

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter written from Chenies on 16 April 1599 by Oxford's daughter, Bridget Vere (1584-1631), to Sir Henry Maynard (b. after 1547, d.1610). Maynard had been secretary to Sir Robert Cecil's father, Lord Burghley, to whom he was distantly related by marriage (see TNA SP 14/45/146, f. 205).

The Dowager Countess was born Bridget Hussey (1525/6-1601), the eldest daughter of John Hussey (1465/6-1537) of Sleaford, Lincolnshire, and his second wife, Lady Anne Grey. Bridget Hussey married firstly, Sir Richard Morison (c.1510-1557); secondly, Henry Manners (1526-1563), 2nd Earl of Rutland; and thirdly, Francis Russell (1526/7-1585), 2nd Earl of Bedford.

By her first husband, Sir Richard Morison, the Dowager Countess was the mother of Sir Charles Morison (1549-1599); Jane Sibilla Morison (1552-1615), who married firstly Edward Russell (d.1573), eldest son and heir of Francis Russell (1526/7-1585), 2nd Earl of Bedford, and secondly, Arthur Grey (1536-1593), 14th Baron Grey of Wilton; and Elizabeth Morison, who married firstly, William Norris (d. December 1579), and secondly, Henry Clinton (1539-1616), 2nd Earl of Lincoln. For a memorandum dated 21 September 1603 in which the Earl of Lincoln defends himself for his failure to report to King James in a timely manner his conversations with the French ambassador Christophe de Harlay, Comte de Beaumont, with a Mr Trudgion, and with the Earl of Oxford, see TNA SP 14/3/77, ff. 134-5.

By her first husband, William Norris, Elizabeth Morison was the mother of Oxford's son-in-law, Francis Norris (1579-1622), 1st Earl of Berkshire. See the will of the Dowager Countess, in which she refers to 'Francis Norris, son of my daughter, Lady Elizabeth, Countess of Lincoln', TNA PROB 11/97/10.

On 28 April 1599, a few weeks after she wrote the letter below, Bridget Vere and the Dowager Countess' grandson, Francis Norris, were married at Chenies. For letters from the Dowager Countess to Sir Robert Cecil concerning the wedding ceremony, see TNA SP 12/270/91, f. 159 and TNA SP 12/270/101, f. 176.

Sir John Russell (1552-1593), the brother of Thomas Russell (1570-1634), the overseer of the will of William Shakespeare (1564-1616) of Stratford upon Avon, was brought up in the household of Francis Russell (1526/7-1585), 2nd Earl of Bedford, and was a close friend of Oxford's companion, William Russell (c.1553-1613), 1st Baron Russell of Thornhaugh, youngest son of the 2nd Earl of Bedford, whom he made one of the executors of his will. Sir John Russell was 14 years of age when Bridget Hussey married the 2nd Earl of Bedford in 1566, and Sir John Russell and the Dowager Countess must therefore have known each other well. Moreover Sir John Russell (1552-1593) and the family of Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, were connected by marriage. For the will of Sir John Russell (1552-1593), see TNA PROB 11/92/96.

The letter is badly damaged on the right side, leaving only the beginning of each line on the left side intact, as indicated in the transcript below.

My Maynard, whereas it
to give leave to this bearer, Mr
to be at liberty from her for
(he having now a present opp
offered him in London, if he
or two of a certain company
to request you in his behalf
letters as effectually as you can, where
gratify me, and pleasure a friend that will in
very thankful unto you. And thus not doubting
friendly care and furtherance in his behalf, I commit
to God. From Chenies, April 16, 1599.

Your loving

Bridget Vere

Endorsed: To my very loving friend, Mr Maynard, at his house in Westminster or elsewhere, give these

Endorsed: 16 April(?), the Lady Bridget Vere to Mr Maynard in favour of Mr Arnold, chaplain to the Countess of Bedford