at which time King James used him as a courier to deliver a letter to the Queen dated 22 March 1591. See Akrigg, p. 108.

Unless Roger Aston returned to England at some time after 1591, it would appear that Oxford’s words ‘in enigma’ were uttered to him at that time.

The transcript below is taken from Akrigg, pp. 194-5.

Trusty and well-beloved cousin,

Although your readiness and favourable furtherance to any suitors recommended by me, in anything concerning your office ever since your entry thereunto, did long ere now sufficiently persuade me of your honest and lawful affection to my service, yet having lately the assurance thereof confirmed, both by the faithful testimony of 10 [Cecil], as likewise by your own words uttered in enigma to my servant Ashton, I would not omit to send you these few lines of my own hand, as witness of my thankfulness. And as by my letter to you and 10 conjunctly ye are already certified of my honest and upright course with your sovereign, and that I am no ways to employ you beyond the bounds of your allegiance, so have I for the present no other recompense to send you for your goodwill but my faithful promise that all my dealing with you shall ever be accompanied with these three qualities: honesty, secrecy, and constancy. But as I will deal with you by no other way but by the means of 10, so may ye assure yourself that your strait and steadfast conjunction with him in my service is the only way to enable you both therein, and to disappoint all my malicious and undeserved adversaries. And thus, trusty and well-beloved cousin, I bid you heartily farewell. From Falkland the xxix July 1602.

Your loving friend, 30.