

SUMMARY: By this privy seal warrant of 26 June 1586 the Queen granted Oxford an annuity of £1000, retroactive to 25 March 1586 and payable quarterly. It is stated that the annuity is to continue during the Queen's pleasure or until she should in some manner otherwise provide for Oxford's financial necessity, an event which never occurred. The annuity was renewed by King James on 2 August 1603. Notes in the right margin of the original document summarize the terms of the warrant, which is signed by the Clerk of the Privy Seal.

In an unpublished manuscript entitled 'The State of England Anno Dom. 1600' (see TNA 12/280), Thomas Wilson claims that Oxford's annuity of £1000 was paid out of the revenues of the See of Ely, which the Queen kept vacant for nineteen years from the death of Bishop Richard Cox (c.1500-1581) on 22 July 1581 until 3 February 1600, when Martin Heton (1554-1609) was consecrated Bishop of Ely. Wilson's claim is clearly erroneous since the privy seal warrant expressly states that the annuity is to be paid out of the Exchequer, and the original source of monies paid from the Exchequer, into which the revenues of the realm flowed, cannot be determined. Moreover Lansdowne MS 156 ff. 125-7 contains a list of 'Pentions and Annuities graunted by hir late Maiestie and paiable att hir death', including an entry for the Earl of Oxford on f. 126r. There is no mention of Oxford's, or any of the other annuities listed, having been paid out of the revenues of the See of Ely.

According to the entry for Wilson in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, his loyalty was to Oxford's brother-in-law, Sir Robert Cecil:

In spite of these indications of a connection with Southampton and Essex, Wilson remained faithful to the Cecils, and during the later years of Elizabeth's reign he was constantly employed as foreign intelligencer by the lord treasurer, Buckhurst, and Sir Robert Cecil. On 1 March 1601 Wilson began writing a discourse, 'The state of England', on conditions in 1600. Although it remained unpublished until edited by F. J. Fisher for a Camden Society Miscellany volume (3rd ser., vol. 16, 1936), it could be considered in key respects Wilson's pitch for gainful employment. . . .

In December 1601 Wilson was in Florence, employed in diplomatic negotiations with the duke of Ferrara, the Venetians, and other Italian states. The main object of his residence in Italy during 1601-2 was to keep Cecil informed about plots against England and Ireland then being devised by and with their Catholic countrymen. This was dangerous work, and by his own admission Wilson feared at times for his life. He returned to England the following winter and was at Greenwich on 12 June 1603. Early in 1604 he was sent to reside as consul in Spain. He was at Bayonne in February 1604, and remained in Spain until the arrival of the earl of Nottingham and Sir Charles Cornwallis as ambassadors in 1605.

On his return to England, Wilson definitely entered the service of Sir Robert Cecil, in the capacity of private secretary.

Although cordial to outward appearances, relations between Oxford and his brother-in-law, Sir Robert Cecil, were strained at the time Thomas Wilson began writing his 'The State of England Anno Dom. 1600' on 1 March 1601, and Wilson's desire to curry favour with Cecil may have coloured his claims about Oxford.

The Earl of Oxford: Dorm'

Elizabeth etc., To the Treasurer and Chamberlains of our Exchequer, greeting. We will and command you of our treasure being and remaining from time to time within the Receipt of our Exchequer to deliver and pay, or cause to be delivered and paid, unto our right trusty and right well-beloved cousin, the Earl of Oxford, or to his assigns sufficiently authorized by him, the sum of one thousand pounds good and lawful money of England, the same to be yearly delivered and paid unto our said cousin at four terms(?) [check] of the year by even portions, the first payment to begin at the feast of th' Annunciation of Our Lady last past before the date hereof, and so to be continued unto him during our pleasure or until such time as he shall be by us otherwise provided for to be in some manner relieved, at what time our pleasure is that this payment of one thousand pounds yearly to our said cousin in manner above specified shall cease. And for the same or any part thereof our further will and commandment is that neither the said Earl nor his assigns nor his or their executors nor any of them shall by way of account, imprest, or any other way whatsoever be charged towards us, our heirs or successors. And these our letters shall be your sufficient warrant and discharge in that behalf. Given under our Privy Seal at our manor of Greenwich the six and twentieth day of June in the eight and twentieth year of our reign [=June 26, 1586]. Thomas Clerk

RM: £1000 of her Majesty's free liberat

To be paid quarterly

During pleasure, or until such time as he shall be by her Majesty's goodness(?) provided for to be in some manner relieved

Without imprest

xxvjto Iunij A {nn}o R {egi}ne Eliz {abethe} xxvij

Ex {aminatus}