



# EDWARD DE VERE NEWSLETTER NO. 42

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## **Did Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, write the verses for Lady Derby's entertainment? [Part 2 of 4]**

The identity of the fourteen ladies present at Lady Derby's entertainment is a conundrum which can perhaps be resolved by considering the assumptions set out in the paragraphs which follow.

The first of these assumptions is that Lady Derby is Alice Spencer, daughter of Sir John Spencer of Althorpe, and widow of Ferdinando Stanley, 5th Earl of Derby.

A second assumption -- since one of the participants is a Mistress Egerton -- is that the entertainment occurred after Lady Derby's marriage to Sir Thomas Egerton on October 20, 1600. At that time, Egerton had three children by a previous marriage -- a daughter, Mary, and two sons, Thomas and John. Mary Egerton married Sir Francis Leigh, and her son, Francis, later 1st Earl of Chichester, was born before 1600. It is thus unlikely that Mistress Egerton was Sir Thomas Egerton's daughter, Mary, who would have been styled Lady Leigh after her marriage. It is more probable that Mistress Egerton was a daughter of Sir Thomas Egerton's eldest son, Sir Thomas, who left three daughters -- Elizabeth, Vere and Mary -- when he died in 1599 (Banks, App. 3-8).

A third assumption is that Lady Derby's entertainment occurred no later than 1604. This assumption depends upon the identification of Lady Compton. Knowles appears to be correct in identifying her as

Lady Derby's sister, Anne Spencer, who by 1600 had outlived two husbands: William Stanley, 3rd Lord Monteagle, and Henry, 1st Lord Compton. In 1604, Anne Spencer married a third husband, Robert Sackville, Lord Buckhurst. From the time of this third marriage, according to Knowles, Anne Spencer was styled Lady Buckhurst. The fact that she is referred to as Lady Compton suggests that the verses were written prior to her marriage to Lord Buckhurst in 1604.

If the foregoing assumptions are correct, Lady Derby's entertainment occurred during the period of time between Lady Derby's marriage to Sir Thomas Egerton on October 20, 1600, and her sister Anne Spencer's marriage to Lord Buckhurst in 1604.

An important conclusion which flows from these assumptions is the identification of Lady Huntingdon as Dorothy Port, daughter of Sir John Port of Etwall, and wife of George Hastings, 4th Earl of Huntingdon, who died on December 30, 1604. His grandson, Henry Hastings, who succeeded him as 5th Earl of Huntingdon, married Lady Derby's third and youngest daughter, Elizabeth Stanley, on January 15, 1601, when both parties were about fourteen years of age. However, Henry Hastings did not succeed to the earldom until his grandfather's death in late December, 1604, and his wife would have been styled Lady Hastings until January, 1605. Thus, the Lady Huntingdon present at Lady Derby's entertainment must have been Henry Hastings' grandmother, Dorothy Port.

A number of the other ladies present at the enter-

tainment can also be tentatively identified once the date of the entertainment is fixed between the years 1600-1604. Lady Hunsdon and Lady Berkeley are, respectively, Lady Derby's sister Elizabeth, the wife of George Carey, 2nd Lord Hunsdon, and Lady Derby's niece, Elizabeth Carey, the wife of Sir Thomas Berkeley. Lady Stanhope is Dorothy Port's sister, Margaret, widow of Sir Thomas Stanhope. Mistress Pakington is likely one of the stepdaughters of Lady Derby's first cousin, Sir John "Lusty" Pakington, of Westwood; in fact, Mistress Pakington may well be Alice Barnham Pakington, who later became the wife of Sir Frances Bacon. Thus, at least half the guests present at Lady Derby's entertainment were close members of the Spencer/Hastings family circle.

### Works Cited

- Banks, Thomas Christopher. *The dormant and extinct baronage of England*. Vol. 1. London: T. Bensley, 1807.
- Knowles, James. "WS MS". *The Times Literary Supplement* (1988), April 29-May 5, 472, 485.

**RELATIONSHIP OF GUESTS AT LADY DERBY'S ENTERTAINMENT**

