
IDENTIFYING EDWARD DE VERE:

A BIOGRAPHY OF EDWARD DE VERE, 17TH EARL OF OXFORD, FROM DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

INTRODUCTION

Portrayals of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, in print, on film, and on the internet in the last century contain inaccuracies of both fact and interpretation. This biography attempts to separate fact from fiction, and is based, insofar as possible, on primary sources. Transcriptions of many of these primary source documents can be found on the Documents page of this website:

<http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/documents.html>

The biography contains numerous page references to B.M. Ward's *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford 1550-1604 From Contemporary Documents*, and to Alan Nelson's *Monstrous Adversary*. Nelson closely followed Ward, and these page references will permit readers to see where the two accounts diverge and interpretations differ. Both are accessible online.

Throughout the biography, references to entries in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* identify persons with whom the Earls of Oxford interacted. In the absence of references to these *ODNB* entries, many of these individuals would otherwise be unknown to most modern readers who are not historians of the period, and their connections to the Earls of Oxford would be obscured. The *ODNB* is available online by subscription.

Some of the material on the 17th Earl of Oxford in this biography can also be found in the Wikipedia entry for him, as that Wikipedia entry is largely the result of an extensive edit in November and December 2010 by the author of this biography. Wikipedia entries for several other Earls of Oxford and for Elizabeth Trussell were also edited ca. 2010-13 by the author of this biography.

Unlike Ward's and Nelson's biographies, this biography does not ignore the hypothesis that Oxford was the author of the Shakespeare canon. Nor does it ignore the possibility that Oxford was the author of other works. In the biography below the evidence for Oxford's authorship of these works is presented, and the reader is invited to make his own judgment.

Spelling and punctuation have been modernized in most quotations.

All errors are the responsibility of the author.

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PART I: ANCESTORS

Edward de Vere (1550-1604), 17th Earl of Oxford, was heir to the oldest¹ continuously inherited earldom in England.² The ancestral seat of the de Veres was Castle Hedingham in Essex, built in the late 11th and early 12th centuries, whose magnificent Norman keep still survives. The Earls of Oxford also held manors throughout East Anglia, most notably at Wivenhoe on the River Colne, and at Colne Priory,³ where the chapel housed the monuments of early Earls of Oxford.

During Oxford's lifetime, the lands of the earldom were sold, for reasons which are still not entirely clear. Sir George Buck⁴ considered it 'divine ordinance':

And in much [shorter time than his] life's time, that great and stately [earldom of Oxenford, with the] very opulent and princely patri[mony was dissipated] and wasted, and it was very suddenly and swiftly used and consumed, and como sal en agua, [as the Spaniards say in the refrain. But not by the fault of the Earl then lord thereof, but rather by the fate of the divine ordinance. For certainly the Earl was a devout and a magnificent and a very learned and religious [nobleman,] and so worthy in every way, as I have heard some grave and [dis]creet and honourable persons (who knew this Earl from his youth and could very well judge of the hopefulness and the springtimes of young

¹ May claims the Oxford earldom was the second oldest in the kingdom. See May, Steven W., 'Early Courtier Verse; Oxford, Dyer and Gascoigne', in Cheyney, Patrick, ed., *Early Modern English Poetry; A Critical Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 61.

² Ross, James, *John de Vere, Thirteenth Earl of Oxford (1442-1513)*, (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2011), p. 14; Ward, B.M., *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford 1550-1604 From Contemporary Documents*, (London: John Murray, 1928), p. 3. URL: <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.176090/page/n23/mode/2up>

³ Colne Priory was founded in or before 1111 by Aubrey de Vere I (died c.1112), a tenant in chief of William the Conqueror, and his wife, Beatrice, after the death of his son Godfrey (died c.1104). Aubrey de Vere I was succeeded by his second, but eldest surviving son, Aubrey de Vere II (c.1085-1141), who married Adeliza, the daughter of Gilbert fitz Richard of Clare, by whom he was the father of Aubrey de Vere III (c.1115-1194), created 1st Earl of Oxford in 1141. See: 'Houses of Benedictine monks: Priory of Earl's Colne', in *A History of the County of Essex: Volume 2*, ed. William Page and J Horace Round (London, 1907), pp. 102-105. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol2/pp102-105>. See also 'Earls Colne: Manors and other estates', in *A History of the County of Essex: Volume 10, Lexden Hundred (Part) Including Dedham, Earls Colne and Wivenhoe*, ed. Janet Cooper (London, 2001), pp. 92-94. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol10/pp92-94>.

⁴ Kincaid, Arthur, "Buck [Buc], Sir George (*bp.* 1560, *d.* 1622)", *ODNB*.

*men) say and affirm that he was much more like to raise and to acquire and to establish a new earldom than to decay and waste and lose an old earldom. And in a word, he was a Vere in deed as in name, vere nobilis. For he was verily and truly noble, and a most noble Vere.*⁵

Buck was right to conclude that the decline of the earldom cannot be attributed solely to the 17th Earl. The seeds were sown several generations before he came of age and gained control of his lands, during which time the De Vere family endured financially crippling wardships,⁶ the failure of the 13th and 14th Earls to produce male heirs, and other political and financial reverses.

The 12th Earl

John de Vere (1408-1462), 12th Earl of Oxford⁷, and his eldest son and heir, Aubrey de Vere (d.1462), were casualties of the Wars of the Roses although the 12th Earl was not an openly committed Lancastrian supporter.

The Earl was a minor at his father's death on 15 February 1417. His wardship was granted to Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter,⁸ the youngest of the three illegitimate sons of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster.⁹ Exeter defended the Lancastrian regime during the reign of Henry IV, was one of Henry V's most trusted commanders, and was appointed governor of the King's infant son, Henry VI.¹⁰

In 1425, while still a minor, the 12th Earl married Elizabeth Howard (1411-1473), heir to her father, Sir John Howard (1385-1410), and her grandfather, Sir John Howard (d.1437).¹¹ Although the Earl claimed the marriage had been arranged by his guardian, it had not been licenced by the infant Henry VI. As a result of this legal technicality, the Earl was fined £2000,¹² a severe financial blow if, as the Earl claimed in 1437, his lands were worth only £500 per annum.¹³

⁵ BL MS Cotton Tiberius E.X.

⁶ During wardship, a minor heir's body, lands and marriage were controlled by parties who profited financially from the arrangement at the expense of the minor heir. For further details, see Green, Nina, 'The Fall of the House of Oxford', *Brief Chronicles*: Vol. 1 (2009), pp. 49-122. URL: <https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/briefchronicles/>.

⁷ Castor, Helen, "Vere, John de, twelfth earl of Oxford (1408–1462)", *ODNB*.

⁸ Harriss, G.L., "Beaufort, Thomas, duke of Exeter (1377?–1426)", *ODNB*.

⁹ Walker, Simon, "John [John of Gaunt], duke of Aquitaine and duke of Lancaster, styled king of Castile and León (1340–1399)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰ Harriss, *ODNB*, *supra*.

¹¹ Ross, pp. 24, 52.

¹² Cokayne, George Edward, *The Complete Peerage*, (London: The St Catherine Press, 1945), Vol. X, p. 238.

¹³ Castor, *ODNB*, *supra*.

After Exeter's death in 1426, the 12th Earl became the ward of another committed Lancastrian, Henry IV's third son, John of Lancaster, Duke of Bedford,¹⁴ until he came of age and was granted livery of his inheritance on 4 July 1429.¹⁵

Although the circumstances of his upbringing suggest that the 12th Earl would have developed Lancastrian sympathies at an early age, he remained politically neutral. Ross notes that he had 'offered little active support to either faction between 1450 and 1455' and his forces, apparently deliberately, arrived the day after the first battle in the Wars of the Roses was fought at St Albans on 22 May 1455.¹⁶

Nor was the Earl any more active in the battles which followed:

Despite his victory at St Albans, York¹⁷ was unable to establish a lasting control over government, and his brief second protectorate was ended in February 1456. An uneasy peace was broken at the battle of Blore Heath in September 1459 and a series of engagements was only terminated by the victory of York's son, Edward IV¹⁸, at Towton on 29 March 1461. The sources for the battles do, as a rule, record the principal noblemen who were with the king at any moment of political crisis. In an assessment of the numbers of noblemen who fought in the sequence of battles and stand-offs in these two years, Colin Richmond established that both viscounts, ten of the fourteen earls and all the dukes fought on at least one occasion and mostly on more. Of the four earls who did not fight, Worcester was abroad, Warenne, the heir of the duke of Norfolk, aged only fifteen in 1459, was too young to participate, and the earl of Westmorland was possibly simple, as William Worcester calls him 'innocens'. All but one member of the higher nobility was either recorded as fighting, or there is a reason for his non-participation. The one exception to this was Oxford, who is not mentioned by any chronicles after 1455 until 1462, nor is he connected to any battle by the Paston letters. Several men were probably not eager to participate – the earl of Arundel fought only once, at the second battle of St Albans, and Lord Stanley was more of an interested observer than a participant on several battlefields. Yet Oxford, in avoiding the battlefield altogether, was unique.¹⁹

The Earl also largely absented himself from partisan Parliaments and councils, and was the only Earl to be listed as neutral in a document which named Yorkist supporters and those thought to be neutral.²⁰ The Earl's public neutrality during a time of national

¹⁴ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 237; Stratford, Jenny, "John [John of Lancaster], duke of Bedford (1389–1435)", *ODNB*.

¹⁵ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 237.

¹⁶ Ross, p. 35.

¹⁷ Watts, John, "Richard of York, third duke of York (1411–1460)", *ODNB*.

¹⁸ Horrox, Rosemary, "Edward IV (1442–1483)", *ODNB*.

¹⁹ Ross, pp. 35-6.

²⁰ Ross, pp. 36-7.

conflict presents historians with a thorny problem: why did he suddenly involve himself in February 1462 in a plot to kill Edward IV?

Ross suggests a plausible answer:

The only member of the family who appears to have had any Lancastrian sympathies was Aubrey, the earl's eldest son and heir. Aubrey was in his late twenties or early thirties, already financially independent of his father and therefore free to act on his own account. . . . For a man [i.e., the 12th Earl] whose concerns and commitments seem only to have been to preserve himself and his interests intact, and who seems to have given no support to either side in the dynastic struggle, the conspiracy appears to be totally out of character, with the risks too great to serve his own interests, and showing an ideological commitment to the cause of Henry VI not even remotely evident from his behaviour over the previous ten years. It may therefore have been Aubrey, his eldest son and heir, in great favour at the Lancastrian court, who had the ideological commitment to the Lancastrian cause, perhaps through his wife,²¹ and who was the prime mover in a conspiracy which sought a Lancastrian restoration and the increasingly elderly earl was inexorably drawn into his son's rash venture. . . . No action in [the 12th Earl's] career even hints that such a conspiracy either would have been likely or had any ideological appeal for him.²²

With regard to the Earl's almost lifelong political neutrality, it is perhaps worth asking whether the heavy fine exacted for his marriage had engendered resentment on his part, and might account, at least in part, for his unwillingness to openly champion the Lancastrian cause in the early years of the Wars of the Roses.

There are differing accounts as to both the specific nature of the conspiracy of 1462 and the manner in which it came to light. Once it was discovered, however, events moved quickly. The Earl was tried and condemned to death, and speedily executed, as were his heir and other co-conspirators:

And the 12 day of February th' Earl of Oxenford and ther [sic] Lord Aubrey Vere, his son, Sir Thomas Tuddenham, William Tyrrell²³ and other were brought into the Tower of London. And upon the 20 day of the said month the said Lord Aubrey was drawn from

²¹ Aubrey married Anne Stafford, the daughter of the 1st Duke of Buckingham, for whom see Rawcliffe, Carole, "Stafford, Humphrey, first duke of Buckingham (1402–1460)", *ODNB*.

²² Ross, pp. 43-7.

²³ His involvement with the 12th Earl in the alleged conspiracy can perhaps be explained by family relationships: his brother, Sir Thomas Tyrrell (d. 28 March 1477) of Heron in East Horndon, Essex, was married to Anne Marney, a first cousin of the 12th Earl, while his aunt, Anne Pashley (d.1444), the wife of Edward Tyrrell (d.1442) of Downton, Essex, was also a first cousin of the 12th Earl. See the will of Sir Thomas Tyrrell, TNA PROB 11/6/417, and Richardson, Douglas, *Plantagenet Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. I, pp. 99-100, 615-6, Vol. III, pp. 181-2, 192-4, 410.

Westminster to the Tower Hill and there beheaded. And the 23 day of the said month of February Sir Thomas Tuddenham, William Tyrrell and John Montgomery²⁴ were beheaded at said Tower Hill. And upon the Friday next following, which was the 26 day of February, th' Earl of Oxenford was led upon foot from Westminster unto the Tower Hill, and there beheaded, and after the corpse was had unto the Friar Augustines', and there buried in the choir.²⁵

The 12th Earl was not attainted; however on 12 August 1462 almost all his manors were granted in tail by Edward IV to his younger brother, the future Richard III.²⁶

Besides his eldest son, Aubrey, who was executed with him, the 12th Earl had four other sons, John de Vere, who succeeded as 13th Earl, Sir George Vere,²⁷ Thomas Vere (d.1478), and Richard Vere (d.1480), and three daughters, Elizabeth Vere (d.1499), who married William Bouchier, Mary Vere, a nun at Barking, and Joan Vere, who married Sir William Norreys (c.1441-1507?).²⁸ Sir Edward Norreys (d.1487), the eldest son of Sir William Norreys and Joan Vere, married Frideswide Lovell, whose brother, Francis Lovell,²⁹ was one of the leaders of rebel forces which were defeated on 16 June 1487 at Stoke by an army in which the van was commanded by John de Vere, 13th Earl,³⁰ one of many instances in the Wars of the Roses in which family members fought on opposing sides.

13th Earl

After the execution of the 12th Earl and his eldest son in 1462, the Earl's second son, John de Vere (1442-1513),³¹ succeeded to the earldom as a minor at the age of nineteen, inheriting a mixed legacy. On the positive side, the 12th Earl had increased the family landholdings by his marriage to Elizabeth Howard,³² and was the first member of the family to exercise real regional influence in East Anglia. Yet the executions of the 12th Earl and his heir placed the earldom itself in jeopardy, and the family was never after free

²⁴ He was the brother-in-law of Sir William Tyrrell. See Ross, *supra*, p. 42.

²⁵ Ross, p. 39. In 1492 the 13th Earl had his father's body removed to the family burial place at Earls Colne; see Ross, pp. 52, 60.

²⁶ Ross, p. 49.

²⁷ For his will, see TNA PROB 11/13/444.

²⁸ See Ross, p. 18, and Richardson, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, Vol. I, pp. 350-1.

²⁹ Horrox, Rosemary, "Lovell, Francis, Viscount Lovell (*b. c.* 1457, *d.* in or after 1488)", *ODNB*.

³⁰ Ross, p. 118.

³¹ Gunn, S.J., "Vere, John de, thirteenth earl of Oxford (1442–1513)", *ODNB*.

³² Elizabeth Howard (1411-1473) was the daughter and heir of Sir John Howard (1385-1410) by Joan Walton (d.1425), sister and heir of Richard Walton (d.1409), and the daughter of John Walton by Margery Sutton, daughter of Sir Richard Sutton (d.1395). See Hicks, M.A., 'The Last Days of Elizabeth Countess of Oxford', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 103, No. 406, (January 1988), pp. 76-95 at p. 81.

of Yorkist suspicions.³³ These recent political setbacks were compounded by the fact that, as Ross points out, during the long history of the earldom the Earls of Oxford had seldom exercised substantial political power:

*The thirteenth earl of Oxford was heir to a long established family, but one that for all its longevity had enjoyed little power and influence during much of its history.*³⁴

The 13th Earl overcame these obstacles, partly through sheer tenacity and force of character, and partly through the clemency of Edward IV, who after initially granting the lands of the earldom in tail to his brother, the future Richard III, allowed the 13th Earl to succeed to his estates on 18 January 1464, five months after he came of age.³⁵ Historians have suggested that the King changed his mind because of the 13th Earl's marriage, likely between August 1462 and July 1463,³⁶ to Margaret Neville, (d.1506), a sister of Richard Neville, 16th Earl of Warwick,³⁷ 'the Kingmaker'. The 13th Earl's mother, Elizabeth Howard, was also afforded temporary clemency; she was essentially pardoned on 28 May 1462, and was allowed to enjoy the lands she had inherited, worth about £700 a year, although she was not permitted to claim her dower rights.³⁸

For several years after he came of age, the 13th Earl's income was likely only about £800 per annum, owing to the fact that his brother Aubrey's widow, Anne Stafford, held lands in jointure until her death in 1472, while his mother held her inherited lands until her death in December 1473.³⁹

On the larger political scene, the alliance between Edward IV and the Nevilles began to fray during the 1460s, and for a number of reasons the 13th Earl began to align himself increasingly with his wife's family, the Nevilles.⁴⁰ Despite the clemency he had received from Edward IV and the other efforts made to draw him into the Yorkist fold, he had not inwardly reconciled himself to the regime. Henry VI was a prisoner in the Tower, and although details are unclear it appears the 13th Earl may have been in contact, as early as 1468, with the deposed King's wife, Margaret of Anjou,⁴¹ who had fled to France. If so, this did not go unnoticed; in November 1468 the Earl was committed to the Tower, where his confessions are said to have led to the executions and arrests of other individuals:

³³ Ross, p. 47.

³⁴ Ross, p. 28.

³⁵ Ross, p. 50.

³⁶ Ross, pp. 50-1.

³⁷ Pollard, A.J., "Neville, Richard, sixteenth earl of Warwick and sixth earl of Salisbury [*called the Kingmaker*] (1428–1471)", *ODNB*.

³⁸ Ross, pp. 51-2. The future Richard III later acquired the Countess' lands under dubious circumstances, a fact perhaps worth keeping in mind when assessing Shakespeare's attitude toward Richard III. See Hicks, 'The Last Days of Elizabeth Countess of Oxford', *supra*.

³⁹ Ross, pp. 52-3.

⁴⁰ Ross, pp. 58-61.

⁴¹ Dunn, Diana E.S., "Margaret [Margaret of Anjou] (1430–1482)", *ODNB*.

My Lord of Oxford is committed to the Tower, and, it is said, kept in irons, and that he has confessed much things. And on Monday before St Andrew day [28 November] one Alford and one Poiner, gentleman to my [Lord] of Norfolk, and one Sir Piers Skinner of London were beheaded, and on the morn after was Sir Thomas Tresham arrest[ed] and is commit[ted] to the Tower, and it is said he was arrested upon confession of my Lord of Oxáford, and they say his livelihood and Sir John Marney's⁴² livelihood and divers other livelihoods is given . . . away by the King.⁴³

The Earl was released from the Tower by 7 January 1469.⁴⁴ By April 1470 he was in France with Warwick and Edward IV's disaffected brother, George, Duke of Clarence.⁴⁵ Warwick was coolly received by Queen Margaret at Angers but the Earl was welcomed more warmly, the Queen remarking that 'he and his friends had suffered much thing for King Henry's quarrels'.⁴⁶ A planned invasion of England was quickly brought to pass. Warwick, Clarence and the 13th Earl landed in Devon on 13 September 1470, Edward IV fled to Holland, and Henry VI was released from the Tower, accompanied by Warwick, Clarence, and the Earl, who bore the sword of state when the King was re-crowned at St Paul's on 15 October. Within days, the Earl had the deep satisfaction, as temporary Constable of England, of trying and condemning to death the Earl of Worcester,⁴⁷ who had been responsible for the executions of his father and brother.⁴⁸ By 9 January he had been appointed Steward of the Royal Household.⁴⁹ His influence in East Anglia, where most of the magnates were Yorkists, was crucial to maintaining order in that area.⁵⁰

⁴² Ross, pp. 37, 59, calls Sir John Marney the 13th Earl's cousin. However Sir John Marney (d.1470-2) was a first cousin of the 12th Earl: their mothers, Elizabeth Sergeaux and Alice Sergeaux (d.1452), were sisters. See Richardson, Douglas, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. I, p. 13; the will of Bridget (nee Waldegrave) Marney, TNA PROB 11/33/186; and the Marney pedigree in Gunn, Steven, *Henry VII's New Men and the Making of Tudor England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. xviii. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=q4LADAAAQBAJ&pg=PR18>
See also the entry for Henry Marney, 1st Baron Marney, in Wedgwood, Josiah C., *History of Parliament*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1936), p. 575. URL: <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.210096/page/n643/mode/2up>

⁴³ Ross, p. 59.

⁴⁴ Ross, p. 59.

⁴⁵ Hicks, Michael, "George, duke of Clarence (1449–1478)", *ODNB*.

⁴⁶ Ross, pp. 61-2.

⁴⁷ Kohl, Benjamin G., "Tiptoft [Tibetot], John, first earl of Worcester (1427–1470)", *ODNB*. Worcester was executed on 18 October 1470.

⁴⁸ Ross notes that in the view of some historians the 13th Earl's execution of Worcester was legally problematic. See p. 62.

⁴⁹ Ross, p. 63.

⁵⁰ Ross, p. 63.

Ross considers that the 13th Earl's role in events leading up to the Readeption⁵¹ has been underestimated:

*He was not only one of the leading players, but also the only man acceptable to both sides in the uneasy Neville-Lancastrian alliance that underpinned Henry VI's Readeption. He was connected to Warwick by marriage, and indeed acted with him throughout, but he was not simply a rebellious Yorkist, like Warwick or Clarence. Whatever the truth behind the conspiracy of 1462, his father and brother had been executed for King Henry's cause.*⁵²

However Henry VI's second period on the throne was almost over. By mid-March 1471, Edward IV had launched an invasion of England. Shakespeare sets the scene:⁵³

*Warw. What counsel, lords? Edward from Belgia,
With hasty Germans and blunt Hollanders,
Hath pass'd in safety through the Narrow Seas,
And with his troops doth march amain to London,
And many giddy people flock to him. (3 Henry VI, IV.viii.1-5).*

Edward IV's attempt to land at Cromer in Norfolk on 12 March 1471 was rebuffed by the 13th Earl's brother, Thomas Vere (d.1478), but two days later he landed at Ravenspur in Holderness.⁵⁴ The 13th Earl, Viscount Beaumont⁵⁵ and the Duke of Exeter⁵⁶ mustered a force of 4000 men in East Anglia, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdon and Lincolnshire.⁵⁷ Edward IV also gathered an army as he moved south. By the time he reached Nottingham, his forces were sufficiently strong to confront the Lancastrians. Warwick, however, refused to meet Edward IV in battle, shutting himself up in Coventry.⁵⁸ Sources conflict as to the fate of the forces under Exeter and the 13th Earl, although they agree that much of the army was lost.⁵⁹ Edward IV's forces were further strengthened when on 3

⁵¹ Henry VI was deposed by Edward IV in March 1461. He was restored to power on 30 October 1470. However this second regnal period (the Readeption) lasted only six months; Edward IV regained the throne in May 1471.

⁵² Ross, pp. 59-60.

⁵³ It should be noted that a few lines later Shakespeare has Warwick say, 'And thou, brave Oxford, wondrous well belov'd/In Oxfordshire shalt muster up thy friends'. Shakespeare's source for the unhistorical claim that the 13th Earl could muster tenants in Oxfordshire is unknown. The lands of the Earls of Oxford were primarily in East Anglia.

⁵⁴ Horrox, *ODNB*, *supra*.

⁵⁵ William Beaumont (d.1507), 2nd Viscount Beaumont. The 13th Earl later married his widow.

⁵⁶ Hicks, Michael, "Holland, Henry, second duke of Exeter (1430–1475)", *ODNB*.

⁵⁷ Ross, pp. 64-5.

⁵⁸ Ross, p. 65.

⁵⁹ Ross, pp. 65-6. According to continental sources, there was a skirmish on 3 April near Leicester.

April he was reconciled with his brother, the Duke of Clarence, who had broken with the Lancastrians, and on April 11 he entered London unopposed.⁶⁰

Disaster for the Lancastrians quickly followed at Barnet and Tewkesbury:

On Easter Sunday (14 April) Edward IV defeated Warwick's army at Barnet. On the same day Margaret of Anjou and her son Edward landed at Weymouth. She was able to rally significant support from Devon and Cornwall, and began to advance towards the Welsh march. Edward and his army aimed to intercept her before she could cross the Severn, and the two armies met at Tewkesbury on 4 May. The Yorkists were victorious and Edward of Lancaster was among those killed. This removed the argument for keeping Henry VI alive, and the Lancastrian king was killed on the night of Edward IV's victorious return to London, Yorkist claims that he died of 'pure displeasure and melencoly' (Bruce, 38) probably then, as now, commanding little credence.⁶¹

There is considerable confusion as to what actually happened at Barnet. Holinshed (1577) says that:

. . . through the valiancy of the Earl of Oxford that led [Warwick's] vaward, [Edward IV's] people on that part were overmatched, so that many of them fled towards Barnet, and so to London, bringing news that the Earl of Warwick had won the field. . . . but the residue of those that fought in other parts could not perceive this distress of the King's people because the thick mist would not suffer them to see any space far off, but only at hand.⁶²

Because of this, according to Holinshed, the battle continued until the King's forces, which some say were more numerous, won the day. Other chronicles say that after their initial success, Oxford's troops fell to rifling. According to the Great Chronicle:

Upon the morn so soon as the day dawned, the captains embattled their people upon either side, the Duke of Gloucester leading the vaward of King Edward, and th' Earl of Oxenford the vaward of the Lords. And after the sun was up, either host approached unto other, but then it happed to be so exceeding a mist that nother host could plainly see other, so that it happed th' Earl of Oxenford to set upon the wing or end of the Duke of Gloucester's⁶³ people, and after sharp fight slew a certain of them and put the remnant to flight. And anon as they had a while chased such as fled, some returned & fell to rifling, & some of them, weening that all had been won, rode in all haste to London, & there told that King Edward had lost the field, but for these tidings were not renewed with after-comers, men gave no great credence unto them. . . . Then after this feat was done by th'

⁶⁰ Horrox, *ODNB*, *supra*.

⁶¹ Horrox, *ODNB*, *supra*.

⁶² The Holinshed Project. URL:

http://english.nsms.ox.ac.uk/holinshed/texts.php?text1=1577_5325#p15096

⁶³ Actually Lord Hastings' forces, according to some sources.

*Earl, & he perceived well that he had erred of his way, he then with such as were about him set upon the remnant of that host and held battle with them.*⁶⁴

Warkworth's Chronicle is the sole source for the now widely accepted theory that Warwick's forces mistakenly fell upon Oxford's:

*And upon Easter even [Edward IV] and all his host went toward Barnet, and carried King Harry with him, for he had understanding that the Earl of Warwick and the Duke of Exeter, the Lord Marquess Montagu, the Earl of Oxenford and many other knights, squires and commons to the number of 20,000 were gathered together to fight against King Edward. But it happened that he with his host were entered into the town of Barnet before the Earl of Warwick and his host, and so the Earl of Warwick and his host lay without the town all night, and each of them loosed guns at other all the night. And on Easter day in the morning, the 14 day of April, right early, each of them came upon other, and there was such a great mist that neither of them might see other perfectly. There they fought from 4 of clock in the morning unto 10 of clock the forenoon. And divers times the Earl of Warwick[']s party had the victory, and supposed that they had won the field. But it happened so that the Earl of Oxenford's men had upon them their Lord's livery both before and behind, which was a star with streams, which [was] much like King Edward's livery, the sun with streams, and the mist was so thick that a man might not perfectly judge one thing from another, so the Earl of Warwick's men shot and fought against the Earl of Oxenford's men, weeting and supposing that they had been King Edward's men, and anon the Earl of Oxenford and his men cried, Treason, treason!, and fled away from the field with 800 men.*⁶⁵

Warkworth's Chronicle is the only source for the story that Warwick's men fell upon Oxford's because they mistook a de Vere badge for Edward IV's livery, and there is no certainty that it actually happened, particularly since, as Ross points out, the de Vere coat of arms bears a mullet, a star with five straight points, and there is no known de Vere badge of a star with streams.⁶⁶ It may be that Warwick's men did not fall upon Oxford's at all, and that Edward IV was victorious because his forces were stronger, and ultimately prevailed. Of the Lancastrian leaders, Warwick and Montagu⁶⁷ were slain, Exeter was captured, and the 13th Earl escaped.

In *3 Henry VI*, prior to the Battle of Tewkesbury, Shakespeare has Queen Margaret rally those around her by portraying the 13th Earl as the anchor who will replace Warwick, slain at Barnet:

⁶⁴ Ross, p. 66; English Heritage Battlefield Report: Barnet 1471, (English Heritage, 1995), p. 4; Wilkinson, Josephine, Richard, *The Young King to Be*, p. 228. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=J4SoAwAAQBAJ&pg=PT228>

⁶⁵ Ross, p. 66; Halliwell, James Orchard, ed., *A Chronicle of the First Thirteen Years of the Reign of King Edward the Fourth*, (London: Camden Society, 1839), pp. 15-16. URL: <https://archive.org/details/chronicleoffirst00warkrich/page/14/mode/2up>

⁶⁶ Ross, pp. 66-7.

⁶⁷ Horrox, Rosemary, "Neville, John, Marquess Montagu (c. 1431–1471)", *ODNB*.

*Queen Mar. Great lords, wise men ne'er sit and wail their loss,
But cheerly seek how to redress their harms.
What though the mast be now blown overboard,
The cable broke, the holding-anchor lost,
And half our sailors swallow'd in the flood?
Yet lives our pilot still. Is't meet that he
Should leave the helm and, like a fearful lad
With tearful eyes add water to the sea,
And give more strength to that which hath too much,
Whiles, in his moan, the ship splits on the rock,
Which industry and courage might have sav'd?
Ah, what a shame, ah, what a fault were this!
Say Warwick was our anchor; what of that?
And Montague our topmost; what of him?
Our slaught' red friends the tackles; what of these?
Why, is not Oxford here another anchor?
And Somerset another goodly mast?
The friends of France our shrouds and tacklings?
And though unskillful, why not Ned and I
For once allow'd the skillful pilot's charge?(V,v,1-20)⁶⁸*

Shakespeare has taken liberties with history. The 13th Earl was not at Tewkesbury. After Barnet, he is said to have escaped to Scotland, from whence, after learning of the Lancastrian rout at Tewkesbury, he crossed to France.⁶⁹

Nonetheless, Shakespeare persistently assigned the Earl a role in the battle. In *Richard III*, on learning of the execution of his brother, the Duke of Clarence, Edward IV recalls his personal combat with the 13th Earl at Tewkesbury:

*Have I a tongue to doom my brother's death,
And shall that tongue give pardon to a slave?
My brother kill'd no man, his fault was thought,
And yet his punishment was bitter death.
Who sued to me for him? Who (in my wrath)
Kneel'd [at] my feet and bid me be advis'd?
Who spoke of brotherhood? Who spoke of love?
Who told me how the poor soul did forsake
The mighty Warwick and did fight for me?
Who told me, in the field at Tewksbury,
When Oxford had me down, he rescued me,
And said, "Dear brother, live, and be a king"?(II.I.103-14)⁷⁰*

⁶⁸ Evans, G. Blakemore, ed., *The Riverside Shakespeare*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), p. 701.

⁶⁹ Ross, p. 69.

Although historically false on more than one count, Edward IV's words ring true in a metaphorical sense. Had the Duke of Clarence not broken with the Lancastrians and fought against them at Barnet, Edward IV might well not have lived to be a King.

After the defeats at Barnet and Tewkesbury and the deaths of Henry VI and his son, the Lancastrian cause was hopeless. Warkworth's Chronicle records the 13th Earl's escape to Scotland and France, his privateering, and his invasion of St Michael's Mount:

Also in the 13 year of [the] reign of King Edward, Sir John Vere, Earl of Oxenford, that withdrew him from Barnet field and rode into Scotland, and from thence into France assailed, and there he was worshipfully received. And in the same year he was in the sea with certain ships and gat great good and riches, and afterward came into West Country, and with a subtle point of war gat and entered Saint Michael's Mount in Cornwall, a strong place and a mighty, and cannot be get if it be well victualed with a few men to keep it, for 20 men may keep it against all the world. So the said Earl, with 20 score men save 3, the last day of September the year aforesaid, entered first into [the] said Mount.⁷¹

After a protracted siege, the 13th Earl surrendered St Michael's Mount on 15 February 1474 together with two of his brothers,⁷² Viscount Beaumont and Thomas Clifford.⁷³ Edward IV ordered the Earl imprisoned for life at Hammes Castle near Calais.⁷⁴ He was confined there for nine years, from 1474 until 1483, although according to Ross the conditions were not unduly onerous.⁷⁵ That could not be said for the privations his wife and mother endured in England. The Earl's wife, Margaret Neville, had no inherited lands, no dower, and no powerful relations; two of her brothers, Warwick and Montagu, had been slain at Barnet, and another brother, George Neville, Archbishop of York,⁷⁶ had been imprisoned at Hammes in 1472. According to the chronicler Fabyan,⁷⁷ while the Earl was a prisoner:

⁷⁰ Evans, *supra*, p. 725.

⁷¹ Halliwell, *supra*, p. 26. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/chronicleoffirst00warkrich/page/26/mode/2up>

⁷² The Earl had three brothers living at the time: George Vere (d.1503), Thomas Vere (d.1478) and Richard Vere (d. 1480). See Ross, pp. 18, 74-5.

⁷³ Likely a younger brother of Henry Clifford, 10th Baron Clifford, for whom see Summerson, Henry, "Clifford, Henry, tenth Baron Clifford (1454–1523)", *ODNB*.

⁷⁴ Halliwell, *supra*, p. 27; Ross, pp. 74-5.

⁷⁵ Ross, p. 81.

⁷⁶ Hicks, Michael, "Neville, George (1432–1476)", *ODNB*.

⁷⁷ McLaren, M.-R., "Fabyan, Robert (d. 1513)", *ODNB*.

*. . . my Lady his wife might never be suffered to come unto him, nor had anything to live upon but as the people of their charities would give to her or what she might get with her needle or other such cunning as she exercised.*⁷⁸

The Earl's mother, Elizabeth Howard, fared better since she had lands inherited from her father and grandfather. However at Christmas 1472 she was visited by the future Richard III, who forced her to turn over her lands to him in return for an annuity worth only half their annual value.⁷⁹

The tide turned for the Lancastrians in 1483. Richard III's usurpation of the throne in that year, and suspicion that Edward IV's two young sons had been murdered in the Tower, alienated many former Yorkist supporters, among them the 13th Earl's gaoler at Hammes, Sir James Blount (d. 29 July 1492).⁸⁰ Blount and the 13th Earl left Hammes together, and joined Henry Tudor, who was living in exile in France. The Earl's escape in late October or early November 1484 was timely; Richard III had despatched William Bolton on 28 October to bring the Earl back to England.⁸¹

Polydore Vergil⁸² describes the relief and enthusiasm with which Henry Tudor welcomed the Earl's support:

*During the time of his abode here John, Earl of Oxford. . . . came unto him. When Henry saw th' Earl he was ravished with joy incredible that a man of so great nobility and knowledge in the wars, and of most perfect and sound fidelity, most earnestly bent to his side, was at the last by God's assistance delivered out of ward and in so fit time comed to help him, in whom he might repose his hope and settle himself more safely than in any other, for he was not ignorant that others who had holden on King Edward['s] side yielded unto him by reason of the evil state of time, but this man who had so oft fought for King Henry was, he thought, delivered from that ward by the heavenly help, that he might have one of his own faction to whom he might safely commit all things, and therefore rejoicing above all measure for th' Earl of Oxford's coming, he began to hope better of his affairs.*⁸³

⁷⁸ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 243; Ross, pp. 78-9; Ellis, Henry, ed., *The New Chronicles of England and France*, (London: F.C. and J. Rivington, 1811), p. 663. URL: <https://archive.org/details/newchroniclesofe00fabyuoft/page/662/mode/2up>

⁷⁹ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 238; Ross, pp. 80-1.

⁸⁰ Third son of Walter Blount, 1st Baron Mountjoy, for whom see Horrox, Rosemary, "Blount, Walter, first Baron Mountjoy (d. 1474)", *ODNB*. For his will, in which he appointed the 13th Earl as supervisor, see TNA PROB 11/9/327.

⁸¹ Ross, p. 82.

⁸² Connell, William J., "Vergil, Polydore [Polidoro Virgili] (c. 1470–1555)", *ODNB*.

⁸³ Ross, pp. 84-5; Ellis, Henry, *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History*, (London: Camden Society, 1844), pp. 208-9. URL: <https://archive.org/details/threebooksofpoly29verg/page/208/mode/2up>

The joy was likely mutual since Henry Tudor was also the 13th Earl's greatest hope. As Ross points out, Henry Tudor could have been of no help to the Earl in the years immediately after Barnet; however in 1483 the possibility that together they could oust Richard III finally opened a path for the Earl's own return to England.⁸⁴

The 13th Earl proved to be a pillar of support for the future Henry VII. He fought at Bosworth, and became one of the 'great men' in the new King's regime. In a letter of 7 December 1508 to Margaret of Austria (1480-1530), Flemish ambassadors described him as 'le principal personnage de ce royaume', the principal personage of the realm.⁸⁵ Ross refers to him as 'the last great medieval nobleman'.⁸⁶

In 1621, more than a century after the 13th Earl's death, Sir Francis Bacon disparaged the 13th Earl's relationship with Henry VII, recounting a story of the King's severe displeasure with the Earl for keeping an excessive number of retainers, and claiming the King exacted a fine of 15,000 marks.⁸⁷ Sir George Buck repeated the tale, reporting the fine at £30,000 and incorporating it into the prophecy of a hermit who foretold woe to the Oxford earldom for its role in the death of the pretender, Perkin Warbeck:⁸⁸

And this dealing with them being reported, and near to Heveningham Castle, [t]he chief seat of the Earl, it came to the ears of an [old] hermit who lived in the woods near to Heveningham [Cas]tle, and who was held to be a very good and devout [and] holy man. And this man as soon as he heard this news was much troubled and grieved afterward, because he much [loved the ancient and noble family of Oxenford. And in] much anguish of spirit, he said the Earl and his house would repent and rue this [guilt] and bloody pursuit of these innocent princes. And for the events of [which prophecy,] this hath been observed, viz., that not [long after the Earl] was arrested for a small offence, [and so small that no man thought] that a man of [his merit and credit with the king could be called in question. He was fined also £30,000, the which in those days was a kingly sum. After this he lived many years in great discontent, and died without issue or any child la]wfully begotten him.⁸⁹

Ross concludes that, for many reasons, the story is apocryphal.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Ross, 83.

⁸⁵ Ross, p. 1; Gairdner, James, ed., *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III. and Henry VII.*, Vol. I, (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861), p. 371. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=qpXmLrjsd8kC&pg=PA371>

⁸⁶ Ross, p. 1.

⁸⁷ Lumby, J. Rawson, *Bacon's History of the Reign of King Henry VII*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1885), p. 192. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=gnCjHCH-wj0C&pg=PA192>

⁸⁸ Gunn, S.J., "Warbeck, Perkin [Pierrehon de Werbecque; *alias* Richard Plantagenet, duke of York] (c. 1474–1499)", *ODNB*.

⁸⁹ BL Cotton Tiberius E.X.

⁹⁰ Ross, pp. 141-2. Nelson, p. 11, accepts the story at face value, ascribing it to 1498 although no date is mentioned in either Bacon's or Buck's accounts, and despite the fact

The 14th Earl

Unfortunately for the continuity of the earldom, the 13th Earl had no issue by Margaret Neville, nor by his second wife, Elizabeth Scrope (d.1537),⁹¹ widow of Viscount Beaumont, whom he married in 1508. When he died on 10 March 1513 with no legitimate⁹² issue, he was succeeded by his young and inexperienced nephew, John de Vere (1499-1526), 14th Earl of Oxford, son of his brother, Sir George Vere.⁹³

When his father died, the 14th Earl was a child of four, and became a royal ward. The 13th Earl and the Howards had been on opposite sides at Bosworth;⁹⁴ despite this, the 13th Earl betrothed his heir presumptive at the age of twelve to Anne Howard, the daughter of Thomas Howard, 2nd Duke of Norfolk,⁹⁵ and Agnes Tilney,⁹⁶ thus uniting the families of two East Anglian magnates. The settlement was dated 16 November 1511, with the marriage to take place before 1 May 1512.⁹⁷ Although the settlement does not survive, it is mentioned in the 13th Earl's will.⁹⁸

On 22 April 1513 the 14th Earl was the chief mourner at the 13th Earl's impressive funeral at which nine hundred black gowns were given out to the mourners in attendance. As part of the elaborate heraldic ceremony:

*A mounted knight, armed with an axe, was led into the choir by two knights and delivered the axe to the bishop, who gave it to the heir.*⁹⁹

that 1498 predates by six years Henry VII's 1504 statute requiring the licencing of retainers.

⁹¹ For her will, see TNA PROB 11/27/144.

⁹² The 13th Earl is said to have had an illegitimate daughter, Katherine de Vere, who married Sir Robert Broughton. See Ross, p. 187. For the will of Sir Robert Broughton, see TNA PROB 11/15/535.

⁹³ The 14th Earl was the second surviving son of Sir George Vere (c.1443-1503) and Margaret Stafford. See *Magna Carta Ancestry*, Vol. IV, pp. 275-6. For Sir George Vere's will, see TNA PROB 11/13/444.

⁹⁴ Ross, p. 159.

⁹⁵ Head, David M., "Howard, Thomas, second duke of Norfolk (1443–1524)", *ODNB*.

⁹⁶ Davies, Catherine, "Howard [*née* Tilney], Agnes, duchess of Norfolk (*b.* in or before 1477, *d.* 1545)", *ODNB*.

⁹⁷ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 245.

⁹⁸ Ross, pp. 159-60. The 13th Earl's will dated 1 September 1512, TNA PROB 11/17/379, mentions 'my nephew, John Vere, and the Lady Anne, his wife', and refers to 'certain indentures of covenants bearing date the 16th day of November in the third year of King Henry the 8th made between me on thone party and the said Earl of Surrey on thother party concerning the marriage now solemnized between my said nephew and Lady Anne'.

⁹⁹ Ross, pp. 223-4.

After the death of the 13th Earl, the King treated the 14th Earl's marriage as invalid on the ground that he had been under the age of fourteen, and on 29 May 1514 offered him Margaret Courtenay¹⁰⁰ as a bride. The 14th Earl refused the offer, perhaps an unwise decision; subsequent events suggest that he and Anne Howard were not happy together. After the refusal, the King, as the 14th Earl's legal guardian and in the exercise of his royal prerogative, granted both the 14th Earl's marriage and the fine imposed on him for his rejection of Margaret Courtenay to the 14th Earl's father-in-law, the Duke of Norfolk. During the 14th Earl's minority, the King also granted Norfolk custody of the Earl's lands and the offices of Lord Great Chamberlain, Steward of the Forest of Essex, and Constable of Colchester Castle, as well as custody of the reversion of lands held in dower by the 13th Earl's widow.¹⁰¹

The 14th Earl attended the King at the Field of the Cloth of Gold in June 1520, where he was one of the judges of the foot races. He reached the age of majority and was granted livery of his lands on 16 August of that year.¹⁰² A story for which no source is cited claims he was offered £12,000 per annum when he came of age for the farm of his lands:

*[F]or, on his accession to the earldom, he was offered £12,000 a year for his estates; leaving, in his occupation, all manors, houses, castles, parks, woods, forests, and all the demesne lands thereto belonging.*¹⁰³

The figure seems absurdly high. Ross estimates the 13th Earl's annual income at about £4000 per annum,¹⁰⁴ and the 14th Earl's income is unlikely to have exceeded that.

In 1522 the young Earl was in attendance when the King met the Emperor Charles V between Dover and Canterbury.¹⁰⁵

Two years later, for reasons which are not entirely clear, the King took direct control of the 14th Earl's life. On 16 February 1524, acting through Cardinal Thomas Wolsey,¹⁰⁶ he

¹⁰⁰ It appears she was Margaret Courtenay (d. before 15 April 1526), the daughter of William Courtenay, 18th Earl of Devon, and Katherine Plantagenet, daughter of Edward IV. On 15 June 1514 she married Henry Somerset, 2nd Earl of Worcester. See Richardson, Douglas, *Plantagenet Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. I, pp. 585-7, Vol. III, pp. 235-6.

¹⁰¹ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 245; Ross, p. 160; Brewer, J.S., ed., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, 2nd ed., Vol. I, Part 2, No. 80, p. 1285. URL: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112039549016&view=1up&seq=465>

¹⁰² Cokayne, Vol. X, pp. 244-5.

¹⁰³ Wright, Thomas, *The History and Topography of the County of Essex*, (London: George Virtue, 1836), Vol. I, pp. 515-16. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=SgQVAAAQAAJ&pg=PA515>

¹⁰⁴ Ross, p. 111.

¹⁰⁵ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 244.

¹⁰⁶ Jack, Sybil M., "Wolsey, Thomas (1470/71–1530)", *ODNB*.

ordered the Earl to discharge his household and live with his father-in-law, the Duke of Norfolk. The Earl's personal household was limited to twenty men and women, he was told to moderate his expenses, and was forbidden to grant any offices or annuities. Strictures concerning his food, drink, apparel, recreational activities and conduct towards his wife were included in the decree:

Semblably for conservation of his health and avoiding sundry inconveniences he shall have a vigilant regard that he use not much to drink hot wines, ne to drink or sit up late, or accustom himself with hot or unwholesome meats, contrary to his complexion whereby he may be brought into infirmity and disease.

Item, the said Earl shall also moderate his hunting or other disports, or hunting or using the same excessively, daily or customably, but only at such times and seasons as may be convenient for the wealth and recreation of his body, and as by the saddest and most discretest of his servants shall be advised and thought expedient.

Item, in all other the gestures and behaviours of the said Earl he shall use himself honourably, prudently and sadly, forbearing all riotous and wild companies, excessive and superfluous apparel, and namely he shall, as to a nobleman appertaineth, lovingly familiarly and kindly entreat and demean himself towards the said Countess, his wife.¹⁰⁷

To ensure his compliance, the young Earl was bound to Wolsey in the sum of £2000, while six sureties were bound in the sum of 500 marks apiece.

A directive so drastically restricting the freedom of action of an adult Earl is difficult to explain solely on the basis of the allegation that he was a young wastrel. It seems likely there was a background to the King's order which has not come to light. In particular, the specific direction to the Earl that he was to treat his wife lovingly indicates that there was friction between the Earl and his Countess, perhaps because she had not given him an heir.

In any event, the 14th Earl cannot have lived long with his father-in-law. The aged 2nd Duke of Norfolk's last public duty was his attendance at the opening of Parliament in April 1523, after which he retired to his castle at Framlingham in Suffolk, where he died on 21 May 1524, only three months after the King's order.¹⁰⁸

The order may have lapsed after the death of the Duke of Norfolk. The 14th Earl was at court in 1525 and 1526, officiating in June 1525 when the King's illegitimate son, Henry

¹⁰⁷ Ellis, Henry, 'Copy of an Order made by Cardinal Wolsey, as Lord Chancellor, respecting the Management of the Affairs of the young Earl of Oxford', *Archaeologia*, (London: T. Bensley, 1821), Vol. XIX, pp. 62-5. URL:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=SzZFAAAACAAJ&pg=PA63>

¹⁰⁸ Head, David M., "Howard, Thomas, second duke of Norfolk (1443–1524)", *ODNB*.

Fitzroy,¹⁰⁹ was created Earl of Nottingham, and witnessing the charter for the creation of Wolsey's college, Cardinal College, on 5 May 1526.¹¹⁰

The 14th Earl died of unknown causes on 14 July 1526 at the age of twenty-six, and was buried at Colne Priory. No trace of his tomb remains. At his death, the office of Lord Great Chamberlain reverted to the crown, as did the Barony of Plaiz,¹¹¹ which had come to the earls of Oxford via the 12th Earl's marriage to Elizabeth Howard (1411-1473).¹¹²

The 14th Earl's widow, Anne Howard, survived him for thirty-two years, a classic example of a 'dowager/Long withering out a young man's revenue'. During her widowhood she complained to both Cardinal Wolsey and to her brother, Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk, about the 14th Earl's successor's conduct concerning her dower lands. On 11 August 1526, she wrote to Wolsey alleging that the 15th Earl and Sir John Raynsford and their men had on two occasions broken into the park at Lavenham and killed more than one hundred deer. On 22 August she complained to her brother that the new Earl continued to retain possession of Castle Camps. The Dowager Countess was back in possession during the years 1530-34, when she sent several letters to Thomas Cromwell from Castle Camps, in one of which she complained of a certain Alexander Irlam, parson of Belchamp Otten, 'who in my lord my husband's time convented with other to have poisoned me'.¹¹³ Details which might help to establish the background to these incidents are lacking. Anne Howard died in 1559, and was buried on 22 February of that year in the Howard chapel in the church of St Mary-at-Lambeth.¹¹⁴

Although the 13th Earl had dominated East Anglia during the reign of Henry VII, after his death the Howards became the pre-eminent noble family in the region. According to Ross, this can be ascribed to three factors:

*[T]he thirteenth earl's successor was extravagant and incompetent, not just youthful; after the fourteenth earl's early death in 1526, his successor and cousin, the fifteenth earl, was not the heir to Elizabeth Howard's¹¹⁵ estates, and the de Veres' East Anglian patrimony was substantially reduced; lastly, both the earl of Surrey and his son and heir, the third Howard duke of Norfolk, were able and vigorous men who were able to take advantages of their opportunities in East Anglian and national politics. The fourteenth earl is best described as an incompetent wastrel.*¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁹ Murphy, Beverley A., "Fitzroy, Henry, duke of Richmond and Somerset (1519–1536)", *ODNB*.

¹¹⁰ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 244; *Magna Carta Ancestry*, Vol. IV, p. 276.

¹¹¹ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 245.

¹¹² Ross, pp. 23-5.

¹¹³ Wood, Mary Anne Everett, *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies of Great Britain*, (London: Henry Colburn, 1846), Vol. II, pp. 10–14, 67–8, 112–19. URL: <https://archive.org/details/lettersroyaland00greegoog/page/n30/mode/2up>

¹¹⁴ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 245; Nelson, p. 26; Ward, p. 6.

¹¹⁵ Wife of the 12th Earl of Oxford.

¹¹⁶ Ross, pp. 160-2.

The 15th Earl

Like the 13th Earl before him, the 14th Earl left no legitimate issue, and was succeeded by his second cousin, John de Vere (c.1482-1540), 15th Earl of Oxford, Oxford's paternal grandfather.¹¹⁷ A letter from the Duke of Norfolk is said to portray him as 'hovering around the dying bed of his relative, eagerly waiting the moment of his decease'.¹¹⁸ The Duke's negative comment is understandable; it must have been a great disappointment to him that Anne Howard had not produced an heir to the Oxford earldom.

As an insurance policy against the death of the 14th Earl without issue, the 15th Earl had been placed in the care of the 13th Earl as a child:

*As early as 1490, [the 13th Earl's] cousin, John, grandson of the brother of the twelfth earl, and aged around eight, had been placed in the earl's care by his parents, and was being educated for future service; he was second in line to the comital dignity by 1503.*¹¹⁹

The 15th Earl's family was based in the West Country. He was the son of John Vere (d.1486), esquire, and Alice Colbroke,¹²⁰ the grandson of Sir Robert Vere¹²¹ and Joan

¹¹⁷ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 245.

¹¹⁸ Wood, *supra*, p. 10.

¹¹⁹ Ross, p. 203.

¹²⁰ For Alice Colbroke, see the pedigree from 1531 in Cornwall Record Office AR/1/851 showing the descent of the manors of Tregennow Wortha, Tregorrak and Tresithny, sometime belonging to John Tregennow and Richard Tresithny. The pedigree shows that John Tregennow (who was seised of the 2 manors of Tregennow Wortha and Tregorrak in fee tail to himself and his heirs of body) had issue 1 daughter, Jane, who married Richard Tresithny. Richard entailed the manor of Tresithny to the heirs of his body, and had issue 3 daughters: Jane (married Walter Colbroke), Amyse (married Nicholas Lowre) and Maud (married William Devyok; no issue). Jane and Walter Colbroke had 2 daughters: Alice (married John de Veer, son and heir of Robert de Veer, knight) and Jane (married to William Upton). Alice and John de Veer had a son, John de Veer 'now Erle of Oxinford' (1531), who married Elizabeth, heir of Trussell, and they had children: John, Aubrey, Robert, Geoffrey, Elizabeth, Ann and Frances. Jane and William Upton had a daughter Jane, who died without issue. Amyse and Nicholas Lowre had a son William Lowre 'yet lyuyng' [1531], who had 'sons and children' (not specified). See also Cokayne, *supra*, Vol. X, p. 245; *Plantagenet Ancestry*, Vol. II, p. 195; and CRO AR/1/849 dated 15 March 1488. Alice Colbroke is sometimes referred to as Alice Colbroke *alias* Kilrington. Kilrington may have been the original family surname. Leland says, 'This John [Vere] married Alice one of the 2 daughters and heirs of Walter Kilrington alias Colbroke'. See Hearne, Thomas, *The Itinerary of John Leland*, 3rd ed., (Oxford: James Fletcher, 1769), p. 44. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=FE8VAAAQAAJ&pg=RA1-PA44>. According to Lysons, 'Colebrooke, in this parish, belonged to the abbey of Ford. The abbot granted it

Courtenay,¹²² and the great-grandson of Richard de Vere (1385-1417), 11th Earl of Oxford,¹²³ who fought at Agincourt in 1415, and his second wife, Alice Sergeaux (d.1452).¹²⁴ He had two stepbrothers, William Courtenay and Walter Courtenay, and a stepsister, Katherine Courtenay, by his mother's second marriage, before 1491, to Sir Walter Courtenay (d. 7 November 1506).¹²⁵

The 15th Earl inherited an earldom weakened by the alleged extravagance and incompetence of the young 14th Earl. He was further hampered by his lack of connections to powerful members of the nobility; his father was a descendant of a collateral branch of the de Vere family, while his mother's family were Devonshire gentry. Nor did he marry into the nobility; his two wives were also heiresses of gentry families. Moreover the long life of the 14th Earl's widow, Anne Howard, denied him the revenue from the lands she held in dower, and, as mentioned earlier, led to conflict between them.

Despite these handicaps, and perhaps because he had a forceful personality and had been mentored from an early age by the 13th Earl, the 15th Earl quickly assumed a position of influence. While the 13th Earl was still living, he was an Esquire of the Body at the funeral of Henry VII on 11 May 1509. A few months after the 13th Earl's death, he was knighted by Henry VIII on 25 September 1513 at Tournai following the Battle of the Spurs, and attended the King at the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520, and at his meeting with the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, at Dover in 1522. On 19 December 1526, with Cardinal Wolsey's support, he was appointed Lord Great Chamberlain¹²⁶ for life.

to Kilrington, whose descendants, by the name of Kilrington or Colebrooke, possessed it for several generations. One of the co-heiresses brought a moiety of this estate to the Veres, Earls of Oxford'. See Lysons, Daniel and Samuel Lysons, *Magna Britannia*, (London: Thomas Cadell, 1822), Vol. VI, p. 60. URL:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=Y0hBAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA60>

¹²¹ Ross, p. 18.

¹²² Joan Courtenay was the daughter of Sir Hugh Courtenay (d.1425) by his third wife, Phillipa Archdekne. See Richardson, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, *supra*, Vol. I, pp. 547-9.

¹²³ Ross, James, "Vere, Richard de, eleventh earl of Oxford (1385-1417)", *ODNB*.

¹²⁴ Richardson, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, *supra*, Vol. II, pp. 30, 326-7; Cokayne, *supra*, Vol. X, p. 247; TNA C 1/127/29.

¹²⁵ See TNA C 1/127/29. Sir Walter Courtenay (d. 7 November 1506) was a younger son of Sir Philip Courtenay of Powderham, Devon, by Elizabeth Hungerford, the daughter of Walter Hungerford, 1st Baron Hungerford. See Kightly, Charles, "Hungerford, Walter, first Baron Hungerford (1378-1449)", *ODNB*.

¹²⁶ For the office of Lord Great Chamberlain, see Cokayne, *supra*, Vol. X, Appendix F, pp. 47-90 at pp. 64, 71-4. See particularly p. 71: 'When the office was in dispute in 1902, the claimants who urged that the 15th Earl had held the office by hereditary right under the King's Award had to face the question why it did not pass to his son [the 16th Earl] on his death. They could only bring up an absurd 17th-century tale that he was not so wise as his ancestors, which proved to be founded on a document relating to restrictions imposed on the extravagant 14th Earl'. See also Round, J. Horace, 'Notes on the Lord Great

He was made a Knight of the Garter on 21 October 1527. He signed the Lords' petition against the Cardinal on 1 December 1529, and was appointed to the Privy Council before 22 March 1531.¹²⁷

On 10 November 1531 Lodovico Falier, who had been ambassador to England, reported to the Venetian Senate details concerning the 15th Earl's offices, wealth and personal qualities:

*The Lord Great Chamberlain, Captain of the Island (Capitano dell' Isola) the Earl of Oxford [John de Vere, 15th Earl of Oxford], is a man of valour and authority, with a revenue of 25,000 ducats, and it is his custom always to cavalcade with 200 horse.*¹²⁸

The 15th Earl bore the crown at Queen Anne Boleyn's coronation in April 1533, and later served on the commission which tried the Queen on 15 May 1536.¹²⁹

On 22 July 1536, his landholdings were augmented by a substantial grant from Henry VIII.¹³⁰ The grant was made to the Earl and his heirs, and included the lands of two former priories, the priory of Blessed Mary the Virgin & Saint John the Evangelist in Earls Colne (usually referred to as Colne Priory), and the priory of Blessed Mary & Saint James & the Holy Cross in Castle Hedingham (usually referred to as Hedingham Nunnery), as well as three manors (Colne Priory, Barwick and Hinxton), and several rectories, advowsons, tithes and pensions.

On 15 October 1537 he attended the christening of the future Edward VI, and on 12 November following was present at the funeral of Queen Jane Seymour. On 2 and 3 December 1538 he served on the panel of peers at the treason trials of the Marquess of Exeter,¹³¹ and Lord Montagu.¹³² He and his eldest son and heir, the future 16th Earl, were in the King's retinue at the reception of Anne of Cleves at Blackheath.¹³³

Chamberlain Case', *The Ancestor*, No. IV, January 1903, pp. 7-28 at p. 19. URL: <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.228395/page/n31/mode/2up>

¹²⁷ Cokayne, *supra*, Vol. X, pp. 245-6.

¹²⁸ Hughes, Jonathan, "Vere, John de, sixteenth earl of Oxford (1516–1562)", *ODNB*; 'Venice: November 1531', in *Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 4, 1527-1533*, ed. Rawdon Brown (London, 1871), pp. 291-307. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/venice/vol4/pp291-307>.

¹²⁹ Cokayne, *supra*, Vol. X, pp. 245-6.

¹³⁰ TNA C 66/668, mm. 26-7.

¹³¹ Cooper, J.P.D., "Courtenay, Henry, marquess of Exeter (1498/9–1538)", *ODNB*.

¹³² Mayer, T.F., "Pole, Henry, Baron Montagu (1492–1539)", *ODNB*.

¹³³ Cokayne, *supra*, Vol. X, pp. 245-6.

The 15th Earl was a sportsman, as attested by a letter dated 17 October 1531 from Gregory Cromwell (d.1551), later 1st Baron Cromwell, to his father, Thomas Cromwell.¹³⁴

*Father, I beseech you, when you meet with the right honourable Lord of Oxford, to give thanks unto his Lordship, for when he came to a town called Yeldham to the parson's thereof to hunt the fox, he sent for me and my cousins, and made us good cheer, and let us see such game and pleasure as I never saw in my life.*¹³⁵

He was also instrumental in refounding the Earls Colne grammar school, which he had attended as a youth according to the accounts of the 13th Earl's receiver, Clement Heigham, dating from 1496-7:

*The first entry on the sheet records the payment of £10 16s. 8d. for the board of Masters John Veer, Robert Fitzwalter, Nicholas Wentworth and William Rynger while they were in Earls Colne from Michaelmas of one year until Christmas of the next. The second entry records that 53s. 4d. was paid to John Askcliff, 'chaplain and master of the school there', for teaching the same gentlemen for one quarter up till Christmas.*¹³⁶

The 15th Earl is said to have been the first Protestant Earl of Oxford.¹³⁷ About 1535, Sir Richard Morison¹³⁸ urged Henry VIII to use the theatre to undermine respect for the Pope.¹³⁹ It appears the 15th Earl commissioned John Bale¹⁴⁰ to write plays for that purpose; in 1536 Bale listed the titles and first lines of fourteen plays which he had written for the 15th Earl.¹⁴¹ It is thought that one of Bale's plays, *King John*, was presented to Queen Elizabeth at Ipswich in August 1561.¹⁴² However the Queen also

¹³⁴ Leithead, Howard, "Cromwell, Thomas, earl of Essex (*b.* in or before 1485, *d.* 1540)", *ODNB*.

¹³⁵ TNA SP 1/68, f. 22; Nelson, p. 12.

¹³⁶ Essex Record Office D/DPr 135A; Merson, A.D., *Earls Colne Grammar School Essex: A History*, (Colchester: The Governors of Earls Colne Grammar School, 1975), pp. 7-9; Nelson, p. 22.

¹³⁷ Nelson, p. 12.

¹³⁸ Woolfson, Jonathan, "Morison, Sir Richard (*c.* 1510–1556)", *ODNB*. For his will, see TNA PROB 11/39/330. Although the *ODNB* says he died in 1556, his will contains a codicil dated 15 March 1557.

¹³⁹ Wickham, Glynne, ed., *English Professional Theatre, 1530-1660*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 20-1. URL:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=y82YJ1P5gksC&pg=PA20>

¹⁴⁰ King, John N., "Bale, John (1495–1563)", *ODNB*.

¹⁴¹ Harris, Jesse W., *John Bale; A Study in the Minor Literature of the Reformation*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1940), pp. 75, 133-4.

¹⁴² Norland, Howard B., *Drama in Early Tudor Britain 1485-1558*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 188. URL:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=iirHge-GkdkC&pg=PA188>

visited Castle Hedingham in August 1561,¹⁴³ and *King John* may have been presented on that occasion, although against that inference is the fact that there is no record of an award paid to the 16th Earl's players during the Queen's visit.

On 8 June 1539 Henry VIII granted the 15th Earl a mansion near London Stone,¹⁴⁴ later described by Stow as a 'fair and large built house':

On the north side of this church [=St Swithins] and churchyard is one fair and large built house,¹⁴⁵ sometime pertaining to the prior of Tortington in Sussex, since to the Earls of Oxford, and now to Sir John Harte, alderman, which house hath a fair garden belonging thereunto, lying on the west side thereof. On the back side of two other fair houses in Walbrook, in the reign of Henry VII, Sir Richard Empson, knight, chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, dwelt in the one of them, and Edmond Dudley, esquire, in the other; either of them had door of intercourse into this garden, wherein they met and consulted of matters at their pleasures. In this Oxford place Sir Ambrose Nicholas kept his mayoralty, and since him the said Sir John Harte.¹⁴⁶

As early as 1493, the 13th Earl had arranged the marriage of the future 15th Earl to one of the three co-heiresses of a minor gentry family. When they were both about eleven years of age, the future 15th Earl married Christian Foderingey (c.1481-c.1498), the third daughter of Thomas Foderingey of Brockley, Suffolk, and Elizabeth Doreward, daughter of William Doreward of Bocking, Essex.¹⁴⁷ By an agreement with Christian Foderingey's uncle, John Doreward,¹⁴⁸ the reversion of five Essex manors was settled on the heirs of the future 15th Earl and his wife, Christian, and in default, the reversion was to descend to the 13th Earl. Christian Foderingey died young, and there were no issue of the marriage.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³ Ward, p. 12; Nelson, p. 29.

¹⁴⁴ TNA C 66/688, m. 8.

¹⁴⁵ In 1479, Sir John Risley (d.1512) planned to purchase this house from the future Richard III, but was advised not to do so by Edward IV. See Hicks, 'The Last Days of Elizabeth Countess of Oxford', *supra*, p. 88.

¹⁴⁶ Thoms, William J., ed., *A Survey of London Written in the Year 1598 by John Stow* (London: Whittaker, 1842), p. 84.

¹⁴⁷ Richardson, Douglas, *Plantagenet Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. II, pp. 195-6. Christian's eldest sister, Margaret Foderingey (d. 10 February 1514), married Nicholas Beaupre (d. 20 February 1514), while her second sister, Hellena Foderingey, married firstly Henry Thursby, and secondly Thomas Shernborne. See Carthew, G.A., *The Hundred of Launditch and Deanery of Brisley, in the County of Norfolk*, (Norwich: Miller and Leavins, 1877), p. 160. Their sons Edmund Beaupre and Edward Thursby are mentioned in the inquisition post mortem taken after the death of the 16th Earl. See TNA WARD 8/13, Part 53.

¹⁴⁸ For the will of John Doreward (d. 28 February 1495), see TNA PROB 11/10/374.

¹⁴⁹ Cokayne, *supra*, Vol. X, p. 247; Ross, p. 95.

Almost a decade passed before the 13th Earl arranged another marriage for the future 15th Earl. His second wife, whom he married between 1507 and 1509, was the wealthy heiress Elizabeth Trussell (b. 1496, d. in or before 1527), the daughter of Edward Trussell, gentleman, and Margaret Don, the daughter of Sir John Don¹⁵⁰ and Elizabeth Hastings, daughter of Sir Leonard Hastings (d. 20 October 1455).¹⁵¹ Edward Trussell had been a ward of William Hastings, 1st Baron Hastings,¹⁵² and was still a minor when Hastings was executed in 1483. In his will, Hastings expressed the wish that his brother-in-law, Sir John Don, purchase Trussell's wardship:

Also I will that mine executors give to my sister, Dame Elizabeth Don, 100 marks . . . Also where I have the ward and marriage of Edward Trussell, I will that it be sold and the money employed to the performing of this my will and for the weal of my soul; and if my brother Sir John Don will buy the said ward, I will that he be preferred therein before any other by £10.¹⁵³

Elizabeth Trussell's father died on 16 June 1499 while still under age. His heir, Elizabeth's infant brother, John Trussell, died the same year.¹⁵⁴ Elizabeth, then three years of age, was heir to her brother, and became a ward of the crown. Her wardship was purchased by George Grey,¹⁵⁵ 2nd Earl of Kent, who intended to marry her to his son by his second marriage, Sir Henry Grey (d. 24 September 1562). After the 2nd Earl's death, however, his eldest son and heir by his first marriage, Richard Grey,¹⁵⁶ 3rd Earl of Kent, abducted Elizabeth Trussell, for which he was fined 2500 marks by Henry VII. He failed to keep up the instalments stipulated for payment of the fine, and on 29 May 1505 surrendered the wardship of the then nine-year-old Elizabeth to the King, who sold it to the 13th Earl of Oxford on 29 April 1507 for a payment of 1000 marks on 1 June 1510 and an annual payment of £387 18s.¹⁵⁷

By his marriage to Elizabeth Trussell, the 15th Earl had four sons, John de Vere (1516–1562), who succeeded as 16th Earl of Oxford; Aubrey Vere (d.1580); Robert Vere (d.1598) and Geoffrey Vere (d.1572), and four daughters, Elizabeth Vere (d.1565), whose first husband was Thomas Darcy,¹⁵⁸ 1st Baron Darcy of Chiche; Anne Vere

¹⁵⁰ Holmes, George, "Donne [Dwn], Sir John (d. 1503)", *ODNB*.

¹⁵¹ Cokayne, *supra*, Vol. X, p. 247; Ross, p. 101; Richardson, Douglas, *Plantagenet Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. II, pp. 195-6, 229-31, Vol. III, p. 360.

¹⁵² Horrox, Rosemary, "Hastings, William, first Baron Hastings (c. 1430–1483)", *ODNB*.

¹⁵³ TNA PROB 11/7/105.

¹⁵⁴ McFarlane, K.B., *Hans Memling*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 3, 9, 54-5.

¹⁵⁵ Gunn, S.J., "Grey, George, second earl of Kent (d. 1503)", *ODNB*.

¹⁵⁶ Bernard, G.W., "Grey, Richard, third earl of Kent (b. in or before 1478, d. 1524)", *ODNB*.

¹⁵⁷ Ross, pp. 95, 101. See also Ross, James, 'The Trussell Wardship'. URL: <https://www.tudorchamberbooks.org/the-trussell-wardship/>

¹⁵⁸ Loades, David, "Darcy, Thomas, first Baron Darcy of Chiche (1506–1558)", *ODNB*.

(d.1572), who married firstly Edmund Sheffield,¹⁵⁹ 1st Baron Sheffield, and secondly John Brock, esquire;¹⁶⁰ Frances Vere (d. 30 June 1577),¹⁶¹ whose first husband¹⁶² was Henry Howard,¹⁶³ the poet Earl of Surrey,¹⁶⁴ and Ursula Vere, who died young.¹⁶⁵

Of the 15th Earl's four sons, John de Vere, 16th Earl, was the grandfather of Henry de Vere (1593-1625), 18th Earl of Oxford, who died without issue; Aubrey Vere (d.1580) was the grandfather of Robert de Vere (d.1632), 19th Earl of Oxford, whose son, Aubrey de Vere (1627-1703), 20th Earl of Oxford, died without surviving male issue; Robert Vere (d.1598) died without surviving male issue, and Geoffrey Vere (d.1572) was the father of four sons who died without male issue. The male line of descendants of the 15th Earl thus died out in 1703 with the death of the 20th Earl.

The 15th Earl died 21 March 1540 at his manor of Colne¹⁶⁶ in Essex, and was buried 12 April in the parish church of Castle Hedingham.¹⁶⁷

The 16th Earl

¹⁵⁹ Summerson, Henry, "Sheffield, Edmund, first Baron Sheffield (1521–1549)", *ODNB*. For his will, see TNA PROB 11/33/132. He was slain 31 July 1549 in the attempt to suppress Kett's Rebellion. His father had died while he was underage, and on 2 January 1538 his wardship and marriage had been granted to the 15th Earl, who by the end of that month had married him to his daughter, Anne. According to Fuller, he was a skilled musician, and wrote a book of sonnets, now lost, 'after the Italian fashion'.

¹⁶⁰ See Richardson, *Plantagenet Ancestry*, *supra*, Vol. III, pp. 198-9; Richardson, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, *supra*, Vol. IV, pp. 18-19; and TNA C 1/1410/50-52, a Chancery suit brought by John Brock and Dame Anne Sheffield, his wife, against Ellen, late the wife of Robert Goche (d.1557), gentleman.

¹⁶¹ According to Ward, p. 10, she wrote verse.

¹⁶² She married secondly Thomas Steyning (d.1582?), by whom she had a son, Henry Steyning, and a daughter, Mary Steyning, who married Charles Seckford. See the History of Parliament entries for Thomas Steyning and Charles Seckford. See also Clark, Nicola, *Gender, Family, and Politics: The Howard Women, 1485-1558*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 167. URL:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=7hhdwAAQBAJ&pg=PA199>

¹⁶³ Brigden, Susan, "Howard, Henry, earl of Surrey (1516/17–1547)", *ODNB*.

¹⁶⁴ The 15th Earl paid 4000 marks at his daughter's marriage to Surrey. See Ross, p. 160.

¹⁶⁵ Ward, p. 7; Nelson, pp. 11-12; Cornwall Record Office AR/1/851, *supra*.

¹⁶⁶ According to the *ODNB* entry for the 16th Earl, *supra*, and Nelson, p. 12, the 15th Earl died at Earls Colne. According to Richardson, *Plantagenet Ancestry*, *supra*, Vol. II, p. 195, he died at Wakes Colne.

¹⁶⁷ Ward, pp. 6, 10; Nelson, p. 12; Amphlett, H., *Who Was Shakespeare?*, (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1955), p. 55. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.184517/page/n73/mode/2up>

An undated description by Stow, likely of John de Vere (1516-1562), 16th Earl of Oxford, describes the manner of his entry into London with his retainers:

*The late Earl of Oxford, father to him that now liveth, hath been noted within these forty years to have ridden into this city, & so to his house by London Stone, with 80 gentlemen in a livery of Reading tawny, and chains of gold about their necks, before him, and 100 tall yeomen in the like livery to follow him without chains, but all having his cognizance of the blue boar embroidered on their left shoulder.*¹⁶⁸

It appears the 16th Earl, was, like the 15th Earl, a sportsman. A story recounted by Gervase Markham credits him with nonchalantly killing a boar with a dancing rapier while conducting negotiations for the King in France:

*Being in France upon serious negotiations for the King, his master, this Earl of Oxford was entertained with all the pomp and state that either pleasure or magnificence could produce, and amongst the rest, by reason of his warlike disposition, he was invited to the hunting of a wild boar, a sport mixed with much danger, and deserving the best man's best care for preservation of his safety, whence it comes that the Frenchmen, when they hunt this beast, are ever armed with light arms, mounted on horseback, and having chasing staves like lances in their hands. To this sport the Earl of Oxford goes but no otherwise attired than as when he walked in his own private bedchamber, only a dancing rapier by his side, neither any better mounted than on a plain English tracconer [sic?] or an ambling nag. Anon the boar is put on foot, which was a beast both huge and fierce. The chase is eagerly pursued, many affrights are given & many dangers escaped. At last the Earl, weary of the toil, or else urged by some other necessity, alights from his horse and walks alone by himself on foot, when suddenly down the path in which the Earl walked came the enraged beast with his mouth all foamy, his teeth whetted, his bristles up, & all other signs of fury and anger. The gallants of France cry unto the Earl to run aside & save himself, everyone hallowed out that he was lost, & (more than their wishes) none there was that durst bring him succour. But the Earl, who was as careless of their clamours as they were careful to exclaim, alters not his pace nor goes an hair's breadth out of his path, and finding that the boar and he must struggle for passage, draws out his rapier, and at the first encounter slew the boar, which when the French nobility perceived, they came galloping in unto him and made the wonder in their distracted amazements some twelve times greater than Hercules' twelve labours . . . [A]nd so they returned to Paris with the slain beast, where the wonder did neither decrease nor die, but to this day lives in many of their old annals.*¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Nelson, pp. 22-3; Kingsford, Charles Lethbridge, *A Survey of London by John Stow, Reprinted from the Text of 1603*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1908), Vol. I, p. 89.

URL:

<https://archive.org/details/ASurveyOfLondonVol1ByJohnStowe1603reprint1908/page/n195/mode/2up>

¹⁶⁹ Ward, pp. 9-10; Nelson, p. 13. Markham, Gervase, *Honour in his Perfection*, (London: B. Alsop, 1624), pp. 15-16. URL: <http://tei.it.ox.ac.uk/tcp/Texts-HTML/free/A06/A06935.html>

Although Markham assigns the exploit to the 16th Earl, he is not known to have been in France on a diplomatic mission, and the story perhaps originally pertained to the 12th Earl, who from May to September 1439 was in France as a commissioner to treat for peace with the French.¹⁷⁰

On the basis of a Lucas pedigree,¹⁷¹ the 16th Earl is also said to have had a 'passion for gambling'.¹⁷² However it is not the Earl, but John Lucas (c.1512-1556),¹⁷³ one of his legal counsel, who is referred to in the pedigree as a 'great gamester':¹⁷⁴

John Lucas, Master of the Request, who being a great gamester, won of the Earl of Oxford the wardship of Roydon at dice, with whom he matched his youngest son.

On 29 April 1544 Henry VIII granted eleven manors to the 16th Earl and Dorothy Neville in exchange for eight manors held by the Earl and a cash payment of £1720.¹⁷⁵ Such exchanges by Henry VIII were common, and this transaction was likely to his benefit, particularly since several of the manors he acquired were in East Anglia, and their loss would have weakened the 16th Earl's tenantry base in that area. It seems a reasonable inference that the King was desirous of acquiring long-established and well-run manors in exchange for the vast array of lands in his hands whose administrative structures had been destroyed by the dissolution of the monasteries or the execution of traitors.

In the summer of 1544, the 16th Earl was among the noblemen who accompanied Henry VIII's army of 30,000 men to France. The Duke of Norfolk besieged Montreuil, while the King himself besieged Boulogne.¹⁷⁶ According to Hughes, the 16th Earl served as a captain:

¹⁷⁰ Cokayne, *supra*, Vol. X, p. 237; Ross, p. 26. Nelson, p. 13, notes that a similar story is told of Henry Radcliffe 1506?-1557), 2nd Earl of Sussex. See Singer, Samuel Weller, *The Life of Cardinal Wolsey*, 2nd ed., (London: Thomas Davison, 1827), pp. xvii, 178-81. URL: <https://archive.org/details/lifecardinalwol00singgoog/page/n220/mode/2up>

¹⁷¹ Metcalfe, Walter C., ed., *The Visitations of Essex, Part I*, (London: Harleian Society, 1878), Vol. XIII, pp. 236. URL: <https://archive.org/stream/visitationsofess13metc#page/236/mode/2up>

¹⁷² Nelson, p. 13.

¹⁷³ For his will, see TNA PROB 11/38/199. After his death, his son by his second marriage, John Lucas (d. 27 May 1599) of Ramsey, married Mary Roydon, the daughter and heir of Christopher Roydon (d. 6 October 1543), esquire, of Roydon Hall in Essex. Mary Roydon was a first cousin of Ursula Roydon, wife of Oxford's uncle, Arthur Golding. She was an infant when her father died in 1543. See Royden, E.B., *Three Roydon Families*, (Edinburgh, R. 7 R. Clark Ltd., 1924), pp. 32, 62-7. URL: <https://archive.org/stream/threeroydonfamil00royd#page/n61/mode/2up>

¹⁷⁴ Nelson, p. 13.

¹⁷⁵ TNA C 66/766, mm. 5-8.

¹⁷⁶ Hume, David, *The History of England*, rev. ed., (Philadelphia: Clark & Raser, 1828), Vol. II, p. 366. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=-zNAAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA366>

*He took part in Henry's Boulogne campaign of 1544 as captain of the rearguard, unusually bringing a contingent with firearms rather than horses.*¹⁷⁷

Dugdale mentions the Earl's service at Boulogne, but not his rank:

*[A]nd in 36 Hen. 8. [the 16th Earl] was in that famous expedition then made to Boloine; being in the Rear of the Kings Army, under the conduct of Iohn Lord Russel, at that time Lord Privy-Seal.*¹⁷⁸

As Earls of Oxford had done since 1492, the 16th Earl kept a company of players. On 5 February 1547, Oxford's Men are recorded as planning to play at Southwark on the following day. The same company appears to have performed at Dover, Ipswich and Maldon during the years 1555-62.¹⁷⁹

Fall of the Howards

In December 1546, as Henry VIII's reign neared its end, the 16th Earl's alliance with the Howard family would have given him cause for concern. Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk, was attempting to revive a proposal first broached in 1538 for a marriage between his widowed daughter, Mary Howard,¹⁸⁰ and Thomas Seymour,¹⁸¹ and in the midst of the Duke's intrigues, on 2 December 1546 Sir Richard Southwell¹⁸² notified the privy council that he 'knew certain things' concerning the Duke's son and heir, the 16th Earl's brother-in-law, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, 'that touched his fidelity to the King'. The allegations were taken seriously. On 12 December both Surrey and his father were imprisoned in the Tower. On 7 January 1547 Surrey was charged with treason on the ground that, on 7 October 1546, he had displayed the royal arms in his own heraldic coat. He was tried at the Guildhall on 13 January, and beheaded on Tower Hill six days later, on 19 January. The Duke narrowly escaped a similar fate. Although he was not tried, his family gave evidence against him, and on 27 January 1547 he was attainted by

¹⁷⁷ Nelson, p. 13; Hughes, Jonathan, "Vere, John de, sixteenth earl of Oxford (1516–1562)", *ODNB*.

¹⁷⁸ Dugdale, William, *The Baronage of England*. URL:

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A36794.0001.001/1:6.45?rgn=div2;view=fulltext>

¹⁷⁹ Ward, pp. 9-10; Nelson, pp. 13, 239, 444; Chambers, E.K., *The Elizabethan Stage*, Vol. II, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1923), pp. 99-100. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.79128/page/n117/mode/2up>

¹⁸⁰ Murphy, Beverley A., "Fitzroy [*née* Howard], Mary, duchess of Richmond (c. 1519–1555?)", *ODNB*. She was the widow of Henry VIII's illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy.

¹⁸¹ Bernard, G.W., "Seymour, Thomas, Baron Seymour of Sudeley (b. in or before 1509, d. 1549)", *ODNB*. Seymour later married Henry VIII's widow, Katherine Parr. James, Susan E., "Katherine [Kateryn, Catherine] [*née* Katherine Parr] (1512–1548)", *ODNB*.

¹⁸² Lehmborg, Stanford, "Southwell, Sir Richard (1502/3–1564)", *ODNB*.

statute. It was rumoured he would be executed the following day, 28 January; however the execution was forestalled by the King's death that day.

Although the execution of his brother-in-law may have been a personal blow, the fall of the Howards did not at first outwardly affect the 16th Earl's position. He was one of the twelve chief mourners at Henry VIII's funeral procession on 14 February 1547, and served as ewer and was knighted at the coronation of Edward VI. However his claim to serve as Lord Great Chamberlain at the coronation was rejected. That office was filled by John Dudley, Earl of Warwick,¹⁸³ father of Queen Elizabeth's favourite and Oxford's eventual foe, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.¹⁸⁴ On 21 May 1547, the Privy Council, at the instigation of Edward Seymour,¹⁸⁵ Duke of Somerset, now Lord Protector, demanded that the 16th Earl surrender his patent:

*Also this day it was ordered by the Lord Protector's Grace, with th' assent of others of the Council, that the patent of the Great Chamberlainship of England should be demanded of th' Earl of Oxenford, to be by him surrendered into the King's Majesty's hands for the clear extinction of his pretenced claim to the said office, whereunto he could show nothing of good ground to have right in the same.*¹⁸⁶

16th Earl's Marriage, Separation and Bigamous Marriage

The 16th Earl's wedding to his first wife, Dorothy Neville,¹⁸⁷ eldest daughter of Ralph Neville, 4th Earl of Westmorland,¹⁸⁸ was a resplendent affair. The couple were married at a triple wedding ceremony at the London mansion of the Earls of Rutland in Holywell in Shoreditch on 2 July 1536. Among those present in a church hung with cloth of arras were the Lord Chancellor, the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, two Marquesses and several Earls. The three bridegrooms were attired in 'doublets & coats of radiant gold, and gowns of pure white damask with broad guards of white velvet laced with silver', while the three brides wore 'kirtles of yellow damask and gowns of white damask, & upon their heads circlets of gold set with pearls & stones rich & of great value'.¹⁸⁹

The proceedings were graced after the ceremony by the King's presence:

¹⁸³ Nelson, p. 13; Loades, David, "Dudley, John, duke of Northumberland (1504–1553)", *ODNB*.

¹⁸⁴ Adams, Simon, "Dudley, Robert, earl of Leicester (1532/3–1588)", *ODNB*.

¹⁸⁵ Beer, Barrett L., "Seymour, Edward, Duke of Somerset (c.1500–1552)", *ODNB*.

¹⁸⁶ Dasent, John Roche, ed., *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, New Series, 32 vols., (1890–1964), Vol. II, p. 93.

¹⁸⁷ Ward, p. 7; Nelson, p. 15. Ward erroneously calls Dorothy Neville a sister of the 4th Earl of Westmorland, and dates the marriage to 1537. Dorothy Neville is said to have died at Salisbury on 6 January 1548.

¹⁸⁸ Dockray, Keith, "Neville, Ralph, fourth earl of Westmorland (1498–1549)", *ODNB*.

¹⁸⁹ BL Add 6113, ff. 199–200.

This year the 3 day of July, being Monday, was a great solemnity of marriage kept at the nunnery of Holywell beside London in the Earl of Rutland's place, where the Earl of Oxford's son and heir, called Lord Bulbeck, married the Earl of Westmorland's eldest daughter named Lady Dorothy, and the Earl of Westmorland's son and heir, called Lord Neville,¹⁹⁰ married the Earl of Rutland's¹⁹¹ eldest daughter named Lady Anne,¹⁹² and the Earl of Rutland's son and heir, called Lord Rous,¹⁹³ married the Earl of Westmorland's daughter named Lady Margaret.¹⁹⁴ And all these three Lords were married at one Mass, going to church all 3 together one by another, and the Ladies, their wives, following one after another, every one of the young Ladies having 2 young Lords going on every side of them when they went to church and a young Lady bearing up every of their gown trains. At which marriage was present all the great estates of the realm, both Lords and Ladies, the Lord Chancellor of England and the Duke of Norfolk leading the Lord Bulbeck's wife home from the church, the Duke of Suffolk¹⁹⁵ and the Lord Marquess of Dorset leading the Lord Neville's wife, and the Earl of Derby and the Earl of Surrey leading the Lord Rous' wife. And after Mass there was a great dinner and divers great dishes and delicate meats with subtleties, and divers manner of instruments playing at the same, which were too long to express.

And after dinner the King's Grace came thither in a mask, riding from Yorke Place with 11 more with him, whereof the King and 7 more with him wore garments after the Turk's fashion, richly embroidered with gold, with Turk's hats of black velvet and white feathers on their heads and visors on their faces, and 4 other were arrayed in purple sarcenet like Turks, which were as their pages. And so they danced with the Ladies a good while, and then the King put off his visor and showed himself. And then the King had a great banquet of 40 dishes wherein was divers subtleties and meats, which was a goodly sight to behold. The banquet ended, the King with his company departed thence and rode again to Yorke Place in their masking garments as they came thither.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁰ Henry Neville (1524/5-1564), later 5th Earl of Westmorland. See Cokayne, Vol. XII, Part II, pp. 555-8.

¹⁹¹ Thomas Manners (d. 20 September 1543), 1st Earl of Rutland. See Cokayne, Vol. XI, pp. 253-5.

¹⁹² Anne Manners (d. in or after 1549), daughter of Thomas Manners (c.1497–1543), 1st Earl of Rutland. Wriothesley's Chronicle calls her the eldest daughter; Cokayne, Vol. XII, Part II, p. 557, calls her the second daughter.

¹⁹³ Henry Manners (1526-1563), 2nd Earl of Rutland. See Cokayne, Vol. XI, pp. 255-7.

¹⁹⁴ Margaret Neville (c.1525 – 13 October 1559), another of the daughters of Ralph Neville, 4th Earl of Westmorland.

¹⁹⁵ Gunn, S.J., "Brandon, Charles, first duke of Suffolk (c. 1484–1545)", *ODNB*.

¹⁹⁶ Hamilton, William Douglas, ed., *A Chronicle of England During the Reigns of the Tudors from A.D. 1485 to 1559*, by Charles Wriothesley, *Windsor Herald*, (London: Camden Society, 1875), Vol. I, pp. 50-1. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/chronicleengland00wriouoft/page/50/mode/2up>

According to Harris, the ceremony was 'the major social event of the year outside the court itself'.¹⁹⁷

By Dorothy Neville, the 16th Earl had two daughters,¹⁹⁸ Katherine de Vere (1538-1600),¹⁹⁹ who married Edward Windsor (1532?-1575), 3rd Baron Windsor, and a daughter who died as an infant 'in the swaddling-clouts'.²⁰⁰ Oxford's brother-in-law, Lord Windsor, was a Catholic recusant. In 1573 he abandoned both country and family to live in Venice, where he died in 1575. In his will he named three men as executors, Sir John Throckmorton,²⁰¹ John Talbot²⁰² and Peter Vavasour,²⁰³ who were either noted recusants or had strong ties to recusant families.²⁰⁴ Katherine de Vere also appears to have been a recusant; in 1598 she appointed John Talbot as executor of her own will after he had been imprisoned several times for recusancy.²⁰⁵

A lawsuit brought by Hugh Key against Richard Masterson in 1585 for possession of one of Oxford's former manors reveals most of what we know about the 16th Earl's first marriage.²⁰⁶ Although they 'lived long after the same marriage in good liking together', the Earl and his first wife separated about January 1546.²⁰⁷ The Earl's 'unkind dealing' appears to have played a part; he was likely disappointed that the marriage had not produced a male heir, and is known to have had mistresses. His wife felt he had 'bad company' about him. There may also have been religious differences; the Earl appears to have leaned toward Protestantism, while most members of the Neville family adhered to the old faith.

¹⁹⁷ Harris, Barbara J., *English Aristocratic Women 1450-1550*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 69. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=CjwkDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA69>

¹⁹⁸ Nelson, p. 14, says this daughter was named Faith, but cites no source for her Christian name.

¹⁹⁹ For Katherine de Vere's earlier contract to marry Lord Henry Seymour, see *infra*. For her will, see TNA PROB 11/95/237.

²⁰⁰ Huntington Library EL 5870.

²⁰¹ For Sir John Throckmorton (by 1524-1580), see his will, TNA PROB 11/62/552, and the History of Parliament entry. URL: <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/throckmorton-john-i-1524-80>

²⁰² For John Talbot (1545-1611) of Grafton, see the History of Parliament entry. URL: <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/talbot-john-1545-611>

²⁰³ For Peter Vavasour (d.1573) of the Middle Temple, see his will, TNA PROB 11/55/483.

²⁰⁴ TNA PROB 11/57/332.

²⁰⁵ TNA PROB 1/95/237.

²⁰⁶ Nelson, p. 15.

²⁰⁷ Nelson, p. 15.

Although the ground for the 1585 lawsuit was a claim concerning the manor of Ashton in which the 16th Earl had granted his second wife, Margery Golding, a life estate, the five witnesses were unable to depose anything material regarding that issue. Their entire testimony was concerned with the legality of the 16th Earl's second marriage to Margery Golding. The object of this line of questioning on behalf of the defendant, Richard Masterson, is unclear. Had the 16th Earl's marriage to Margery Golding been found to be unlawful, the provisions in the 16th Earl's indenture of 2 June 1562 whereby he granted Margery Golding a life estate in the manor of Ashton with the reversion to Oxford would likely have been rendered invalid, but the validity of the 16th Earl's lease to Margaret and Hugh Key would not have been affected. It was therefore perhaps somewhat to Richard Masterson's advantage to raise the issue of the lawfulness of the 16th Earl's marriage to Margery Golding. On the other hand, had the marriage been found to be unlawful, it would have invalidated Oxford's right to the earldom of Oxford and therefore the Queen's right to Oxford's wardship, and her right to assign Oxford's lands during his minority to Leicester, and the Queen and Leicester would presumably have had to repay to those now found to be the legitimate heirs of the earldom all the profits the Queen and Leicester had taken under Oxford's wardship from 1562 to 1585. It was perhaps for this reason that the Queen appointed her two highest-ranking legal officers, her Attorney-General, John Popham,²⁰⁸ and her Solicitor-General, Thomas Egerton,²⁰⁹ to conduct the examinations of the five witnesses.

The witnesses' depositions established the lawfulness of the 16th Earl's second marriage. A key witness was Richard Ennows, who appears to have been a former servant of the 16th Earl. Although he was 92 years of age at the time of the lawsuit, he had no difficulty in recalling events in which he had participated half a century earlier. Responding to interrogatories on 19 January 1585, Ennows stated that he had been present at the 16th Earl's marriage to Dorothy Neville:

5. To the 5th he saith that John, Earl of Oxford, married with the Lady Dorothy Neville, sister to the Earl of Westmorland, and that he knoweth for that this examinant was at the marriage and waited thereat, to which marriage King Henry the Eight came in the afternoon, and it was about seven years before that the same King went to Boulogne [=1537].²¹⁰

Moreover he could attest to both Dorothy Neville's separation from the 16th Earl, and to the fact that they were never divorced:

6. To the 6th he saith that the same Earl of Oxford was never divorced from the same Lady Dorothy by any law although they lived not together somewhat before her death through the unkind dealing of the same Earl, but the Duke of Norfolk caused this examinant to move the same Lady Dorothy to come to the Earl again, but she said she

²⁰⁸ Ibbetson, David, "Popham, Sir John (c. 1531–1607)", *ODNB*.

²⁰⁹ Baker, J.H., "Egerton, Thomas, first Viscount Brackley (1540–1617)", *ODNB*.

²¹⁰ Huntington Library EL 5870.

would never go home again amongst such a bad company as were about the Earl of Oxford at that time.

Ennows further deposed that about six months after the separation, and during Dorothy Neville's lifetime, the 16th Earl entered into a bigamous marriage with a certain Joan Jockey:

[The Earl] married with the said Joan Jockey about Corpus Christi tide at White Colne Church in the lifetime of the said Lady Dorothy, the which the said Lady Dorothy took very grievously, and it was about half a year after the Lady Dorothy departed from the said Earl.

The reason for the Earl's bigamous marriage is unknown. It is possible that he had a son by Joan Jockey, and since he had no hope of a male heir after he and Dorothy Neville separated, he may have considered legitimizing this son, as Henry VIII had planned to do with his own illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy.

According to Ennows, Dorothy Neville 'died at a parsonage about half a mile from Salisbury' in 1548, 'very shortly after the Christmas holidays', and was buried at Salisbury.²¹¹

Ennows' testimony put to rest the key issue in the suit. The Earl's 'marriage' to Joan Jockey took place during Dorothy Neville's lifetime, and was therefore bigamous, and had no legal effect on his subsequent marriage to Margery Golding on 1 August 1548, seven months after Dorothy Neville's death on or about 6 January of that year.

Although the keeping of mistresses by noblemen was commonplace, a bigamous marriage was not. The Earl was forced to 'put away' Joan Jockey after Ennows and two others, in the company of two of the 16th Earl's brothers-in-law, Lord Darcy and Lord Sheffield, broke open her door at Earls Colne, and 'cut her nose':

13 To the 13th he saith that both the said Joan Jockey and also the woman that the same Earl of Oxford kept at Tilbury Hall were put from the said Earl in the lifetime of the said Lady Dorothy, and for the said Joan Jockey, in the absence of the Earl the Lord Darcy and Lord Sheffield came to Earl's Colne, and this examinant & two more with him brake open the door where the same Joan was and spoiled her, and this examinant's fellow, John Smith, cut her nose, and thereupon after she was put away.

The mutilation of Joan Jockey is a permanent stain on the reputations of Lord Darcy and Lord Sheffield. Although their ultimate motive cannot be known with certainty, it seems evident that they were currying favour with the Protector Somerset and hoping to terrorize any other woman with whom the 16th Earl might be tempted to dally, perhaps even including a potential spouse if Dorothy Neville were to die. The effect of this violent act on the 16th Earl is clear. He felt it prudent to put away not only Joan Jockey,

²¹¹ Huntington Library EL 5870.

but also the unnamed woman at Tilbury Hall. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that he also feared for his own personal safety.

Somerset's Extortion

The first months of 1548 were dark ones for the 16th Earl. Dorothy Neville died about 6 January. The 16th Earl had no male heir, and no prospect of having a male heir unless he remarried. His only child was his daughter, Katherine, and Somerset acted swiftly to secure her as a bride for his youngest son by his second marriage, Henry Seymour.²¹² Irrespective of the marriage of his daughter, however, under the 'ancient entails', the 16th Earl's lands would pass on his death to the next male de Vere heir, likely one of the Earl's younger brothers. In order for Somerset to obtain the 16th Earl's lands, it was necessary for him to break the 'ancient entails' by means of the legal documents which he speedily proceeded to extort from the 16th Earl.

Although it is not known what hold Somerset had over the Earl, what is known from a private Act of Parliament in 1552 ('An Act for frustrating assurances to the Duke of Somerset made by the Earl of Oxford') is that in early 1548 Somerset coerced the Earl into signing an indenture by which Katherine de Vere would marry Henry Seymour, and the lands of the Oxford earldom would be entailed on their heirs. What the 16th Earl could not have known when he signed this indenture is that Somerset had in April 1540 obtained the passage of an earlier private Act of Parliament, and that via the Act of 1540, once the 16th Earl signed the indenture, the lands of the Oxford earldom would pass, by legal sleight of hand, to Somerset himself.

By statute, licence from the King was required before a tenant in chief such as the 16th Earl could alienate lands held by him by knight service. To bring his scheme to pass, Somerset therefore had to first obtain licence from the King authorizing the 16th Earl to alienate his lands. He obtained the necessary licence from his nephew, the 10-year-old Edward VI, on 30 January 1548.²¹³ The wording is highly unusual in that in each section licence is granted to the 16th Earl to alienate a specified manor or manors by fine or otherwise in one of two alternative ways.

²¹² Lord Henry Seymour (b.1540) later married Jane Percy (b. after 1565, d. after 1591), daughter of Thomas Percy (1528-1572), 7th Earl of Northumberland, and served against the Spanish Armada. See Lock, Julian, "Percy, Thomas, seventh earl of Northumberland (1528–1572)", *ODNB*, and Goldring, Elizabeth, ed., John Nichols's *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth I*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), Vol. III p. 419. URL:

https://books.google.ca/books?id=_VacAQAAQBAJ&pg=PA419&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false. See also Scard, Margaret, *Edward Seymour: Lord Protector: Tudor King in All but Name*, (Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2016), p. 311. URL:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=FmNODQAAQBAJ&pg=PT311>.

²¹³ TNA E 328/345. All the lands included in the licence are stated to be held by the 16th Earl as tenant in chief of the Crown by knight service.

Having taken this first step, Somerset followed it up, on 1 and 26 February 1548, by forcing the Earl to enter into an indenture, secured by a recognizance in the amount of £6000, binding him to marry his nine-year-old daughter, Katherine, to Henry Seymour, and to transfer legal title to the lands of the Oxford earldom in fee simple to Somerset and his heirs by means of a fine before 20 May 1548.²¹⁴ The circumstances by which Somerset forced the Earl to sign the indenture are described in a private Act of Parliament of 23 January 1552:

*. . . under the colour of administration of justice, [Somerset] did convent before himself for certain supposed criminal causes John, Earl of Oxenford, one of the King's most loving subjects, who personally appeared before the said Duke, and then the said Duke so circumvented and coerced the said Earl of Oxenford to accomplish the desire of the said Duke (though it were unconscionable), and used such comminations & threats towards him in that behalf that he, the Earl, did seal & subscribe with his own hand one counterpane of one indenture devised by the said Duke & his counsel bearing date the first day of February in the second year [1548] of our said Sovereign Lord the King his reign made between the said Duke on the one party and the said Earl on the other party.*²¹⁵

It is clear from the language of the Act of 1552 that Somerset used coercion to blackmail the 16th Earl into breaking the ancient de Vere entails and signing away the de Vere inheritance, but unfortunately the Act is silent as to the precise nature of the specious 'criminal causes' which Somerset alleged against the Earl, and the precise nature of Somerset's threats. In the Key vs. Masterson lawsuit in 1585, Richard Ennows testified that the 16th Earl bigamously married his mistress, Joan Jockey. However it seems unlikely that this constituted Somerset's hold over the 16th Earl. Bigamy would have been a matter for the ecclesiastical courts, and the private Act of Parliament specifically states that Somerset purported to act 'under the colour of administration of justice', and mentions specious 'criminal causes' alleged by Somerset against the 16th Earl.

²¹⁴ No copy of either the indenture of 1 February 1548 or the recognizance of 26 February 1548 has survived; however they are discussed in the private Act of Parliament by which the 16th Earl's lands were restored to him after Somerset's execution, and in the letters patent of 22 January 1553, TNA C 66/848, by which Edward VI restored certain bonds, jewels and other chattels to the Earl.

²¹⁵ The original Act in the House of Lords Record Office, HL/PO/PB/1/1551/5E6n35, is undated, and there is some question as to whether it was passed on 22 or 23 January. The preponderance of evidence suggests that it was passed on 23 January. Two copies of the original are also extant, TNA C 89/4/18, dated 17 May 1552, and TNA C 89/4/12, dated 12 February 1566. An earlier private Act of Parliament passed in 1547 which might have shed further light on Somerset's extortion against the 16th Earl has been lost. It is listed in the catalogue of the Parliamentary Archives at the House of Lords as HL/PO/PB/1/1547/MISSING. Private Act, 1 Edward VI, c. 7, An Act concerning the Lands and Possessions of the Earl of Oxford.

A year after he had forced the 16th Earl to sign the first indenture and recognizance, on 1 February 1549 Somerset forced the Earl to make an 'unalterable' will in the form of an indenture tripartite, and to guarantee it by an indenture of 6 February 1549 secured by a recognizance in the amount of £4000. Although this unalterable will has not survived, it is mentioned in the King's letters patent of 22 January 1553.²¹⁶ Its provisions included a stipulation that the 16th Earl would not make a gift or grant during his lifetime of any jewels, hangings or other possessions which he had bequeathed in his unalterable will to his daughter Katherine, and that Somerset would hold the jewels, hangings and other possessions to the use of Katherine and Henry, although the 16th Earl was permitted to possess the jewels during his lifetime, with a further provision that if Katherine were to die before marriage with any of Somerset's sons, Somerset would nonetheless still hold the jewels and other possessions to the use of the 16th Earl.

The 16th Earl must have been hopeful that things were turning in his favour when Somerset's opponents within the Council brought about his first fall from power. Somerset was imprisoned in the Tower, and his deposition as Lord Protector was confirmed by an Act of Parliament on 14 January 1550. Despite this serious setback, he was pardoned and regained the young King's favour, but his political comeback was short-lived. He was arrested for high treason on 16 October 1551, tried on 1 December, convicted of felony and attainted, and beheaded at Tower Hill at 8:00 a.m. on 22 January 1552.

The agreement he had extorted from the 16th Earl was reversed by the private Act of Parliament passed either on the day of his execution, or the next day, 23 January 1552.²¹⁷ A year later Edward VI's letters patent of 22 January 1553²¹⁸ supplemented the private Act of Parliament by restoring to the 16th Earl bonds, jewels and other chattels which had escheated to the Crown as a result of Somerset's extortion.²¹⁹

In a lawsuit brought by the Queen against Oxford in 1571, Sir James Dyer (1510–1582) referred to the private Act of Parliament of 23 January 1552 in his judgment:

King Edward 6, having knowledge by information of his Council of the great spoil and disherison of John, late Earl of Oxford, by the circumvention, commination, coercion and other undue means of Edward, late Duke of Somerset, Governor of the King's person and Protector of the realm and people, practised and used in his time of his greatest power and authority with the said Earl whereby all ancient lands and possessions of the earldom of Oxford within the realm were conveyed by fine and indenture anno 2 Edward 6 [1548] to the said Duke in fee, and yet indeed by a metamorphosis entailed to him and

²¹⁶ TNA C 66/848.

²¹⁷ House of Lords Record Office HL/PO/PB/1/1551 E6n35.

²¹⁸ TNA C 66/848.

²¹⁹ For a discussion of Somerset's extortion against the 16th Earl, see Green, Nina, 'The Fall of the House of Oxford', *Brief Chronicles*: Vol. 1 (2009), pp. 49-122. URL: <https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/briefchronicles/>.

*his heirs begotten on the Lady Anne, his wife, by force of a statute made anno 32 Henry 8 [1540].*²²⁰

It should be noted that Dyer's comments concerning Somerset's 'great spoil and disherison' of the 16th Earl were not mere hearsay years after the fact. Dyer, elected to Parliament in 1542, was a member of the Parliament which passed the private Act of 23 January 1552 to which he alludes, and ended his parliamentary career as speaker in the last Parliament of Edward VI in March 1553.

As noted by Dyer in his 1571 judgment, the fine which Somerset had forced the 16th Earl to enter into resulted in a legal 'metamorphosis' by which the lands of the Oxford earldom, rather than being assured to the heirs of the 16th Earl's daughter, Katherine, and her prospective husband, Henry Seymour, instead became entailed to Somerset himself, and his male heirs by his second wife, Anne. This legal 'metamorphosis' came about, as Dyer says, because of the earlier private Act of Parliament which Somerset had had passed in April 1540 by which he had disinherited his own son and heir by his first marriage, John Seymour (d.1552), and had entailed his lands on his heirs by his second wife.²²¹

Even though the 16th Earl's lands were restored to him after Somerset's execution, Somerset's extortion left a legacy in that it permanently altered the legal manner in which the 16th Earl held his lands. The 'ancient entails' by which the core lands of the earldom had passed from heir to heir were cut off by the fine of 10 February and 15 April 1548 which Somerset had extorted from the 16th Earl.²²² After the fine, the lands of the Oxford earldom comprised in the fine were governed by the provisions of the private Act of Parliament of 22 or 23 January 1552 which deemed the fine to be to the use of the 16th Earl and his male heirs. All the lands which the 16th Earl had originally inherited under

²²⁰ Baker, J.H., ed., *Reports from the Lost Notebooks of Sir James Dyer* (London: Selden Society, 1994), 196-8.

²²¹ See 32 Henry VIII, c. 78. The clause in the private Act of Parliament of April 1540 which wrought the legal 'metamorphosis' is described in the Act which repealed it as follows: 'And it was further enacted by the same Act that all other manors, lands, tenements and hereditaments with th' appurtenances which after the making of the same former Act should happen to come to the said late Duke and his heirs in fee simple in possession, reversion or remainder by descent, gift, purchase or otherwise should by virtue of the said Act be deemed and judged in and to the said late Duke and his heirs males lawfully begotten upon the body of the said Lady Anne, then his wife' (see HL/PO/PB/1/1551/5E6n37). The provision secretly converted the lands of the Oxford earldom comprised in the fine of 10 February 1548 into lands entailed on Somerset and his heirs by his second wife, Anne. The provisions of the indenture of 1 February 1548 which purported to assure the lands to the 16th Earl's daughter Katherine and her prospective husband, Henry Seymour, thus merely served as 'cover' for the real nature of the transaction.

²²² TNA E 328/403.

the 'ancient entails' and which were comprised in the fine were thus now held by him subject to the terms of the private Act of Parliament.

Meanwhile, in 1548, after Somerset had extorted his lands from him and only a few months after Dorothy Neville's death, the 16th Earl contemplated a second marriage. His intended bride was Dorothy Foster,²²³ a Catholic gentlewoman attending on his young daughter, Katherine.²²⁴ This was undesirable from Somerset's point of view since the Earl might then beget a male heir, a circumstance which would prevent some of the Earl's lands from passing to Somerset. Active steps were therefore taken to prevent the Earl from marrying anyone other than one of the nine daughters of the Protector Somerset's first cousin, Thomas Wentworth, (1501-1551) 1st Baron Wentworth, who was also a first cousin of the 16th Earl's brother-in-law, Sir Thomas Darcy. On 27 June 1548, Darcy wrote to an unnamed recipient, likely Sir Michael Stanhope,²²⁵ who was Darcy's first cousin and a brother-in-law of the Protector Somerset:

After right hearty commendations these shall be to advertise you that according to my late communication had with you in my Lord's Grace's gallery at Westminster, I have by all means that I can inquired of the matter between my Lord of Oxenford and the gentlewoman with whom he is in love named Mistress Dorothy, late woman to my Lady Katherine his daughter, and upon communication had with them both I have found and do perceive them to be in the same case that they were in when my said Lord of Oxenford was before my Lord's Grace and none other, saving that the banns of matrimony between them were twice proclaimed in one day. Other treatise or solemn communication hath not been before witness, but only be in secret between them twain.

Sir, if it shall stand with my Lord's Grace's pleasure to have this matter further stayed (as my Lord of Oxenford's honour, wealth and preservation considered, I think it very expedient and may right well be), then I beseech you I may be thereof advertised, and that ye will move his Grace to direct his letters to Mr Edward Green of Sampford in whose house the said Dorothy doth now continue, commanding him by the same neither to suffer my said Lord of Oxenford to have access to her ne she unto him, and that no privy messengers may go between them, which as I suppose will be the surest way to stay them. And upon further advertisement to be had from his Grace, if it shall so stand with his pleasure I will enter in communication with my Lord Wentworth for a marriage to be had between my said Lord of Oxenford and one of his daughters, and as they upon sight with other treatise may agree, so to proceed in the same.

Sir, upon your motion to be made unto my Lord's Grace concerning the premises, I pray you I may be advertised by this bearer of his pleasure in the same, which known, I shall

²²³ One of the claims in the Key vs. Masterson lawsuit in 1585 was that the Earl had made a legally binding pre-contract with her. She was the god-daughter of the 16th Earl's first wife, Dorothy Neville. See Nelson, p. 17.

²²⁴ Ward, p. 8.

²²⁵ Dockray, Keith, "Stanhope, Sir Michael (b. before 1508, d. 1552)", *ODNB*.

right gladly endeavour myself to accomplish by th' aid of the Blessed Trinity, who have you in his continual preservation.

The degree to which Somerset and his henchmen, who included the 16th Earl's brother-in-law, Sir Thomas Darcy, had taken control of the 16th Earl's life is evident from this letter.

The 16th Earl, however, was undaunted. Having been forcibly separated from Dorothy Foster, he determined to steal her away in order to marry her. However, while he was on his way to effect this purpose, his chaplain, the vicar of Clare,²²⁶ persuaded him of the folly of marrying a Catholic against the Protector Somerset's wishes, and introduced him to Margery Golding, to whom he took an instant liking, and married that day, as recorded in the register of the parish church of Belchamp St Paul's:

*The wedding of my Lord John de Vere, Earl of Oxenford, and Margery, the daughter of John Golding, esquire, the first of August.*²²⁷

On 12 April 1550, the 16th Earl's long-desired heir, Edward de Vere (1550-1604), 17th Earl of Oxford, was born. The name Edward, unique in the de Vere family, was almost certainly a compliment to Edward VI,²²⁸ who bestowed a 'standing cup gilt' at Oxford's christening five days later on 17 April:

*The King's Majesty's pleasure by our advice is that ye deliver unto Philip Mainwaring,²²⁹ Gentleman Usher to the King's Majesty, one standing cup gilt with a cover weighing twenty and seven ounces quarter, by him to be delivered as the King's Majesty's gift at the christening of our very good Lord the Earl of Oxford's son, and these our letters shall be our sufficient warrant and discharge therein. Given at the King's Majesty's manor at Greenwich the 17th of April the 4th year of his Highness' most prosperous reign King Edward the Sixth 1550.*²³⁰

On 2 March 1552, Henry Neville, 6th Baron Bergavenny,²³¹ was placed in custody for striking the 16th Earl in the presence chamber:

*The Lord of Bergavenny was committed to ward for striking the Earl of Oxford in the chamber of presence.*²³²

²²⁶ EL 5870.

²²⁷ Ward, p. 7; Nelson, p. 15. For the entry in the parish register, see Essex Record Office T/R 168/2. For the will of Margery Golding's father, John Golding (d. 28 November 1547), see TNA PROB 11/32/177.

²²⁸ Ward, p. 9; Nelson, p. 20.

²²⁹ Philip Mainwaring.

²³⁰ BL Add MS 5751A, f. 283; Nelson, p. 20.

²³¹ Henry Neville (d.1587), 6th Baron Bergavenny, married firstly Frances Manners, daughter of Thomas Manners, 1st Earl of Rutland. See Cokayne, Vol. I, pp. 33-4.

The reason for the assault is unknown.²³³ It took place a month after Somerset's execution at a time when tensions at court were undoubtedly high. The penalty was severe; however Neville was pardoned on 6 April 1552.²³⁴

Whereas Henry Neville, Lord Bergavenny, on 3 March 6 Edward VI within the precinct of the royal palace of Westminster, namely within the King's chamber of presence, struck a certain nobleman (nobilem virum) a blow with his right hand which drew blood, for which by law he ought to suffer the loss of his right hand and imprisonment during the Kings pleasure:

*Pardon, at the instance of divers magnates and nobles and in consideration of his frail youth (juventutem fragilem) to the said Henry Neville, Lord Bergavenny, of all affrays within the King's palace and other offences to date. By privy seal.*²³⁵

An unexpected connection between the 16th Earl and the 6th Baron Bergavenny is mentioned in the *ODNB* entry for Sir John Perrot (1528-1592).²³⁶

Aged eighteen [i.e. in 1546] Perrot proceeded to London where his stepfather's connections at court (he was groom of the chamber in 1513 and gentleman usher in 1532) secured him a place in the house of William Paulet, Lord St John, later first marquess of Winchester and lord treasurer of England. Here, in the company of Henry Neville, sixth Lord Bergavenny, and John de Vere, sixteenth earl of Oxford, Perrot completed his formal education.

Succession Crisis

²³² Nelson, p. 217; *The Journal Of King Edward's Reign, Written With His Own Hand*, (Clarendon Historical Society, 1884), p. 62. URL:

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101017388750&view=1up&seq=66>

²³³ The Nevilles, Barons Bergavenny, were only very distantly related to the Nevilles, Earls of Westmorland, rendering it unlikely the assault had anything to do with the 16th Earl's treatment of his first wife, Dorothy Neville (d. 6 January 1548?). Henry Neville later married Frances Manners, sister of Anne Manners, who had married Henry Neville (1524/5-1564), 5th Earl of Westmorland, at the triple wedding ceremony at which the 16th Earl had married Dorothy Neville; however Henry Neville's marriage to Frances Manners appears to have taken place in early 1556, four years after his assault on the 16th Earl, and the connection seems tenuous at best. See Cokayne, Vol. I, p. 33.

²³⁴ For the pardon, Nichols cites BL MS Cotton Julius B.ix, f. 38. See Nichols, John Gough, ed., *Literary Remains of King Edward the Sixth*, (London: J.B. Nichols and Sons, 1857), p. 403. URL: <https://archive.org/details/cu31924091758312/page/n209/mode/2up>

²³⁵ Nelson, p. 21; *CPR*, Edward VI, A.D. 1550-1553, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1926), Vol. IV, p. 322. URL:

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951d02046621p&view=1up&seq=326>

²³⁶ Turvey, Roger, "Perrot, Sir John (1528-1592)", *ODNB*.

On 16 June, the 16th Earl and his fellow peers signed letters patent nominating Lady Jane Grey,²³⁷ the daughter-in-law of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, as Edward VI's successor.²³⁸ The King died on 6 July 1553. On 8 August, the 16th Earl served as a mourner at his funeral.²³⁹

On 10 July, Northumberland caused his daughter-in-law, Lady Jane Grey, to be conducted in state to the Tower, and proclaimed Queen at the Cross in Cheapside. However by 12 July it was apparent that Henry VIII's eldest daughter, Mary Tudor,²⁴⁰ refused to be passed over, and was prepared to fight for her right to the crown. Despite having signed the letters patent confirming Lady Jane Grey as Edward VI's successor, on 19 July 1553²⁴¹ the 16th Earl threw his support behind Mary, and was instrumental in her accession to the throne.²⁴² Despite this, the Earl appears to have been regarded with suspicion by the new Queen and her advisors, and was given no preferment²⁴³ although he is said to have been 'the principal magnate of Essex' during her reign.²⁴⁴ Moreover, the execution of Northumberland on 22 August 1553 which resulted in part from the 16th Earl's support of Queen Mary doubtless sowed the seeds for his son Robert Dudley's²⁴⁵ animosity towards the 16th Earl's heir.

Queen Mary died on 17 November 1558. the 16th Earl are listed first and second in a list of noblemen appointed to attend upon the new Queen at her coming up to London from Hatfield in 1558.²⁴⁶

As chief ewer at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth on 15 January 1559, the 16th Earl was awarded as fees 'one pair of covered basins gilt and one gilt cup of assay'.²⁴⁷

Margery Golding was at court as well. The Countess of Oxford is fifth in a list of 'Ladies of Honour Now Being with the Court and about London Early in the Reign of Queen

²³⁷ Plowden, Alison, "Grey [married name Dudley], Lady Jane (1537–1554)", *ODNB*.

²³⁸ Nelson, p. 22

²³⁹ Nelson, p. 13.

²⁴⁰ Weikel, Ann, "Mary I (1516–1558), Queen of England and Ireland (1516-1558)", *ODNB*.

²⁴¹ Nelson, p. 22.

²⁴² For an account of the 16th Earl's support of Queen Mary, see MacCulloch, Diarmaid ed. & trans., 'The Vita Mariae Angliae Reginae of Robert Wingfield of Brantham' in *Camden Miscellany XXVIII*, Camden 4th series, Vol. 29, (London: Royal Historical Society, 1984), pp. 181-301, at pp. 263-4, 266.

²⁴³ Loades, David, *Mary Tudor; A Life* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 181, 184.

²⁴⁴ Nelson, pp. 22-3.

²⁴⁵ During his lifetime, Leicester was Queen Elizabeth's most prominent favourite.

²⁴⁶ Ward, p. 12; Nichols, John, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, (New York: Franklin, 1823), Vol. I, p. 37. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/progressespublic01nich/page/36/mode/2up>

²⁴⁷ *ECDBD* (1559), p. 15.

Elizabeth, 1558-9'.²⁴⁸

In 1559 the 16th Earl received John (1537-1592), Duke of Finland, when he came to England to woo Queen Elizabeth as proxy for his brother, Eric XIV of Sweden (1533-1577).²⁴⁹ On 15 June 1560, he wrote to the Privy Council concerning Thomas Holland, parson of Little Burstead, who had confessed to saying that he had met the vicar of Stortford, Hertfordshire, in Cheapside, who told him that 'there was one gone to the Tower for saying the Queen's Majesty was with child'.²⁵⁰ By letters from the Queen on 8 September 1560, the 16th Earl and Thomas Wentworth,²⁵¹ 2nd Baron Wentworth, were directed to receive Eric of Sweden if he were 'constrained to take harbour' in Suffolk or Essex.²⁵²

The Queen, together with the entire Privy Council, visited the 16th Earl at Castle Hedingham from 14-18 August 1561.²⁵³

At New Year's in 1562 the 16th Earl and Margery Golding exchanged gifts with the Queen.²⁵⁴ The Earl's gift was £10 in demi sovereigns in a red silk purse, while the Countess gave £5 in a red purse. As was customary, in return the Queen gave gifts of silver plate varying in weight according to the recipient's status.²⁵⁵ Her gift to the Earl was a gilt cup with a cover weighing 21 ¼ ounces, while the Countess received a gilt cup with a cover weighing 12 ¾ ounces.²⁵⁶

The 16th Earl died at Castle Hedingham on 3 August 1562. An account of his funeral, likely written by Sir Gilbert Dethick, Garter King of Arms,²⁵⁷ records that the 12-year-old Oxford was chief mourner:

Then the chief mourner, th' Earl of Oxford, his train borne by a gentleman usher, and after them thother mourners 2 and 2:

*Mr Aubrey de Vere
Mr Geoffrey de Vere
Sir Thomas Golding*

*Mr Robert de Vere
Sir John Wentworth
Sir Francis Jobson*

²⁴⁸ Nichols, *Progresses . . . Elizabeth, supra*, Vol. I, p. 37.

²⁴⁹ TNA SP 12/7/1, ff. 1-2; TNA SP 12/7/2, ff. 3-4; *ECDbD* (1559), pp. 66-7, 69-70.

²⁵⁰ TNA SP 12/12/51; *ECDbD* (1560), p. 25.

²⁵¹ Denton, Barry, "Wentworth, Thomas, second Baron Wentworth and *de jure* seventh Baron Le Despenser (1525-1584)", *ODNB*.

²⁵² TNA SP 12/13/29, ff. 71-2; *ECDbD* (1560), p. 37. Eric XIV of Sweden; he was King-Elect at the time. In the event, he did not sail for England in 1560; when he attempted the journey in 1561, he was put back by contrary winds. See *ECDbD* (1561), p. 36.

²⁵³ TNA SP 12/19/29, f. 62; BL Add MS 35830, f.187-8]. *ECDbD* (1561), p. 29-30.

²⁵⁴ The New Year's gift rolls survive for only 24 years of the reign. *ECDbD* (1559), p. 1.

²⁵⁵ *ECDbD* (1559), p. 1.

²⁵⁶ Nelson, p. 29; Nichols, *Progresses . . . Elizabeth, supra*, Vol. I, pp. 109-110, 121-2.

²⁵⁷ Adolph, Anthony R.J.S., "Dethick, Sir Gilbert (1499/1500-1584)", *ODNB*.

Mr Robert Darcy

Mr Henry Mackwilliam

*Then after them two yeomen ushers, and after them all the yeomen 2 and 2 in black coats.*²⁵⁸

According to Dethick's account, the Earl died between eight and nine o'clock on the evening of 3 August, and was buried on 25 August. The same date for his burial, 25 August 1562, is given in BL Harley 897, f. 81. However both the parish register of Castle Hedingham (ERO D/P 48/1/1) and Machyn's *Diary* state that the 16th Earl was buried on 31 August 1562. From the parish register:

*John de Vere, Earl of Oxenford, was buried the 31 of August 1562.*²⁵⁹

From Machyn's *Diary*:

*The 31 day of August was buried in Essex the good Earl of Oxford, with 3 Heralds of Arms, Master Garter, Master Lancaster, Master Richmond, with a standard and a great banner of arms and 8 bannerols, helmet crest, target and sword and coat armour, and a hearse with velvet and a pall of velvet, and a 10 dozen of scutcheons, and with many mourners in black, and great moan made for him.*²⁶⁰

According to the College of Arms manuscript describing his heraldic funeral, the 16th Earl was buried 'right before the door of the choir' in the parish church at Castle Hedingham, after which ceremony the ministers, the Earl's officers and others repaired to the Castle for dinner:

*Item, when the mourners were gone, the ministers came down to the hearse, and after divers prayers by them said, the 8 gentlemen that bare the corse took up the same, and carried it to the grave, which was right before the door of the choir. The officers of household followed the corse to the grave. When the corse was put into the vaults(?), and certaynene [sic for 'certain?'] prayers said to the words of 'From dust thou comest and to dust thou most [sic?] return', the officers of household brake their staves over their heads and cast the same into the grave. Then the gentlemen officers brake their rods in like manner, and the porters their staves. Then the minister said divers prayers, after the which they all departed from the church to the Castle to dinner, and many people also.*²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ College of Arms Arundel MS 35, ff. 35-40.

²⁵⁹ Nelson, p. 30; Sperling, C.D., 'Castle Hedingham and the De Veres', in Fitch, Edward A. and W.H. Dalton, eds., *The Essex Review*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1893), Vol. II, p. 260. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=RDgNAAAIAAJ&pg=PA260>

²⁶⁰ Nichols, John Gough., ed., *The Diary of Henry Machyn*, (London: Camden Society, 1848), pp. 290-1. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/diaryofhenrymach00machrich/page/290/mode/2up>

²⁶¹ College of Arms Arundel MS 35, ff. 35-40.

PART II: OXFORD'S LIFE

A. WARDSHIP

From an early age Oxford had been educated by private tutors, among them Thomas Fowle, a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, to whom the 16th Earl granted an annuity on 4 May 1558 'for service in teaching Edward Vere, my son, Viscount Bulbeck, done & to be done'.²⁶²

On 14 November 1558 Oxford matriculated as an impubes or fellow-commoner of Queens' College, Cambridge,²⁶³ however his name is no longer found in the college registers from March 1559.²⁶⁴

The normal course of Oxford's upbringing and education was altered forever with his father's sudden death on 3 August 1562. Six days earlier, on 28 July, the 16th Earl had made a will²⁶⁵ in which he named Robert Dudley as one of the supervisors. Dudley, later to become Earl of Leicester, was already the acknowledged favourite of Queen Elizabeth, who had come to the throne after Queen Mary's death in November 1558. With the 16th Earl's sudden death, Oxford became Queen Elizabeth's ward. In the following year, the Queen, by a grant made on 22 October 1563 expressing her desire to 'benefit' Robert Dudley, turned over the core lands of the Oxford earldom to her favourite for an annual rent.²⁶⁶ This grant is unprecedented in the annals of the Court of Wards. The usual procedure was for the Queen to dispose of a ward's lands outright for a cash sum. It would appear that Robert Dudley, who had limited financial assets at the time, was unable to come up with the necessary cash sum, and the Queen took liberties with the wardship system in order to benefit her favourite.²⁶⁷

This transaction laid the foundation for Oxford's later financial ruin. There is no direct documentary evidence of Leicester's stewardship of the de Vere lands, but given other reports of Leicester's practices in stripping lands of their assets and leaving them worthless,²⁶⁸ it seems likely that the de Vere lands were mismanaged during Leicester's

²⁶² See the 16th Earl's inquisition post mortem, TNA C 142/136/12, and Nelson, p. 25.

²⁶³ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 250; Nelson, p. 24.

²⁶⁴ Nelson, p. 25; Cambridge University Archives Matriculation Book I, p. 169, and Queen's College, Journale, Book 3, ff. 244, 245, 257v, 258v and 259v.

²⁶⁵ For the 16th Earl's first surviving will, see BL MS Stowe Charter 633-4. For the 16th Earl's second surviving will, see TNA PROB 11/46/247.

²⁶⁶ For the Queen's grant to Leicester of the core lands of the Oxford earldom on 22 October 1563, see TNA WARD 8/13, Part 25.

²⁶⁷ Green, p. 61.

²⁶⁸ See *Leicester's Commonwealth* at <http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/leicester.html>.

tenure, and that the servants put in place by Robert Dudley served his interests, not Oxford's.

Given the anomalous nature of the Queen's grant to Robert Dudley, the question of whether Dudley had anything to do with the 16th Earl's death requires consideration. Throughout his lifetime Leicester was repeatedly accused of responsibility for the deaths of persons whose continued existence hampered his ambitions and interests. When the question is raised as to who benefited from the 16th Earl's death, it is clear that the primary and only real beneficiary of the 16th Earl's death was Robert Dudley. The 16th Earl was in good health and attending to his usual business affairs only a few weeks prior to his death,²⁶⁹ and his sudden demise on 3 August 1562²⁷⁰ cannot be attributed to a lingering illness.

On the death of his father on 3 August 1562, the twelve-year-old Edward de Vere became the 17th Earl of Oxford and Lord Great Chamberlain of England, inheriting an annual income of approximately £2250.²⁷¹ In his last will and testament, the 16th Earl appointed six executors, including his widow and his only son and heir; however administration of the will was granted on 29 May 1563 to only one of the executors, the 16th Earl's former servant, Robert Christmas.²⁷² Shortly after this appointment Robert Christmas entered Robert Dudley's service.²⁷³ Margery Golding's surviving letters show that after the death of the 16th Earl she was not only prevented from administering her husband's estate or playing any role in her son Edward's life, but was persecuted by Robert Dudley's then servant, Robert Christmas.²⁷⁴

Because the 16th Earl held land from the Crown by knight service, Oxford became a royal ward. After the Earl's funeral, Oxford rode into London:

*The 3 day of September came riding out of Essex from the funeral of th' Earl of Oxford, his father, the young Earl of Oxford, with 7 score horse all in black, though London and Cheap and Ludgate, and so to Temple Bar, and so to (blank), between 5 and 6 of the clock at afternoon.*²⁷⁵

²⁶⁹ Green, p. 58.

²⁷⁰ TNA C 142/136/12; Nelson, p. 30.

²⁷¹ TNA C 142/136/12, WARD 8/13; Green, pp. 65-73; Paul, Christopher, 'A Crisis of Scholarship: Misreading the Earl of Oxford', *The Oxfordian*, Vol. 9 (2006), pp. 91-112; Paul, Christopher, 'Shorter Notices: Edward de Vere (1550-1604): The Crisis and Consequences of Wardship', *English Historical Review*, Vol. 120, No. 493 (September 2006), pp. 1173-4.

²⁷² Green, pp. 60-1; Nelson, p. 33.

²⁷³ See TNA SP 15/13/5. In the Black Book of Warwick, Robert Christmas is referred to as Leicester's Treasurer. See Kemp, Thomas, ed., *The Black Book of Warwick*, (Warwick: Henry T. Cooke and Son, 1898), p. 36. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/blackbookofwarwi00warw/page/36/mode/2up>

²⁷⁴ BL Lansdowne 6/34, ff. 96-7; TNA SP 12/36/47, ff. 110-11; Nelson, pp. 37-9.

²⁷⁵ *Machyn*, p. 291; Ward, p. 15; Nelson, p. 34.

He was brought to the Queen at Greenwich,²⁷⁶ and shortly thereafter was placed in the household of Sir William Cecil,²⁷⁷ a leading member of the Queen's Privy Council, and one of her chief advisors.

On 12 January 1563 Oxford was present when the Queen opened Parliament:

*At the side of the Queen sat on the ground three or four ladies and no more, and at the back of rail behind the cloth of estate kneeled the Earls of Oxford and Rutland, under age. . . .*²⁷⁸

Oxford continued his education under tutors while a royal ward.²⁷⁹ Apart from any personal inclinations Oxford may have had towards scholarly pursuits, young noblemen needed to be proficient in English, Latin and the law in order to properly oversee the officials who administered their lands and legal affairs.²⁸⁰ This included the ability to read and write the various scripts in which legal documents of the period were written.

Under Sir William Cecil's supervision, Oxford studied French,²⁸¹ Latin, writing, drawing, cosmography, dancing, riding and shooting. The program of studies drawn up for him by Cecil indicates that at age twelve he was sufficiently fluent in French and Latin to read the epistles and Gospels of the day in those languages.²⁸² Among his tutors in 1563 was the antiquary Laurence Nowell, one of the founders of Anglo-Saxon studies and owner of the *Beowulf* manuscript.²⁸³ In June 1563 Nowell wrote to Cecil that 'I clearly see that my work for the Earl of Oxford cannot be much longer required',²⁸⁴ indicating that Oxford's proficiency had reached a level at which Nowell felt Oxford needed no further instruction from him.

In 1563 the legitimacy of the marriage of Oxford's parents was challenged, presumably on the basis of the 16th Earl's bigamous marriage to Joan Jockey²⁸⁵ during the lifetime of his first wife, Dorothy Neville, in a petition²⁸⁶ to Archbishop Matthew Parker²⁸⁷ brought

²⁷⁶ Nelson, p. 34.

²⁷⁷ MacCaffrey, Wallace T., "Cecil, William, first Baron Burghley (1520/21–1598)", *ODNB*.

²⁷⁸ Nelson, p. 37; *ECDbD* (1563), p. 37.

²⁷⁹ Oxford's tutors are mentioned in TNA SP 15/19/38, ff. 89-90.

²⁸⁰ Ross, p. 49.

²⁸¹ For a letter in French written to Sir William Cecil when Oxford was thirteen years of age, see BL Lansdowne 6/25, f. 79.

²⁸² TNA SP 12/26/50; Nelson, p. 37.

²⁸³ Warnicke Retha M., "Nowell, Laurence (1530–c.1570)", *ODNB*. Oxford's tutor is often confused with Lawrence Nowell, Dean of Lichfield.

²⁸⁴ BL Lansdowne 6/54, f. 135. For a translation, see Ward, p. 20.

²⁸⁵ See EL 5870, *supra*.

²⁸⁶ TNA SP 12/29/8, ff. 11-12; Ward, p. 8; Nelson, pp. 40-1.

by Oxford's half sister, Katherine de Vere, then the wife of Edward Windsor (1532?-1575), 3rd Baron Windsor. On 28 June 1563 Oxford's maternal uncle of the half blood, the translator Arthur Golding,²⁸⁸ replied on behalf of Oxford and his sister, Mary (d.1624),²⁸⁹ contending that the Archbishop should stay the proceedings on the grounds that the petition contained grievous prejudice to the Queen, Oxford and Mary, and that a proceeding against a ward of the Queen could not be maintained in any other court without prior licence from the Court of Wards and Liveries.²⁹⁰ Since the Queen had claimed Oxford's wardship in 1562, it was clearly in her interest to contest Katherine de Vere's petition, and nothing further appears to have been heard of the matter. Lord Burghley took credit for frustrating the suit, writing later that:

*I preserved his title to his earldom, the Lord Windsor attempting to have made him illegitimate.*²⁹¹

On 19 August 1563, the 13-year-old Oxford replied, in fluent French, to a letter sent to him by Sir William Cecil.²⁹² Oxford may have resided with, and being tutored by, Sir Thomas Smith²⁹³ as he speaks of sending Cecil a fuller explanation of the regimen of his studies 'by the first passer-by', suggesting that he was not living at Cecil House at the time:

*As to the order of my study, because it requires a long discourse to explain it in detail, and the time is short at this hour, I pray you affectionately to excuse me therefrom for the present, assuring you that by the first passer-by I shall make it known to you at full length.*²⁹⁴

That Oxford was tutored by Sir Thomas Smith and resided for a time in Smith's household is evidenced by a letter of Smith's which refers to 'the love I bear him because he was brought up in my house'.²⁹⁵ Similarly, on 3 August 1574, Lord Burghley added in a postscript to a letter Sir Francis Walsingham²⁹⁶:

²⁸⁷ Crankshaw, David J. and Alexandra Gillespie, "Parker, Matthew (1504–1575)", *ODNB*.

²⁸⁸ Considine, John, "Golding, Arthur (1535/6–1606)", *ODNB*.

²⁸⁹ Mary de Vere's birthdate is unknown. She was probably born c.1554.

²⁹⁰ TNA SP 12/29/8, ff. 11-12. It should be noted that the Latin phrase in Arthur Golding's petition 'fuisse et esse minorem quatuordecem Annorum' means 'under fourteen years of age'. It has been erroneously translated in Nelson, pp. 40-1, and other secondary sources as a statement that both Oxford and his sister, Mary, were fourteen years of age in 1563.

²⁹¹ Nelson, p. 152, citing CP ii, p. 171 (9/92).

²⁹² BL Lansdowne 6/25, f. 79.

²⁹³ Archer, Ian W., "Smith, Sir Thomas (1513–1577)", *ODNB*; Nelson, p. 25.

²⁹⁴ BL Lansdowne 6/25, f. 79.

²⁹⁵ BL Harleian 6992/21, ff. 41-2; Strype, John, *The Life of the Learned Sir Thomas Smith*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1820), pp. 18-20; Dewar, Mary, *Sir Thomas Smith: A*

*I doubt not but Mr Secretary Smith will remember his old love towards the Earl when he was his scholar.*²⁹⁷

The evidence as to when Oxford resided with Smith is unclear; however it seems likely that it was after the 16th Earl's death in 1562 since Smith was not among those granted annuities by the 16th Earl.²⁹⁸

At some time before October 1563 Oxford's mother remarried. Her second husband was the Gentleman Pensioner, Charles Tyrrell (d.1570), about whom little is known. Since he was a member of the Tyrrell family, he may have been named after Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, whose mother, Elizabeth Bruyn, had married, as her first husband, Thomas Tyrrell (d.1473), esquire.²⁹⁹ *The Complete Peerage*³⁰⁰ erroneously identifies Margery Golding's second husband as the sixth son of Sir Thomas Tyrrell of Heron in East Horndon, Essex,³⁰¹ by Constance Blount, daughter of John Blount (d. 12 October 1485), 3rd Baron Mountjoy.³⁰² One of the sources relied upon by *The Complete Peerage* is a letter from Richard Rich, 1st Baron Rich,³⁰³ to Sir William Petre³⁰⁴ dated 22 January 1554.³⁰⁵ According to the summary of the letter, Lord Rich 'hears that certain of the pensioners are to be removed, and others appointed; recommends Charles Tyrrell, brother

Tudor Intellectual in Office, (London: Athlone Press, 1964), p. 77; TNA SP 12/92/2, ff. 5-6v; Nelson, pp. 25, 115, 145.

²⁹⁶ Adams, Simon et al, "Walsingham, Sir Francis (c. 1532–1590)", *ODNB*.

²⁹⁷ TNA SP 12/98/2, ff. 5-6; Nelson, p. 25.

²⁹⁸ Pearson, Daphne, *Edward de Vere (1550-1604): The Crisis and Consequences of Wardship*, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), pp. 14, 222.

²⁹⁹ Elizabeth Bruyn (d. March 1494) was one of the two daughters and coheirs of Sir Henry Bruyn (d. 30 November 1461) by Elizabeth Darcy (d.1471?), the daughter of Sir Robert Darcy of Maldon, Essex. See *Magna Carta Ancestry, supra*, Vol. II, p. 360.

³⁰⁰ Cokayne, Vol. X, pp. 249-50.

³⁰¹ Sir Thomas Tyrrell (c.1453-1510?) of Heron in East Horndon, Essex, was a retainer of John de Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford. For his will, see TNA PROB 11/17/263. He married firstly Anne Devereux, and secondly Beatrice Cokayne. The Thomas Tyrrell who married Constance Blount was his son by Beatrice Cokayne (d.1513), and was also a retainer of the 13th Earl. For the will of Beatrice Cokayne, see TNA PROB 11/17/422.

³⁰² Horrox, Rosemary, "John Blount third Baron Mountjoy (d. 1485)", *ODNB*. As noted earlier, his brother, Sir James Blount, was the 13th Earl of Oxford's gaoler at Hammes.

³⁰³ Carter, P.R.N., "Rich, Richard, first Baron Rich (1496/7–1567)", *ODNB*.

³⁰⁴ Knighton, C.S., "Petre, Sir William (1505/6–1572)", *ODNB*. He married firstly Gertrude Tyrrell (d. 28 May 1541), the daughter of Sir John Tyrrell (1482 - 28 February 1541) of Warley, Essex, and secondly Anne Browne (1509-1582), the daughter of Sir William Browne (1467-1514), and widow of John Tyrrell (d.1540), esquire, of Heron in East Horndon, Essex. See the will of Sir John Tyrrell of Heron, TNA PROB 11/28/299, the will of Sir John Tyrrell of Warley, TNA PROB 11/28/444, and the will of Anne (nee Browne) Tyrrell Petre, TNA PROB 11/64/153.

³⁰⁵ See *CSPD 1547-1580*, p. 56.

to Sir Henry Tyrrell, to one of the vacancies'.³⁰⁶ There was thus a Charles Tyrrell who was not Margery Golding's second husband, but who was the sixth son of Thomas Tyrrell and Constance Blount, and a brother to Sir Henry Tyrrell, and who had connections to Lord Rich. In an entail in his will, Richard Tyrrell, Warden of the Fleet, mentions both Charles Tyrrells:

And for default of such issue the remainder thereof unto Charles Tyrrell that married the Countess of Oxford and his heirs males lawfully begotten.

*And for default of such issue the remainder thereof to Charles Tyrrell, servant to the Lord Rich, and to his heirs males lawfully begotten.*³⁰⁷

According to a letter written by the Privy Council on 29 July 1553, one of these two Charles Tyrrells had earlier been Master of the Horse to Leicester's father, John Dudley:

*A letter to Charles Tyrrell, late Master of the Horse to the Duke of Northumberland, to find the means to get into his hands all those horses which he heretofore knew to be the Duke's, and those to keep safe to the Queen's Highness' use.*³⁰⁸

The will of Margery Golding's second husband, Charles Tyrrell,³⁰⁹ makes no mention of the East Horndon branch of the Tyrrell family, and names only one brother, Philip Tyrrell, and three sisters, referred to by their married surnames of Church, Garnish and Felton. Since Sir Thomas Tyrrell of East Horndon and Constance Blount had no son named Philip and no daughters who married into the Church, Garnish or Felton families, it is clear that Margery Golding's husband did not belong to the East Horndon branch of the Tyrrell family.

The identity of Margery Golding's second husband, Charles Tyrrell, appears to be established by the pedigree of Carew of Bury St Edmunds, which identifies him as the son of Margaret or Margery Kelly,³¹⁰ whose first husband was John Carew, eldest son and

³⁰⁶ There was a remote connection between Lord Rich and the Tyrrell family. Lord Rich's daughter, Agnes Rich, married Edmund Mordaunt, the great-grandson of Sir William Tyrrell (d.1471?) of Beeches. For the will of Sir William Tyrrell, see TNA PROB 11/5/167.

³⁰⁷ Will of Richard Tyrrell (d.1566), TNA PROB 11/48/637.

³⁰⁸ *APC 1552-1554*, Vol. IV, p. 305. URL: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/acts-privy-council/vol4/pp301-325>. See also Feldman, Bronson, *Hamlet Himself*, (Indiana: iUniverse, 2010). URL:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=Z79IDwAAQBAJ&pg=PT19>

³⁰⁹ TNA PROB 11/52/187.

³¹⁰ See the pedigree in Metcalfe, Walter C., ed., *The Visitations of Suffolk*, (Exeter: William Pollard, 1882), p. 187, in which 'Celley Delond' appears to be an error for 'Kelly of London'. URL:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=EycAAAAAQAQAJ&pg=PA187>

heir of Sir William Carew (d.1501).³¹¹ The Charles Tyrrell who married Margery Golding was thus the son of James Tyrrell³¹² and the grandson of Sir James Tyrrell³¹³, the alleged murderer of the 'princes in the Tower'.³¹⁴

The Complete Peerage is also in error in suggesting that Margery Golding's second husband, Charles Tyrrell, had previously been the husband of the heiress Agnes Wodhull (d. 20 March 1576), whose wardship was purchased successively by Sir Anthony Wingfield and Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk,³¹⁵ and that the marriage was annulled by the Court of Delegates.³¹⁶ This error is based on a misreading of a suit instigated in 1556 by a Charles Tyrrell, gentleman, which resulted in the annulment of Agnes Wodhull's marriage to Richard Chetwood (d. 12 January 1560),³¹⁷ with whom she had eloped in 1556 at the age of fourteen.³¹⁸ The identity of the Charles Tyrrell, gentleman, who instigated the suit has not been definitively established, nor has his motive, but it is clear that he did not instigate the suit on the basis that he was the husband of Agnes Wodhull.³¹⁹ In seeking the annulment of the marriage, Charles Tyrrell may have been acting on behalf of Frances (nee Brandon) Grey, Duchess of Suffolk,³²⁰ Charles Brandon's daughter by his marriage to Henry VIII's sister, Mary Tudor, who on 19 April 1559 wrote to Sir William Cecil claiming the right to the wardship and marriage of 'Ann Odell, now wife to Mr. Chetwood'.³²¹

On 9 January 1564, Oxford was at Hitcham, Buckinghamshire, likely at the home of Sir

³¹¹ For the will of Sir William Carew (d.1501), see TNA PROB 11/12/390.

³¹² For the will of James Tyrrell, see TNA PROB 11/26/266.

³¹³ Horrox, Rosemary, "Tyrell, Sir James (c. 1455–1502)", *ODNB*.

³¹⁴ The *ODNB* notes that 'the identification rests on a confession that Sir James Tyrrell is said to have made just prior to his execution, no copy of which survives.

³¹⁵ See the will, TNA PROB 11/31/456, of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk: 'Also I give and grant by these presents to my said son, Charles, the custody and marriage of Agnes Wodhull, daughter and heir of Anthony Wodhull, esquire, deceased, the which I bought of Sir Anthony Wingfield'. For the will of Sir Anthony Wingfield (d. 15 August 1552), who married Elizabeth Vere (d.1557), sister of John de Vere, 14th Earl of Oxford, see TNA PROB 11/36/112.

³¹⁶ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 250, citing BL MS Add. Charter 44271.

³¹⁷ For the will of Richard Chetwood, see TNA PROB 11/43/556. For the marriage of Agnes Wodhull and Richard Chetwood, see Richardson, Douglas, *Plantagenet Ancestry*, 2nd ed., 2011, Vol. I, p. 524.

³¹⁸ See the History of Parliament entry for Richard Chetwood. URL: <http://www.histparl.ac.uk/volume/1558-1603/member/chetwode-richard-1560>

³¹⁹ See Bray, Gerald, ed., *Documents of the English Reformation, 1526-1701*, (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1994), pp. 327-8 at: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=UGi6WWtzkJYC&pg=PA327>

³²⁰ Warnicke, Retha M., "Grey [*other married name* Stokes], Frances [*née* Lady Frances Brandon], duchess of Suffolk (1517–1559)", *ODNB*.

³²¹ See *CSPD 1547-1580*, p. 128. URL: <https://archive.org/details/cu31924091775258/page/n147/mode/2up>

William Cecil's servant, Roger Alford (d.1580).³²²

Many books were dedicated to Oxford throughout his lifetime, attesting to his interest in literature, history, medicine, music and other topics. Some of these dedications mention Oxford's own scholarly accomplishments. In May 1564, for example, Arthur Golding dedicated *Th' Abridgement of the Histories of Trogus Pompeius* to his 14-year-old nephew, noting Oxford's perceptive interest in both ancient history and current events:

*Now at such time as I had finished my translation of th' histories of Justin . . . devising to whom I might specially dedicate the same, it came to my remembrance that sithence it had pleased Almighty God to take to his mercy your Lordship's noble father (to whom I had long before vowed this my travail), there was not any who either of duty might more justly claim the same, or for whose estate it seemed more requisite and necessary, or of whom I thought it should be more favourably accepted than of your Honour. For (to omit other things whereof this time and matter serveth not to speak), it is not unknown to others, and I have had experience thereof myself, how earnest a desire your Honour hath naturally graffed in you to read, peruse and communicate with others as well the histories of ancient time and things done long ago as also of the present estate of things in our days, and that not without a certain pregnancy of wit and ripeness of understanding, the which do not only now rejoice the hearts of all such as bear faithful affection to th' honourable house of your ancestors, but also stir up a great hope and expectation of such wisdom and experience in you in time to come as are meet and beseeming for so noble a race..*³²³

On 10 August 1564 Oxford was among 17 noblemen, knights and esquires in the Queen's entourage who were awarded the honorary degree of Master of Arts by the University of Cambridge.³²⁴

The Annotated Hall's Chronicle

On 6 April 1565, Sir Richard Newport (d.1570)³²⁵ of High Ercall, Shropshire, wrote his initials and the date, 'R N 6 Apll ao 1565',³²⁶ in his copy of Hall's *Chronicle*. Elsewhere in the volume he wrote his name twice, 'Rycherd Newport',³²⁷ and 'Ry Newport'.³²⁸ The sections of the volume concerning the reigns of Henry IV and Henry V are heavily

³²² HMC Rutland, Vol. I, p. 89; Nelson, pp. 41-2. For Roger Alford, see his will, TNA PROB 11/62/442.

³²³ STC 24290.

³²⁴ Cokayne, p. 250; Nelson, pp. 42-3.

³²⁵ For his will, see TNA PROB 11/53/456.

³²⁶ See f. 114r in the 15th year of the reign of Henry VIII. URL: <http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/AnnotatorNewportInitialsDate.jpeg>

³²⁷ See f. 32r in the 7th year of the reign of Henry VII.

³²⁸ See f. 45r in the 5th year of the reign of Henry VIII. URL: <http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/AnnotatorNewportSignature2.jpeg>

annotated in a mixed italic and secretary hand. Alan Keen,³²⁹ who discovered the volume in 1940, attributed the annotations to Shakespeare,³³⁰ as did Seymour Pitcher, who connected the annotations to Shakespeare's authorship of the anonymous early play, *The Famous Victories*.³³¹

Among the annotations in Sir Richard Newport's copy of the *Chronicle* is the name 'Edward', once written,³³² and once pricked out with a pin.³³³ It thus seems possible that Sir Richard Newport's copy of the *Chronicle* found its way into Oxford's hands. Sir Richard Newport was knighted by Oxford's first cousin, Thomas Howard (1538-1572), 4th Duke of Norfolk,³³⁴ on 21 July 1560 at Berwick for service during the Scottish campaign. He refers to the campaign in his will:

Item, I bequeath to my servant Jockey, whom I brought with me out of Scotland, £13 6s 8d of lawful money of England.

Moreover Sir Richard Newport appointed as overseer of his will Sir Thomas Bromley (c.1530-1587),³³⁵ whom Oxford appointed as one of the trustees in his indenture of 20 January 1575 (see *infra*).³³⁶ Sir Thomas Bromley was a second cousin of Sir Richard Newport's wife, Margaret Bromley (d. 11 August 1598).³³⁷

It is also worth noting that Sir Richard Newport's sister, Elizabeth Newport, married John Pakington (1530-1578), the aunt of Humphrey Martyn (d.1587?), the addressee of the *Langham Letter* describing Leicester's entertainment of Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth in the summer of 1575 (see *infra*).

³²⁹ Alan Keen (1899-1959) was born Gordon Alen Keen in Dublin on 28 October 1899. He spent most of his life in London as a designer, an antiquarian bookseller, an author, and the owner of Pollock's Toyshop. He died 28 September 1959 at St Asaph, Wales, survived by his wife, Frances (nee Kloet), and two daughters, Elaine Frances Keen (7 March 1928 - 14 May 2008) and Freda Mary Keen (5 March 1931 - 4 February 2002).

³³⁰ Keen, Alan, *The Annotator*, (London: Putnam, 1954).

³³¹ Pitcher, Seymour M., *The Case For Shakespeare's Authorship Of The Famous Victories*, (New York: State University of New York, 1961).

³³² See f. 14v in the fifth year of Henry IV. URL: <http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/AnnotatorEdward.jpeg>

³³³ See f. 81v in the 12th year of the reign of Henry VIII. E-mail dated 27 November 2019 from Dr Lucy Gwynn, Deputy Director of Collections, Eton College Library, Windsor.

³³⁴ Graves, Michael A.R., "Howard, Thomas, fourth Duke of Norfolk (1538–1572)", *ODNB*.

³³⁵ Jones, N.G., "Bromley, Sir Thomas (c. 1530–1587)", *ODNB*. For his will, see TNA PROB 11/70/219.

³³⁶ SRO D615/D45(1); Pearson, p. 44.

³³⁷ For her will, see TNA PROB 11/93/149.

At New Year's in 1565 Margery Golding gave the Queen 100 shillings in angels in a blue silk purse.³³⁸

In a letter dated 7 May 1565 to Sir William Cecil, Oxford's mother, Margery Golding, urged that the portion of her son's inheritance which was to come to him during his minority be entrusted to herself and other persons of substance so that, as his father the 16th Earl had intended, it would be available to Oxford when he reached the age of majority to meet the expenses of suing his livery from the Crown and furnishing his household. The relevant clause in the 16th Earl's will of 28 July 1562 reads:

*Item, I will, give and bequeath unto my son Edward, Lord Bulbeck, one thousand marks [=£666 13s 4d] of lawful money of England, to be paid unto him by my said executors as it may conveniently be levied of the manors, lands and tenements hereafter by me bequeathed to the use of this my last will*³³⁹

There is no evidence that Margery Golding's offer was accepted.

Mary, Queen of Scots,³⁴⁰ widow of Francis II of France, was next in line to the English crown. Her marriage was thus of paramount concern to Queen Elizabeth, who went so far in March 1564 as to offer her favourite, the Earl of Leicester, to Mary as a prospective husband. Leicester was less than enthusiastic since he hoped to marry Queen Elizabeth, and the plan had faltered by early 1565. However when it became evident in mid-April 1565 that Mary might marry her first cousin of the half blood, Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton³⁴¹ was sent to Scotland in May to again offer her Leicester as a husband, or alternatively, Oxford's first cousin, Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, or Norfolk's father-in-law, Henry Fitzalan, 12th Earl of Arundel.³⁴² The offers were too late. Mary married Darnley on 29 July 1565. The marriage linked Mary's life to Oxford's in several ways. After Darnley's murder, Oxford's first cousin, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, attempted to become Mary's fourth husband, a fatal miscalculation which resulted in his execution in 1572. In 1587, Oxford sat in judgment at Mary's trial for treason.

On 11 November 1565, Oxford and the Earl of Rutland³⁴³ led both bride and groom to the Queen's chapel at the wedding of Leicester's brother, Ambrose Dudley, Earl of

³³⁸ Not mentioned in Nichols, but see <http://www.larsdatter.com/gifts/1564-5.htm>

³³⁹ TNA PROB 11/46/247.

³⁴⁰ Goodare, Julian, "Mary [Mary Stewart] (1542–1587), Queen of Scots", *ODNB*.

³⁴¹ Lehmborg, Stanford, "Throckmorton, Sir Nicholas (1515/16–1571)", *ODNB*.

³⁴² Lock, Julian, "Fitzalan, Henry, twelfth earl of Arundel (1512–1580)", *ODNB*.

³⁴³ Jack, Sybil M., "Manners, Edward, third earl of Rutland (1549–1587)", *ODNB*. His only daughter, Elizabeth Manners (d.1591), was the first wife of William Cecil (1566–1640), 2nd Earl of Exeter, whose daughter by his second wife, Diana Cecil, married Oxford's only son and heir, Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford.

Warwick,³⁴⁴ to his third wife, Lady Anne Russell.³⁴⁵

On 26 December 1565 Oxford's paternal aunt, Elizabeth Darcy, died at the house of her son-in-law, Edmund Pyrton (d.1609).³⁴⁶

In 1566 Oxford's mother, Margery Golding, and her second husband, Charles Tyrrell, commissioned a survey of the manor of Fingrith Hall by John Carew, gentleman.³⁴⁷

On 2 April 1566 the Queen arranged to meet Leicester at Oxford's house at London Stone. It is not known who had the use of the house at the time; the Queen had granted Leicester the core lands of the Oxford earldom during Oxford's minority, and it may be that she allowed him the use of Oxford's house at London Stone as well. Although the reason for the meeting is unknown, the secrecy of the Queen's departure from Greenwich and the extent of Leicester's train suggest that the Queen had indicated that she would marry Leicester at Oxford's house that day, but frustrated his expectation by delaying her arrival until after he had left.³⁴⁸

On 19 June 1566, Mary, Queen of Scots, having recently endured the murder of her secretary, David Riccio, on 9 March,³⁴⁹ and an attempt to imprison her, and having made a daring escape and raised an army to retain power, gave birth to Queen Elizabeth's eventual successor, James I.³⁵⁰ Knowing of Mary's pregnancy, did Queen Elizabeth plan to marry Leicester at Oxford's house at London Stone in the hope of having a child of her own who would inherit the throne?

On 6 September 1566 Oxford and others accompanying the Queen were granted honorary Master of Arts degrees by the University of Oxford.³⁵¹ It appears that it was on the latter occasion that Latin verses³⁵² were presented to Oxford by George Coryat.³⁵³

³⁴⁴ *ECDbD* (1565), p. 48. Adams, Simon, "Dudley, Ambrose, earl of Warwick (c. 1530–1590)", *ODNB*.

³⁴⁵ Adams, Simon, "Dudley [*née* Russell], Anne, countess of Warwick (1548/9–1604)", *ODNB*.

³⁴⁶ For her will, see TNA PROB 11/48/328.

³⁴⁷ ERO D/DHt M186.

³⁴⁸ Gairdner, James, ed., *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, (London: J.B. Nichols and Sons, 1880), Camden Society, New Series, Vol. 28, p. 137. URL: <https://archive.org/details/threefifteenthce00gairrich/page/136/mode/2up>

³⁴⁹ Marshall, Rosalind K., "Riccio, David (c. 1533–1566)", *ODNB*.

³⁵⁰ Goodare, *Mary, Queen of Scots*, *ODNB*, *supra*.

³⁵¹ Cokayne, p. 250; Nelson, p. 45; *ECDbD* (1566), pp. 35, 41.

³⁵² 'Postuma Fragmenta Poematum Georgii Coryati Sarisburiensis, Sacrae Theologiae Baccalauri', in *Coryat's Crudities* (1611), Vol. II, (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1905), pp. 395-6. URL:

<https://archive.org/stream/posthumafragmen00corygoog#page/n416/mode/2up>.

³⁵³ Money, D.K., "Coryate, George (d. 1607)", *ODNB*.

A Court of Wards document records the total annual expenditures, allegedly ‘for the apparel, with rapiers and daggers, for my Lord of Oxenford his person’, from the beginning of his residency at Cecil House on 3 September 1562 until Christmas 1566, a period of 52 months.³⁵⁴ The total for the period ending on 28 September 1566 is £627 15s. An additional £56 4s expended during the three months from October to December 1566 brings the total to £683 19s. The average expenditure during the entire 52 months was thus approximately £13 per month, or £156 a year. By 1566 Oxford was a young courtier 16 years of age with the expectation that he would dress the part, and an annual expenditure of £156 for apparel, rapiers and daggers, was perhaps not unduly excessive. However the account appears to be in the same hand as accounts prepared for the first three quarters of 1570, and these later accounts include many items in addition to apparel such as board and wages for Oxford’s servants, expenditures for books and paper, payments to physicians and apothecaries during illnesses etc. Thus, even though the document is headed ‘for the apparel, with rapiers and daggers, for my Lord of Oxenford his person’, it is perhaps not unreasonable to conclude that the totals for each year included items in addition to apparel.

On 1 February 1567 Oxford was admitted to Gray’s Inn, one of the Inns of Court.³⁵⁵ In 1570 the Inn recorded an expenditure of 10s for the purchase of Oxford’s arms.³⁵⁶

On 23 July 1567, the 17-year-old Oxford accidentally killed Thomas Brincknell,³⁵⁷ yeoman, of Westminster, while practising fencing with Edward or Edmund Baynham in the backyard of Cecil House in the Strand. At the coroner’s inquest held the following day the 17 jurymen³⁵⁸ found that Brincknell was drunk, and had caused his own death.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁴ TNA SP 12/42/38, ff. 91-2.

³⁵⁵ Ward, p. 27, cites Harleian MSS, 1912; Nelson, p. 46; Foster, Joseph, *The Register of Admissions to Gray's Inn, 1521-1889*, (London: The Hansard Publishing Union, Limited, 1889), column 36. URL:

<https://archive.org/stream/registerofadmiss00gray#page/18/mode/2up>

³⁵⁶ Nelson, p. 450; Fletcher, Reginald J., ed., *The Pension Book of Gray's Inn*, (London: The Chiswick Press, 1901), p. 484. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/pensionbookofgra01gray/page/484/mode/2up>

³⁵⁷ There is no evidence to identify him with the Thomas Brincknell who married Agnes Harris on 8 August 1563. See Burke, Arthur Meredyth, ed., *Memorials of St. Margaret's Church Westminster Comprising the Parish Registers 1539-1660 and The Churchwardens' Accounts, 1460-1603*, (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, Ltd., 1914), p. 281. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/memorialsfstmar00westrich/page/280/mode/2up>

³⁵⁸ According to Nelson, p. 48, the juror ‘Randolphi Holynshedd’ can be identified with the chronicler, Raphael Holinshed. However ‘Randolphi’ is the Latinized form of ‘Randolph’, not ‘Raphael’, and the chronicler is said to have been in the employ of Reyner Wolfe (d.1573) of Paul’s Churchyard at the time. See Clegg, Cyndia Susan, “Holinshed [Hollingshead], Raphael (c. 1525–1580?)”, *ODNB*. Since the jurors were from the county of Middlesex, whereas Paul’s Churchyard was situated in the city of

The inquest report describes the incident and the nature of Brincknell's injury:

[The jurors] say upon their oath that where on the twenty-third day of July in the ninth year abovesaid, between the seventh & eighth hours after noon of the same day, Edward, Earl of Oxenford, and a certain Edmund Baynham of the city aforesaid, tailor, were together in a certain place called le backyard within the mansion house of William Cecil, knight, at St Clement Danes in the county aforesaid, not intending nor having in mind injury of any person then and there being, and either of them having a sword of iron & steel called foils, with the same swords called foils either of them with the other then & there played at the science of defence;

The foresaid Thomas Brincknell came there to the place aforesaid, and the same Thomas then & there, being drunk, & not having God before his eyes, but moved & deceived by diabolic instigation, desperately ran & fell upon the point of the foresaid sword called a foil to the value of 12d which the foresaid Edward, Earl of Oxenford, then & there had & held in his right hand with the said intention to play, as is aforesaid;

By reason of which the forenamed Thomas with the same sword called a foil in the front part of his left thigh then & there feloniously pierced & stabbed himself, & he then & there gave himself with the sword aforesaid one fatal stroke of the depth of four inches & the breadth of one inch, of which certain fatal stroke the said Thomas then & there instantly died;

And thus the jurors aforesaid say upon their oath that the foresaid Thomas Brincknell at St Clement Danes aforesaid in the county aforesaid on the said twenty-third day of July in the ninth year abovesaid in manner & form aforesaid feloniously & wilfully slew & killed himself against the peace of the said Lady Queen, her crown & dignity;

And thus the same Thomas Brincknell came to his death, & not otherwise nor by any other manner than as is abovesaid.³⁶⁰

It seems Brincknell's femoral artery was severed, an injury which caused him to bleed to death within minutes.

Sir William Cecil recorded the event in a retrospective note which describes Brincknell as an under-cook, likely in the Cecil household:

Thomas Brincknell, an under-cook, was hurt by the Earl of Oxford at Cecil House, whereof he died, and by a verdict found felo de se with running upon a point of a fence sword of the said Earl.³⁶¹

London, and the Christian name of the juror differs from that of the chronicler, the identification of the juror 'Randolphi Holynshedd' with the chronicler appears unlikely.

³⁵⁹ TNA KB 9/619, Part 1, m. 13.

³⁶⁰ TNA KB 9/619, m. 13.

³⁶¹ Nelson, p. 47, citing Lord Burghley's diary, ii, 764.

Cecil also later wrote that 'I did my best to have the jury find the death of a poor man whom he killed in my house to be found *se defendendo*'.³⁶²

In an undated document headed 'Names and Faith of English Nobles',³⁶³ Oxford is one of 20 noblemen, including the Duke of Norfolk and the Earls of Sussex, Leicester and Rutland, listed under the heading 'well affected towards Catholics'. In the document Sussex is said to be 'at present the Queen's Ambassador at the Imperial Court', which dates the document to sometime after Sussex' departure to the Imperial court in June 1567.³⁶⁴ The accuracy of the views expressed in the document as to the religious affiliations of the persons named in it can be judged by the fact that in July 1568 Sussex was appointed President of the Council of the North, in which position he played a major role in the suppression of the Northern Rebellion of 1569.

The writer and soldier Thomas Churchyard³⁶⁵ had been a page in the service of Oxford's uncle, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, from 1537 to 1541. In 1567 he entered Oxford's service, as recounted in his *A True Discourse Historical* (1602):

. . . at the time when he arrived at Dillenburgh where Churchyard, being sent from the Lord High Chamberlain of England, saw the meeting of all this mighty assembly, and served under Monsieur de Lume, Count de la March, as cornet-bearer to two hundred and fifty light horsemen all that wars, which was against the Duke of Alva in his first coming to Flanders.³⁶⁶

³⁶² CP 9/92; Nelson, pp. 48, 151. 'Se defendendo': 'In self-defence': a plea which if established is held to remove legal guilt from a homicide. (OED). Cecil's comment contradicts the jury's verdict of *felo de se* (One who 'deliberately puts an end to his own existence, or commits any unlawful malicious act, the consequence of which is his own death' (Blackstone). OED). Verdicts of *felo de se* were not uncommon when the victim's death resulted from his own actions. The verdict of the coroner's inquest does not suggest in any way that Oxford acted in self defense. The report indicates that Brincknell, who was drunk, ran into Oxford's fencing foil; he may have thought Oxford and Baynham were involved in a serious fight, and that his intervention would save one or the other.

³⁶³ Nelson, p. 49; *CSP Rome, 1558-71*, pp. 265-6. Nelson dates the document to 18 December 1567; however that is the date of the previous document. See 'Rome: 1567, October-December', in *Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Vatican Archives, Volume 1, 1558-1571*, ed. J M Rigg (London, 1916), pp. 256-267. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/vatican/vol1/pp256-267>.

³⁶⁴ Van der Meulen, Steven, "Radcliffe, Thomas, third earl of Sussex (1526/7–1583)", *ODNB*.

³⁶⁵ Lyne, Raphael, "Churchyard, Thomas (1523?–1604)", *ODNB*.

³⁶⁶ Nelson, p. 49. See also St Onge, Henry Orion, 'Thomas Churchyard: A Study of his Prose and Poetry', Ph.D Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1966, p. 74.

In April 1568 Oxford was to have reached a decision as to whether he would marry a sister of Henry Hastings, 3rd Earl of Huntingdon.³⁶⁷ By an indenture of 1 July 1562³⁶⁸ the 16th Earl had contracted that when Oxford reached the age of 18, he could choose to marry either Elizabeth Hastings (1556-1621) or Mary Hastings. However after the death of the 16th Earl the Queen, as Oxford's legal guardian, allowed the indenture to lapse. Elizabeth Hastings later married Edward Somerset, 4th Earl of Worcester,³⁶⁹ while Mary Hastings died unmarried.

On 3 September 1568 Oxford's first cousin, Robert Darcy, made his last will.³⁷⁰

In the meantime, in the late spring of 1568, Mary, Queen of Scots' reign had come to an end. The previous year had been disastrous. Her second husband, Lord Darnley, had been murdered on 10 February 1567, likely by the Earls of Bothwell³⁷¹ and Morton³⁷² with the complicity of Mary's illegitimate half brother, James Stewart, 1st Earl of Moray.³⁷³ After the murder Mary suffered a nervous breakdown, and on 15 May married Bothwell, who had abducted her and ravished her. Morton and other Scottish lords who originally supported Bothwell then turned against him, and Mary was taken captive on 15 June 1567 after her forces were defeated at Carberry. On 24 July she was forced to abdicate, having recently suffered a miscarriage. Her infant son James was crowned on 29 July; Moray, who had been abroad during most of these events and had returned to Scotland on 11 August, was appointed as Regent on 22 August. Mary escaped from imprisonment at Lochleven Castle on 2 May 1568; however when the forces which rallied to her support lost a battle to the Regent at Langside near Glasgow on 13 May, she fled from Scotland.³⁷⁴ On the evening of 16 May 1568, she crossed by fishing boat into England, arriving at Workington in Cumberland with only twenty followers.³⁷⁵

In October 1568 Oxford's first cousin, Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, became involved in a plan to marry the Queen of Scots which led to his execution in 1572. Between 4 and 20 October 1568 Norfolk, Sussex and Sir Ralph Sadler³⁷⁶ were at York as commissioners at an inquiry held to determine whether the Queen of Scots had been involved in the murder of Lord Darnley.³⁷⁷ Mary was not present, but sent commissioners based on a mistaken understanding that the outcome would lead to her restoration. Among the commissioners for Mary's two-year-old son, King James, were

³⁶⁷ Cross, Claire, "Hastings, Henry, third Earl of Huntingdon (1536?-1595)", *ODNB*.

³⁶⁸ Huntington Library HAP o/s Box 3(19).

³⁶⁹ Croft, Pauline, "Somerset, Edward, fourth Earl of Worcester (c.1550-1628)", *ODNB*.

³⁷⁰ TNA PROB 11/51/388. The will was proved 22 November 1569.

³⁷¹ Marshall, Rosalind K., "Hepburn, James, fourth earl of Bothwell and duke of Orkney (1534/5-1578)", *ODNB*.

³⁷² Hewitt, G.R., "Douglas, James, fourth earl of Morton (c. 1516-1581)", *ODNB*.

³⁷³ Loughlin, Mark, "Stewart, James, first earl of Moray (1531/2-1570)", *ODNB*.

³⁷⁴ Goodare, 'Mary, Queen of Scots', *ODNB, supra*.

³⁷⁵ *ECDBD* (1568), p. 11.

³⁷⁶ Phillips, Gervase, "Sadler, Sir Ralph (1507-1587)", *ODNB*.

³⁷⁷ *ECDBD* (1568), p. 37.

the Regent Moray and William Maitland of Lethington.³⁷⁸ The Duke later confessed that while they were out hawking, Maitland indicated his support for a marriage between the Duke and the Queen of Scots, who at the time was still legally married to Bothwell. The English commissioners were ordered to return to England in mid-November where the hearing into Mary's culpability was to be continued.³⁷⁹

Cecil later noted that on his return Norfolk found that the Queen had already learned of the discussion at York of his possible marriage to the Queen of Scots:

. . . understanding the Queen's Majesty had heard somewhat of his intention to marry with the Scottish Queen, sought means to speak with her Majesty privately thereupon, and complained to her Majesty that such speeches should be suffered, charging one Robert Melville,³⁸⁰ a Scot, with the report, and required to have him punished.

And so perceiving by her Majesty that she had heard thereof, though she could not believe it, he, the Duke, did with great oaths deny it, and with cursings of himself very deeply if ever he meant it or would mean it, adding, amongst many reasons, these, in saying:

*'What should I seek to marry her, being so wicked a woman, such a notorious adulteress and murderer. I love to sleep upon a safe pillow. I count myself, by your Majesty's favour, as good a prince at home in my bowling-alley at Norwich as she is, though she were in the midst of Scotland. And if I should go about to marry with her, knowing as I do that she pretendeth a title to the present possession of your Majesty's Crown, your Majesty might justly charge me with seeking your own Crown from your head.'*³⁸¹

The inquiry into Mary's culpability continued at Westminster in late November and early December. On 7 December the Regent Moray produced the casket letters and verses, which, had they been genuine, would have convicted Mary of adultery and of complicity in the murder of Lord Darnley. However the documents were almost certainly forgeries. The originals were returned to Scotland in 1569, where they were last known to be in the possession of the 1st Earl of Gowrie.³⁸² After his execution in 1584, they disappeared forever.³⁸³

Whether Norfolk believed the casket letters to be genuine is difficult to determine. On the one hand, his protestation to Queen Elizabeth on his return from York, as reported by

³⁷⁸ Loughlin, Mark, "Maitland, William, of Lethington (1525x30–1573)", *ODNB*.

³⁷⁹ *ECDbD* (1568), p. 42.

³⁸⁰ See Zulager, "Melville, Robert, first Lord Melville (1527/8–1621)", *ODNB*. See also Lang, Andrew, *The Mystery of Mary Stuart*, p. 107. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=mxg-DwAAQBAJ&pg=PA107>

³⁸¹ *ECDbD* (1568), p. 42.

³⁸² Adams, Sharon, "Ruthven, William, fourth Lord Ruthven and first earl of Gowrie (c. 1543–1584)", *ODNB*.

³⁸³ Goodare, *Mary, Queen of Scots, ODNB, supra*.

Cecil, indicates that he did consider them to be genuine. On the other hand it is difficult to imagine that he would have pursued marriage with Mary had he really believed she was an adultress and a murderer, which suggests that he had been persuaded the casket letters were forgeries.

The inquiry ended inconclusively with a declaration by Queen Elizabeth on 10 January 1569 that neither side had proved its case. But Moray's production of the casket letters accusing his half sister of murder and adultery caused an irreparable breach which made it easy for Cecil and Queen Elizabeth to avoid her restoration. Moray returned to Scotland as Regent, and Mary remained behind in England as a prisoner at Tutbury Castle in Staffordshire, despite the fact that Queen Elizabeth had no legal jurisdiction over her.³⁸⁴

While the inquiry was ongoing, Oxford's mother, Margery Golding, died on 2 December 1568. She is said to have been buried at Earls Colne.³⁸⁵ She owned no lands independently, and thus did not leave a will which might have revealed much about her relationship with her children, her second husband, her extended family, and her friends.

On 10 December 1568, Oxford's first cousin, John Sheffield (c.1538-1568), 2nd Baron Sheffield, died.³⁸⁶ His wife, who is not mentioned in his will, was Douglas Howard,³⁸⁷ the eldest daughter of William Howard, 1st Baron Howard of Effingham.³⁸⁸ Shortly after the 2nd Baron Sheffield's death, his widow began a liaison with Leicester, and later claimed they had secretly married.³⁸⁹ Although the evidence for the marriage is inconclusive, she did bear Leicester a son, Sir Robert Dudley.³⁹⁰ The anonymous author of *Leicester's Commonwealth* (1584) charged Leicester with the murder of the 2nd Baron Sheffield:

Long after this, [Leicester] fell in love with the Lady Sheffield, whom I signified before, & then also had he the same fortune to have her husband die quickly with an extreme rheum in his head (as it was given out), but as other say of an artificial catarrh that stopped his breath.

³⁸⁴ Goodare, *Mary, Queen of Scots*, *ODNB*, *supra*.

³⁸⁵ Ward, p. 30, citing Morant, Philip, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex* (1748), Vol. II, p. 328; Nelson, p. 49, erroneously says 'beside her first husband'. However the 16th Earl was buried at Castle Hedingham (see above).

³⁸⁶ For his will, see TNA PROB 11/51/31.

³⁸⁷ Adams, Simon, "Sheffield [*née* Howard], Douglas, Lady Sheffield (1542/3–1608)", *ODNB*.

³⁸⁸ McDermott, James, "Howard, William, first Baron Howard of Effingham (1510–1573)", *ODNB*.

³⁸⁹ According to the *ODNB*, Douglas Howard claimed she married Leicester at her family's house at Esher, Surrey, between 11 November and 25 December 1573, having persuaded him to agree to a contract of marriage in 1571 because she then believed she was pregnant.

³⁹⁰ Adams, Simon, "Dudley, Sir Robert (1574–1649)", *ODNB*.

On 22 April 1569 Oxford received his first vote for membership in the Order of the Garter.³⁹¹ The vote was cast by Douglas Howard's father, William Howard, 1st Baron Howard of Effingham.

In 1569 Thomas Underdowne³⁹² dedicated his translation of the *Æthiopian History*³⁹³ of Heliodorus of Emesa to Oxford:

*Now of all knowledge fit for a noble gentleman, I suppose the knowledge of histories is most seeming, for furthering whereof I have Englished a passing fine and witty history written in Greek by Heliodorus, and for right good cause consecrated the same to your honourable Lordship, for such virtues be in your Honour, so haughty courage joined with great skill, such sufficiency in learning, so good nature and common sense, that in your Honour is, I think, expressed the right pattern of a noble gentleman which in my head I have conceived.*³⁹⁴

On 15 February 1569³⁹⁵ the French ambassador, Fenelon,³⁹⁶ reported to Charles IX (1550-1574)³⁹⁷ that Oxford was called before the Privy Council to answer for having sought leave to serve the King in the French wars of religion:³⁹⁸

I hear, however, that a few days ago the Earl of Oxford, a young lord well thought of in this court, who desired to see the wars, and importuned the said Lady to give him leave to go to the Prince of Condé, after several refusals she answered him that she did not wish a personage of hers of such stature to be found with one who was against his King, which he, afterwards discussing with other young lords of goodwill [to France], said to them that he would desire that the Queen, his Mistress, would give him leave to go to serve the King, and that he would willingly fight against the rebels who were making war on him. Being accused of this, he was brought before the Lords of the Council, before whom he showed himself so resolute in his opinion that they considered that it arose from some practice of the Catholics, for which they wished to use him with some rigour, but, after he had told them frankly what the Queen had answered him, they were utterly astonished, and said nothing more to him.

³⁹¹ Nelson, p. 50.

³⁹² Freeman, David, "Underdowne, Thomas (fl. 1566–1577)", *ODNB*.

³⁹³ STC 13041.

³⁹⁴ STC 13041; Ward, p. 31.

³⁹⁵ Nelson, p. 52, erroneously dates this letter to 1570.

³⁹⁶ Bertrand de Salignac Fenelon (1523-1589), Seigneur de la Mothe, served as ambassador to England from 1568-1575.

³⁹⁷ Charles IX reigned from 1560 to 1574.

³⁹⁸ *Correspondance Diplomatique de Bertrand de Salignac, de la Mothe Fénelon, Ambassadeur de France en Angleterre de 1568 à 1575*, (Paris and London, 1838), Vol. I, pp. 197-8. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/correspondanced03coopgoog/page/n259/mode/2up>

The Queen's position throughout the French wars of religion was ambivalent. She secretly favoured the Huguenot rebels on religious grounds, offering them aid and allowing young Englishmen to serve in the Protestant forces led by Henri (1552-1588), Prince of Condé. However she was careful not to openly oppose her fellow monarch, Charles IX, on the general ground that England was weak at the time, and on the particular ground that if she were to openly support subjects who were in rebellion against their sovereign on religious grounds, it might encourage the same thing in her own realm. Thus, when Oxford, a high-ranking nobleman, requested permission to serve with the Huguenot leader, Condé, the Queen replied that she could not permit someone of his stature to fight alongside Condé, who was making war against his King.

Oxford then discussed with friends the possibility of enlisting in the King's forces, and when this became known, was summoned before the Privy Council. Members of the Council, like the Queen, favoured the Huguenot rebels, and were prepared to deal somewhat rigorously with Oxford for his expressed desire to fight on the King's side, suspecting it to have arisen from some practice by English Catholics. As Fenelon notes, however, the Council was astonished to learn that Oxford's position resulted directly from the answer given to him by the Queen that it would be inappropriate for a nobleman of his stature to join the Huguenot forces under Condé. Only after receiving that answer from the Queen had Oxford discussed with friends the possibility of fighting with the King's forces against Condé. Faced with the Queen's pronouncement, the Council immediately dropped the matter.

Fenelon wrote again on 21 March 1569,³⁹⁹ saying that the Queen had now expressly forbidden Oxford to serve with Condé, and had given him letters for travel to Ireland:

It is true that the young Earl of Oxford has shown himself very ready for many days with a number of young English gentlemen to go to the Prince of Condé or some German prince in order to see the wars, but he has not been able to obtain permission from the said Lady. It seemed that some have actually advised him to go as a volunteer, and assured him that he would not incur the indignation of the said Lady for it. But in the end she expressly forbade him and has given him letters to pass to Ireland. I know not whether some contrary wind will push him of its [own] volition to La Rochelle.⁴⁰⁰

As Fenelon wryly remarks, however, this may have been a mere subterfuge on the Queen's part since a contrary wind might well carry Oxford, not to Ireland, but to La Rochelle, which in 1569 was one of four Protestant strongholds in France.

The three-year fall of Oxford's powerful and highly placed kinsman, his first cousin, Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, as a result of his plan to marry Mary, Queen of Scots, had a profound impact on the rest of Oxford's life. Norfolk's downward trajectory began in 1568, when Oxford was eighteen years of age; the events leading up to the

³⁹⁹ Nelson, p. 52, erroneously dates this letter to 1570.

⁴⁰⁰ *Correspondance, supra*, Vol. I, pp. 269-70. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/correspondance6701feneuoft/page/268/mode/2up>.

Duke's execution thus merit reconstruction from Oxford's point of view.

As noted above, in October 1568 Maitland of Lethington broached the idea to the Duke while he was in York.⁴⁰¹ Fatally for Norfolk, however, much had changed between the Queen's suggestion in 1564, and Maitland's suggestion in 1568:

*. . . . Mary was a deposed monarch, accused of murder and adultery, and Elizabeth was not consulted.*⁴⁰²

Graves sums up the problems inherent in determining the degree of Norfolk's own responsibility for his downfall, and the degree to which it was brought about by the machinations of others:

In the politics of intrigue and conspiracy which characterized the crisis years of Elizabeth's reign, 1568-72, Norfolk's role is at times difficult to detect, and his motives, obscured by a contradictory mixture of confidence and uncertainty, loyalty and ambition, are capable of conflicting interpretations. At times they are even impossible to determine. The problem is magnified by the double motives, shifting alignments, and calculated self-interest of most of those involved in the extended crisis. Nevertheless, there are some consistent traits in his behaviour during these years. He was susceptible to persuasion and easily influenced by others, among whom were both protestants – Maitland, the earls of Moray and Leicester – and Catholics, including his father-in-law, Henry, earl of Arundel, the conspirator Ridofi, Mary Stuart, and her ambassador, John Lesie, bishop of Ross. Norfolk proved to be incapable of acknowledging and confessing his errors, and he made repeated protestations of loyalty to the Queen. He certainly had no calculated intention to commit treason.

*Maitland's suggestion of a marriage appealed to Norfolk on several admittedly unrealistic counts. Mary could then be restored to the Scottish throne without imperilling Elizabeth; in due course the English queen would recognize her as rightful successor; and one day he would be king consort throughout the British Isles.*⁴⁰³

In the meantime, there was a distraction. In February 1569 the Duke supported a court conspiracy by the Earls of Leicester, Pembroke, Arundel and others to remove Cecil. The plot was thwarted by the Queen, however, and by May of 1569 the Duke was again on friendly terms with Cecil. According to Graves, 'Leicester, Arundel, and Pembroke, foiled in their attempt to unseat Cecil, turned to promotion of the Mary–Norfolk marriage'. That Norfolk's father-in-law, the Catholic Earl of Arundel, would have supported the Duke's marriage to the Catholic Queen of Scots is understandable on religious grounds, but that motive did not apply to Leicester and Pembroke. Why would Leicester and Pembroke, after failing to remove Cecil, begin promoting Norfolk's marriage to the Queen of Scots? Why would Leicester in particular have involved

⁴⁰¹ Graves, *supra*, ODNB.

⁴⁰² Graves, *supra*, ODNB.

⁴⁰³ Graves, *supra*, ODNB.

himself so thoroughly in the Duke's marriage plans? Did Leicester and Pembroke feel that the marriage would in the long run check Cecil's power because of Cecil's known hostility to the Queen of Scots, and hers to him? Did they think that by allying themselves with Norfolk to help him achieve his objective they could create a power bloc at court against Cecil? The answer is unclear. What is abundantly clear is that in the end the prime beneficiary of Norfolk's downfall was Leicester. After Norfolk's execution, Leicester's primacy at court was unchallenged. For everyone else involved, things turned out badly.

Whatever the motives of his various allies, the Duke proved to be susceptible to their schemes:

Norfolk was now increasingly led by the various designs of Maitland, Moray, and the Scottish go-between, the bishop of Ross, by Leicester, Pembroke, and their go-between, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, and by Mary through Ross. The problems and obstacles were numerous: Mary's abdication, adultery, complicity in murder, and her current marriage to the earl of Bothwell; the attitude of the Scots to her restoration; and Cecil's implacable hostility. There was also the crucial question, how would Elizabeth respond?

Increasingly Norfolk, who remained protestant and, as he saw it, a loyal subject, depended on the words and actions of others. Often they failed to confide in him, especially as some of the plans involved collaboration with Spain and even the liberation of Mary Stuart by force. . . In June 1569 Mary responded to the approaches of Leicester and others by giving her consent to a marriage match, but she asked the same question which perplexed Norfolk: how was Elizabeth's consent to be obtained? This was the crucial problem which caused everyone, not just Norfolk, to procrastinate.⁴⁰⁴

He looked to Moray in Scotland for action, writing to him on 1 July that he could not 'with honour proceed further till such time as he should remove all stumbling-blocks to more apparent proceedings' (Haynes and Murdin, 520). The Scottish regent, however, no longer approved of the marriage scheme and later that month he secured the defeat of an attempt to end Mary's marriage to Bothwell. In England, Leicester, who had previously stressed the need for the public marriage proposal to come from Scotland, agreed to approach the queen on his behalf. He insisted, however, that care must be taken to choose the most favourable opportunity. At a meeting of the privy council in late July from which Cecil was absent, there was overwhelming support for the proposition that Mary should be freed if she married an English nobleman. Even with this conciliar endorsement, however, neither Leicester nor Norfolk made a move.⁴⁰⁵

In May 1569 John Leslie, Bishop of Ross,⁴⁰⁶ recorded the Council's action in his memoirs:

⁴⁰⁴ Graves, *supra*, ODNB.

⁴⁰⁵ Graves, *supra*, ODNB.

⁴⁰⁶ Marshall, Rosalind K., "Lesley [Leslie], John (1527–1596)", ODNB.

. . . the 'Nobility of England' gave me articles to be sent to the Queen of Scots including that she 'should accept some nobleman of England in marriage, specially the Duke of Norfolk'. These noblemen (Arundel, Pembroke, Leicester, on the advice of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton and others) sent a special messenger, Mr Cavendish,⁴⁰⁷ to Mary with the Articles 'and certain honourable and costly tokens' and 'very loving and affectionate letters to her specially in great praise and commendation of the Duke of Norfolk . . . And also that they doubted not but the Queen of England would be persuaded to like well thereof'.⁴⁰⁸

Queen Elizabeth's true feelings were quite otherwise; between 22 and 27 July, while the court was at Richmond, she obliquely warned the Duke against the marriage. Leicester, however, counselled him to pursue it. The Duke's misplaced reliance on Leicester can perhaps be attributed to the fact that the Queen was openly speaking of marrying Leicester at the time. On 25 July the Spanish ambassador in England, Guerau de Spes, wrote to Philip II:

She said yesterday publicly that she would marry at once, either Leicester or the Archduke Charles, although I feel quite sure she will do neither.⁴⁰⁹

On 5 August 1569 the Duke accompanied the Queen on her summer progress to Surrey and Hampshire, and while they were at Guildford, on or about 10 August, according to the Duke's later confession, Leicester promised him that the Queen would speak to him about the marriage. When the Duke later dined with the Queen privately, however, she gave him no encouragement, and instead concluded the dinner with a 'nip', counselling him to 'take good heed to his pillow'. Unfortunately for Norfolk, he was too 'abashed' to pursue the matter with the Queen at that point.⁴¹⁰ There was now strong opposition to the marriage in Scotland as well, and the Earl of Moray sent Alexander Hume to England to actively raise the suspicions of the Queen and Council against the Duke. According to the memoirs of the Bishop of Ross, Hume:

. . . made privately information to some ladies in the court and others of good credit about the Queen of England, to give her warning to beware with her estate, for that the Duke of Norfolk, by the advice and assistance of the principals of her nobility, went about by secret devices and practices to marry the Queen of Scotland, and thereby to possess both the Kingdom of England and Scotland presently . . . This being reported to the Queen of England . . . she began to conceive a high jealousy against the Duke and principals of her nobility and Council, specially the Earls of Arundel, Pembroke, Leicester and others, and used some froward speeches in parables touching them divers times, before she did utter anything to themselves; which moved the noblemen to retire themselves from court, so that the Earl of Arundel went into Sussex, the Earl of Pembroke

⁴⁰⁷ Adams, Simon, "Cavendish, Richard (c. 1530–1601)", *ODNB*.

⁴⁰⁸ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 20.

⁴⁰⁹ *ECDbD* (1569), pp. 22-3.

⁴¹⁰ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 25.

went to his house in Middlesex.⁴¹¹

On or about 23 August, while the court was at Basing, the Duke had 'the last gracious countenance of her Majesty'.⁴¹² On 1 September, Fenelon wrote to Catherine de Medici that he had so persuaded both Norfolk and the Queen of Scots that 'he in person, and she by the Bishop of Ross, have declared to me to have, under hope of her restitution to the Crown and his promise that he will restore her, a mutual consent for marriage between them'.⁴¹³ This promise, if indeed it was made, was likely the cause of Norfolk's later confession of guilt; he may have meant that the Queen of Scots would be restored to the throne of England after the death of Queen Elizabeth, but the promise could obviously be taken in another sense.

On 6 September, at Titchfield, Leicester was either genuinely ill, or feigned a convenient illness. When the Queen came to his bedside, he revealed Norfolk's marriage plans, whereupon the Queen summoned the Duke, and as he later wrote in his confession:

*. . . did charge me on my allegiance to deal no further in the Scottish cause. After which time everybody began to be afraid to keep me company, insomuch as where before the lords' board was ever replenished as full of gentlemen as could sit at it, now if I could get three or four to dine with me it was all. Besides her Majesty's sharp speeches and grievous looks did so kill my heart as I could not tell what to do, and when I came to my Lord of Leicester thinking to find some comfort there, I found him very cold; whereupon I determined to withdraw myself.*⁴¹⁴

Undoubtedly Oxford was one of those who continued to dine with Norfolk. Moreover while they were at Titchfield he advised the Duke to take up arms to save himself. Charles Arundel later alleged that Oxford railed at Norfolk after his execution, saying that:

*My Lord of Norfolk [was] worthy to lose his head for not following his counsel at Titchfield to take arms.*⁴¹⁵

The allegation seems hypocritical; Norfolk was Lord Henry Howard's brother, and both Charles Arundel and Lord Henry Howard must themselves have fervently hoped that Norfolk, who had many loyal followers in East Anglia, would take a stand, and not submit meekly to imprisonment by the Queen.

On the same day, 6 September, Cecil wrote to Nicholas White, advising that:

I can assure you the Queen's Majesty at this present so misliketh [the marriage] as I

⁴¹¹ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 26.

⁴¹² *ECDbD* (1569), p. 27.

⁴¹³ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 28.

⁴¹⁴ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 29.

⁴¹⁵ TNA SP 12/151/46, ff. 103-4; Ward, p. 67, mistranscribes as 'Lichfield'.

*know nobody dare deal therein. And the principal party with us here doth cease.*⁴¹⁶

Thoroughly cowed, Norfolk left court without leave on 15 September for the Charterhouse in London. On 22 September, on learning from Leicester that he would likely be sent to the Tower, 'he panicked and fled to Kenninghall in Norfolk'.⁴¹⁷

According to the Bishop of Ross:

*The Queen used certain sharp speeches to the Duke himself, which moved him to depart, leaving the Queen at Southampton, and at his coming to London he had certain advertisements sent after him from court of evil will borne against him, and of many threatenings spoken by the Queen to put him in prison, which moved him to retire into his country of Norfolk.*⁴¹⁸

In his confession, Norfolk wrote that he was summoned to Hampton Court 'whither her Highness was then appointed to have come, although after her Majesty came to Windsor'. Whether out of genuine concern, or for the purpose of frightening him into some ill-considered action, Leicester sent the Duke a warning 'that he feared I should be presently remitted to the Tower'. 'This sudden news 'appalled and amazed' the Duke, and he left London for his house at Kenninghall in Norfolk.⁴¹⁹ This was an unfortunate step since it allowed Leicester to suggest to the Queen that the Duke could pose a very real threat if he were to raise his tenantry.

About this time it is alleged that 'Arundel sent Hugh Owen with a message suggesting seizure of the Tower. Instead Norfolk retreated indecisively to Kenninghall, leaving Northumberland⁴²⁰ and Charles Neville, sixth earl of Westmorland,⁴²¹ to rebel on their own in November. The rebel leaders claimed that they had Norfolk's and Arundel's concurrence'.⁴²²

On 25 September the Queen ordered the Duke's immediate return to court, adding ominously that she 'never intended in Thought to minister any thing to yow, but as you shuld in Truth deserve'.⁴²³ While en route to the court he sent an urgent dispatch to the northern earls not to rebel, 'for if they did, it should cost him his head'.⁴²⁴

Meanwhile the Queen of Scots was moved to a place of greater security, and the guard

⁴¹⁶ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 29.

⁴¹⁷ Graves, *ODNB*, *supra*.

⁴¹⁸ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 29.

⁴¹⁹ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 31.

⁴²⁰ Lock, Julian, "Percy, Thomas, seventh earl of Northumberland (1528–1572)", *ODNB*

⁴²¹ McDermott, Roger N, "Neville, Charles, sixth earl of Westmorland (1542/3–1601)", *ODNB*.

⁴²² Lock, *Henry Fitzalan*, *supra*, *ODNB*.

⁴²³ Graves, *ODNB*, *supra*, citing Haynes and Murdin, 528-9.

⁴²⁴ Graves, *ODNB*, *supra*, citing Williams, p. 165.

around her doubled, and Queen Elizabeth sent a personal letter chastising her for thinking of marrying Norfolk without her (Queen Elizabeth's) knowledge.⁴²⁵ At the same time, seemingly unaware of recent events, Charles IX wrote to Fenelon urging him to expend every effort to further the marriage, and in addition to encourage Catholic members of the nobility to stir up division and restore the Catholic faith.⁴²⁶

On 27 September de Spes, in a letter to Philip II, indicated that the Duke's allies in Norfolk were coming voluntarily to his aid:

*The Duke of Norfolk, who was in London, having learnt that the Queen desired to have him arrested, suddenly departed for his country, and on the road sent a letter to the Queen . . . As soon as he arrived in his country men flocked to him, both horse and foot. The Queen is greatly alarmed about it, and has summoned to Windsor, where she is, all the members of the Council, sending Master Garrett, Captain of the Pensioners, with her reply to the Duke. . . . They are meeting today to consider the situation.*⁴²⁷

On 29 September, the Earls of Arundel and Pembroke, as well as Lord Lumley,⁴²⁸ husband of the Earl of Arundel's daughter, Jane Fitzalan,⁴²⁹ Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, and some of the Duke's servants, were interrogated. De Spes reported to Philip II on 30 September that when the three noblemen reached Windsor, they were ordered not to leave their lodgings without the Queen's express permission. De Spes also reported that Norfolk had refused to receive the Captain of the Pensioners, excusing himself in a letter to the Queen on the grounds of illness, and that the Queen had sent the Captain and another gentleman back 'with orders not to lose sight of the Duke'.⁴³⁰

Matters had now reached a point at which events were unpredictable. Camden reported later in his *Annals* that:

*All the whole court hung in suspense and fear lest [the Duke] should break forth into rebellion; and it was determined (so the report went) forthwith to put the Queen of Scots to death.*⁴³¹

Oxford vehemently urged the Duke not to obey the Queen's command to repair to Windsor. In their later allegations against Oxford, Lord Henry Howard and Charles Arundel recalled Oxford's frustration at the Duke's 'tame submission':

Railing at my Lord of Norfolk for his coming at the Queen's commandment, contrary to

⁴²⁵ ECDBD (1569), p. 32.

⁴²⁶ ECDBD (1569), p. 32.

⁴²⁷ ECDBD (1569), p. 33.

⁴²⁸ Barron, Kathryn, "Lumley, John, Baron Lumley (c. 1533–1609)", *ODNB*.

⁴²⁹ Hodgson-Wright, Stephanie, "Lumley [née Fitzalan], Jane, Lady Lumley (1537–1578)", *ODNB*.

⁴³⁰ ECDBD (1569), p. 33.

⁴³¹ ECDBD (1569), p. 34.

*his [Oxford's] counsel as he said in a letter he wrote. Continual railing on the Duke for coming up when he was sent for.*⁴³²

These allegations seem hypocritical considering that at the time both Howard and Arundel were undoubtedly fervently hoping the Duke would not comply with the Queen's command.

Oxford was not the only one to urge Norfolk to refuse to come to Windsor. The Bishop of Ross wrote that:

*Many advertisements were sent to the duke by his friends with fair offers of assistance in time of his absence, and at Windsor, in respect to the great rigour intended, assuring him, if he came to court, it would cost him his life. But he would attempt nothing.*⁴³³

On 2 October, Edward FitzGarret, Lieutenant of the Gentlemen Pensioners, sent to Cecil from St Albans for instructions, saying that the Duke 'hath 34 or 40 with him, gentlemen and yeomen of his own servants . . . and I and my company be not past six or seven'; the Queen replied that although she had willed the Duke to come to Windsor, she had now 'determined that he shall, before he come hither, resort to the house of Paul Wentworth⁴³⁴ at Burnham'. On 3 October the Duke arrived at Burnham,⁴³⁵ where Sir Henry Neville⁴³⁶ had been ordered to take charge of him. According to the Bishop of Ross, the Duke was then examined by members of the Privy Council, as was Leicester, who was pardoned by the Queen 'because he did plainly utter the whole proceedings at the first accusation'.⁴³⁷

Access to the court at Windsor was strictly prohibited, allegedly because of the plague, but almost certainly for reasons of security, and Fenelon expressed concern to Catherine de Medici that a plan to put the Queen of Scots into the hands of the Earl of Moray was being secretly carried out. Meanwhile the Council was deliberating on 'what to do about the Duke of Norfolk and the Queen of Scots'.⁴³⁸ In a surprise move which merits further investigation in light of his later nefarious activities, orders were given on 7 October to arrest Roberto Ridolfi, who remained in the custody of Sir Francis Walsingham for a month, and may have been turned into an agent against Norfolk at that time.⁴³⁹

⁴³² Ward, p. 67.

⁴³³ Edwards, Francis, *The Dangerous Queen*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964), p. 136.

⁴³⁴ Dean, David, "Wentworth, Paul (1534–1594)", *ODNB*.

⁴³⁵ Graves, *ODNB*, *supra*, says: 'On his arrival at St Albans on 2 October 1569 the duke was taken to Paul Wentworth's house at Burnham. There he was held a prisoner in the custody of Sir Henry Neville until 8 October, when he was transferred to the Tower, shortly before the northern uprising.'

⁴³⁶ For Sir Henry Neville, see Riordan, Michael, "Henry VIII, privy chamber of (*act.* 1509–1547)", *ODNB*.

⁴³⁷ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 34.

⁴³⁸ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 35.

⁴³⁹ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 36.

Fenelon, reporting that the Queen was rallying her supporters, predicted civil war:

*. . . it is thought that soon there will be people in the country on both sides, led by the Earl of Leicester on one side and the Duke on the other, although it is known that Leicester and Secretary Cecil had from the beginning given their word and their hand to the Duke in this cause, but since, having on their knees begged pardon of the Queen their mistress, have left it . . . The Duke returned last Monday against the advice of all his friends.*⁴⁴⁰

De Spes reported to Philip II on 8 October that the Earls of Arundel and Pembroke, as well as Lord Lumley, had been detained at Windsor and 'judicially interrogated'. De Spes reported further that the Duke had 'abandoned for the present his attempts at revolt', although it appears that revolt had all along been the furthest thing from his mind, although much in the minds of others, including Oxford. De Spes reported further rumours concerning the Earls of Westmorland,⁴⁴¹ Cumberland, Derby and others, 'all Catholics', who 'say that they will by armed force release the Queen [of Scots] and take possession of all the north country, restoring the Catholic religion in this country.'⁴⁴² The Earl of Westmorland was Norfolk's brother-in-law, having married the Duke's sister, Jane Howard (1537-1593).

On 11 October 1569 the Duke was committed to the Tower,⁴⁴³ although not charged with any offence. Fenelon reported his committal to Charles IX:

*The Duke of Norfolk . . . was taken by water in the Queen's barge from Windsor to the Tower of London . . . The other lords are still under arrest at Windsor, and many others have been made prisoners . . . and it is said they have ordered the Catholic bishops everywhere to be made close prisoners . . . there being doubt of an uprising in the country.*⁴⁴⁴

On 13 October 1569, Cecil wrote to the Earls of Shrewsbury and Huntingdon dismissing a 'fond rumour stirred up the 6th of this month in the North Riding [of Yorkshire and the Bishopric [of Durham] of a rising should be; but it was a vain smoke, without any spark of any account'.⁴⁴⁵

On 18 October Fenelon wrote to Charles IX that:

The Council appear to wish, now that the Duke of Norfolk is in the tower, to proceed to

⁴⁴⁰ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 36.

⁴⁴¹ McDermott, Roger N, "Neville, Charles, sixth earl of Westmorland (1542/3–1601)", *ODNB*.

⁴⁴² *ECDbD* (1569), p. 36.

⁴⁴³ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 37; Edwards, Francis, *The Marvellous Chance*, (London: Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd., 1968), p. 157. Edwards dates the Duke's committal to 8 October.

⁴⁴⁴ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 37; Sharp, p. 6.

⁴⁴⁵ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 37.

put him on trial. It seems they have not found evidence to send the Earls of Arundel and Pembroke and Lord Lumley to the Tower; but they are kept under strict guard, Lumley in a house very near Windsor, the Earl of Arundel in Windsor College [in Castle precincts]. The Earl of Pembroke, as he is old and weak, is shut up in his lodgings. . . Seven Councillors are commissioners for this trial 'all tried and chosen Protestants . . . the Earl of Leicester . . . leaves the Council as soon as they touch on these lords' deeds'.⁴⁴⁶

On 24 October, the Queen instructed Sussex to send for the Earl of Northumberland and the Duke's brother-in-law, the Earl of Westmorland, requiring them to come to court without delay.⁴⁴⁷

On 27 October three of the Duke's adherents, Edward Clere,⁴⁴⁸ a second cousin of the Queen and of the Duke, Thomas Kitson⁴⁴⁹ and Michael Hare, were interrogated at Windsor.⁴⁵⁰

Fenelon's notes for 28 October record that to forestall an uprising the Council had instructed officials to forbid assemblies, seize weapons and forbid any speech concerning the Queen, the Council or the state of government. Moreover when one of the commissioners advised the Queen that no charge could lawfully be laid against Norfolk, she replied, 'What the laws cannot do, my authority can do'. The Queen's belief that her personal wishes superseded the law is illuminating in light of her later comment to Oxford concerning his rights to the Forest of Essex:

. . . and for a final answer commanded me no more to follow the suit for, whether it was hers or mine, she was resolved to dispose thereof at her pleasure.⁴⁵¹

Fenelon recorded further that 'All that the Council have against [the Duke] are: a letter which he sent to the Earl of Moray touching the marriage, which the Earl sent to the Queen; a suspicion that he plotted with princes overseas; and his departure from court without leave', adding that 'before he leaves the Tower they wish to constrain him to

⁴⁴⁶ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 38.

⁴⁴⁷ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 39.

⁴⁴⁸ Sir Edward Clere (15 June 1536 – 3 June 1606) purchased Oxford's manor of Weybourne. For his will, see TNA PROB 11/108/109.

⁴⁴⁹ Rowe, Joy, "Kitson family (*per. c.* 1520–*c.* 1660)", *ODNB*. Thomas Kitson (1540–1603) was the brother-in-law of Sir William Cornwallis, to whom Oxford sold Fisher's Folly.

⁴⁵⁰ *ECDbD* (169), p. 40. For the interrogatories, see *Historical Manuscripts Commission. Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquis of Salisbury, K.G., &c. &c. &c., Preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, Part I*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1883), pp. 439–40. URL:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=2WdKAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA439>

⁴⁵¹ BL MS Harley 6996[22], ff. 42–3.

marry Lady Hoby,⁴⁵² widow of the last English ambassador to France, who is the sister of Secretary Cecil's wife'.⁴⁵³

On 1 November Catherine de Medici, clearly unaware of how events were unfolding in England, wrote to Fenelon encouraging him to secretly do everything in his power to further the marriage between the Duke and Mary, Queen of Scots.⁴⁵⁴

On 8 November de Spes informed Philip II that the Earl of Pembroke was still confined to his house and forbidden to communicate with anyone but his servants, that the Earl of Arundel was still under guard in the College (Eton?) near Windsor, and that the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland would not come to court for fear of arrest, and moreover were vowing to free Mary, Queen of Scots and take over the country if King Philip would assist them.⁴⁵⁵

On 8 November Sussex advised the Queen that Northumberland had delayed his coming to court, while Westmorland had outright refused to come. Having taken this step, the two Earls wrote to the Pope on the same day asking him to excommunicate the Queen.⁴⁵⁶ Unfortunately for the Earls, the letter was not received in Rome until 16 February 1570, and although the Pope promptly issued the excommunication Bull on 25 February, by then the rebellion in the North was over,⁴⁵⁷ and not unsurprisingly the Bull increased the oppression of English Catholics.

On 9 November the Northern Rebellion broke out,⁴⁵⁸ provoked by the Queen's demand that the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland repair to court. Sussex, who was at York when the rebellion began, had advised the Queen that summoning Westmorland and Northumberland to court would precipitate a crisis; however his warning was ignored.⁴⁵⁹ Norfolk, of course, played no part in the rebellion, being confined to the

⁴⁵² Priestland, Pamela, "Russell [*née* Cooke], Elizabeth, Lady Russell [*other married name* Elizabeth Hoby, Lady Hoby] (1528–1609)", *ODNB*. She was ten years older than the Duke. The marriage had been discussed by Cecil and Norfolk before 15 June 1569, when de Spes wrote to Philip II that 'Cecil has spoken to the Duke about marrying a sister-in-law of his, a widow with 3000 ducats income, offering to increase her dowry if the Duke marries her. The Duke would not listen to it, for he has his thoughts very high, having fixed his eyes upon the Queen of Scotland. . . . The Countil now offer to recover her kingdom for her on certain conditions, and the rununciation by her of her claim to the English crown. With this object this Queen has sent to Scotland to request the Regent to send new commissioners to discuss it. See *ECDbD* (1569), p. 18.

⁴⁵³ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 40.

⁴⁵⁴ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 41.

⁴⁵⁵ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 42.

⁴⁵⁶ Lock, 'Percy, Thomas', *ODNB*, *supra*.

⁴⁵⁷ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 42.

⁴⁵⁸ *ECDbD* (1569), pp. 37, 42.

⁴⁵⁹ Lock, 'Percy, Thomas', *ODNB*, *supra*; Williams, Neville, *Thomas Howard, Fourth Duke of Norfolk*, (London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1964), pp. 170-3.

Tower, but Westmorland was his brother-in-law, and his complicity was therefore suspected.

Unaware that that the rebellion had begun, on 10 November the Queen again demanded that Northumberland and Westmorland repair to court, this time ordering them to do so on their allegiance, making their refusal treasonous.⁴⁶⁰ On 14 November two Earls rode to Durham, and 'raised the standard of revolt'.⁴⁶¹ Sussex, Sadler and Hunsdon:

*. . . felt insecure in York, which however they durst not leave on account of their inferiority in cavalry. They could not act on the offensive, as their levies came slowly in.*⁴⁶²

On 24 November 1569, with his cousin Norfolk in the Tower and another cousin, the Countess of Northumberland, in rebellion, Oxford, doubtless concerned to prove his loyalty to the Queen, wrote to Cecil:

Sir. Although my hap hath been so hard that it hath visited me of late with sickness, yet thanks be to God, through the looking to which I have had by your care had over me, I find my health restored and myself double beholding unto you, both for that and many good turns which I have received before of your part, for the which, although I have found you to not account of late of me as in time tofore, yet notwithstanding that strangeness, you shall see at last in me that I will acknowledge and not be ungrateful unto you for them, and not to deserve so ill a thought in you that they were ill bestowed in me, but at this present desiring you, if I have done anything amiss that I have merited your offence, impute to my young years and lack of experience to know my friends.

And at this time I am bold to desire your favour and friendship, that you will suffer me to be employed by your means and help in this service that now is in hand, whereby I shall think myself the most bound unto you of any man in this court, and hereafter ye shall command me as any of your own.

*Having no other means whereby to speak with you myself, I am bold to impart my mind in paper, earnestly desiring your Lordship that, at this instant, as heretofore you have given me your good word to have me see the wars and services in strange and foreign places, sith you could not then obtain me licence of the Queen's Majesty, now you will do me so much honour as that, by your purchase of my licence, I may be called to the service of my prince and country, as at this present troublous time a number are.*⁴⁶³

⁴⁶⁰ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 42.

⁴⁶¹ See McDermott, 'Neville, Charles', *ODNB, supra*. See also Sharp, Cuthbert, *Memorials of the Rebellion of 1569*, (London: John Bowyer Nichols and Son, 1840), p. xvi at:

<https://archive.org/details/memorialsfrebel00shar/page/n23/mode/2up>

⁴⁶² Sharp, p. xvi.

⁴⁶³ BL Lansdowne 11/53, ff. 121-2.

Oxford begins by mentioning his recovery from an illness. It seems possible he contracted it while the court was on progress in Hampshire. On 28 June the Bishop of Winchester⁴⁶⁴ wrote to Leicester from Bishop's Walton:

*I understand . . . that her Majesty meaneth to make her progress into these parts. I wrote unto the Lord Chamberlain that there hath been sick in my house at Waltham 50 persons, and five died since the 25th day of March last, and in the town 13 died since the same time. Now on Saturday at night last past there is at the Constable's house at Waltham one dead, and all the neighbours feareth it was of the plague. But I cannot affirm that to be the disease. . . . And this I dare well affirm of my own knowledge that it is a sharp and perilous sickness. . . . There is no part along the sea coast free from it.*⁴⁶⁵

The mysterious disease may have been spotted fever or typhus.⁴⁶⁶ Although the court did not visit Bishop's Walton, the Queen did visit other places in Hampshire, including Titchfield and Southampton.⁴⁶⁷ In any event, whether Oxford had spotted fever or some other serious illness, he appears still to have been in isolation when he wrote to Cecil on 24 November as he says he has no means to speak personally with him.

Oxford also refers in the letter to Cecil's recent displeasure with him. The cause of the rift is unknown; however there are several possible reasons for it. Oxford may have supported Norfolk in his bid in February 1569 to remove Cecil from power. Alternatively, perhaps the advice Oxford had given Norfolk at Titchfield 'to take arms' had come to Cecil's ears.

On the same day that Oxford wrote to Cecil, the Earl of Warwick and Lord Clinton⁴⁶⁸ were appointed Lieutenants General of the forces being sent to suppress the Northern Rebellion,⁴⁶⁹ and Oxford requests Cecil to let him take part in 'this service that now is in hand'. Events moved swiftly. Clinton's troops marched north from Lincoln on 1 December, while Warwick's set out from Leicester. Sussex, who had earlier been confined to York since his horsemen were outmatched by those of the rebels, had

⁴⁶⁴ Houlbrooke, Ralph, "Horne, Robert (1513x15–1579)", *ODNB*.

⁴⁶⁵ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 19.

⁴⁶⁶ In England the term 'spotted fever' was loosely applied to typhus or any fever involving petechial eruptions. 'From 1569 to 1574 the spotted or petechial fever prevailed in Europe with much mortality, and was followed by the plague': see Levick, James J., 'Report of the Committee on "Spotted Fever, So-Called"', *The Transactions of the American Medical Association*, (Philadelphia: American Medical Association, 1866), Vol. XVII, pp. 309-64 at p. 318. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=-ehXAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA318>

⁴⁶⁷ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 29.

⁴⁶⁸ Duffin, Anne, "Clinton, Edward Fiennes de, first earl of Lincoln (1512–1585)", *ODNB*.

⁴⁶⁹ *ECDbD* (1569), p. 45, citing Haynes, Samuel, *A Collection of State Papers*, (London: William Bowyer, 1740), p. 561. Ward, p. 38, dates the appointment to 29 November, citing TNA SP 12/59/53 (*CSPD 1547-1580*, p. 349).

recently received reinforcements; he now had 7,000 men, and could have proceeded against the rebels without waiting for the 12,000-strong army of Warwick and Clinton.⁴⁷⁰ However according to Sir Ralph Sadler, writing to the Privy Council on 15 December:

*. . . albeit we think ourselves able enough with that force my Lord Lieutenant hath here to deal with them . . . yet because my Lord of Warwick and my Lord Admiral are so desirous to be at this service, we do stay for them of intent to join all our force together whereby we may proceed with surety.*⁴⁷¹

Meanwhile the disorganized and ill-planned rebellion fell apart on its own, with the rebels having wasted time marching south towards York, then retracing their steps and laying siege to Barnard Castle. When Sussex approached Darlington on 16 December, Northumberland and Westmorland left their footmen to shift for themselves and fled with their horsemen from Durham to Hexham, and from thence to the Scottish border, crossing on 20 December.⁴⁷²

Court of Wards accounts for the first quarter of 1570 confirm that Oxford had been ill at Windsor:

To Riche, the apothecary, for potions, pills and other drugs for my Lord's diet in time of his sickness, as by his bill it particularly appeareth, £15 15s 4d.

*[To Chester Herald] for certain acates [=purchased provisions] for my Lord during his being sick at Windsor, for rewards to his physician and others. . . .*⁴⁷³

However since Oxford's letter of 24 November 1569 refers to a recent illness from which he had already recovered, it is unclear whether the foregoing expenditures relate to an illness in the late fall of 1569 for which bills were now being paid in the first quarter of 1570, or whether Oxford was ill in both the late fall of 1569 and again in the first quarter of 1570.

The same accounts for the first quarter of 1570 record books purchased for Oxford, attesting to his interest in literature, biography and history, and his fluency in French and Italian.

⁴⁷⁰ Longstaffe, W. Hylton Dyer, *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Darlington, in the Bishoprick*, (London: J. Henry Parker, 1854), p. 107. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=APEVAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA107>

⁴⁷¹ Sharp, p. 102.

⁴⁷² Sharp, pp. xviii, 35-6, 104-113. Northumberland was captured on 24 December 1569, and sold to Queen Elizabeth on 6 June 1572. He was taken to York and beheaded on 22 August. See Lock, 'Percy, Thomas', *ODNB*, *supra*. Westmorland was protected by Sir Thomas Ker, laird of Ferniehirst in Roxburghshire, and in 1570 sailed from Aberdeen to exile in the Spanish Netherlands. McDermott, 'Neville, Charles', *ODNB*, *supra*.

⁴⁷³ TNA SP 15/59/38, ff. 89-90.

To William Seres,⁴⁷⁴ stationer, for a Geneva Bible gilt,⁴⁷⁵ a Chaucer, Plutarch's work in French, with other books and paper, as by his bill, 57s 10d.

To William Bishop, my Lord's man . . . for two Italian books. . . .⁴⁷⁶

A prominent member of the Stationers' Company, William Seres was also a trusted servant of Sir William Cecil, Master of the Court of Wards, who caused John Hart⁴⁷⁷ to purchase most of the books, paper and ink used by royal wards from Seres.⁴⁷⁸

The Geneva Bible purchased for Oxford in the first quarter of 1570 has been identified with a volume in the Folger Shakespeare Library printed at Geneva in 1570 by John Crispin.⁴⁷⁹ It has been asserted that it was Oxford himself who underlined approximately 1000 verses in it, and wrote a handful of marginal annotations. It has also been asserted that the correlation between the underlined verses and marginal annotations and Shakespeare's biblical allusions establishes that Oxford wrote the works of Shakespeare.⁴⁸⁰ However as David Kathman notes:

. . . the pattern of marked verses in this Bible shows very little similarity to Shakespeare's pattern of Bible use. . . .⁴⁸¹

Although Oxford almost certainly owned the volume during his lifetime, after his death it may have been among the possessions his widow, Elizabeth Trentham, stored at Kirby Hall at Castle Hedingham, the home of Oxford's first cousin, John Vere (d.1624).⁴⁸² John

⁴⁷⁴ Evenden, Elizabeth, "Seres, William (d. 1578x80)", *ODNB*.

⁴⁷⁵ Nelson, pp. 53, 214-15, 467.

⁴⁷⁶ Ward, pp. 31-3.

⁴⁷⁷ Salmon, Vivian, "Hart, John (c. 1501-1574)", *ODNB*. See also Barnett, Richard C., *Place, Profit and Power; A Study of the Servants of William Cecil, Elizabethan Statesman*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), pp. 73, 79-80, 118-19, 133. Hart was a servant of Sir William Cecil, who had him appointed Chester Herald. Hart's works on spelling reform may have influenced the *Langham Letter* (see *infra*).

⁴⁷⁸ See Barnett, *Place, Profit and Power*, pp. 22, 44, 116-20.

⁴⁷⁹ STC 2106, c.1: 'Contemporary maroon velvet with silver clasps (partially restored), corners and center plates, with the engraved crest of the Earl of Oxford on front cover; on back cover, a center plate of quartered pointed shield, ribboned coronet and a star. Provenance: probably Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford copy; purchased in 1925 from Bernard Halliday, Leicester.'

⁴⁸⁰ Stritmatter, Roger A., 'The Marginalia of Edward de Vere's Geneva Bible', Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 2001. URL: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations/AAI3001149/>.

⁴⁸¹ See Kathman, David, 'Oxford's Bible', and 'Annotations in Edward de Vere's Geneva Bible'. URL: <https://shakespeareauthorship.com/ox5.html>.

⁴⁸² See Elizabeth Trentham's will, TNA PROB 11/121/171: '*Item, I give unto my dear and loving son, Henry de Vere, Earl of Oxenford, to be kept by him as a remembrance of my motherly love unto him, my rope of great pearl, my new jewel, my thirteen diamond*

Vere's widow, Thomasine,⁴⁸³ in turn left 'two books of the Bible and New Testament bossed with silver' to her sister-in-law, Mary Vere,⁴⁸⁴ widow of Oxford's first cousin, Horatio Vere, with whom she appears to have been on affectionate terms:

And the other moiety of my said household stuff (except linen and plate), I give and bequeath unto the righ[t] honourable Mary, Lady Vere, Baroness of Tilbury, my sister-in-law, lately wife of Horace, Lord Vere, deceased.

Item, I give and bequeath to the said Mary Vere two long tables standing in Tilbury Hall, and what else is mine there at the time of my death, and those two books of the Bible and New Testament bossed with silver which I have already delivered unto her, but her Ladyship desired me to put them into my will, which I now [+have] performed.

Also I give her my ring with nine sparks of diamonds, desiring her Ladyship to wear it as a token of my love, to be delivered to her within two months after my decease by my executors hereinafter named.

It thus seems likely that it was either Thomasine Vere or Lady Mary Vere who after Oxford's death underlined the approximately 1000 verses in his Geneva Bible. Lady Mary Vere in particular was known to be religiously inclined; she is described by the *ODNB* as a 'patron of godly ministers'.

On 20 January 1570 the Queen finally left Windsor for Hampton Court, having been there since about 23 September 1569 during the contretemps with Norfolk and the Northern Rebellion.⁴⁸⁵ Presumably Oxford left Windsor at the same time.

On 23 January 1570, the Regent Moray was assassinated at Linlithgow,⁴⁸⁶ resulting in political turmoil in Scotland between the Marians and the supporters of the young James VI.⁴⁸⁷ Queen Elizabeth was 'much grieved' at Moray's death; she had counted on him to rule Scotland in her interests, and lamented that 'this would be the beginning of her ruin'.⁴⁸⁸

In February 1570 Oxford was involved in the first of several legal battles with the Queen. A document entitled 'The Earl of Oxford his Case' dating from February 1570 sets out the legal issue in a case the Queen brought against Oxford concerning revenues of £471 19s 5-1/4d per annum from the lands of Oxford's mother's jointure after her death in

buttons, and all those rich garments, cloaks, bedding, and household stuff, fine diaper and damask linen which are now in my cousin John Vere's house. . . .

⁴⁸³ TNA PROB 11/181/273.

⁴⁸⁴ Eales, Jacqueline, "Vere [*née* Tracy; *other married name* Hoby], Mary, Lady Vere (1581–1671)", *ODNB*.

⁴⁸⁵ *ECDbD* (1570), p. 3; *ECDbD* (1569), p. 33.

⁴⁸⁶ *ECDbD* (1570), p. 4.

⁴⁸⁷ Ward, pp. 42-3.

⁴⁸⁸ *ECDbD* (1570), p. 5.

1568, and further revenues of £343 6s 5-1/4d per annum for lands which Oxford inherited in tail after his father's death.⁴⁸⁹

On 7 March 1570, Oxford's stepfather, Charles Tyrrell, was buried at Kingston-upon-Thames.⁴⁹⁰ In his will he left bequests to Oxford ('unto the Earl of Oxford one great horse that his Lordship gave me') and to Oxford's sister, Mary.⁴⁹¹ In the same year Oxford wrote 'favourable letters' for the mathematician and astrologer Dr. John Dee.⁴⁹² The letters have not survived, and are only known through Dee's reference to them in *A Compendious Rehearsal*, published in 1592.⁴⁹³

On 14 March the Queen determined to send Sussex back north to take an army to the Scottish border.⁴⁹⁴ Sussex left on the following day. Headquartered at York, Sussex had forces at Berwick in the East March under Lord Hunsdon,⁴⁹⁵ at Alnwick in the Middle March under Sir John Forster,⁴⁹⁶ and at Carlisle in the West March under Lord Scrope.⁴⁹⁷

Although Oxford did not leave with Sussex, he received permission to join him. On 30 March 1570 Cecil wrote to Sir William Damsell (c.1520-1582), Receiver-General of the Court of Wards, instructing him to deliver £40 to Oxford as the Queen was sending him 'into the north parts to remain with my Lord of Sussex, and to be employed there in her Majesty's service'.⁴⁹⁸

On 10 April the Queen proclaimed the 'just, honourable and necessary causes' for which she had sent an army to the Scottish border. According to Strype's summary of the proclamation, certain Scots were not only aiding the English rebels, but had conducted raids with them into England:

. . . [The Queen] doubted not but that it was notorious to all persons of understanding, both in England and Scotland, in what sort certain of her rebellious subjects fled into Scotland, and there were maintained, kept, and favoured in the continuance of their rebellious enterprises. That by succour of outlaws, thieves, and disordered persons, living upon the frontiers of Scotland, (with whom they had former intelligence to begin and prosecute their rebellion,) they entered and invaded sundry places of England, their native country, and that with fire and sword. . . . in the word of a prince, she assured all manner of persons that her intent and meaning was to treat all the subjects of Scotland as lovingly and peaceable as her own; excepting only notorious outlaws, thieves, enemies,

⁴⁸⁹ TNA SP 12/66/47, f. 135.

⁴⁹⁰ Nelson, pp. 49, 450-1.

⁴⁹¹ See TNA PROB 11/52/187.

⁴⁹² Roberts, R. Julian, "Dee, John (1527–1609)", *ODNB*.

⁴⁹³ Ward, pp. 49-50.

⁴⁹⁴ *ECDbD* (1570), p. 12.

⁴⁹⁵ MacCaffrey, Wallace T., "Carey, Henry, first Baron Hunsdon (1526–1596)", *ODNB*.

⁴⁹⁶ Meikle, Maureen M., "Forster, Sir John (c. 1515–1602)", *ODNB*.

⁴⁹⁷ Henry Scrope, 9th Baron Scrope of Bolton. See Ward, p. 40.

⁴⁹⁸ TNA SP 15/19/37, f. 88; Ward, p. 40; Nelson, pp. 50-3.

*and peace-breakers, who lately with her rebels invaded and spoiled her realm, and such other of the nation as should support and maintain her rebels, contrary to the treaties between the realms.*⁴⁹⁹

Thus, the official justification for sending an army to Scotland was that Scottish lairds in the border area had taken advantage of the civil unrest after the assassination of the Regent Moray to conduct raids into England, and that the raiding parties were assisted by English fugitives who had fled to Scotland after the Northern Rebellion.⁵⁰⁰

It is true that Sir Thomas Ker of Ferniehirst,⁵⁰¹ a staunch supporter of Mary, Queen of Scots, sheltered Westmorland at Ferniehirst Castle, and that Sir Walter Scott, another of Mary's supporters, 'laid waste to the English border'.⁵⁰² However the extent to which English fugitives took part in these raids about the time of Moray's assassination remains unclear. Sussex himself, in a letter to Cecil on 22 December 1569, pointed out that Northumberland and Westmorland's forces in Scotland were so weak that they had been forced to flee Liddesdale with no more than 50 horse, leaving the Countess of Northumberland and others behind.⁵⁰³ Moreover in a letter on 22 March 1570, Cecil accused the Scots of both maintaining the English fugitives and conducting border raids, but specifically did not accuse English fugitives of participating in the border raids:

*Since the death of the Regent, the Borderers have maintained our rebels, and invaded England, wherefor for which purpose my Lord of Sussex is now ordered with an army to invade them and make revenge, whereof the Scots hearing do make all means they can to be reconciled but they must feel the sword and the firebrand.*⁵⁰⁴

It thus appears that the real purpose of the campaign was to pressure the Scots into surrendering the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland and, as de Spes phrased it in a letter to Philip II, to keep the government of Scotland in the Queen's hands.⁵⁰⁵

Sussex appears to have interpreted his authority very broadly. On the same day as the Queen issued her proclamation, 10 April, he wrote to Cecil from Newcastle:

⁴⁹⁹ *ECDbD* (1570), p. 14: Strype, John, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion and Other Various Occurrences in the Church of England, During Queen Elizabeth's Happy Reign*, New ed., (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1824), Vol. I, Part II, pp. 358-61. URL:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=q4tKAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA358&lpg=PA358>

⁵⁰⁰ Ward, p. 42.

⁵⁰¹ Meikle, Maureen M., "Ker, Sir Thomas, of Ferniehirst (d. 1586)", *ODNB*.

⁵⁰² Paul, James Balfour, *The Scots Peerage Founded on Wood's Edition of Sir Robert Douglas's Perage of Scotland*, (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1905), Vol. II, pp. 231-2. URL: <https://archive.org/details/scotsppeeragefoun02paul/page/230/mode/2up>

⁵⁰³ Sharp, pp. 114-15.

⁵⁰⁴ *ECDbD* (1570), p. 13.

⁵⁰⁵ *ECDbD* (1570), p. 12.

*I hope before the light of this moon be past to leave a memory in Scotland whereof they and their children shall be afraid to offer war to England.*⁵⁰⁶

On 16 April he wrote to Cecil announcing his intention to enter Scotland the next night with 1000 horse and 3000 foot. During the week of 17 to 22 April, Sussex, Hunsdon and Scrope ravaged the border areas.⁵⁰⁷ The Bishop of Ross described the invasion:

*[The army] entered in . . . upon the Borders . . . and burnt towns, houses and corn, cast down castles and palaces in such rigorous manner that the like destruction was not done by England to Scotland in so short time these many hundred years.*⁵⁰⁸

According to MacCaffrey, Sussex and Hunsdon exceeded their authority:⁵⁰⁹

*Elizabeth initially opposed the dispatch of English troops to aid James, but Sussex and Hunsdon risked her wrath by making a series of devastating raids on the Scottish borderlands between April and June 1570, laying waste to the country and seizing the principal castles.*⁵¹⁰

Whether Oxford saw action is unknown, as is the impression the campaign made on him. It seems unlikely he found anything valorous in the indiscriminate burning of towns and villages.

In May 1570, Lord Darnley's father, Matthew Stewart, Earl of Lennox, who had earlier attempted to avenge his son's murder and who was a bitter opponent of Mary, Queen of Scots, crossed into Scotland and was elected Regent on 12 July 1570. He was an unpopular choice, perceived by the Earl of Huntly as having been 'virtually appointed by Queen Elizabeth',⁵¹¹ and the civil unrest in Scotland continued:

*A bitter civil dispute developed between the king's party, which aspired to govern in the name of James VI, and the queen's party, which conducted a rival administration from Edinburgh Castle in Mary's name.*⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁶ *ECDbD* (1570), p. 14.

⁵⁰⁷ For details of the campaign, see Ward, pp. 40-8.

⁵⁰⁸ *ECDbD* (1570), pp. 14-15.

⁵⁰⁹ For a contemporary description of their proceedings, see Cabala, *Sive Scrinia Sacra, Mysteries of State and Government: in Letters of Illustrious Persons and Great Ministers of State . . .*, (London: G. Bedell and T. Collins, 1663), pp. 174-5. URL: <https://archive.org/details/cabalasivescrini00lond/page/174/mode/2up>

⁵¹⁰ See MacCaffrey, Wallace T., "Carey, Henry, first Baron Hunsdon (1526–1596)", *ODNB*.

⁵¹¹ White, Allan, "Gordon, George, fifth earl of Huntly (d. 1576)", *ODNB*.

⁵¹² Merriman, Marcus, "Stewart, Matthew, thirteenth or fourth earl of Lennox (1516–1571)", *ODNB*.

Although Sussex' military operation was a success, the Queen did not allow him to complete it:

The magnificent show of strength the [party of Mary, Queen of Scots,] boasted in April 1570 was swept aside by England's decisive and devastating military intervention in the same month under Thomas Radcliffe, third earl of Sussex. After scattering the Marian triumvirate of Huntly, Argyll, and Châtelherault,⁵¹³ despite their territorial strength across northern, central, and western Scotland and the support of 'xxxii erles and lordes in parlement' (CSP Scot., 3.216), and the expulsion of the queen's party from Edinburgh in May 1570, Sussex could not believe Elizabeth's refusal to let him finish the job. There is no doubt Elizabeth's hesitancy kept the queen's party alive at this time.⁵¹⁴

About 1570 Edmund Elviden, gentleman,⁵¹⁵ dedicated to Oxford *The most excellent and plesant metaphoricall historie of Pesistratus and Catanea.*⁵¹⁶ Nothing is known of Elviden beyond the fact that he published three works: *The Closet of Counsels, Pesistratus and Catanea*, and a tract urging the Northern rebels to reconsider their actions, *A Neweyeres gift to the Rebellious persons in the North partes of England*. The latter, dated 1 January 1570 and written in accomplished fourteeners, ends with these lines:⁵¹⁷

*This wrote your friend, a wishing friend
Unto his native soil,
Who craves your friendships to befriend
Yourselfes, and fear your foil.⁵¹⁸*

The phrase 'native soil' has been construed as evidence that the author was from the north of England, but the phrase 'native soil' could equally well refer to England generally. Elveden is a small town in Suffolk, and the manor of Elveden, which had belonged to the abbey of Bury St Edmunds, was granted after the dissolution to the Duke of Norfolk. It seems possible the name 'Edmund Elviden' is a blend of the two elements, and is therefore a pseudonym. It may have been a pseudonym used by Oxford, who is known to have written in fourteeners in his youth, and who was a first cousin of the wife of the rebel Earl of Westmorland and a first cousin of Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk,

⁵¹³ Merriman, Marcus, "Hamilton, James, second earl of Arran, and duke of Châtelherault in the French nobility (c. 1519–1575)", *ODNB*.

⁵¹⁴ Loughlin, Mark, "Maitland, William, of Lethington (1525x30–1573)", *ODNB*.

⁵¹⁵ Alsager Vian, rev. Elizabeth Goldring, "Elviden, Edmund (fl. 1569–1570)", *ODNB*.

⁵¹⁶ STC 7624; Ward, p. 55; Nelson, p. 236. URL:

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A21272.0001.001?view=toc>

⁵¹⁷ Huth, Henry, ed., *Fugitive Tracts Written in Verse Which Illustrate the Condition of Religious and Political Feeling in England*, (1875), pp. xix, 285. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/fugitivetractsw01huthgoog/page/n280/mode/2up>

⁵¹⁸ Huth, Henry, ed., *Fugitive Tracts Written in Verse Which Illustrate the Condition of Religious and Political Feeling in England*, (1875), pp. xix, 285. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/fugitivetractsw01huthgoog/page/n280/mode/2up>

whom the Northern Rebellion affected adversely from the outset.

Court of Wards accounts for the second quarter of 1570 indicate that for part of that quarter Oxford stayed near Charing Cross, possibly while waiting to depart for the Border area with Sussex' forces:

*To John Hart, Chester Herald, for so much by him disbursed for my Lord's servants' wages & board-wages, for the laundress' wages, and for other rewards, and for my Lord's diet whiles he lay near Charing Cross. . . .*⁵¹⁹

Accounts for the third quarter record the purchase for Oxford of folio editions of the works of Cicero and Plato, likely in Latin:

*To William Seres for Tully's and Plato's works in folio, with other books, paper and ink, as by his bill, £4 6s 4d*⁵²⁰

At the beginning of August 1570, Norfolk:

*. . . made a most solemn renunciation of his proposed marriage with Mary [Queen of Scots], and craved Elizabeth's forgiveness.*⁵²¹

He was thereupon released to house arrest at his London residence, the Charterhouse.⁵²²

Sussex was back in London by late December. If Oxford was with him in Scotland, it is unclear whether he returned then, or earlier.

B. COMING OF AGE AND MARRIAGE

On 23 January 1571, Fenelon reported to Charles IX on the Queen's opening of the Royal Exchange, and on an upcoming tournament at Greenwich:

Sire, those of this city of London have shown great rejoicing at the coming of their Queen, who, on account of the plague, has not been there for two years. She goes today to see a new building which has been erected there, very convenient, and greatly ornamented, in order to give it its name, which, up till now, has been called provisionally 'the Burse'. A banquet has been prepared for her in the house of Master Gresham. People say that after tomorrow she will go down to Greenwich to pass the rest of the

⁵¹⁹ TNA SP 15/19/39, ff. 91-2.

⁵²⁰ TNA SP 15/19/40, f. 93.

⁵²¹ Hume, Martin, *The Great Lord Burghley*, (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1898), p. 246.

⁵²² Edwards, *Marvellous Chance*, p. 157.

winter there, where already a place is set up to hold a tourney at this Shrovetide,⁵²³ at which the Earl of Oxford and Sir Charles Howard⁵²⁴ are to be the defenders.⁵²⁵

According to Stow's account, the Queen was attended by her nobility. It thus seems almost certain that Oxford was among the noblemen who dined at Sir Thomas Gresham's and attended the opening of the Royal Exchange:

The 23 of January the Queen's Majesty, accompanied with her nobility, came from her house at the Strand called Somerset Place and entered the city of London by Temple Bar, Fleet Street, Cheap, & so by the north side of the Burse to Sir Thomas Gresham's in Bishopsgate Street, where she dined. After dinner her Grace, returning through Cornhill, entered the Burse on the south side, and after her Highness had viewed every part thereof above ground, especially the Pawn, which was richly furnished with all sorts of the finest wares in the city, she caused the same Burse by an herald and a trumpet to be proclaimed The Royal Exchange, so to be called from thenceforth, and not otherways.⁵²⁶

About 25 March 1571, Roberto Ridoli left England on his fatal 'mission' to the Pope and the princes of Europe.⁵²⁷

In an undated document assigned to March 1571, Oxford's name appears among a list of noblemen considered to be either friend, foe or neutral to the cause of Mary, Queen of Scots. Those listed as friends besides Oxford are his first cousin, Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, the Marquess of Winchester, the Earls of Arundel, Northumberland, Westmorland, Shrewsbury, Derby, Worcester, Cumberland, Pembroke and Southampton, Viscount Montagu, and the Lords Howard, Bergavenny, Audley, Morley, Cobham, Clinton, Dudley, Ogle, Latimer, Scrope, Monteagle, Sandys, Vaux, Windsor, St John, Burgh, Mordaunt, Paget, Wharton, Rich, Stafford, Dacre, Darcy of the North, Hastings, Berkeley, Cromwell and Lumley.⁵²⁸ The list was clearly aspirational, rather than factual, and is said to have been compiled in connection with the Ridolfi plot:

⁵²³ In 1571 Shrove Tuesday fell on 27 February.

⁵²⁴ McDermott, James, "Howard, Charles, second Baron Howard of Effingham and first earl of Nottingham (1536–1624)", *ODNB*.

⁵²⁵ *Correspondance Diplomatique de Bertrand de Salignac, de la Mothe Fénelon, Ambassadeur de France en Angleterre de 1568 à 1575*, (Paris and London, 1840), Vol. III, p. 443. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/correspondanced01coopgoog/page/n461/mode/2up>

⁵²⁶ Stow, John, [*Annals of England to 1603*], (original title page lacking), p. 1131. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/annalsofenglandt00stow/page/n1155/mode/2up>

⁵²⁷ Edwards, *Marvellous Chance*, p. 856.

⁵²⁸ Nelson, p. 68, citing *CSP Rome 1558-1571*, p. 400; Labanoff, Alexandre, *Lettres, Instructions et Mémoires de Marie Stuart, Reine d'Écosse, Publiés sur les Originaux et les Manuscrits du State Paper Office de Londres et des Principales Archives et Bibliothèques de l'Europe*, (London: Charles Dolman, 1844), Vol. III, pp. 251-3. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/lettresinstruct19marygoog/page/n260/mode/2up>

*Ridolfi cultivated a relationship with Thomas Howard, duke of Norfolk, cousin to the queen and the highest ranking peer in England. After some persuasion he convinced Norfolk to sign a declaration stating that he was a Catholic and, if backed by Spanish militia, was willing to lead a revolt. Ridolfi also drew up a list of forty peers whom he believed would join the uprising.*⁵²⁹

As with all the murky evidence in the Ridolfi plot, the list's provenance is open to question. Labanoff writes that Norfolk's secretary, William Barker,⁵³⁰ deposed on 19 and 22 September 1571 that he had brought a list of that nature from Ridolfi to the Duke, and that the Duke had ordered him to return it to Ridolfi. Barker recalled some of the names, and Labanoff concludes that this list in the Vatican Archives is the one Barker presented to the Duke. Unless one accepts that Norfolk would rely on Ridolfi, rather than on his own personal knowledge, as to which of his fellow peers supported Mary, Queen of Scots, it seems logical to conclude that this is a different list from the one allegedly compiled by Ridolfi and brought to the Duke by Barker, and in fact Barker's evidence that he brought a list of that nature from Ridolfi to the Duke at all is suspect, having been obtained under torture. Moreover it is difficult to believe that Ridolfi would have presented Norfolk with a list headed by Norfolk's own name, as if Norfolk did not know his own inclinations, and containing the name of a youth twelve years of age (the Earl of Cumberland). It seems more likely that Ridolfi conveyed these names on his own initiative to Pius V when he went to the continent to seek support for his plot from the Pope, Philip II of Spain, and the Duke of Alva, and it was in that way that the list became part of the Vatican Archives. This hypothesis is supported by a letter from the Duke of Alva to Philip II. Alva called Ridolfi *un gran parlancin* (a great chatterer),⁵³¹ in September 1571, after an interview with Ridolfi, Alva wrote:

*I have been finding out more about him, and the persons with whom he conducted this business . . . [Norfolk] was not in a position to treat with him . . . Rather, he [i.e. Ridolfi] told me it was the ambassador [i.e., the Bishop of Ross] who carried on the affair. . . I conclude he [Ridolfi] is . . . of small wisdom, and that the affair has nothing like the foundation I had imagined. . . I hold it for certain that [Norfolk] never discussed the matter with his other friends who this man says would adhere to him . . . Ridolfi spoke like a man who had learned his lesson parrot-fashion, and when I ask him further questions he is left speechless.*⁵³²

A similar document entitled 'List of English Nobles Favourable or Otherwise to the Plot', assigned to May 1571 and thought to have been enclosed with a letter in Italian, bears the names of all the 'favourers' of the Queen of Scots who appeared on the earlier list,

⁵²⁹ See Hunt, L.E., "Ridolfi, Roberto di (1531–1612)", *ODNB*.

⁵³⁰ There were five individuals of that name at Cambridge in the 1530s. See the History of Parliament entry. URL: <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/barker-william-1520-1576>

⁵³¹ Sharp, p. xix.

⁵³² Edwards, *Marvellous Chance*, pp. 87-8.

including Oxford.⁵³³ However in this later list the spellings are idiosyncratic and distinctively foreign, and it is difficult to envisage Ridolfi, who had lived in England for many years, as responsible for those spellings, which raises further questions as to whether either list should be identified with the one Barker claimed he had brought to the Duke of Norfolk on behalf of Ridolfi.

On 2 April 1571 Oxford, as Lord Great Chamberlain, attended the Queen at the opening of Parliament, where he supported her robe while she sat under a rich cloth of state.⁵³⁴ On 12 April 1571 he reached the age of majority and was eligible to take his seat in the House of Lords.⁵³⁵

On 11 April, Charles Baillie⁵³⁶ was taken at Dover with illegal books and, supposedly, a packet of incriminating letters from Ridolfi; his arrival was not unexpected: Lord Burghley's spy, William Herle,⁵³⁷ had been waiting for him in the Marshalsea prison since as early as April 4, and Lord Cobham's servant, Francis Bertie, had been expecting the illegal books since even before that time.⁵³⁸

On 12 April, Baillie was brought to Lord Cobham's at the Blackfriars in London where the packet of letters found on him was put into 'one bag' with a packet of letters taken from some other unnamed person.⁵³⁹ The two sets of letters were left unguarded at the Blackfriars all night, during which time Francis Bertie allowed the Bishop of Ross to see the originals.⁵⁴⁰ Lord Cobham's brother, the pirate Thomas Cobham,⁵⁴¹ later bragged

⁵³³ Nelson, p. 49, citing *CSP Rome 1558-1571*, pp. 411-12.

⁵³⁴ *ECDBD* (1571), pp. 18-19.

⁵³⁵ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 250.

⁵³⁶ Holmes, Peter, "Baillie [Bailly], Charles (c. 1541–1625)", *ODNB*. 'He was a good linguist, and from about 1564 found employment in the household of Mary, queen of Scots. By 1571 he was in the service of John Leslie, bishop of Ross, who was the representative in London of the now imprisoned queen. Early in that year he was seized at Dover carrying a package of books and some letters, the latter tied close under his clothing against his back. It emerged that he had been sent by Leslie to the Spanish Netherlands, to pick up some copies of Leslie's seditious pamphlet *A Treatise Concerning Defence of the Honour of ... Mary, Queen of Scotland*, which had been reprinted secretly at Liège, and that he had also carried abroad letters for various of the Catholic exiles there. When arrested he was returning from Brussels with a number of letters, including three highly dangerous ones from the Florentine banker and plotter Roberto Ridolfi, who was attempting to interest the duke of Alva in a plan to invade England, depose the queen, free Mary Stewart, and marry her to the duke of Norfolk. The three letters were addressed to Leslie, Norfolk, and Lord Lumley, and implicated them all in this plot.'

⁵³⁷ Jones, David Lewis, "Herle, William (d. 1588/9)", *ODNB*. 'From April 1571 he acted as a prison spy for Cecil. He played an important role in supplying information against Charles Bailly, a participant in the Ridolfi Plot of 1572.'

⁵³⁸ McKeen, Vol. I, pp. 247, 249-50.

⁵³⁹ McKeen, Vol. I, p. 251.

⁵⁴⁰ McKeen, Vol. I, p. 253.

that he had also had access to the packet of letters at this time and that, unknown to Lord Cobham, he had removed two letters from the packet.⁵⁴² Later, importuned by Thomas Cobham not to deliver the letters to the Privy Council, Lord Cobham gave the letters to the Bishop of Ross, and sent a substitute packet to the Council.⁵⁴³ Baillie was imprisoned, and racked until he 'confessed'.⁵⁴⁴ till, no charges were laid against Norfolk.

On 1 May, as the Red Knight, Oxford was one of the challengers in a tournament described in Stow's⁵⁴⁵ *Annals*:

The first, second and third of May 1571 was holden at Westminster before the Queen's Majesty a solemn joust at the tilt, tourney and barriers. The challengers were Edward, Earl of Oxford, Charles Howard, Sir Henry Lee,⁵⁴⁶ and Christopher Hatton,⁵⁴⁷ esquire, who all did very valiantly, but the chief honour was given to the Earl of Oxford.⁵⁴⁸

Prizes were awarded by the Queen on 6 May, Oxford receiving a tablet with a diamond.⁵⁴⁹

On 8 May Fenelon reported on the tournament to Charles IX:

. . . After the departure of the Sieur de Sabran, who will be able to give his own account of what he saw of the jousts of the first day of the tourney undertaken in this court at the beginning of May, I was again invited to be present at the two following, which was on the second fought at the barriers, and the Queen of England wished me to accompany her to all three. . . . The Earl of Oxford had set up the combat, who, with Sir Charles Howard, Sir Henry Lee, and Master Hatton, were four defending against twenty-seven gentlemen of good houses challenging, and the judges of the tourney were the Earls of Worcester and Sussex, the Admiral, and my Lord Sidney, and no untoward accident occurred.⁵⁵⁰

The tournament is described more fully by Segar:

⁵⁴¹ McKeen, Vol. I, pp. 217-26.

⁵⁴² McKeen, Vol. I, pp. 257-8.

⁵⁴³ McKeen, Vol. I, pp. 251-6.

⁵⁴⁴ Edwards, *Marvellous Chance*, pp. 72-6.

⁵⁴⁵ Beer, Barrett L., "Stow [Stowe], John (1524/5–1605)", *ODNB*.

⁵⁴⁶ Fernie, Ewan, "Lee, Sir Henry (1533–1611)", *ODNB*.

⁵⁴⁷ MacCaffrey, Wallace T., "Hatton, Sir Christopher (c.1540–1591)", *ODNB*.

⁵⁴⁸ Segar, William, *The Book of Honor and Armes*, (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1975), pp. 94-5; Nelson, pp. 69-70. According to *ECDbD* (1571), *supra*, p. 2, the challenge was issued on 6 January 1571, but not fulfilled until 1 May of that year.

⁵⁴⁹ *ECDbD* (1571), *supra*, p. 24.

⁵⁵⁰ Nelson, p. 69; *Correspondance Diplomatique de Bertrand de Salignac, de la Mothe Fénelon, Ambassadeur de France en Angleterre de 1568 à 1575*, (Paris and London, 1840), Vol. IV, pp. 88-92. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/correspondance6704feneuoft/page/88/mode/2up>

A royal challenge was also there proclaimed before her Majesty wherein were challengers the Earl of Oxford, Charles Howard, Sir Henry Lee and Christopher Hatton.

The defenders were the Lord Stafford, the Lord Henry Seymour, Edward Herbert, Sir George Carey, Thomas Cecil, Henry Grey, William Howard, Sir Jerome Bowes, Henry Knollys, Henry Knyvet, William Norris, Richard Bulkeley, Thomas Knyvet, William Knollys, Ralph Lane, George Delves, Robert Colsell, Lancelot Bostock, Brian Annesley,⁵⁵¹ Henry Mackwilliam, Thomas Bedingfield, Thomas More, William Worthington, Richard Blount, Thomas Coningsby, Robert Alexander, Roger Clopton.

This triumph continued three days, the first at tilt, the second at tourney, and the third at the barriers.

On every of the challengers her Majesty bestowed a prize, for the receiving whereof they were particularly led armed by two ladies unto her presence chamber.

The prize at the tilt on the defenders' party was given unto Henry Grey, at the tourney unto the Lord Henry Seymour, at the barriers unto Thomas Cecil. Before them went Clarencieux King of Arms in his rich coat of arms.

This magnificent combat was performed anno 1571.⁵⁵²

On 14 May 1571 George Delves, one of the defenders in the tournament, wrote to the Earl of Rutland⁵⁵³ that:

Lord Oxford has performed his challenge at tilt, turn [=tourney] and barriers far above the expectation of the world, and not much inferior to the other three challengers.⁵⁵⁴

On 23 June the Queen went 'to her park at Westminster to see a salute and review some arquebusiers which the Earl of Oxford and Captains Horsey and Leighton had led there'.⁵⁵⁵

On 24 June, George Delves wrote again to Rutland, saying that 'There is no man of life and agility in every respect in the Court but the Earl of Oxford'.⁵⁵⁶

Sir William Cecil had been raised to the peerage on 25 February 1571 as Lord Burghley,

⁵⁵¹ For his will, see TNA PROB 11/104/286. His daughter, Cordell, has been erroneously associated with Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

⁵⁵² Segar, William, *The Book of Honor and Armes*, (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1975), pp. 94-5.

⁵⁵³ Jack, Sybil M., "Manners, Edward, third Earl of Rutland (1549–1587)", *ODNB*.

⁵⁵⁴ Nelson, p. 70; HMC Rutland, Vol. I, p. 92.

⁵⁵⁵ *ECDbD* (1571), p. 30; Nelson, p. 70.

⁵⁵⁶ HMC Rutland, i, 94; *ECDbD* (1571), p. 30; Nelson, p. 70.

and by the summer of that year Oxford was betrothed to Burghley's 14-year-old daughter, Anne Cecil.⁵⁵⁷ Lord St John announced the news in a letter to the Earl of Rutland on 28 July 1571:

*Th' Earl of Oxenford hath gotten him a wife – or at the least a wife hath caught him – that is Mistress Anne Cecil, whereunto the Queen hath given her consent, the which hath caused great weeping, wailing and sorrowful cheer of those that hoped to have had that golden day.*⁵⁵⁸

Although Lord St John had already announced the news on 28 July, according to Lord Burghley it was not until 3 August that Oxford broached the matter to the Queen, who gave her consent, as did Oxford's first cousin, Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk:

The Earl of Oxford declared to the Queen's Majesty at Hampton Court his desire to match with my daughter Anne; whereto the Queen assented; so did the Duke of Norfolk, being then a prisoner in his own house, called Howard House'.⁵⁵⁹

Oxford's decision to marry Anne Cecil was likely motivated by the realization that the Queen would never allow him to marry into the old nobility, and that he needed to marry into a family with influence at court, which left him with few choices.

Lord Burghley wrote to the Earl of Rutland concerning Oxford's engagement on 15 August:

*I think it doth seem strange to your Lordship to hear of a purposed determination in my Lord of Oxford to marry with my daughter, and so before his Lordship moved it to me I might have thought it if any other had moved it to me himself. For at his own motion I could not well imagine what to think, considering I never meant to seek it nor hoped of it. And yet reason moved me to think well of my Lord, and to acknowledge myself greatly beholden to him, as indeed I am.*⁵⁶⁰

On 30 August 1571 Oxford and others attended on Paul de Foix (1528-1584) during a visit to Cambridge; Oxford and Lord Edward Seymour⁵⁶¹ were given gloves as a gift by

⁵⁵⁷ May, Steven W., "Vere [née Cecil], Anne de, Countess of Oxford (1556–1588)", *ODNB*. On 6 August 1569 a settlement had been drawn up for a proposed marriage between Philip Sidney and Anne Cecil. See Cecil Papers, Vol. I, p. 415 (156 41-2).

⁵⁵⁸ HMC Rutland, i, p. 94; *ECDbD* (1571), p. 34; Nelson, p. 71.

⁵⁵⁹ *ECDbD* (1571), p. 35; Nelson, p. 71.

⁵⁶⁰ HMC Rutland, i, p. 95; Nelson, p. 72.

⁵⁶¹ Edward Seymour (c.1500-1552), 1st Duke of Somerset, had four sons named Edward Seymour (one died as an infant). The Lord Edward Seymour who received gloves on this occasion appears to be the same person as the Lord Edward Seymour (1548-1574) who accompanied Oxford to Calais on 1 July 1574.

the university.⁵⁶²

Sometime at the end of August 1571, further letters incriminating Oxford's cousin, Norfolk, were fortuitously 'discovered' in a bag of money at St Albans,⁵⁶³ and on 7 September he was brought back to the Tower.⁵⁶⁴ By 6 October Lord Cobham was under house arrest for his aforementioned part in sending the substitute packet of letters to the Privy Council.⁵⁶⁵ He remained under arrest for seven and a half months at Lord Burghley's house in the Strand, but was never charged.⁵⁶⁶

On Wednesday 26 September 1571 Oxford was at the Priory near Warwick, the house of Thomas Fisher to meet Leicester and his entourage.⁵⁶⁷

And so the said Earl [of Leicester], expecting as before [i.e., to be met outside the town of Warwick by the burgesses], was thereof disappointed, though for that purpose he came riding through the said borough by the cross, & so through the streets accompanied with the Earl of Hertford,⁵⁶⁸ Sir Henry Sidney, Lord Deputy of Ireland & President of Wales,⁵⁶⁹ Sir John Spencer,⁵⁷⁰ Sir Henry Lee, Sir Richard Knightley⁵⁷¹ and many others of good calling, and passed to the house of Mr Thomas Fisher, where met him & came to him the Lord & Lady Marquess of Northampton,⁵⁷² the Earl of Oxford, the Lord Berkeley,⁵⁷³ the Lord Dudley,⁵⁷⁴ the Lord Chandos⁵⁷⁵ and many other lords, knights and gentlemen.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁶² Nelson, p. 73; *ECDbD* (1571), pp. 40-1. De Foix had come to England to negotiate a marriage between the Queen and the Duke of Anjou, the future Henri III of France. Lord Edward Seymour and Oxford left England together without licence in 1574 (see *infra*).

⁵⁶³ Edwards, *Marvellous Chance*, pp. 155, 164.

⁵⁶⁴ McKeen, Vol. I, p. 282.

⁵⁶⁵ McKeen, Vol. I, p. 284.

⁵⁶⁶ McKeen, Vol. I, p. 295.

⁵⁶⁷ Dyer, Alan, "Fisher [Hawkins], Thomas (1515/16–1577)", *ODNB*.

⁵⁶⁸ Doran, Susan, "Seymour, Edward, first earl of Hertford (1539?–1621)", *ODNB*.

⁵⁶⁹ MacCaffrey, Wallace T., "Sidney, Sir Henry (1529–1586)", *ODNB*.

⁵⁷⁰ Sir John Spencer (1524-1586) was a first cousin of Sir Richard Knightley. See the History of Parliament entry. URL:

<https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/spencer-sir-john-1524-8>

⁵⁷¹ Sheils, William Joseph, "Knightley, Sir Richard (1533–1615)", *ODNB*. Knightley was the brother-in-law of the Earl of Hertford. Martin Marprelate's *Epitome* was printed on a secret press at his house at Fawsley in November 1588.

⁵⁷² James, Susan E., "Parr, William, marquess of Northampton (1513–1571)", *ODNB*.

Parr died on 28 October 1571 in Thomas Fisher's house. For his funeral, see Kemp, *The Black Book of Warwick*, pp. His third wife, who was with him on this visit, was Helena Snakenborg. See Harrington, Paul, "Gorges [*née* Snakenborg], Helena, Lady Gorges [*other married name* Helena Parr, marchioness of Northampton] (1548–1635)", *ODNB*.

⁵⁷³ Henry Berkeley (1534-1613), 7th Baron Berkeley. His wife, Katherine Howard (d. 7 April 1596), was Oxford's first cousin. For his will, see TNA PROB 11/123/109.

⁵⁷⁴ Edward Sutton (d.1586), 4th Baron Dudley.

Leicester had come to Warwick to celebrate his membership in the French Order of St Michael. Charles IX had first nominated him to the Order in 1564; however the Queen did not permit his election until January 1566, and then only jointly with the Duke of Norfolk.⁵⁷⁷ Leicester's celebration seems to have been deliberately designed as a humiliating contrast to his fellow member: Norfolk had been committed to the Tower only three weeks earlier, on 7 September 1571. Equally pointed was Leicester's inclusion in his entourage of Norfolk's brother-in-law, Lord Berkeley, and Oxford, Norfolk's first cousin.

Leicester's arrival on the 26th did not go smoothly. He was incensed by the burgesses' decision not to meet him outside the town, as was customarily done for the sovereign alone, and on 27 September, slighted them by riding to Kenilworth accompanied by 'divers of the nobles', Oxford almost certainly among them.⁵⁷⁸ The burgesses made their amends, and on Saturday 29 September,⁵⁷⁹ Leicester entered the Church of St Mary in Warwick preceded by commoners, constables, burgesses, the lords and gentlemen 'as that day waited upon him', the serjeant bearing the mace, the town baliff, his household servants, and Dragon Puirsuivant at Arms and Clarencieux King at Arms, 'both in coat armour':

*And then came my said Lord, th' Earl of Leicester by himself, apparelled all in white, his shoes of velvet, his stocks of hose knit silk, his upper stocks of white velvet lined with cloth of silver, his doublet of silver, his jerkin white velvet drawn with silver beautified with gold and precious stone, his girdle & scabbard white velvet, his robe white satin embroidered with gold a foot broad very curiously, his cap black velvet with a white feather, his collar of gold beset with precious stone, and his Garter about his leg of Saint George's Order, a sight worthy the beholding.*⁵⁸⁰

Within the church, Leicester was seated under a cloth of estate, and later repaired to the Priory where he dined alone in his sumptuous attire, with tasters in attendance to assay his food and drink. When one considers Oxford's relationship with Leicester over succeeding years, it is perhaps useful to consider how this celebration would have

⁵⁷⁵ MacMahon, Luke, "Brydges, Edmund, second Baron Chandos (d. 1573)", *ODNB*.

⁵⁷⁶ Kemp, Thomas, ed., *The Black Book of Warwick*, (Warwick: Henry T. Cooke and Son, 1898), pp. 29-33. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/blackbookofwarwi00warw/page/32/mode/2up>

⁵⁷⁷ See Doran, Susan, *Elizabeth I & her Circle*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 142(?). URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=q67qBgAAQBAJ&pg=PT142>. See also Rapple, Rory, *Martial Power and Elizabethan Political Culture: Military Men in England and Ireland, 1558-1594*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 93. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=7WkMyKjS44gC&pg=PA93>

⁵⁷⁸ Kemp, *Black Book of Warwick*, p. 33.

⁵⁷⁹ Cheney, C.R., ed., *Handbook of Dates for Students of English History*, (London: Royal Historical Society, 1961), p. 133.

⁵⁸⁰ Kemp, *Black Book of Warwick*, p. 36.

affected him; his kinsman, Norfolk, the highest-ranking nobleman in England, was a prisoner in the Tower, while Leicester was comporting himself as though he were the reigning monarch.

On 20 October 1571 Arthur Golding dedicated a second book to Oxford, *The Psalms of David and others, with M. John Calvin's Commentaries*.⁵⁸¹

Although Oxford's marriage to Anne Cecil was to take place on 23 September during the Queen's visit to Theobalds, and verses mentioning the marriage (*Carmen Gratulorum*) were presented during the Queen's visit, the ceremony was delayed until 16 December 1571 at Whitehall.⁵⁸² Oxford's maternal uncle, George Golding, noted that 'the same day, year and place the Lord Herbert, son and heir of the Earl of Worcester, did marry the Lady Hastings, sister to Henry, Earl of Huntingdon', one of the Hastings sisters whom Oxford's father, the 16th Earl, had chosen to be Oxford's bride. Guests at the wedding feast on 19 December at Lord Burghley's house in the Strand included the Queen, the French ambassador, Fenelon, and the Sieur de Sweveghem,⁵⁸³ a Commissioner from Flanders.⁵⁸⁴

Anne Cecil brought Oxford a dowry of £3000, and Oxford assigned her a jointure of £669 6s 8d.⁵⁸⁵

Although he had reached the age of majority and had married, Oxford was still not in possession of his inheritance. After suing his livery,⁵⁸⁶ Oxford was finally licenced to enter on his lands on 30 May 1572.⁵⁸⁷ However this privilege came at a price. The fines assessed against Oxford in the Court of Wards included £2000 for his wardship and marriage, £1257 18s 3/4d for his livery, and £48 19s 9-1/4d for mean rates, a total of £3306 17s 10d. To guarantee payment, Oxford entered into bonds to the Court of Wards totalling £11,000. Oxford's own bonds to the Court of Wards were in turn guaranteed by bonds to the Court of Wards in the amount of £5000 apiece entered into by two guarantors, Oxford's first cousin, John Darcy (d.1581), 2nd Baron Darcy of Chiche, and Sir William Waldegrave.⁵⁸⁸ In return for these guarantees, on 6 July 1571 Oxford entered into two statutes of £6000 apiece to Darcy and Waldegrave.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸¹ STC 4395; Nelson, p. 236.

⁵⁸² Anne Cecil turned 15 on 5 December 1571.

⁵⁸³ Francois de Halewyn (c.1525-1585), Sieur de Sweveghem, a Commissioner from Flanders in the service of Philip II of Spain. See *ECDbD* (1574), pp. 5, 41-2.

⁵⁸⁴ ERO D/DRg 2/24; Nelson, pp. 74-5; *ECDbD* (1571), pp. 45, 55-6.

⁵⁸⁵ CP 159/113; Cecil Papers 146/7; CP 160/99; Nelson, pp. 101, 106-7, 141.

⁵⁸⁶ Hurstfield, Joel, *The Queen's Wards* (London: Frank Cass, 1973), pp. 169-176.

⁵⁸⁷ TNA C 66/1090, mm. 29-30.

⁵⁸⁸ TNA C 2/Eliz/T6/48. For John Darcy, 2nd Baron Darcy of Chiche, see his will, TNA PROB 11/63/135. For Sir William Waldegrave (c.1540 – 25 August 1613), see the will of his father, Sir William Waldegrave (d. 12 December 1554), TNA PROB 11/37/466.

⁵⁸⁹ TNA PRO 30/34/14, No. 3; Green, p. 93.

Having sued his livery, Oxford was entitled to yearly revenues both from his lands and from the office of Lord Great Chamberlain of approximately £2250, although he was not entitled to the income from the estates comprising his mother's jointure until after her death in 1568, nor to the income from certain estates set aside to pay his father's debts until 1583.⁵⁹⁰

On 1 January 1572, the Gentleman Pensioner Thomas Bedingfield⁵⁹¹ dedicated *Cardanus' Comfort*⁵⁹² to Oxford, a translation from the Latin of *De Consolatione Libri Tres* by the Italian mathematician and physician Girolamo Cardano. Oxford wrote a commendatory letter and verses in which he took responsibility for having the translation published against Bedingfield's wishes, terming himself Bedingfield's 'loving and assured friend'.⁵⁹³ The friendship between Oxford and Thomas Bedingfield perhaps owed something to the fact that they were distantly related: as noted above, Oxford was a descendant of Alice Serjeaux (d.1452), who married Richard Vere (d.1417), 11th Earl of Oxford, while Thomas Bedingfield was a descendant of her sister, Elizabeth Serjeaux, who married Sir William Marney (d.1414). This early relationship between the de Vere and Marney families was maintained in later generations. Sir William Marney's great-grandson, John Marney (d.1525), 2nd Baron Marney, mentioned in his will the appointment of Sir John Vere, later John de Vere, (c.1482-1540), 15th Earl of Oxford, as one of his feoffees.⁵⁹⁴

On 3 January 1572 Oxford wrote a Latin epistle to Bartholomew Clerke's⁵⁹⁵ *De Curiali*, a translation into Latin of Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*,⁵⁹⁶ and in the same year Thomas Twyne⁵⁹⁷ dedicated his *Breviary of Britain*⁵⁹⁸ to Oxford, noting that 'your Honour taketh singular delight' in 'books of geography, histories and other good learning'.⁵⁹⁹

On 16 January 1572, Oxford's first cousin, Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, was tried for treason.⁶⁰⁰ On 28 January, he wrote to his sons:

Although my hap hath been such that my kin have had cause to be ashamed of me, their

⁵⁹⁰ Green, pp. 65-73; Paul, pp. 95-104.

⁵⁹¹ Kelly, L.G., "Bedingfield, Thomas (early 1540s?-1613)", *ODNB*. Thomas Bedingfield was the second son of Sir Henry Bedingfield (d.1583). For his will, see TNA PROB 11/122/124.

⁵⁹² STC 4607.

⁵⁹³ Nelson, p. 77.

⁵⁹⁴ TNA PROB 11/21/540.

⁵⁹⁵ White, P.O.G., "Clerke, Bartholomew (c.1537-1590)", *ODNB*. For his will, see TNA PROB 11/75/199.

⁵⁹⁶ STC 4782; Nelson, p. 237.

⁵⁹⁷ Moore, Norman, rev. Rachel E. Davies, "Twyne, Thomas (1543-1613)", *ODNB*.

⁵⁹⁸ STC 16636.

⁵⁹⁹ Nelson, p. 237.

⁶⁰⁰ Edwards, *Marvellous Chance*, p. 209.

*kinsman, yet I hope when I am gone nature will so work in them that they will be in goodwill to you as heretofore they have been to me, amongst whom I will begin as high as I, unworthy, dare presume, with my cousin Oxford. . . .*⁶⁰¹

On 3 April 1572 Oxford's paternal uncle, Geoffrey Vere, made a nuncupative will,⁶⁰² and likely died the same day. In 1556 he had married Elizabeth Hardekyn (d. December 1615),⁶⁰³ by whom he had four sons and a daughter: John Vere (d.1624) of Kirby Hall,⁶⁰⁴ Sir Francis Vere,⁶⁰⁵ Robert Vere, Horatio Vere⁶⁰⁶ and Frances Vere.⁶⁰⁷ Two of his sons, Oxford's first cousins Francis and Horatio, gained renown as 'The Fighting Veres'.

On 4 May 1572 Oxford assisted at the ceremony at which Walter Devereux was created 1st Earl of Essex.⁶⁰⁸

On 8 May, Oxford attended the Queen at the opening of Parliament.⁶⁰⁹

A letter from Fenelon to Charles IX on 28 May 1572 indicates that Oxford and Leicester were to attend at Somerset House to meet a delegation headed by François (1530-1579), Duc de Montmorency, arriving in England to ratify the Treaty of Blois.⁶¹⁰

On the same day Sir Thomas Gresham wrote to Lord Burghley stating that he had 'in readiness 2000 marks for to pay to my Lord of Oxford'.⁶¹¹

On 2 June 1572 Norfolk was executed on Tower Hill.⁶¹² The mass of 'evidence' which survives from this period appears to incriminate him overwhelmingly in a joint plot with

⁶⁰¹ Nelson, p. 80.

⁶⁰² ERO D/ABW 38/187. In his will he mentions only his wife and eldest son, John.

⁶⁰³ See Markham, Clements R., *The Fighting Veres*, (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1888), pp. 21, 23, 381. URL: <https://archive.org/details/thefightingveres00markiala/page/n6>

⁶⁰⁴ For his will, see TNA PROB 11/143/706.

⁶⁰⁵ Trim, D.J.B., "Vere [de Vere], Sir Francis (1560/61–1609)", *ODNB*.

⁶⁰⁶ Trim, D.J.B., "Vere, Horace [Horatio], Baron Vere of Tilbury (1565–1635)", *ODNB*. For his will, see TNA PROB 11/168/39.

⁶⁰⁷ She married, as his second wife, Robert Harcourt, eldest son of Sir Walter Harcourt (c.1553–1639) of Ellenhall and of Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire, knighted at Rouen in 1591. He was a considerable adventurer with Sir Walter Raleigh, having obtained a patent from King James for planting Guyana. See Lorimer, Joyce, "Harcourt, Robert (1574/5–1631)", *ODNB*.

⁶⁰⁸ *ECDbD* (1572), pp. 17-18; Nelson, p. 82; McGurk, J.J.N., "Devereux, Walter, first earl of Essex (1539–1576)", *ODNB*.

⁶⁰⁹ *ECDbD* (1572), pp. 19-20; Nelson, p. 82.

⁶¹⁰ *Correspondance*, Vol. IV, pp. 463-7; Nelson, pp. 83-4. According to *ECDbD* (1572), p. 24, Montmorency arrived on 8 June.

⁶¹¹ Nelson, p. 83.

⁶¹² Nelson, p. 84; Edwards, *Marvellous Chance*, p. 367.

Mary, Queen of Scots; her ambassador, John Leslie, Bishop of Ross; Robert Ridolfi; and Gerau de Spes, the Spanish ambassador. In fact, Ridolfi's so-called conspiracy was a totally impracticable farce which could never have done Mary's cause anything but harm, and none of the evidence used to 'prove' the treason charges against the Duke would stand up in a modern court of law. Of those who gave evidence against Norfolk, several were tortured, and others were government spies.⁶¹³ 'Incriminating' documents were tampered with.⁶¹⁴ During the entire period in which the 'conspiracy' was supposedly being plotted, Mary and Norfolk were both prisoners who never once met face to face. Nor were any of the 'conspirators' ever allowed to confront their 'co-conspirators' afterward.⁶¹⁵ Had they been permitted to do so, they would likely have discovered that Ridolfi had lied to each of them about what the others had said. The Duke's trial for treason was a travesty, a form of 'judicial murder'. Ill after two and a half years of imprisonment, he was allowed no legal counsel, no access to the documents being used against him, and no opportunity to question his accusers.⁶¹⁶ Throughout his imprisonment and trial, and even at the moment of his execution, Norfolk consistently denied any part in Ridolfi's treasonous schemes, though admitting freely his rashness in considering marriage to the Queen of Scots without Queen Elizabeth's formal sanction. In his final words on the scaffold, when he expected within moments to meet his Maker, Norfolk reaffirmed his innocence and blamed no one, seeming to feel that his persistence in pursuing marriage with the Queen of Scots was a sufficient transgression in itself to merit execution:

I will not justify myself. I know I deserve to die. I will lay no injustice against my peers. I clear them. I acquit them, for they have given just judgment against me. I dealt touching a marriage with the Queen of Scots not as I ought, without the assent of my prince. . . I dealt contrary to my promise to the Queen's Majesty.

I have had judgment given on me by reason of my dealing with suspected persons, namely one, I mean Ridolfi. I never saw his face but once; a stranger, a naughty man with whom I never dealt but once, and that once touching a recognizance between him and me, as the world knoweth. [Here the Duke was interrupted and told not to purge himself.]

I purge my peers. I will not accuse them. I have been charged that I should receive letters from the Pope. Indeed, I confess such letters were brought unto me . . . somewhat touching rebellion, but I never assented, nor allowed them touching rebellion or invasion or any danger to my prince or this city. I never consented to any. But yet that I had to do with such persons as I might well understand had not good meaning to the Queen and state, and did not utter the same as appertained. And therein I did offend. [Here the Duke was again interrupted, and told not to deal with such matters.]

I take God to witness, I am not, nor never was, a papist since I knew what religion meant.

⁶¹³ Edwards, *Marvellous Chance*, pp. 43, 72, 227.

⁶¹⁴ Edwards, *Marvellous Chance*, pp. 228-9.

⁶¹⁵ Edwards, *Marvellous Chance*, pp. 26-7.

⁶¹⁶ Edwards, *Marvellous Chance*, pp. 212-15, 225.

I have had friends, yea, familiar friends, and peradventure servants, that have been papists, with whom I have borne. But I call God to witness I am none. I utterly defy the Pope and his religion, and I hope to be saved only by my faith in Jesus Christ. I utterly abhor all man's traditions. And if at any time I did give countenance to any papist whereby any good man was offended, or the Church, I ask them mercy. There is no man that alloweth better of religion than I do. [Here again the Duke was interrupted, and 'required to be short', whereon he finished by reaffirming that he had never departed from his loyalty to the Queen].⁶¹⁷

At Norfolk's trial, the Attorney-General claimed God's hand in the ultimate discovery of the evidence which had, after two years of vain attempts, finally brought Norfolk down:

No man could by any travail find it out, till God disclosed it by a marvellous chance.⁶¹⁸

But at least one observer saw a hand more sinister than God's. Twelve years after Norfolk's execution, in 1584, the anonymous author of *Leicester's Commonwealth* had this to say:

I have a friend yet living that was towards the old Earl of Arundel in good credit and by that means had occasion to deal with the late Duke of Norfolk in his chiefest affairs before his troubles. This man is wont to say strange things from the Duke's own mouth of my Lord of Leicester's most treacherous dealings towards him for gaining of his blood, as after appeared, albeit the Duke, when he reported the same, mistrusted not so much my Lord's malice therein. But the sum of all is this, in effect, that Leicester, having a secret desire to pull down the said Duke, to the end that he might have no man above himself to hinder him in that which he most desireth, by a thousand cunning devices drew in the Duke to the cogitation of that marriage with the Queen of Scotland which afterward was the cause of his ruin. And he behaved himself so dexterously in this drift, by setting on the Duke on the one side and entrapping him on the other, as Judas himself never played his part more cunningly when he supped with his master and set himself so near as he dipped his spoon in the same dish, meaning that night to do it himself, as he showed soon after supper when he came as a captain with a band of consirators and with a courteous kiss delivered his person into the hands of them whom he well knew to thirst after his blood.

The very like did the Earl of Leicester with the Duke of Norfolk for the art of treason, though in the parties betrayed there were great difference of innocency. Namely at one time, when her Majesty was at Basing in Hampshire and the Duke attended there to have audience, with great indifferency in himself to follow or leave off his suit for marriage (for that now he began to suspect her Majesty liked not greatly thereof), my Lord of Leicester came to him and counselled with him in any case to persevere and not to relent, assuring him with many oaths and protestations that her Majesty must and should be brought to allow thereof whether she would or no, and that himself would seal that

⁶¹⁷ Edwards, *Marvellous Chance*, pp. 367-9.

⁶¹⁸ Edwards, *Marvellous Chance*, frontispiece.

purpose with his blood. Neither was it to be suffered that her Majesty should have her will herein; with many other like speeches to this purpose, which the Duke repeated again then presently to my friend, with often laying his hand upon his bosom and saying: I have here [that] which assureth me sufficiently of the fidelity of my Lord of Leicester, meaning not only the aforesaid speeches, but also divers letters which he had written to the Duke to that effect, as likewise he had done to some other person of more importance in the realm [Lord Burghley?]; which matter coming afterward to light, he cozened most notably her Majesty by showing her a reformed copy of the said letter for the letter itself.

But how well he performed his promise in dealing with her Majesty for the Duke, or against the Duke, in this matter, her Highness can best tell and the event itself showed. For the Duke, being admitted soon after to her Majesty's speech at another place and receiving a far other answer than he had in hope conceived upon Leicester's promises, retired himself to London, where the same night following he received letters both from Leicester and Sir Nicholas Throgmorton upon Leicester's instigation (for they were at that time both friends and of a faction) that he should presently flee into Norfolk, as he did, which was the last and final complement of all Leicester's former devices whereby to plunge his friend over the ears in suspicion and disgrace, in such sort that he should never be able to draw himself out of the ditch again, as indeed he was not, but died in the same.⁶¹⁹

This version of Leicester's responsibility for entrapping the Duke into the proposed marriage with the Queen of Scots, and then withdrawing at the critical moment, leaving Norfolk to face alone the Queen's wrath and suspicion, is supported by numerous contemporary documents from the years 1569-1572.⁶²⁰ It is also reiterated in the fable in Thomas Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse*, in which Leicester is the bear, Elizabeth the lion, Norfolk the camel, and Lord Burghley the ape:

The bear on a time, being chief burgomaster of all the beasts under the lion, gan think with himself how he might surfeit in pleasure, or best husband his authority to enlarge his delight and contentment. With that he began to pry and to smell through every corner of the forest for prey, to have a thousand imaginations with himself what dainty morsel he was master of, and yet had not tasted. Whole herds of sheep had he devoured, and was not satisfied; fat oxen, heifers, swine, calves, and young kids, were his ordinary viands. He longed for horseflesh, and went presently to a meadow, where a fat camell was grazing, whom, fearing to encounter with force, because he was a huge beast and well shod, he thought to betray under the colour of demanding homage, hoping that, as he should stoop to do him trewage, he might seize upon his throat and stifle him before he should be able to recover himself from his false embrace. But therein he was deceived; for, coming unto this stately beast with this imperious message, instead of doing homage unto him, he lifted up one of his hindmost heels and struck him such a blow on the forehead that he overthrew him. Thereat not a little moved and enraged that he should

⁶¹⁹ Transcript of *Leicester's Commonwealth* by the author of this website. See also Peck, *supra*, pp. 171-3.

⁶²⁰ Williams, *supra*, pp. 155-61.

be so dishonoured by his inferior, as he thought, he consulted with the ape how he might be revenged.

The ape abhorring him by nature, because he overlooked him so lordly and was by so many degrees greater than he was, advised him to dig a pit with his paws right in the way where this big-boned gentleman should pass, that so stumbling and falling in, he might lightly skip on his back, and bridle him, and then he come and seize on him at his pleasure. No sooner was this persuaded than performed . . . What needeth more words? The devourer feeds on his captive and is gorged with blood.⁶²¹

It is thus evident that in the Elizabethan period there was a belief, in some circles at least, that Norfolk's downfall was the direct result of his entrapment by Leicester. No one would have been more likely to have shared this opinion than those members of the nobility who were said to be ready to rise in rebellion along with Norfolk, since they were well aware that this was far from the case. Considering the efforts Oxford is said to have made to effect the Duke's release, it seems he may well have been one of those who did not believe Norfolk guilty of treason.

History has unfortunately left no direct evidence from Oxford himself of his position with respect to Norfolk's difficulties in the period 1569-1572, and much of the fragmentary indirect evidence which survives appears to be tainted by self-interest on the part of the deponents. However, one impression dominates: Oxford's contemporaries believed that he was actively involved in trying to save his cousin's life.

The earliest record of Oxford's involvement pertains to the summer of 1570, when he is said to have come up with a plan for the Duke's escape to Spain. In a petition to the Queen, Isabel Frobisher,⁶²² the wife of Martin Frobisher, supplies details of Oxford's efforts on Norfolk's behalf:

At the time the late Duke of Norfolk was removed out of the Tower to the Charterhouse

⁶²¹ Steane, J.B., ed., *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works*, (London: Penguin, 1971), pp. 122-3. See also the transcript of *Pierce Penilesse* by the author of this website.

⁶²² There is considerable confusion concerning the date and place of Isabel's marriage to Martin Frobisher. An entry in the Snaith parish register says she married Martin Frobisher at Snaith, Yorkshire, in 1559. However in her 1574 petition she says she was married in the parish of Walbrook in London five years before the date of the petition to the Queen, which would date the marriage to 1569, not 1559. She also states in her petition that she has lived in the Blackfriars as 'maid, widow and wife' for 20 years, which would place her in London as early as 1554. There appears to be no way to resolve these discrepancies. However in connection with her claim that she married Martin Frobisher in the parish of Walbrook, it should be noted that Sir John Yorke and his family resided in the parish of Walbrook, and that Sir John Yorke's sister, Margaret Yorke, married Bernard Frobisher and by him was the mother of Martin Frobisher. See the will of Sir John Yorke, TNA PROB 11/51/58.

[August, 1570] my husband, being a prisoner in the Fleet, the Earl of Oxford provided a ship called the 'Grace of God', and £10 was given earnest thereupon, and £500 more was to be paid for her, my husband's liberty granted, and the ship to be given him with £2000 in ready money, the one half to be paid here, the other to be delivered him at his arrival with the Duke in Spain. My husband opened these dealings with me, and offered to leave me £900 of the first payment so that there might no words grow thereon. But I utterly renounced such gain to receive. I had a care of the duty I owe to your Majesty, as also feared it would be the utter destruction of my husband. So that with dutiful persuasions, I caused to let the earnest be lost. And so that enterprise was dashed.⁶²³

Had Isabel Frobisher not dissuaded her husband, the Duke of Norfolk might have escaped from England. Moreover, had Isabel Frobisher not reported Oxford's plan to the Queen, she would never have known about it. Even though the plan was aborted, the mere fact that Oxford had attempted to help Norfolk leave England would have had a lasting negative impact on the Queen's perception of Oxford's reliability.

A rising in Norwich in May or June 1570 led by John Appleyard⁶²⁴ may also have had something to do with helping Norfolk. Among the participants was John Jerningham, the husband of Lord Cobham's sister, Catherine Brooke:

John Jerningham had been found guilty of abetting the treasonable riots raised at Norwich. Ostensibly xenophobic and directed against the city's community of immigrant artisans, the riots were thought also to be a demonstration of support for the duke of Norfolk, then imprisoned in the Tower. . . .⁶²⁵

In late August 1570, Appleyard, Jerningham, and two others were condemned to death, although Appleyard and Jerningham were later pardoned.⁶²⁶

A letter written by William Herle to Lord Burghley on 16 March 1573 indicates that the opinion that Norfolk could have saved himself had he wished was not confined to

⁶²³ Nelson, pp. 53-4; TNA SP 12/95/92, f. 202; Edwards, *Marvellous Chance*, p. 399; TNA SP 15/21/23, ff. 42-3.

⁶²⁴ For John Appleyard (1527-1574?), see the will of his father, Roger Appleyard (d. 8 July 1528), TNA PROB 11/23/225. See also the History of Parliament entry: 'His prospects ruined, Appleyard seems to have retired to Norfolk, where in 1570 he completed his self-destruction by becoming one of the leaders of a pathetic little rising having the disparate aims of securing the expulsion of foreign immigrants and effecting the release of the Duke of Norfolk. . . . After four years he was transferred from Norwich castle to the custody of the sheriff and in May 1574 to that of the dean of Norwich, with a grant of some liberty. That is the last trace found of him'. URL: <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/appleyard-john-1529-74-or-later>. See also Skidmore, Chris, *Death and the Virgin Queen*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 2010), pp. 299-306.

⁶²⁵ McKeen, Vol. I, p. 187, Vol. II, p. 380.

⁶²⁶ Peck, *Leicester's Commonwealth*, p. 246.

Oxford. The occasion of Herle's letter was yet another conspiracy revealed by Isabel Frobisher:⁶²⁷

. . . The occasion of this bile, beside their own decay & lewdness, is an offence that some of them have conceived against your Lordship, namely Sir Warham St Leger, for the restoring of the Earl of Desmond into his country again, which he takes on so ill part that he hopes to see the Queen's Majesty, he saith, destroyed, with all the pack of such villainous Councillors as now govern, having opened to your Lordship great secrets, he saith, of the said Earl of Desmond & of the state of Ireland whereby he hath discredited himself utterly & is rejected with all from that he looked for & should have had there, but the Pope shall grow on their heels or [ere] either he advertise any more or serve in such a state where upstarts do command & that the nobility of the land is kept back & condemned, cursing that blab-lipped cowardly fool, the Duke of Norfolk, that he had not gone roundly to his business, who might have had 15 men to one of the Queen, & yet would suffer himself to be entrapped like a dolt, which words & matter, as they be grievous, so it may please your Lordship. to construe of them as you see cause, & to hold me discharged for imparting the same unto you.

Hereof your Lordship shall try the whole truth with further circumstance if ye vouchsafe to speak with Frobisher's wife, whom I will send to you with a little schedule of mine, by whom her husband may be made a mean to entertain this matter to his full ripeness, for they cannot depart before the next term for that their bank will not be ready till then. I have enjoined great secrecy to Frobisher's wife, who is the discoverer of this pack, & though it proceed partly of displeasure borne to Sir Warham St Leger, as I perceive, & partly of some jar happened between Frobisher & her by Sir Warham's means, yet there is great likelihood that every part thereof should be true, & by such displeasures women many times have disclosed great treasons, wherein it may please your Lordship to examine her of every part that I have written, which she will show you [deleted: in effect] also written with her own hand.⁶²⁸

Oxford's activities on behalf of Norfolk were noticed by the French ambassador, de la Mothe Fenelon. On December 10, 1571, Fenelon sent the Sieur de Sabran to Paris with secret information for the King about various matters, including:

. . . a certain proposal recently made by the Earl of Oxford to some of his friends, and what came of it.⁶²⁹

On 22 December 22 1571, Fenelon again mentioned Oxford in his despatches to the French court, stating guardedly in a letter to Queen Catherine de Medici that the Earl was

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⁶²⁸ See BL MS Lansdowne 16, f. 102-103v. URL:
<http://www.livesandletters.ac.uk/herle/letters/086.html>

⁶²⁹ Ward, p. 66.

‘un peu broiller ez affaires du Duc de Norfolk’.⁶³⁰

The historical record also shows that Oxford tried hard to persuade Lord Burghley, who was now his father-in-law, to intervene to save Norfolk's life, and that he was bitterly angry with Burghley for his part in the proceedings against Norfolk. On 18 March 1572, two months after Norfolk had been condemned to death for treason, John Lee, one of Burghley's agents, wrote to him from Antwerp that:

*The Papists in the Low Countries hope some attempt shortly against the Queen, for they hear the French King has manned twenty ships of war, and that the Duke of Alva has sent into Germany to take up bands of Horse and Foot. They further affirm that there was like to have been a meeting there the 27th of last month, when it was thought that the Duke of Norfolk should have passed [i.e., been executed]; so that they be fully persuaded that the Queen dare not proceed further therein, and also affirm that the Duke has secret friends and those of the best, and such as may do very much with the Queen; and that the Earl of Oxford (who has been a most humble suitor for him) has conceived some great displeasure against you for the same, whereupon he hath, as they say here, put away from him the Countess his wife.*⁶³¹

The story of Oxford's displeasure with Burghley over the Norfolk affair was still current fifty years later. William Dugdale, in his *Baronage of England* of 1625, says that:

*This Edward, being an intire friend to Thomas, Duke of Norfolk; when he discerned his Life in danger, upon what was laid to his charge; touching the Q. of Scots (whereof our Historians of that time do give some account) earnestly interceded with the Lord Treasurer Burghley (his Wives Father, and one of the chiefest States-men of that time) for the preserving him from destruction; but prevailing not, grew so highly incensed against Burghley, knowing it was in his power to save him; that, in great indignation, he said, he would do all he could to ruin his Daughter: and accordingly, not only forsook her Bed, but sold and consumed that great Inheritance, descended to him from his Ancestors: leaving very little for Henry his Son and Successor.*⁶³²

Whatever Oxford's actual activities in the Duke's behalf may have been, the historical record conveys a clear impression that he was loyal to Norfolk, and that he did what was in his power to aid his cousin and friend. In common with other of his contemporaries in court circles, Oxford probably believed that Norfolk was innocent of treason, and that he had been — at least with regard to the marriage with Mary, Queen of Scots — entrapped by Leicester. Given the suspicious circumstances surrounding all the key evidence against Norfolk — the letters taken from Charles Baillie and those found under the mats in the Duke's apartments and in the bag of money at St. Alban's — the possibility that

⁶³⁰ Ogburn, Charlton, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, (New York: Dodd, 1984), p. 491.

⁶³¹ Ward, p. 68; Nelson, pp. 80-1.

⁶³² Nelson, p. 82; Dugdale, William, *The Baronage of England*, (London, 1675), pp. 199-200.

evidence was deliberately planted to implicate the Duke in treason cannot be easily discounted.⁶³³

Only four days after Norfolk's execution, the Earl of Northumberland, one of the leaders of the Northern Rebellion of 1569, was sold by the Scots to Queen Elizabeth on 6 June 1572.⁶³⁴

By 22 July, chambers had been assigned to Oxford and others at Theobalds in anticipation of the Queen's visit.⁶³⁵

On Monday, 12 August 1572, the Queen, having dined at the house of Edward Fisher⁶³⁶ in Long Itchington, arrived at Warwick accompanied by a great train including the Earls of Warwick, Leicester, Oxford, Sussex, Rutland and Huntingdon, Lord Burghley and Lord Howard of Effingham.⁶³⁷

On Wednesday, the Queen:

*. . . desired to go to Kenilworth, leaving her household & train at Warwick, and so was on Wednesday morning conveyed through the streets to the north gate, & from thence through Mr Thomas Fisher's grounds, & so by Woodloes the fairest way to Kenilworth, where she rested at the charge of the Lord of Leicester from Wednesday morning till Saturday night, having in the meantime such princely sport made to her Majesty as could be devised. On Saturday night very late her Majesty returned to Warwick.*⁶³⁸

On the Monday following:

*[Thomas Fisher] rode with the Lord Treasurer attending her Majesty to Kenilworth again, reporting such things as some for their untruths & some for other causes had been better untold, but as he did it by counsel rashly & in heat, so by appearance at leisure coldly he repented. What these things mean is not for everyone to know. But to return to her Majesty, that Saturday night was lodged again in the castle at Warwick. . . .*⁶³⁹

Since the Queen had been openly speaking of marrying Leicester in June and July 1569,⁶⁴⁰ her visit to him at Kenilworth, leaving her train behind at Warwick, was certain

⁶³³ Green, Nina, 'Did Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, write Sir John Oldcastle in an attempt to save his cousin Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, from the headsman's axe?', *The Edward De Vere Newsletter*, No. 14, (April 1990).

⁶³⁴ See Lock, 'Percy, Thomas', *ODNB*, *supra*.

⁶³⁵ *ECDbD* (1572), p. 37; Nelson, p. 84.

⁶³⁶ Edward Fisher (1546/7–1601) was the only child of Thomas Fisher. See Dyer, Alan, 'Fisher [Hawkins], Thomas', *ODNB*, *supra*.

⁶³⁷ Kemp, *The Black Book of Warwick*, p. 86.

⁶³⁸ Kemp, *The Black Book of Warwick*, p. 95.

⁶³⁹ Kemp, *The Black Book of Warwick*, p. 95.

⁶⁴⁰ *ECDbD* (1569), pp. 19, 23.

to provoke the kind of speculation in which Thomas Fisher appears to have engaged.

An account by Thomas Fisher's younger brother, John Fisher, town clerk of Warwick, describes the mock battle staged for the Queen's entertainment on Sunday, 18 August in in which Oxford played a leading role:

. . . supper done, a show of fireworks prepared for that purpose in the Temple Fields was set abroach, the manner whereof this writer cannot so truly set forth as if he had been at the[m], being sick in his bed, but the report was that there was devised on the Temple ditch a fort made of slender timber covered with canvas. In this fort were appointed divers persons to serve as soldiers, and therefore so many harnesses as might be gotten within the town were had, wherewith men were armed & appointed to show themselves, some others appointed to cast out fireworks, as squibs & balls of fire. Against that fort was another castlewise prepared of like strength, whereof was governor the Earl of Oxford, a lusty gentleman, with a lusty band of gentlemen. Between these forts, or against them, were placed certain battering-pieces to the number of 12 or 13 brought from London, and 12 score chambers or mortys [sic for 'mortar'] pieces brought also from the town at the charge of th' Earl of Warwick. These pieces & chambers were by trains fired, & so made a great noise as though it had been a sore assault, having some intermission, in which time th' Earl of Oxford & his soldiers to the number of 200 with calivers & arquebuses likewise gave divers assaults. Then the fort shooting again & casting out divers fires, terrible to those that have not been in like experience, valiant to such as delighted therein, and indeed strange to them that understood it not, for the wild-fire falling into the River of Avon would for a time lie still, and then again rise & fly abroad, casting forth many flashes and flames, whereat the Queen's Majesty took great pleasure, till after by mischance a poor man or two were much troubled. For at the last, when it was appointed that the overthrowing of the fort should be, a dragon flying casting out huge flames & squibs lighted upon the fort, and so set fire thereon, to the subversion thereof. But whether by negligence or otherwise, it happed that a ball of fire fell on a house at the end of the bridge wherein one Henry Cowy [sic for 'Cooper'], otherwise called Miller, dwelled, and set fire on the same house, the man & wife being both in bed & on sleep, which burned so as before any rescue could be, the house & all things in it utterly perished, with much ado to save the man & woman, & besides that house, another house or two near adjoining were also fired, but rescued by the diligent & careful help as well of th' Earl of Oxford, Mr Fulke Greville & other gentlemen & townsmen which repaired thither in greater number than could be ordered. And no marvel it was that so little harm was done, for the fireballs & squibs cast up did fly quite over the castle and into the midst of the town, falling down some on houses, some in courts & backsides, and some in the streets as far as almost of Saint Mary Church, to the great peril or else great fear of the inhabitants of this borough. And so as by what means is not yet known four houses in the town & suburbs were on fire at once, whereof one had a ball came though both sides, & made a hole as big as a man's head, & did no more harm. This fire appeased, it was time to go to rest. And in the next morning it pleased her Majesty to have the poor old man & woman that had their house burnt brought unto her, whom so brought, her Majesty recomforted very much. And by her great bounty & other courtiers there was given towards their losses that had taken hurt £25 12s 8d or thereabouts,

which was dispensed to them accordingly. On Monday, her Majesty taking great pleasure in the sport she had at Kenilworth, would thither again, where she rested till the Saturday after, and then from thence by Charlecote⁶⁴¹ she went to the Lord Compton's,⁶⁴² & so forwards.⁶⁴³

While the court was diverted by the progress, the Earl of Northumberland was taken to York and beheaded on 22 August.⁶⁴⁴

On 1 January 1573, Mary de Vere received two jewels from the Queen, although not as part of the traditional exchange of New Year's gifts:

*Jewels given to her Majesty at New-Year's tide. . . . First two jewels of gold, the one being an oystege [ostrich?] garnished with two blue sapphires, sundry small diamonds and rubies, with two pearls hanging by a small chain at a knot, having two diamonds and rubies thereat, thother being a little tablet of gold having therein a spider and fly of opal, with one pearl pendent like two. Given by the Lady Margaret, Countess of Derby, the same delivered by her Majesty's commandment to the Lady Mary Vere.*⁶⁴⁵

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Queen deliberately slighted Margaret, Countess of Derby,⁶⁴⁶ who had royal blood, by giving Mary de Vere the expensive jewels the Countess had sent her.

On 11 May 1573 Gilbert Talbot⁶⁴⁷ wrote to his father, George Talbot, 6th Earl of

⁶⁴¹ Home of Sir Thomas Lucy. See Bearman, Robert, "Lucy, Sir Thomas (*b.* in or before 1532, *d.* 1600)", *ODNB*.

⁶⁴² Henry Compton (1544-1589), 1st Baron Compton. In 1576 he was the dedicatee of *The Paradise of Dainty Devises*, STC 7516. Oxford is mentioned on the title page, and as the author of eight songs in the collection. For Henry Compton, see his will, TNA PROB 11/74/434, and the Hhistory of Parliament entry. URL: <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/compton-henry-i-1544-89>

⁶⁴³ Kemp, *The Black Book of Warwick*, pp. 95-7; *ECDbD* (1572), p. 45; Ward, pp. 70-1; Nelson, pp. 84-6.

⁶⁴⁴ See Lock, 'Percy, Thomas', *ODNB*, *supra*.

⁶⁴⁵ The New Year's gift roll for 1573 is not extant (see *ECDbD* (1573), p. 1), and this document apparently lists only the jewels given to the Queen that year. See Nichols, *Progresses . . . Elizabeth*, *supra*, Vol. I, p. 323. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/progressespublic01nich/page/322/mode/2up>

⁶⁴⁶ Margaret Clifford (1540-1596) was the daughter of Henry Clifford (1517-1570), 2nd Earl of Cumberland, and his wife, Eleanor Brandon, the daughter of Henry VIII's sister, Mary Tudor. She married Henry Stanley, 4th Earl of Derby, who filed for separation from her in 1567. See 'Margaret Clifford, Countess of Derby'. URL:

<https://thefreelancehistorywriter.com/2020/04/24/margaret-clifford-countess-of-derby/>

⁶⁴⁷ Hicks, Michael, "Talbot, Gilbert, seventh Earl of Shrewsbury (1552-1616)", *ODNB*.

Shrewsbury,⁶⁴⁸ of the Queen's favour towards Oxford:

*My Lord of Oxford is lately grown into great credit, for the Queen's Majesty delighteth more in his personage and his dancing and valiantness than any other. I think Sussex doth back him all that he can; if it were not for his fickle head, he would pass any of them shortly. My Lady Burghley unwisely has declared herself, as it were, jealous, which is come to the Queen's ear, whereat she has been not a little offended with her, but now she is reconciled again.*⁶⁴⁹

Allusive language in a letter from Sir Christopher Hatton to the Queen in June 1573 suggests rivalry between Hatton and Oxford for the Queen's favour ('reserve it to the sheep; he hath no tooth to bite where the boar's tush may both raze and tear').⁶⁵⁰

In June 1573 Oxford sold the mansion at London Stone which Henry VIII had granted to the 15th Earl in 1539.⁶⁵¹ The purchaser, Sir Ambrose Nicholas,⁶⁵² Lord Mayor of London, was the father of Daniel Nicholas, a witness in the *Belott vs. Mountjoy* lawsuit who deposed therein to a personal conversation with William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon:

3 To the third interrogatory this deponent [=Daniel Nicholas] saith he heard one William Shakespeare say that the defendant did bear a good opinion of the plaintiff, and affected him well when he served him, and did move the plaintiff by him, the said Shakespeare, to have [+a] marriage between his daughter, Mary Mountjoy, [+and] the plaintiff, and for that purpose sent him, the said Shakespeare, to the plaintiff to persuade the plaintiff to the same, as Shakespeare told him, this deponent, which was effected and solemnized upon promise of a portion with her, and more he cannot depose.

4 To the 4th interrogatory this deponent saith that the plaintiff did request him, this deponent, to go with his wife to Shakespeare to understand the truth how much and what the defendant did promise [+to] bestow on his daughter in marriage with him, the plaintiff, who did so, and asking Shakespeare thereof, he answered that he promised if the plaintiff would marry with Mary, his, the defendant's only daughter, he, the defendant, would by his promise, as he remembered, give the plaintiff with her in

⁶⁴⁸ Goldring, Elizabeth, "Talbot, George, sixth Earl of Shrewsbury (c.1522–1590)", *ODNB*.

⁶⁴⁹ Talbot Papers, Vol. F, f. 79; Nelson, p. 95; *ECDbD* (1573), p. 14.

⁶⁵⁰ Nicolas, Harris, *Memoirs of the Life and Times of Sir Christopher Hatton*, (London: Richard Bentley, 1847), pp. 28-9. URL:

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044011795259&view=1up&seq=64>

⁶⁵¹ TNA C 66/688, m. 8; TNA C 66/1101, mm. 32-3; TNA C 66/922, Part 27; TNA PRO 30/34/14, No. 3.

⁶⁵² For the will of Sir Ambrose Nicholas (d.1578) in which he mentions 'my great messuage or house called Oxford House', see TNA PROB 11/60/296.

*marriage about the sum of fifty pounds in money and certain household stuff. . . .*⁶⁵³

On 9 June 1583 Oxford's friend, Thomas Radcliffe, 3rd Earl of Sussex, died at his house at Bermondsey. In his final illness he is said to have warned his friends against Leicester:

*I am now passing into another world and I must leave you to your fortunes and the Queen's grace and goodness, but beware of the Gypsy, meaning Leicester, for he will be too hard for you all; you know not the beast so well as I do.*⁶⁵⁴

In the late August 1573 Oxford was in the process of making definite plans to travel abroad.⁶⁵⁵ In a document prepared at the time he estimated his debts to the Queen and others to be £6000,⁶⁵⁶ and it may be that he had sold his mansion at London Stone to provide the necessary funds for foreign travel. For reasons which are unclear, he did not leave England.⁶⁵⁷

On 14 October 1573 Edward Bacon⁶⁵⁸ wrote to his brother, Nathaniel,⁶⁵⁹ that 'My Lord of Oxford and Mr Hatton were at great words in the Chamber of Presence, which matter is said to be before the Council'.⁶⁶⁰ What gave rise to the 'great words' is unknown. The relationship between Oxford and Sir Christopher Hatton had its ups and downs; however later events demonstrate that when his influence counted, Hatton was usually on Oxford's side.

In January 1574, Eleanor Bridges⁶⁶¹ sent news from Hampton Court to the Earl of Rutland, including news of Oxford's sister:

⁶⁵³ TNA REQ 4/1/3; Nicholl, Charles, *The Lodger Shakespeare; His Life on Silver Street*, (New York: Viking, 2008), p. 64.

⁶⁵⁴ Naunton, Robert, *Fragmenta Regalia*, (1641), p. 17. URL: <https://archive.org/details/1641fragmentareg00naun/page/16/mode/2up>

⁶⁵⁵ Nelson, p. 99.

⁶⁵⁶ Nelson, p. 103.

⁶⁵⁷ CP 159/110; CP 159/113; Nelson, pp. 99-104.

⁶⁵⁸ Edward Bacon (1548/9–1618) was the sixth child of Sir Nicholas Bacon (1510-1579) by his first wife, Jane Ferneley (d.1552). Sir Nicholas Bacon later became Lord Burghley's brother-in-law through his marriage to Lady Burghley's sister, Anne Cooke (c.1528-1610). Edward Bacon and his brother, Nathaniel Bacon (1546?–1622), were thus distantly related to Oxford by marriage, which partly explains Edward Bacon's references to Oxford in his letters.

⁶⁵⁹ Smith, A. Hassell, "Bacon, Sir Nathaniel (1546?–1622)", *ODNB*.

⁶⁶⁰ Nelson, p. 104; *ECDbD* (1573), p. 41.

⁶⁶¹ Eleanor Bridges was the daughter of Edmund Brydges (d.1573), 2nd Baron Chandos, and Dorothy Bray (1529/30–1605), fifth daughter and coheir of Edmund Bray, 1st Baron Bray.

*The Queen has used Mary Shelton⁶⁶² very ill for her marriage. 'She hath dealt liberal both with blows and evil words, and hath not yet granted her consent.' No one ever bought her husband more dearly. Lady Mary de Vere, sister of the Earl of Oxford, is sworn one of the privy chamber. The court is as full of malice and spite as when you left.*⁶⁶³

Being sworn of the privy chamber was a great honour, but also a mixed blessing. One could find oneself subject to 'evil words' and 'liberal blows' from the Queen. Moreover Eleanor Bridges does not appear to be entirely jesting when she describes the court as 'full of malice and spite'.

On 7 March 1574, Sir Thomas Smith wrote from Richmond to Lord Burghley, 'concluding with intelligence of Lady Oxford's being with child, wishing it may be a boy to continue that stock in the county of Essex which is so well beloved there'.⁶⁶⁴

In 1574 Oxford's surgeon, George Baker,⁶⁶⁵ dedicated to him a work containing two translations, *The Composition or Making of . . . Oleum Magistrale, and The Third Book of Galen*.⁶⁶⁶

C. FLIGHT TO THE LOW COUNTRIES

The summer of 1574 was a turning-point in Oxford's life. It was also a time of uneasy relations between England, Spain, the Low Countries and France. England and Spain had long been at odds, in part because the English were aiding the Dutch rebels fighting their Spanish masters in the Low Countries. Moreover France had a new and untried King:

The summer of 1574 following the death of Charles IX was a tense one; the English waited anxiously for the coming of a Spanish fleet, which they feared was destined for Ireland, and naval preparations continue fitfully through these months, depending on the latest rumors from the north coast of Spain. Relations with France were no happier; the Queen and her ministers were apprehensive as to Henry III's intentions. Henry III was notoriously Catholic; he had refused the Queen's hand for his religion's sake. Was it not likely that he would ally himself with Spain and the Pope against the heretic kingdom? Negotiations with the Huguenots and particularly with agents of Condé were reopened. All summer long the French ambassador nervously watched what he saw as a struggle

⁶⁶² Adams, Simon, "Scudamore [*née* Shelton], Mary, Lady Scudamore (c. 1550–1603)", *ODNB*.

⁶⁶³ HMC Rutland, Vol. I, p. 107, where the letter is tentatively dated to 1576. However Mary Shelton was married to Sir John Scudamore before January 1574.

⁶⁶⁴ BL MS Harley 6991[62]. See *A Catalogue of the Harleian Collection of Manuscripts*, (London: Dryden Leach, 1759), Vol. II. URL:

https://archive.org/details/b30455315_0002/page/n775/mode/2up

⁶⁶⁵ Ungerer, Gustav, "Baker, George (1540–1612)", *ODNB*.

⁶⁶⁶ STC 1209; Nelson, p. 237.

within the English Council of pro-French and pro-Spanish elements. It would probably be more accurate to characterize English actions during these months as a nervous jockeying for position at a moment of rapid and unpredictable change. The conclusion of the Convention of Bristol [=21 August 1574] was a step towards better relations with Spain; those with France remained in a state of worrying suspense while Henry III enjoyed the flesh-pots of Italy as he idled homewards towards his impatient mother,⁶⁶⁷ who was waiting for him at Lyons.⁶⁶⁸

English ships were put on alert in June, and the ensuing months were filled with news of the Spanish fleet which, although some suspected it might be bound for Ireland, was generally thought to be sailing to the aid of Spanish forces in the Netherlands.⁶⁶⁹ An unresolved issue was whether England would allow the Spanish ships to shelter and provision in ports in the West Country on their way to Zealand, and on 5 July Don Bernardino de Mendoza⁶⁷⁰ was dispatched to England with the objective of securing safe passage for the Spanish fleet.⁶⁷¹

It was against this backdrop that on 25 June 1574 Oxford was in the final stages of preparation for a secret departure from England. On that date, at his rooms at Greenwich, he granted Edmund Yorke⁶⁷² a 42-year lease of his manor of Tilbury juxta Clare.⁶⁷³ On 30 June he acknowledged a recognizance in the amount of £400 to William Aylofffe⁶⁷⁴ in connection with indentures of the same date which may have involved the sale of a parcel of land. Part of the large sum of money Oxford had with him when he left England was likely obtained from these and other leases and sales. His accumulation of funds and

⁶⁶⁷ Catherine de Medici was acting as Regent of France.

⁶⁶⁸ MacCaffrey, Wallace T., *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy, 1572-1588*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 182-3. URL: https://books.google.ca/books?id=uc__AwAAQBAJ&pg=PA182

⁶⁶⁹ See *CSP Rome 1572-1578*, Nos. 325, 327, 329, 334, 335, 336, 337, 339, 341, 345 and 349.

⁶⁷⁰ Don Bernardino de Mendoza (c.1540-1604). He was briefly in England on this mission in 1574, and returned as Spanish ambassador in 1578, remaining until his expulsion in 1584.

⁶⁷¹ Mendoza was dispatched from Brussels on 5 July. See *CSP Rome 1572-1578*, No. 323. *ECDbD* (1574), pp. 18, 19, differs slightly as to his mission, saying he was sent by Requesens, Governor of the Low Countries, with a letter from King Philip asking the Queen to allow the Spanish fleet to revictual in English ports, if necessary. According to *ECDbD*, he was in England from 10 July to 20.

⁶⁷² For his will, see TNA PROB 11/89/243. He married the widow of William Whasshe, whose daughter, Eleanor Whasshe (or Walsh) married Oxford's first cousin, Hugh Vere. In 1572, when Edmund Yorke conveyed his manor of Sledmere, the indenture was 'attested by three men-servants of the right honourable the Earl of Oxford'. See *Descent of Lands in Sledmere*, (Kingston-upon-Hull, James Plaxton, n.d.), pp. 11-12. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=fEEIAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA12>

⁶⁷³ ERO D/DCw T46/52. The indenture enrolled in Chancery on 28 June 1574.

⁶⁷⁴ William Aylofffe (c.1535-1584). For his will, see TNA PROB 11/67/475.

arrangement for a ship to take him and his companions from Wivenhoe to Calais indicates that his flight to the continent was carefully planned. The preparations he had made to travel abroad in late August 1573 had been frustrated, likely by the Queen, and he was now about to slip away secretly.

On 1 July 1574, Oxford left England without licence. His departure is recorded in the notebook of his auditor and maternal uncle, George Golding:⁶⁷⁵

Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxenford, went from the Lady Yorke's⁶⁷⁶ house in Walbrook in London where he then lay for a time, and at Aldgate here(?) took horse, scilicet, the first day of July 1574 anno xvjth Regine Elizabethae, being Thursday, between two and three of clock in the morning, and so to Wivenhoe in Essex, and the next night he took ship & coasted over into Flanders, arriving at Calais.

Where the said Earl departed from the Lady Yorke's between 2 & 3 of clock in the morning on Thursday primo Iulii 1574, in th' afternoon of the same day there was delivered to Robert Rose, his Lordship's servant, a lease engrossed in parchment by my clerk for 21 years to begin at Michaelmas 1574 of such things as Sir Edward Littleton holdeth in Acton Trussell, which he would have preferred to the said Earl to be sealed if he had tarried.⁶⁷⁷

Oxford's strategy to mask his imminent flight from England appears to have been the pretext that he was in London engaged in property transactions such as this lease to Robert Rose. However news of his departure spread on the very day he left. On 1 July Edward Bacon reported to his brother, Nathaniel, that Oxford had crossed the Channel in the company of Lord Edward Seymour,⁶⁷⁸ Lady Yorke's son, Edward Yorke, and two others, and that he was well supplied with money:

My Lord of Oxford is gone beyond the sea, & hath carried a great sum of money with him. He took shipping by his house in Essex. My Lord Edward Seymour is with him, Edward Yorke, one Cruse,⁶⁷⁹ & a[n]other. He went without leave, the cause of their departure unknown. Much speech thereof. The Queen is said to take it ill.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁵ For George Golding, see the will of his widow, Mary Bartelet, TNA PROB 11/119/379.

⁶⁷⁶ Anne Yorke (d.1575), widow of Sir John Yorke (d.1569), Lord Mayor of London. See her will, TNA PROB 11/57/581.

⁶⁷⁷ ERO D/DRg 2/24.

⁶⁷⁸ Edward Seymour (c.1500-1552), 1st Duke of Somerset, had four sons named Edward Seymour; the Lord Edward Seymour (1548-1574) who accompanied Oxford to Calais on 1 July 1574 was his fourth son of that name.

⁶⁷⁹ He may have been the Robert Cruse who wrote to Lord Burghley in 1575. See *CSPD 1547-1580*, pp. 496-7. URL:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=USIMAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA497>

⁶⁸⁰ Nelson, p. 109; Folger MS X.d.502(2).

URL: <https://findingaids.folger.edu/dfonathaniel.xml>

One of Oxford's travelling companions, Lord Edward Seymour, is said to have continued on to Italy, and to have died in Rome later than year.⁶⁸¹ It thus seems that Oxford's original destination was Italy as well, and that he and Lord Seymour had left England with the intention of travelling there together. However Oxford got no further than Flanders, and on 3 July the Queen sent his friend, the Gentleman Pensioner, Thomas Bedingfield, to recall him.⁶⁸²

In the interim, his sudden and unauthorized departure caused wild speculation as to his motives. On 6 July de Sweveghem, the Flemish Commissioner who had attended Oxford's wedding reception, wrote from London to Jean de Boisshot, indicating that although some at court were convinced that Oxford was merely carrying out his long-frustrated plan to see Italy, others suspected he might join the Catholic exiles in Flanders.⁶⁸³

This court is shaken and filled with apprehension because the Earl of Oxford, son-in-law of Lord Burghley, hereditary Lord Great Chamberlain, and the second Earl in the realm, has, with Lord Edward [Seymour], the Earl of Hertford's brother, passed the seas into Flanders in disguise.

For fear that this is for another purpose than to see Italy and other Christian countries, as he has long said he desires to do, it is rumoured that on this occasion all ships (as people say), are being put on alert. Suspicion is increased because some gentlemen, familiars and favorers of the said Earl, have sailed from Bristol to Spain with fifteen chests of his goods and money. Others are of opinion that they are arming for fear of France, so much so that yesterday letters of marque were granted against the French, and others against Portugal.

The rebels here who solicit on behalf of the Prince of Orange and others favouring his party were greatly astonished when, by the gentleman, and by the patent granted to me, de Sweveghem, they found themselves assured of the agreement for ports for our Spanish army,⁶⁸⁴ having been firmly persuaded till now that we would not be able to obtain it, so that the principal among them cannot hide [their astonishment], marvelling and complaining that the King, our master, has so many friends active here who increase the

⁶⁸¹ He wrote to his brother from Paris on 18 September 1574 (see BL MS Add. 32091, f. 277). Nelson, p. 111, and Calthorpe, *ECDBD* (1574), p. 21, both state that he died in Rome later that year. However no authority is cited.

⁶⁸² As noted above, in 1572 Thomas Bedingfield had dedicated his translation of *Cardanus' Comfort* to Oxford. See *ECDBD* (1574), p. 38 for payment to Bedingfield of £51 for fetching Oxford back to England: 'For his posting, his transportation, and other necessary charges, as well going as returning, with two servants and a guide'.

⁶⁸³ Jean de Boisshot (1520-1580), Advocate-Fiscal of Brabant. See *ECDBD* (1574), pp. 5, 40.

⁶⁸⁴ The Treaty of Bristol, which was signed in August 1574, settled commercial disputes with Spain.

Queen's impression of the strong confidence and assurance that she can place in his Majesty.

It is thought that a gentleman friend of the said Earl of Oxford will be sent with a patent from the Queen addressed to all princes and potentates to treat him favourably and assist him in passing thorough their countries, so that he is thereby retained in his office and diverted from any sinister schemes, and will perhaps not devote himself to some service by which she could be harmed -- by which it seems (speaking under correction), in case he should present his service to the King, our master -- that it would greatly increase the confidence of the Queen if, before accepting his service, his Majesty or your Excellency would give her convenient warning beforehand, we being advised that such and similar actions would greatly serve to maintain the warm friendship of the Queen in that regard.⁶⁸⁵

On 6 July, John Knyveton reported to the Earl of Shrewsbury that ships had been placed on alert because of Oxford's unauthorized departure, but that nonetheless matters were moving forward in terms of an agreement between England and Spain:

I can write of no other news than I did yesterday by Nicholas Steward, saving that where all the Queen's ships were discharged, there is now again commandment that certain of them shall be made ready with all speed, which was done upon th' Earl of Oxford his departure so suddenly without licence. Notwithstanding, the Spanish ambassador and Mr Harbart with certain others have commission to go into the West Country, and to see that the King [of] Spain his ships, if any come there, be well used & may have victuals for their money if they have such necessity. . . .⁶⁸⁶

The rumours reported by de Sweveghem and Knyveton are indicative of the level of panic at court. Ships were placed on alert, and in case he refused to return, Bedingfield was given a letter of commendation from the Queen requesting her fellow monarchs to treat Oxford favourably on his travels in the hope that he would continue with his original plan to travel to Italy, and would not be tempted to remain in Flanders and offer his service to King Philip of Spain. If the rumour concerning this patent is accurate, it seems it was to be kept in reserve by Bedingfield, and only used in the event that Oxford refused to return to England. It was by no means a certainty that he would do so. Lord Burghley says in his letter of 3 August (see *infra*) that no one who had left England without licence, or who had left with licence but had remained abroad after the expiry of the licence, had ever returned.

On July 8 Fenelon belatedly reported Oxford's departure to Catherine de Medici, then Regent of France, inaccurately naming his travelling companion as 'Lord Somerset':

And I will add only that on Saturday last the Earl of Oxford and my Lord Edward

⁶⁸⁵ Lettenhove 1573-75, Vol. VII, pp. 204-5. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/relationpolitiqu07nethuoft/page/204/mode/2up>

⁶⁸⁶ Nelson, pp. 109-10, citing Lambeth Palace MS 697, ff. 47-48.

*Somerset [sic] slipped away from here to pass to Flanders, with which this court is much troubled.*⁶⁸⁷

On 8 July Sir Francis Walsingham wrote to Lord Burghley advising that a secret message had been sent to Oxford:

*I made her acquainted with my Lord of Oxford's arrival at Calais, who doth not interpret the same in any evil part. She conceiveth great hope of his return upon some secret message sent him.*⁶⁸⁸

In a few years, Oxford alluded to this message in his tall tale about the siege of Bommel (see below).⁶⁸⁹

On 11 July, Sir Thomas Smith wrote to Lord Burghley concerning the ships to be sent out, and on 13 July wrote again to convey what he had learned about Oxford's reception abroad, and whether the Queen's anger had abated:

*Of my Lord of Oxford, for my part I can as yet learn no certainty, but it is commonly said that he arrived at Calais, and was there very honourably received and entertained, and from thence he went into Flanders. As far as I can yet perceive, her Majesty's grief for him, or towards him, is somewhat mitigated, but I will do what I can conveniently to understand more of her Highness' advertisements and mind in this case.*⁶⁹⁰

By mid-July it was known at court that Oxford had agreed to return, and that the Queen had decided how he would be dealt with. The Earl of Sussex wrote to Lord Burghley informing him of this, and on 15 July, Lord Burghley responded:

My very good Lord, I most heartily thank your Lordship for your advertisements of my Lord of Oxford's cause, wherein I am sorry that her Majesty maketh such haste, and so to answer him as I fear the sequel may breed offence if he shall be evil counselled.

My Lord, howsoever my Lord of Oxford be for his own private matters of thrift unconsiderate, I dare avow him to be resolute in dutifulness to the Queen and his country.

As for my being or coming to Reading, I meant not but at Woodstock, for so her Majesty appointed me. And yet this day I received a letter from Mr Secretary Walsingham by

⁶⁸⁷ *Correspondance*, Vol. VI, p. 177; Nelson, p. 109.

⁶⁸⁸ Nelson, p. 109; BL MS Harley 6991[42]. URL: https://archive.org/details/b30455315_0002/page/n775/mode/2up

⁶⁸⁹ '... next day, Mr Bedingfield, as the devil would have it, came in upon his post-horse and called him from this service by her Majesty's letters'.

⁶⁹⁰ Nelson, p. 109; BL MS Harley 6991[44]. URL: https://archive.org/details/b30455315_0002/page/n775/mode/2up

which he seemeth that the Queen's Majesty hath a disposition to have my Lord Keeper⁶⁹¹ and me, with Sir Ralph Sadler, to abide at London, I know not yet why. I shall do as I am commanded; only I wish I had been at the court at this depeach [=dispatch], although I doubt I should not have prevailed. I pray God the usage of the poor young Lord may not hazard him to the profit of others.

From my house at Theobalds where my Lord of Surrey⁶⁹² and his 2 brethren are sporting.⁶⁹³

Burghley's reply indicates his uneasiness at the Queen's hasty decision. He senses that he is deliberately being kept back in London so that he cannot advocate for Oxford, and regrets that he could not be with the court on the progress to suggest a more moderate approach, although he doubts he would have prevailed. He emphasizes Oxford's loyalty, and expresses his fear that if the Queen deals too harshly with him, others may take advantage of his discontent.

It has been asserted, once by Oxford himself,⁶⁹⁴ that Lord Burghley did not sufficiently exert himself on Oxford's behalf throughout his lifetime. A careful reading of letters such as the one quoted above suggests otherwise, and fails to take into account that Lord Burghley had to contend with Oxford's powerful at court, the Queen's favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.

On 18 July, Lord Burghley's brother-in-law, Sir Henry Killigrew,⁶⁹⁵ writing from Edinburgh, reported, among much other news:

That my Lord of Oxford and my Lord Seymour were fled out of England & passed by Bruges to Brussels.⁶⁹⁶

Whether Killigrew's information placing Oxford in Bruges and Brussels was accurate is unknown.

On 27 July, Lord Burghley's long-time friend, Sir Walter Mildmay,⁶⁹⁷ sent words of encouragement:

⁶⁹¹ Lord Burghley's brother-in-law, Sir Nicholas Bacon. See Titler, Robert, "Bacon, Sir Nicholas (1510–1579)", *ODNB*.

⁶⁹² Philip Howard, eldest son and heir of Oxford's first cousin, Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk. See Elzinga, J.G., "Howard, Philip [St Philip Howard], thirteenth Earl of Arundel (1557–1595)", *ODNB*.

⁶⁹³ Ward, p. 94; Nelson, pp. 110–11, 459, citing BL MS Cotton Titus B.2, f. 295.

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⁶⁹⁵ He married Lady Burghley's sister, Katherine Cooke. See MacMahon, Luke, "Killigrew, Sir Henry (1525x8–1603)", *ODNB*.

⁶⁹⁶ TNA SP 15/26/1, f. 73; Nelson, p. 111, citing *CSP Foreign 1572–1574*, No. 1496.

⁶⁹⁷ Ford, L.L., "Mildmay, Sir Walter (1520/21–1589)", *ODNB*.

*. . . of my Lord of Oxford's return, I am glad to hear. I trust this little journey will make him love home the better hereafter. It were great pity he should not go straight; there be so many good things in him to serve God and his prince.*⁶⁹⁸

On 28 July, Sir Francis Walsingham noted in his journal that he had received letters from Lord Cobham advising that Oxford had landed at Dover.⁶⁹⁹

George Golding recorded in his notebook the precise details of Oxford's arrival in London:

*The said Earl returned and was at London again on Wednesday at night about 9 of clock the 28th of July aforesaid, 1574.*⁷⁰⁰

On 29 July Lord Burghley and Anne Cecil came to meet Oxford in London. Oxford and Anne then travelled to Theobalds, where Oxford met with Thomas Bedingfield and spent time 'hunting of the stag' while he awaited word from the Queen.⁷⁰¹

Meantime Sir Francis Walsingham proved to be a useful ally at court, informing Lord Burghley on 1 August of the current state of the Queen's intentions:

*I find her Majesty graciously enough inclined towards the Earl of Oxford, whose peace I think will be both easily and speedily made for that her Majesty doth conceive that his obedience in his return hath fully satisfied the contempt of his departure, and the rather [doth avow?] his honourable and dutiful carriage of himself towards the rebels and other undutiful subjects of her Majesty's in that country, an argument of his approved loyalty, which as opportunity shall serve I will not fail to lay before her Majesty by acquainting her with your Lordship's letters.*⁷⁰²

The Queen's graciousness was in marked contrast to her earlier actions. According to a letter of 2 August 1574 from Bartolomeo Portia⁷⁰³ to Tolomeo Galli,⁷⁰⁴ the understanding on the continent was that Oxford had returned because of dire threats conveyed to him by Bedingfield:

The Earl of Oxford, an Englishman, having come to Flanders without the Queen's

⁶⁹⁸ Nelson, p. 111, citing BL MS Harley 6991[49], ff. 98-9. URL: https://archive.org/details/b30455315_0002/page/n775/mode/2up

⁶⁹⁹ *ECDbD* (1574), p. 20.

⁷⁰⁰ ERO D/DRg 2/24, *supra*.

⁷⁰¹ Ward, p. 95; Nelson, p. 112.

⁷⁰² Nelson, p. 112; BL Harley 6991[50]. URL: https://archive.org/details/b30455315_0002/page/n775/mode/2up

⁷⁰³ Bartolomeo Portia (1525?-1578), Papal Nuncio in Germany.

⁷⁰⁴ Tolomeo Galli (1526?-1607), Cardinal of Como.

*licence, was bidden to return under very heavy penalties.*⁷⁰⁵

The allegation seems credible since Oxford had left behind a wife, kinsmen by blood and marriage, and estates of considerable value, over all of which the Queen had power if she chose to use it.

On 3 August Fenelon reported briefly to Catherine de Medici that the Queen:

*. . . continues her progress towards Bristol, very joyful that the Earl of Oxford has returned at her command, although my Lord Edward has remained.*⁷⁰⁶

Fenelon's characterization of the Queen as 'joyful' is not entirely accurate. Although she was undoubtedly relieved that Oxford was safely back in England without having allied himself with her Catholic rebel subjects on the continent, she did not intend to let him go unreprieved. In an undated letter Walsingham⁷⁰⁷ wrote to Lord Burghley:

*The chiefest news presently here is that the Earl of Oxford lately arrived at Dover, whose return hath very much qualified her Majesty's displeasure conceived against him. Yet I perceive her Majesty doth not mean to wrap up his contempt without using some kind of reprehension, that he may not think but that his fault is not only to be reprov'd but were also to be corrected had he not cured the wound of his undutiful departure contrary to her Majesty's inhibition through his dutiful return upon her Majesty's revocation.*⁷⁰⁸

On 3 August, Lord Burghley, still kept back from court and unable to intercede for Oxford personally, wrote a long worried letter from Theobalds to Sir Francis Walsingham in which Oxford's own nervousness as to how the Queen would receive him is reflected:

Sir, yesternight your letters came to Master Bedingfield and me signifying her Majesty's pleasure that my Lord of Oxford should come to Gloucester now at her Majesty's being there, whereof he, being advertised by us, was very ready to take the journey, showing in himself a mixture of contrary affections, although both reasonable and commendable, the one fearful and doubtful in what sort he shall recover her Majesty's favour because of his offence in departure as he did without licence, the other gladful and resolute to look for a speedy good end because he had in his abode so notoriously rejected the attempts of her Majesty's evil subjects, and in his return set apart all his own particular desires of foreign travel, and come to present himself before her Majesty, of whose goodness towards him he saith he cannot doubt.

⁷⁰⁵ Nelson, p. 111; *CSP Rome*, No. 336, pp. 181-2. URL: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/vatican/vol2/pp181-184>.

⁷⁰⁶ Nelson, p. 113; *Correspondance*, Vol. VI, p. 204; *ECDbD* (1574), p. 21.

⁷⁰⁷ According to Kreiler, the letter is from Walsingham's letter book. See 'Oxford in Flanders, July 1574'. URL: <http://www.anonymous-shakespeare.com/cms/index.301.0.1.html>

⁷⁰⁸ Nelson, pp. 112-13; TNA SP 12/45, p. 59.

Hereupon he and Mr Bedingfield departed this afternoon to London where the Earl, as I perceive, will spend only two days or less to make him some apparel meet for the court, although I would have had him forborne that new charge, considering his former apparel is very sufficient, and he not provided to increase a new charge.

But now considering my Lord is to come to Gloucester, there to make all humble means to recover her Majesty's favour, wherein he is to be helped with advice and friends, and that I cannot be so soon as he for that on Friday or Saturday next I am to attend at London for the celebration of the French King's funerals so as I am in doubt whether I shall come to Gloucester before Wednesday following, I must be bold by this my letter to require you in my name most humbly to beseech her Majesty that she will regard his loyalty and not his lightness in sudden going over, his confidence in her goodness and clemency and not his boldness in attempting that which hath offended her, and finally so to order him both in the order and speed of his coming to her Majesty's presence that her Majesty's enemies and rebels which sought by many devices to stay him from returning may perceive his returning otherwise rewarded than they would have had him imagined, and that also his friends that have advised him to return may take comfort thereof with himself, and he not repent his dutifulness in doing that which in this time none hath done, I mean of such as hath either gone without licence, or gone with licence and not returned in their due time. Of his offence he hath examples overmany in going without licence, but of his dutifulness abroad, where he was provoked to the contrary, and of his returning again when he lacked not some stings of fear, he hath no examples at all to my remembrance.

And truly, not for himself only, but for to give some good examples to others that either have erred as he did or may hereafter err in like sort, I think it a sound counsel to be given to her Majesty that this young nobleman, being of such a quality as he is for birth, office and other notable valours of body and spirit, be not discomfited, either by any extraordinary delay or by any outward sharp or unkind reproof, but if her Majesty will not spare from uttering of some sparks of her first offence for his first, yet that the same may in presence of some few of her Council be uttered, and that her favourable accepting of his submission may be largely and manifestly declared to him to the confirmation of him in his singular loyalty.

Thus you see how busy I am, and surely not without some cause, for if he shall not find comfort now in this amendment of his first fault, I fear the malice of some discontented persons, wherewith the court is overmuch sprinkled, will colourably set to draw him to a repentance rather of his dutifulness in thus returning than to settle in him a contentation to continue in his duty.

And to conclude, sir, I beseech you to impart such parts of this my scribbling with my Lords of the Council with whom you shall perceive her Majesty will have to deal in this case, that not only they will favourably reprehend him for his fault, but frankly and liberally comfort him for his amends made both in his behaviour beyond seas and in his returning as he hath done, and beside this that they will be suitors to her Majesty for him

as noblemen for a nobleman, and so bind him in honour to be indebted with goodwill to them hereafter, as indeed I know some of them hath given him good occasion, though he hath been otherwise seduced by such as regarded nothing his honour nor well doing, whereof I perceive he now acknowledgeth some experience to his charge, and I trust will be more ware of such sycophants and parasites.

*You see I cannot well end, neither will I end without also praying you to remember Mr Hatton to continue my Lord's friend as he hath manifestly been, and as my Lord confesseth to me that he hopeth assuredly so to prove him.*⁷⁰⁹

On 5 August, likely in the company of Thomas Bedingfield, Oxford left for the West Country, where the Queen was on progress.⁷¹⁰ On 13 August Fenelon wrote to Catherine de Medici that while he was in Flanders Oxford had had no communication with the Earl of Westmorland, the Countess of Northumberland,⁷¹¹ or any of the English exiles.⁷¹²

On 13 August, while the court was at the home of Sir Nicholas Poyntz in Iron Acton, Walsingham noted in his journal that 'After dinner the Council sat about the Earl of Oxford'.⁷¹³

On 21 August, while the court was at Bristol, Walsingham wrote in his journal, 'The Earl of Oxford came before her Majesty'. Lord Burghley also noted, 'Earl of Oxford returned, and he and I went to the Queen's Majesty to Bristol'.⁷¹⁴ The note raises a question as to Oxford's whereabouts from 5 August to 21 August. Was he with the court from about 7 August, but not permitted to see the Queen until 21 August?

On 21 August, the Treaty of Bristol was finally signed, resolving outstanding issues between England and Spain. The Queen's Commissioners were Dr William Aubrey and Dr David Lewis; the King of Spain's Commissioners, de Sweveghem and de Boisshot.⁷¹⁵ The Treaty angered English Protestants who wanted to ally England with Protestants in the Low Countries. The Queen agreed to no longer assist William of Orange; in return, English merchant could once again frequent Spanish-controlled ports.⁷¹⁶

⁷⁰⁹ Ward, pp. 95-6; Nelson, pp. 113-15; TNA SP 12/98/2, ff. 5-6.

⁷¹⁰ Nelson, p. 115, citing CP xiii, p. 144 (140/15(2)).

⁷¹¹ Scott, Jade, "Percy [*née* Somerset], Anne, countess of Northumberland (1536–1591)", *ODNB*. She was the widow of Thomas Percy (1528-1572), 7th Earl of Northumberland. Her daughter, Jane Percy, later married Lord Henry Seymour (b.1540), who had earlier been contracted to marry Oxford's half sister, Katherine de Vere. See above.

⁷¹² Nelson, p. 115; *Correspondance*, Vol. VI, p. 209; *ECDbD* (1574), p. 25.

⁷¹³ Nelson, p. 115; *ECDbD* (1574), p. 25.

⁷¹⁴ Nelson, p. 115, citing CP 140/15(2); *ECDbD* (1574), pp. 30, 38.

⁷¹⁵ *ECDbD* (1574), p. 30.

⁷¹⁶ Gillespie, Alexander, *The Causes of War; Volume III: 1400 CE to 1650 CE*, (Portland, Oregon: Hart Publishing, 2017), p. 103. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=i3UpDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA103>

A letter written by Edward Woodshaw⁷¹⁷ to Lord Burghley from Antwerp on 3 September describes the political wasp's nest into which Oxford had stumbled in early July, reporting the joyful anticipation with which English rebels and Catholics on the continent had greeted the news of Oxford's departure from England without licence:

Further I cannot but advise your Honour what triumph, joy and gladness was here amongst our noble & unnoble northern rebels that be here, as also amongst our Catholic men of Louvain or elsewhere on this side the seas, when that they heard of my Lord of Oxford's coming over. What great lies, what divers fables were of his Honour's flying out of England I am ashamed to write, as also that my Lord of Southampton⁷¹⁸ was fled into Spain by seas with 60 pilotz(?), & there was a general council held at Louvain wherein was concluded that my Lord of Westmorland should ride to Bruges to welcome my Lord of Oxford, & to persuade him not to return back with Mr Bedingfield & others in no case, but as far as I can learn the 2 Earls met not together. It were a great pity that such a valiant & noble young gentleman should have communicated with such detestable & devilish gentlemen(?) to their natural princess & country, but God amend them.⁷¹⁹

The Earl of Westmorland had fled from England after the abortive Northern Rebellion of 1569, the purpose of which had been to release Mary, Queen of Scots, from imprisonment at Tutbury. Since, as noted earlier, Westmorland was married to Oxford's first cousin, Jane Howard (1537-1593), sister of the recently executed Duke of Norfolk, the Earl had reason to expect that Oxford would meet with him as a kinsman. He may also have considered Oxford a fellow Catholic, as Mary, Queen of Scots, did at the time. On 4 August 1574, while a prisoner at Sheffield, she wrote to her ambassador in France, James Beaton, Archbishop of Glasgow,⁷²⁰ concerning the offer of a pardon which had recently been made to Westmorland.⁷²¹

. . . to Westmorland, you will make known my desire to do better when I shall have the

⁷¹⁷ Edward Woodshaw has not been identified. In his letter he claims kinship with the Levesons of Wolverhampton and the Ardens of Park Hall ('my friends in Staffordshire, as my brother, my uncle Leveson of Wolverhampton, with my cousin Arden of Park Hall in Warwickshire'). Elizabeth Leveson, the daughter of Walter Leveson and Elizabeth Arden, the daughter of (blank) Arden of Park Hall, married a husband surnamed Woodshaw. See Grazebrook, H. Sydney, ed., *The Visitacion of Staffordschire*, (London: Mitchell and Hughes, 1883), p. 107.

⁷¹⁸ The rumours which were circulating apparently confused Lord Edward Seymour, who left England without licence at the same time as Oxford, with the Earl of Southampton.

⁷¹⁹ Ward, p. 94; Nelson, p. 111; TNA SP 15/23/62, ff. 152-8; *CSPD Addenda 1566-79*, p. 469

⁷²⁰ Dilworth, Mark, "Beaton, James (1524–1603)", *ODNB*.

⁷²¹ See BL MS Harley 6991[/53], a letter dated 9 September 1574 written from Louvain by Westmorland to his wife in which he states that he is willing to accept mediation promised by Lord Burghley and Leicester on his return from exile, 'offering to submit to any pains her Majesty should inflict, saving his life & conscience in point of religion'. URL: https://archive.org/details/b30455315_0002/page/n775/mode/2up

*means. And as to his appointment, I should be well pleased that he had it, provided that two things were seen to: the one his safety, of which I am doubtful, for the rest of those who are of his religion, and better backed at court than him, begin to draw back in it, as you understand of Oxford and others, of whom I know nothing in particular except that few people feel themselves secure or contented here who do not side with the Puritans, of whom Huntingdon is the leader, or with the Protestants, which are two contrary factions very inimical to each other In short, it is difficult for a good Catholic to maintain himself here without danger to his life, or, which is dearer, his conscience. . . . Still I do not wish to advise him to refuse a good offer if made to him, but heartily to admonish him that in accepting it he has regard not to injure the cause of God, his friends and his reputation by assuring his life only upon dishonourable terms.*⁷²²

The Queen of Scots' continuing involvement with Westmorland five years after the Northern Rebellion makes it clear that Queen Elizabeth would have taken it very ill had Oxford met with him, particularly when it is recalled that Oxford's first cousin, Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, was executed for his plan to marry the Queen of Scots.

The letter sheds light on Oxford's perceived religious leanings at the time. The Queen of Scots had previously numbered him among English Catholic noblemen, but had heard that he was moving away from Catholicism, likely because, as she points out, it was not easy to live as a Catholic in England.

A note by Lord Burghley that Oxford was 'absent on the progress' from 5 August to 16 September indicates that Oxford remained with the peripatetic court for more than a month. He left the progress while the Queen was at the Bishop of Winchester's⁷²³ palace at Farnham.⁷²⁴ Lord Burghley noted his return on 16 September:

*Earl of Oxford at Theobalds returned from the progress from Farnham.*⁷²⁵

On 17 September 1574 a newsletter from Flanders reported on the whereabouts of Oxford's companion, Lord Edward Seymour:

There goes to Spain Lord Edward Seler [Seymour], third son of the Duke of Solerset [Somerset], who took the chief part in establishing the heretical religion in England, being Protector of the realm and of King Edward, as all the world knows, and was the cause of so much evil. And to this day his sons have followed in their father's footsteps. . .

⁷²² *ECdbD*, p. 21; Turnbull, William, trans., *Letters of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland*, (London, Charles Dolman, 1845), pp. 238-9. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/lettersmarystua00marygoog/page/n297/mode/2up>

⁷²³ Dr Robert Horne.

⁷²⁴ Nelson, p. 116; *ECdbD* (1574), p. 37.

⁷²⁵ Ward, p. 97; Nelson, p. 116, citing CP, xiii, p. 144 (140/15(2)). Ward interprets the note as indicating that Oxford was absent *from* the progress; however it seems more likely that Burghley meant that Oxford was absent because he was *with* the court on progress. The Queen did not return to Hampton Court until 1 October.

. *And now the said Lord Edward Seler [Seymour] pretends to be a Catholic, and gives out that he desires to serve under Don John of Austria, and nevertheless will not allow that the Queen of Scotland has any right to the Crown of England.*⁷²⁶

At about this time⁷²⁷ a letter, likely written by Sir Francis Walsingham to Lord Burghley,⁷²⁸ states that although Oxford still desires to travel, he dares not ask the Queen's permission; moreover he refuses to remain with the court as it continues on the Queen's summer progress.⁷²⁹

My very good Lord, the persuasion I have that your Lordship is now of late so wholly dedicated to a private life as the hearing what course public affairs taketh might rather breed unto you discontentment than otherwise hath been cause why I have forborne to write unto your Lordship, but when I consider how unfit it is for you to live long privately for that your calling in this state may not allow of it, then do I think it necessary that your Lordship should be made acquainted with the state of both home and foreign matters, to the end that when you shall be employed the ignorance of them may be no hindrance unto your service.

For the state of home matters, I know you lack not friends that do advertise you from time to time how things pass, & amongst other things I am assured you are not unadvertised how the Earl of Oxford is restored to her Majesty's favour, whose loyal behaviour towards her Majesty's rebels in the Low Country who sought conference with him, a thing he utterly refused, did very much qualify his contempt in departing without her Majesty's leave. The desire of travel is not yet quenched in him, though he dare not make any motion unto her Majesty that he may with her favour accomplish his said desire. By no means he can be drawn to follow the court, and yet there are many cunning devices used in that behalf for his stay.

Oxford early departure from the progress suggests that his return to court had not been easy. Although friends of Lord Burghley had rallied to help him regain the Queen's favour, there were likely others who let him know in subtle ways that his headstrong action had diminished his status.

⁷²⁶ *CSP Rome 1572-1578*, No. 350.

⁷²⁷ Since the writer of the letter states that Oxford has refused to continue on the progress, the letter must date from just prior to his return to Theobalds on 16 September.

⁷²⁸ The letter is a copy, and appears to be taken from Walsingham's letter book.

Walsingham's statement that the recipient 'is of late so wholly dedicated to a private life' may be a jesting allusion to the fact that Lord Burghley had been prevented for most of the summer from joining the progress, or perhaps an allusion to the fact that at the end of September he was hosting 'the agents of the German princes' at Theobalds. See *ECDBD* (1574), p. 39.

⁷²⁹ According to Calthorpe, however, it passed by later in the summer out of sight of the coast. See *ECDBD* (1574), p. 21.

Walsingham also notes that time has resolved the problem of the much-anticipated Spanish fleet; due to the lateness of the season, it will almost certainly not put to sea. The delay has played into the hands of the Protestant forces in the Low Countries:

. . . Touching the Spanish navy so long talked of & so long in preparing, it is now doubted whether it shall repair into these parts or no. The time of the year is so far spent as unless it come within these 10 days it is thought it will not come at all. The Flushingers have put themselves in that strength as, if they should come, they are fully resolved to fight with them.

The Prince of Orange hath so victualled & manned his towns as he shall be able to keep play with the King of Spain these two years. And time, as your Lordship knoweth, bringeth unlooked for remedies.⁷³⁰

While Oxford had been in the Low Countries, the town of Bommel had been under siege. As Ward notes:

Bommel was a place of great strategical importance, forming an outpost in the defence of Flanders. From June till October 1574 a Spanish force under Hierges laid siege to it, but it was successfully defended by Van Haeften, who eventually forced the enemy to raise the siege by cutting the dykes.⁷³¹

Oxford was in Flanders during almost the entire month of July, and it is possible, as Ward suggests, that he visited the Spanish lines outside Bommel during that time. He later embellished the story, turning it into a tall tale to entertain his friends, as reported in late December 1580/early January 1581 by the humourless Charles Arundel:

I That but for the coming of Bedingfield, and the Duke of Alva's⁷³² persuasion rather to omit the service than forsake his country, he had surprised Bommel. Witness my Lord Howard of Effingham, Lord Henry, Francis Southwell, Walter Raleigh and myself.⁷³³

And first will I detect him of the most impudent and senseless lies that ever passed the mouth of any man, which as heretofore they have made much sport to the hearers, so are they now turned to the prejudice of divers. Of a million at the least that hath passed his tongue I will only speak of three, in affirmation of which lies, being void of sense and without colour of truth, to have them believed he hath perjured himself a hundred times and damned himself to the pit of hell, a vice not inferior to many that him attend.

And leaving all his circumstances, this is the first lie. At his being in Flanders, the Duke of Alva, as he will constantly affirm, grew so much to affect him for those rare parts he

⁷³⁰ Nelson, p. 115; TNA SP 12/45, p. 60.

⁷³¹ Ward, p. 98.

⁷³² The Duke of Alva (1507-1582), Governor of the Netherlands from 1567-1573, was not in the Low Countries in the summer of 1574, as Oxford doubtless well knew.

⁷³³ TNA SP 12/151/46, ff. 103-4.

saw in him as he made him his lieutenant-general over all the army then in the Low Country, and employed him further in a notable piece of service where, according to his place, he commanded and directed the ambassador of Spain that is now here,⁷³⁴ Mondragon, Sancho D'Avila and the rest of the captains, but these whom I have named, as he will say, of all others were most glad to be commanded by him, and so valiantly he behaved himself as he gained great love of all the soldiers, and no less admiration of his valure of all sorts.

And in this journey he passed many straits and divers bridges kept by the enemy, which he beat them from with the loss of many a man's life, but still he forced them to retire till at the last he approached the place that he went to besiege, and using no delay the cannon was planted, and the battery continued the space of ten days, by which time he had made such a breach as by a general consent of all his captains he gave an assault, and to encourage his soldiers, this valiant prince led them thereto, and through the force of his murdering arm many were sore wounded, but more killed.

Notwithstanding, being not well followed by the roiters, he was repulsed, but determining to give a fresh and general assault the next day, Mr Bedingfield, as the devil would have it, came in upon his post-horse and called him from this service by her Majesty's letters, being the greatest disgrace that ever any such general received, and now the question is whether this noble general were more troubled with his calling home, or Bedingfield more moved with pity and compassion to behold this slaughter, or his horse more afeard when he passed the bridges at sight of the dead bodies, whereat he started and flung in such sort as Bedingfield could hardly keep his back.

Whether this hath passed him I leave it to the report of my Lord Charles Howard, my Lord Windsor, my Lord Compton, my Lord Harry Howard and my Lord Thomas Howard, Raleigh, Gorges, Gifford, Waldose [=Woodhouse?], Noel and Southwell, with divers other gentlemen that hath accompanied him. And if in his soberest moods he would own this, it may easily be gathered what will pass him in his cups.⁷³⁵

The repercussions of Oxford's flight to the continent were lasting. Although the Queen forgave him for flouting her authority, it seems unlikely she ever again fully trusted him. And although Lord Burghley, the Earl of Sussex, Sir Francis Walsingham, Sir Christopher Hatton, Sir Walter Mildmay and Sir Thomas Smith rallied to help him avoid the more serious consequences of the Queen's wrath, it seems likely that to some degree he forfeited their confidence as well. This rendered him susceptible in the future, as Lord Burghley had feared, to the machinations of malcontents at court, prominent among them his first cousin, Lord Henry Howard, and Charles Arundel.

⁷³⁴ Mendoza.

⁷³⁵ Ward, pp. 99-100; TNA SP 12/151/45, ff. 100-102.

D. FOREIGN TRAVEL

At New Year's in 1575 Oxford gave the Queen an expensive jewel depicting a woman holding a ship, perhaps symbolic of the Queen's having granted him leave to travel:

Item, a very fair jewel of gold containing a woman holding a ship of sparks of diamonds upon her knee, the same fully garnished with sparks of diamonds, four fair rubies, one large diamond and sundry diamonds, with three pearls pendent and three small chains of gold set with sparks of diamonds. Given by th' Earl of Oxford, 6 ounces 3 qua.⁷³⁶

In January 1575, while Oxford was preparing to depart on his continental tour, his brother-in-law died of a fever in Venice. A letter dated 22 January 1575⁷³⁷ written by Don Cesare Carrafa to Marcantonio Colonna⁷³⁸ expresses regret over the loss of an English nobleman who had won admiration for his Catholicism:

We are here in great grief by reason of the death of Milord Edward Windsor, one of the chief nobles of England, beloved by all the city, and particularly by the Patriarch, by the Spanish ambassador, by the Legate, and particularly by me, who from the day of his arrival in this city, for respect to his great virtue and religiousness, had him ever in loving protection, so that we were never seen save in company. This death has marred all our pleasures. He was twelve days a dying, and his end was as holy as had been his life. By the testimony of the Spanish ambassador and other gentlemen it is many a year since a more blessed man has been seen. He has left his body to Mr John Pole, and as to all else that pertained to him here, his will was that the Prior of England and I do as God should inspire us, as well in beneficence to his servants as in almsgiving and in his obsequies, which have been solemnized in such a sort that it is current in the city that nothing grander has been seen, to which matter I paid particular attention. A chapelle ardente was made, and I resolved that it should be borne on the bier according to the custom of Naples with a great pall, a thing not till then seen in Venice, which all deemed very meet. I followed the corpse with the train, as did also many other persons of quality. The Spanish ambassador awaited it at the church. All the English nobility here followed the corpse with their hoods on their heads according to the English custom. So I have been for the last fortnight busy serving him in life and in death.

He has left 4,000 crowns in ready money, and 10,000 in jewels, silver plate and movables. I would not omit to give your Excellency an account of the death of this Lord because he was truly the most devout Lord of his great name, and though he has annoyed

⁷³⁶ Nelson, p. 119; Nichols, *Progresses . . . Elizabeth*, Vol. I, p. 412.

⁷³⁷ Two inquisitions post mortem state that he died 24 January 1575. See TNA C 142/173/72 and TNA WARD 7/17/66 (Gloucester), and TNA C 142/178/47 and TNA WARD 7/18/50 (Middlesex). See also Collins, Arthur, *The Peerage of England*, (London: H. Woodfall, 1768), Vol. IV, p. 86. However Carrafa's letter indicates that Lord Windsor died before 22 January.

⁷³⁸ For Marcantonio Colonna (1535-1584), see the Wikipedia entry.

*me many a time, I have done him reverence.*⁷³⁹

On 3 February 1575 Carrafa wrote to Sir Philip Sidney reporting that Lord Windsor had been buried at San Zanipolo, the principal Dominican church of Venice, burial place of the Venetian Doges:

*Most excellent sir, and like a very dear son to me, To my shame, the first letter I write to your Lordship is full of such sadness and pain that it contains nothing but tears and sighs because I must tell you of the death of my very dear friend, Lord Edward Windsor, whom in twelve days of a wicked fever it has pleased Blessed God to draw unto Himself, I say 'draw unto Himself' because it has been many years since we have seen a more saintly death than his. And since he left me in charge of his body and of his other effects, I have had him buried with so much pomp and with so much honour that never in this city has such a funeral been seen. And I will see to it that your Lordship receives a particular account of the form and manner in which the body was conveyed, and of the order by which route it was borne through the city, and the furnishings of the church where he was buried, which is at SS. Giovanni e Paolo. During his illness I never abandoned him, serving and consoling him as I was bound to do.*⁷⁴⁰

Whether Oxford would have visited his brother-in-law in Venice, had he lived, is unknown. He is not mentioned in his brother-in-law's will, and the two were likely not on good terms as a result of his earlier attempt to have Oxford declared illegitimate.

The Queen issued Oxford's long-desired licence to travel on 24 January 1575,⁷⁴¹ and provided him with two letters of introduction to foreign monarchs, one a general introduction to rulers to whom Oxford might be presented, the other to the Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian II (1527-1576). In the letters the Queen describes Oxford as 'our dearly beloved cousin', 'an illustrious young man adorned with many virtues'.⁷⁴²

On the same day as Oxford's licence to travel was issued, Fenelon reported his travel plans to Henri III. Fenelon's letter highlights Oxford's restlessness, and the Queen's suspicions which motivated her to deny him preferment:

Sire, following upon the notice in which, at the end of my dispatch of the 19th of the present [year], I mentioned to your Majesty that certain English gentlemen and captains were readying themselves, on their own initiative, to undertake an enterprise along the coast, I took pains to make it known to the neighbouring governors here who have the

⁷³⁹ *CSP Rome 1572-78*, No. 376. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/vatican/vol2/pp193-196>.

⁷⁴⁰ See BL MS Add. 15914, ff. 15-16, and Kuin, Roger, ed., *The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Vol. I, pp. 386-7. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=hngIsH1gDRgC&pg=PA546>

⁷⁴¹ TNA E 157/1, f. 1; *ECDBD* (1575), p 3.

⁷⁴² The original letters are not extant; for copies, see Cambridge University Library MS Dd.3.20, ff. 98v-99v.

charge of places along the coast, who I hope will be more alert. And in confirmation of that, I am advised that every night certain people secretly withdraw arms and munitions of war from the Tower of London to send them to the ports and distribute them to the captains and soldiers who are volunteers, and to loyalists of the enterprise who are all private individuals.

It seemed that the Earl of Oxford was the leader of the said enterprise, but he [now] takes a different path, having begged of the Queen, his Mistress, permission to travel to Italy, and he plans to depart in a week and to pass through France, intending to sojourn a month in Paris. And he shows himself, Sire, to be greatly devoted to your Majesty, having wished to supplicate the Queen, his Mistress, to find it good that he might offer himself to your service, but he has been warned that because he is notoriously reputed to be strongly partial to the Queen of Scots, and is nephew [=first cousin] to the late Duke of Norfolk, that the Queen holds him in great suspicion. Nonetheless, he intends very humbly to kiss your Majesty's hands, and not to refuse to obey anything it might please you to command him. And because he is, as it were, the premier Earl and Great Chamberlain of England, and, as it were, the first among the nobility of the country, and the most followed, and greater expectation held of him than any other Lord in the realm, he begs you, Sire, to command that honour be done him and that he be granted favour and respect in passing through your realm because, apart from his merit, all England and the court itself would be infinitely gratified. The partisans of Burgundy have promised him that he will be given a position in the service of the King of Spain as soon as he arrives in Italy, and they have pressed him to go to find Don John of Austria, he not lacking letters of bank and credit and cash money to make an honest expenditure over there, but he appears to have greater inclination to your service than he has to that of the said King of Spain.⁷⁴³

Prior to his departure Oxford entered into two indentures. By the first indenture, dated 20 January 1575, he conveyed his manors in Cornwall, Staffordshire and Wiltshire to three trustees, Sir William Cordell,⁷⁴⁴ Sir Thomas Bromley and Edward Hubbard⁷⁴⁵, for £6000.⁷⁴⁶

By the second indenture, dated 30 January, Oxford entailed the lands of the earldom on his first cousin, Hugh Vere,⁷⁴⁷ giving as his reason that he 'hath not any issue of his body as yet born', and if he should die abroad without heirs the lands of the earldom would therefore descend to his sister, Mary, 'being next of his kin of the whole blood'. The

⁷⁴³ *Correspondance*, Vol. VI, pp. 360-1.

⁷⁴⁴ Baker, J.H., "Cordell, Sir William (1522-1581)", *ODNB*.

⁷⁴⁵ Edward Hubbard was Oxford's receiver-general. For his will, see TNA PROB 11/99/364.

⁷⁴⁶ SRO D615/D45(1); Pearson, p. 44.

⁷⁴⁷ As noted above, Hugh Vere married Ellen or Eleanor Washe, who appears to have been the daughter of William Whasshe, gentleman, of St Martin in the Fields, for whose will, dated 10 February 1569, see TNA PROB 11/52/92. William Whasshe's widow, Margery, married Edmund Yorke.

indenture also provided for payment of debts in an attached schedule amounting to £9096 10s 8/12d, of which sum £3457 was owed to the Queen in the Court of Wards.⁷⁴⁸

On 4 February 1575, Geoffrey Fenton⁷⁴⁹ dedicated his translation entitled *The Golden Epistles* to Anne Cecil. The *Epistolas Familiares* of Antonio de Guevara (1480-1545) had been translated from Spanish into English by Edward Hellowes,⁷⁵⁰ Groom of the Leash, in 1574. The title page of Fenton's translation indicates that it includes epistles taken from 'the remainder of Guevara's works', as well as 'other authors Latin, French and Italian'. *The Golden Epistles* was sufficiently popular to be reprinted in 1577 and again in 1582.⁷⁵¹ Fenton had earlier dedicated two works to Anne Cecil's aunt, Elizabeth Cooke, who had married Sir Thomas Hoby,⁷⁵² and may have been part of Hoby's entourage while he was ambassador in Paris in 1566.⁷⁵³ Hoby was himself a translator; his translation of Baldassare Castiglione's *Il cortegiano* was published in 1561. Fenton subscribed his dedication to Anne Cecil from 'my chamber in the Blackfriars', and Laoutaris speculates that he was resident in Lady Hoby's house there.

Oxford owned a copy of Francesco Guicciardini's *Storia d'Italia* in the Italian edition of 1565.⁷⁵⁴ The work had been translated into French by Jérôme Chomedey in 1568;⁷⁵⁵ Fenton translated Chomedey's version into English, publishing it in 1579 as *The Historie of Guicciardini*.

Oxford left England in the first week of February.⁷⁵⁶ A month later, on 6 March, he was presented by the English ambassador, Valentine Dale⁷⁵⁷ to Henri III⁷⁵⁸ and his Queen,⁷⁵⁹ but could not be presented to Catherine de Medici,⁷⁶⁰ who was still in mourning for her

⁷⁴⁸ ERO D/DRg 2/25; Pearson, pp. 43-4; Nelson, p. 120.

⁷⁴⁹ Hadfield, Andrew, "Fenton, Sir Geoffrey (c. 1539-1608)", *ODNB*. He was the son of Henry Fenton and Cicely Beaumont, the daughter of John Beaumont of Coleorton. He travelled in France, and likely in Spain and Italy.

⁷⁵⁰ Lord, E., "Hellowes, Edward (fl. 1574-1601)", *ODNB*.

⁷⁵¹ STC 10794; Nelson, p. 237.

⁷⁵² Kelly, L.G., "Hoby, Sir Thomas (1530-1566)", *ODNB*.

⁷⁵³ Laoutaris, Chris, *Shakespeare and the Countess*, (London: Fig Tree, 2014), p. 88.

⁷⁵⁴ Oxford's copy is now in the Folger Shakespeare Library. See DG539.G8 H4 1565 Cage.

⁷⁵⁵ URL: <https://www.lux-et-umbra.com/descriptions/guicciardini.php>

⁷⁵⁶ Nelson, p. 121.

⁷⁵⁷ Hicks, Michael, "Dale, Valentine (c.1520-1589)", *ODNB*.

⁷⁵⁸ Henri III (1551-1589), succeeded as King of France after the death of his brother, Charles IX, on 30 May 1574.

⁷⁵⁹ Henri III married Louise of Lorraine (1553-1601) on 15 February 1575.

⁷⁶⁰ Catherine de Medici (1519-1589) was the wife of Henri II, and the mother of Francis II, Charles IX and Henri III.

daughter, the Duchess of Lorraine.⁷⁶¹

On 7 March 1575, an incident occurred with far-reaching repercussions. Dr Richard Masters wrote to Lord Burghley advising that he had informed the Queen that Oxford's wife, Anne Cecil, was pregnant, and that hearing of it, the Queen recalled Oxford's words before he left England in the first week of February 1575 that if Anne were pregnant, it was not by him.⁷⁶²

On 12 March 1575, Giovanni Francesco Morosini (1537-1596), the Venetian ambassador in France, advised the Signory of Oxford's arrival in Paris, alluding to his earlier flight from England without the Queen's licence:

*An English gentleman, whose name is the Earl of Oxford, has arrived in this city. He is a young man of about twenty or twenty-two years of age. It is said that he fled from England on account of his inclination to the Catholic religion, but having returned he received great favour from the Queen, who gave him full licence to travel and see the world when she ascertained that he had resolved to depart under any circumstances.*⁷⁶³

In mid-March Oxford travelled to Strasbourg, where he met with the scholar Sturmius,⁷⁶⁴ and from thence he made his way to Venice via Milan.⁷⁶⁵

The Langham Letter

While Oxford was on the continent in the summer of 1575, Leicester entertained the Queen at Kenilworth Castle in Warwickshire. Her nineteen-day sojourn there was spent in an endless round of spectacle and activity -- pageantry, fireworks, banquets, masques and plays, hunting, bear-baiting, music and dancing. These pleasures were enhanced by the beauty of the surroundings, including the artificial lake which partially encircled the castle, the large chase, and the exquisite garden with its arbours, walks, fountains, sculptures of marble and porphyry, and aviary filled with exotic birds.

The record to which historians invariably turn for a description of the Queen's stay at Kenilworth is the *Langham Letter*, an 18,000-word account of the entertainment in the form of a letter to one Humfrey Martyn, the thirty-year old son of a wealthy mercer and former Lord Mayor of London. The orthography of the *Letter* is unusual, and may have been influenced by the work on spelling reform of Sir John Cheke, Oxford's tutor, Sir Thomas Smith, John Hart, Chester Herald, and others.

⁷⁶¹ Nelson, p. 121; CSP Foreign, 1575-77, Nos. 35, 42-3. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=3q8MAQAIAAJ&pg=PA20>. Claude, Duchess of Lorraine (1547-1575), died 21 February 1575.

⁷⁶² BL Lansdowne 19/83, ff. 181-2; *ECDbD* (1575), p. 7.

⁷⁶³ CSP Venice 1558-80, No. 619; Nelson, p. 121.

⁷⁶⁴ Ward, pp. 104-5; Nelson, pp. 125, 164, 176.

⁷⁶⁵ CP 160/74; TNA SP 12/105/50; Nelson, pp. 128, 130.

The manuscript of the *Letter* and all copies of the original edition of 1575 are lost. Two subsequent editions have survived, the one probably printed in 1577, the other a few years later, both privately published without name of printer or date of publication.⁷⁶⁶

The *Letter* contains a few overt but enigmatic clues in which the author suggests that he is someone named 'Laneham' or 'Langham', a minor court official whose existence has been documented, and whose duty it was to provide boughs, flowers and fire-tongs for the Privy Council chamber.⁷⁶⁷ But through this rather transparent persona the reader glimpses the brilliant and highly individual personality of the true author -- a young man widely read in history and mythology; conversant in Latin and at least three foreign languages; trained in the law; familiar with architecture, the intricate symbolism of heraldry, the etiquette of the court and the terminology of the royal pastime of hunting; possessed of remarkable powers of observation and a bouyant sense of humour, and, above all, a skilled musician and a surpassing literary stylist.

The latter two characteristics, in particular, provide a 'fingerprint' by which the author can be identified, since pronounced musical ability and literary talent are only rarely encountered in a single individual. The Langham *Letter* abounds in evidence of the author's comprehensive knowledge of music. Similarly, his delight in the music of language is demonstrated in his pervasive use of alliteration and assonance. His inventive originality with language is further evidenced in the *Letter's* many stunning descriptive passages, its extensive and rare vocabulary, and the author's coinage of more than two dozen new words.

Oxford's personality, education and achievements tally significantly with those of the unknown author of the Langham *Letter*. He was awarded degrees from both Cambridge and Oxford, had a marked interest in history, was a skilled linguist, took legal training at Gray's Inn, excelled at sports, spent many years as a courtier, and was known for his sense of humour. Most importantly, he also possessed the unique combination of pronounced musical ability and extraordinary literary talent which distinguishes the author of the *Letter*, being praised in his own day as one who had surpassed professional musicians in skill and was, in drama, one of 'the best for comedy.'⁷⁶⁸

The principal, and some might argue insurmountable, objection to the suggestion that Oxford was the author of the Langham *Letter* is his absence from England in the summer of 1575. If the *Letter* is not an eye-witness account, the obvious question arises as to how he was able to give his description of Kenilworth Castle, the surrounding countryside, and the various entertainments put on for the Queen a degree of verisimilitude which has convinced readers for four centuries that the author of the *Letter* was at Kenilworth in the

⁷⁶⁶ O'Kill, Brian, 'The Printed Works of William Patten (c.1510-c.1600)', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, Vol. 7, (1977), pp. 28-45 at p. 42.

⁷⁶⁷ Scott, David, 'William Patten and the Authorship of Robert Laneham's Letter (1575)', *English Literary Renaissance*, Vol. 7, (Spring 1977), pp. 297-306 at p. 299.

⁷⁶⁸ Ward, pp. 204, 264.

summer of 1575. The answer to that question is relatively straightforward: Oxford had been to Kenilworth. On 26 September 1571 he was almost certainly one of the noblemen who accompanied Leicester on a brief visit to Kenilworth that day,⁷⁶⁹ and he was one of the courtiers present during the Queen's 1572 visit to Warwick Castle, the seat of Leicester's brother, Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick. During that visit, which lasted for approximately two weeks, the Queen spent a total of ten days at nearby Kenilworth.⁷⁷⁰ Oxford was thus familiar with the physical layout of Kenilworth, and with the surrounding area.

As for the details of the specific entertainment staged for the Queen at Kenilworth in 1575, it is worth noticing that there are certain marked similarities between it and what little we know of the earlier entertainment in 1572. During her reception at Warwick in 1572, for example, the Queen was greeted by a speech which rehearsed the ancient history of Warwick;⁷⁷¹ the Langham *Letter* opens in a manner which is very reminiscent of this, with an account of the history of Kenilworth. Similarly, the account of the two-hour display of fireworks interspersed with the firing of artillery at Kenilworth in 1575 is very reminiscent of the account in the Black Book of Warwick of the fireworks and the firing of artillery during a mock battle on the Avon at the time of the Queen's visit in 1572, a mock battle in which the Earl of Oxford played a prominent part.⁷⁷² Unfortunately, there is no extant description of the manner in which Leicester entertained the Queen at Kenilworth during the ten days she spent there in 1572; the laconic comment in the Black Book merely records that while the Queen was at Kenilworth 'such princely sports [were] made to her Majesty as could be devised'.⁷⁷³ If an account of these "princely sports" were available, it would perhaps be apparent that Oxford created in the Langham *Letter* a clever pastiche of the 1572 entertainment, into which he interpolated verses and other material prepared for the 1575 entertainment of which he had knowledge prior to his leaving for the continent in early February, 1575. One can imagine the avidity and amusement with which such a work would have been read by courtiers who had been present when the Queen was at Kenilworth in 1572 and who were now, three years later, again the recipients of Leicester's splendid and extravagant hospitality.

There is very little extant evidence of contemporary reception of the *Letter*. The sole document which appears to have survived is a letter from William Patten⁷⁷⁴ to Lord

⁷⁶⁹ See Kemp, *Black Book of Warwick*, p. 33.

⁷⁷⁰ Nichols, *Progresses . . . Elizabeth*, *supra*, Vol. I, pp. 318-19.

⁷⁷¹ Nichols, *Progresses . . . Elizabeth*, *supra*, Vol. I, pp. 312-13.

⁷⁷² Nichols, *Progresses . . . Elizabeth*, *supra*, Vol. I, p. 319.

⁷⁷³ Nichols, *Progresses . . . Elizabeth*, *supra*, Vol. I, p. 318.

⁷⁷⁴ Sherlock, Peter, "Patten, William (*d.* in or after 1598)", *ODNB*. According to the *ODNB*: 'Patten was almost certainly the author of the anonymous satire in Warwickshire dialect suppressed by Cecil in 1575 but later printed as *A letter: whearin, part of the entertainment untoo the queenz majesty, at Killingwoorth Castl, in Warwick sheaer, in this soomerz progress 1575 iz signified* (1585).' For Patten's alleged authorship, see also McCarthy, Penny, *Pseudonymous Shakespeare*, (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), pp. 5-19.

Burghley of September 10, 1575, in which Patten advises Burghley that he has retrieved all copies of a book he had previously distributed, the book having been suppressed 'for that Langham had complained upon it, and otherwise for that the honourable entertainment be not turned into a jest'.⁷⁷⁵ Patten's comment gives the reader pause. Taken at face value, the *Letter* describes Leicester's splendid entertainment of the Queen in the most respectful, even adulatory, terms. By what standard could it be considered a 'jest'? However, if, as has been posited, Oxford wrote the *Letter* under a pseudonym, describing an entertainment at which he himself was not even present, the meaning of Patten's obscure comment is much clearer.

It may be objected that assigning authorship of the Langham *Letter* to Oxford would reduce its value as a historical document. In one respect, this assessment is accurate, in that history has not left us, as we had supposed, a brilliant eye-witness account of the 1575 Kenilworth entertainment. However, there can be little question that the minutely detailed events described in the *Letter* -- the porter's welcome to the Queen, the quintaining, the bear-baiting, the Hock Tuesday play, the water pageants, the fireworks, the hunting scenes, and more -- are events which the author actually witnessed, whether at Kenilworth in 1572 or at other times. They bear the stamp of authentic observation. And they are the more valuable in that they were witnessed and described by an intimate of the court, one who could indeed "see all". Viewed from the perspective of Oxford's authorship, the Langham *Letter* is of signal historical value.

Was Oxford the author of the Langham *Letter*? In the final analysis the reader will, of course, have to form his own judgment on the basis of the internal evidence found in the *Letter* itself.⁷⁷⁶

During the entertainment for the Queen at Woodstock later in that summer's progress,⁷⁷⁷ the ladies present were given nosegays with verses. Those for Oxford's sister, Mary de Vere, contained these sentiments:

*Where virtue, birth, and beauty too, are thus in one mould cast,
This place too simple is for her seat, with gods let her be placed.*⁷⁷⁸

On 24 September 1575 Benedict Spinola advised Lord Burghley that he was sending a letter to Oxford in Venice by the ordinary post, and that there had been no letters received in England from Venice for the past six weeks due to an outbreak of plague at Trent which had prevented the conveyance of letters through the Brenner Pass.

Today I am sending your Lordship's letter by the ordinary post to my friends in Venice with order that they give it into the most illustrious Earl's own hand & that they request a

⁷⁷⁵ Scott, *supra*, p. 301.

⁷⁷⁶ The material on the Langham Letter was printed earlier in *The Edward De Vere Newsletter*, No. 31, De Vere Press, September 1991.

⁷⁷⁷ The Queen was at Woodstock near the beginning of September 1575.

⁷⁷⁸ *ECDbD* (1575), p. 49.

*reply, from which place of Venice no letters have come for six weeks now because of the hindrance caused by the great plague which there was at Trent where those letters are accustomed to pass, so that no news comes from Italy, & thus it is no marvel if the most illustrious Countess does not have news from her most illustrious husband.*⁷⁷⁹

On the same day Spinola wrote to Lord Burghley saying that no letters had come from Venice for six weeks because of the plague, Oxford wrote to Burghley from Venice, thanking him ‘for your good news of my wife’s delivery’, and saying that he had received no letters from England for ‘a great while’, and that his own letters to England had been turned back because of the plague:

*My good Lord, having looked for your Lordship's letters a great while, at length, when I grew to despair of them, I received two from your Lordship. Three packets which at sundry times I had sent this summer towards England returned back again by reason, the plague being in the passages, none were suffered to pass, but as they came were returned back, which I came not to the knowledge of till my return now to Venice, where I have been grieved with a fever.*⁷⁸⁰

On 3 January 1576 Oxford wrote to Lord Burghley from Siena mentioning that complaints had reached him concerning the importunity of his creditors, including the Queen and his sister, and directing that more of his land be sold to pay his debts.⁷⁸¹

On 2 March 1576 Oxford's licence to travel was renewed for a further year,⁷⁸² however verses by Nathaniel Baxter,⁷⁸³ who accompanied Oxford on his continental tour, suggest that the Queen ordered him to return home:

*Vigilant then th' eternal Majesty . . .
Induced us to make speedy repair*⁷⁸⁴

His continental tour had cost Oxford a substantial sum; Benedict Spinola⁷⁸⁵ caused £3761 4s 5d to be paid to Oxford in France and Venice.⁷⁸⁶ Decades later, on 27 April 1617, Sir Henry Wotton,⁷⁸⁷ introducing Oxford's son, Henry de Vere, to the Doge of Venice, claimed that Oxford had a house built for him while he was in Venice:

I have brought hither to the palace a lord of high rank, one of the greatest noblemen of

⁷⁷⁹ TNA SP 70/135, ff. 173-4.

⁷⁸⁰ CP 160/74.

⁷⁸¹ CP 8/12; Nelson, pp. 132-3.

⁷⁸² TNA E 157/1, f. 1; Nelson, p. 134.

⁷⁸³ Hadfield, Andrew, “Baxter, Nathaniel (*fl.* 1569–1611)”, *ODNB*. Nelson, pp. 121, 135, 138-9, 217, 430-1.

⁷⁸⁴ *Sir Philip Sidney's Ourania* (1606), STC 1598.

⁷⁸⁵ Bennell, John, “Spinola, Benedict (1519/20–1580)”, *ODNB*.

⁷⁸⁶ CP 160/91; Cecil Papers 146/12; Nelson, p. 134.

⁷⁸⁷ Loomie, A.J., “Wotton, Sir Henry (1568–1639)”, *ODNB*.

*our country. He is the Earl of Oxford, the heir of his house, and he bears the title of Grand Chamberlain, which for a long time has been hereditary in his family. In other ages his ancestors have rendered great services, and today the general of the forces in the Low Countries is of the same family, as well as a colonel under Count Ernest of Nassau. This lord has spent some time at Florence, to learn the language and practise equestrian exercises, and now in this time of noise he has come to this city, wishing to visit the army and also to take his sword in hand for the service of your Excellencies. Your Serenity will oblige me if he may be allowed to enter and kiss your hands, and then may visit the beauties of Venice, to see which, beyond their universal fame, which is an incentive to everyone, he has an especial motive in the example of his father, who in former times came to Italy, and when he arrived in Venice took no trouble to see the rest of the country, but stopped here, and even built himself a house.*⁷⁸⁸

Wotton's statement is hearsay; he was seven years of age when Oxford was in Venice. Whether there is any truth to the story is unknown.

The nature of Oxford's relationship with the Venetian courtesan Virginia Padoana is also unknown. In a letter to John Chamberlain⁷⁸⁹ on 22 September 1587, Sir Stephen Powle⁷⁹⁰ jestingly described his courtesan neighbours, including Virginia Padoana:

*If to be well neighboured be no small part of happiness, I may repute myself highly fortunate, for I am lodged amongst a great number of signoras -- Isabella Bellochia in the next house on my right hand, and Virginia Padoana, that honoureth all our nation for my Lord of Oxford's sake, is my neighbour on the left side. Over my head hath Lodovica Gonzaga, the French King's mistress, her house. You think it peradventure preposterous in architecture to have her lie over me; I am sorry for it, but I cannot remedy it now. Pesarina with her sweet entertainment & brave discourse is not 2 canals off. Ancilla (Mr Hatton's handmaid) is in the next campo. Paulina Gonzaga is not far off. Prudencia Romana with her courtly train of French gentlemen every night goeth a spasso [unemployed] by my pergalo. As for Imperia Romana, her date is out which flourished in your time. I must of force be well hallowed amongst so many saints. But in truth I am afraid they do condemn me of heresy for setting up so few tapers on their high altars . . .*⁷⁹¹

The wives of prominent Venetians were secluded at home; wealthy and titled Venetians were accompanied publicly by courtesans, who were often highly accomplished. Virginia Padoana may have been Oxford's mistress while he was in Venice; on the other

⁷⁸⁸ Nelson, p. 137; Smith, Logan Pearsall, *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1907), Vol. II, p. 113. URL: <https://archive.org/details/lifeandletterss02smitgoog/page/n122/mode/2up>

⁷⁸⁹ Finkelpearl, P.J., "Chamberlain, John (1553–1628)", *ODNB*.

⁷⁹⁰ Carter, P.R.N., "Powle, Sir Stephen (c. 1553–1630)", *ODNB*. Powle was the son-in-law of John Turner (d.1579), a trusted servant of Oxford's father, the 16th Earl, and was named as an executor in his will.

⁷⁹¹ Nelson, p. 138.

hand, Powle's remark may be evidence of nothing more than the fact that Virginia Padoana had greatly admired Oxford during his visit to Venice eleven years earlier.

John Chamberlain's reply of 7 November 1587 to Powle's letter is in the same jesting vein:

*You are marvellously beset with signoras if you be so round besieged. I see not how you can escape without passing the pikes. If you live still among such saints you are very obstinate if you be not edified.*⁷⁹²

⁷⁹² Stern, Virginia F., *Sir Stephen Powle of Court and Country; Memorabilia of a Government Agent for Queen Elizabeth I, Chancery Official, and English Country Gentleman*, (Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania: Susquehanna University Press, 1992), p. 83. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=QqWQXGafI54C&pg=PA83>.

E. COURTIER

Oxford left Venice on 5 March,⁷⁹³ and travelled to Milan, a route which would have taken him through Padua, Verona and Bergamo. On 31 March Francis Peyto wrote to Lord Burghley advising that when Oxford had passed through Milan he had hoped to show him a genealogical chart he had prepared for the Queen depicting all the marriages between the royal houses of England and Scotland. He had, however, been unable to speak with Oxford.⁷⁹⁴

After leaving Milan, Oxford set out for Paris via Lyons.⁷⁹⁵ En route to Paris, he is said to have passed near the rebel forces. The English ambassador in Paris, Valentine Dale,⁷⁹⁶ wrote to Lord Burghley on 21 March:

The Earl of Oxford has passed through all the camp, and is arrived here, and Mr William Russell⁷⁹⁷ with him.⁷⁹⁸

Ten days later, on 31 March, Dale wrote to Sir Francis Walsingham:

The camp of Monsieur⁷⁹⁹ approaches. The King is unready. The strangers⁸⁰⁰ cannot abide to linger this matter. Lord Oxford is here to attend his coming.⁸⁰¹

The background to Oxford's passage 'through all the camp' is explained by Knecht:

The situation in France was dire. King Henri III's younger brother, the Duke of Alençon (styled 'Monsieur'), had escaped from court on 15 September of the previous year. At the same time the Prince of Condé and John Casimir had signed a treaty by which Condé

⁷⁹³ Nelson, p. 134.

⁷⁹⁴ TNA SP 70/137, ff. 319-21; Nelson, p. 134.

⁷⁹⁵ Oxford's intention to return home by way of Lyons was conveyed to Lord Burghley on 23 March by Benedict Spinola, who had received the information in a letter dated 26 February from his brother in Venice. See *CSP Foreign, 1575-77*, No. 685.

⁷⁹⁶ Hicks, Michael, "Dale, Valentine (c. 1520–1589)", *ODNB*.

⁷⁹⁷ McGurk, J.J.N., "Russell, William, first Baron Russell of Thornhaugh (c. 1553–1613)", *ODNB*. For a letter dated 16 April 1575 from Don Cesare Carrafa to Marcantonio Colonna (1535-1584) mentioning William Russell's arrival in Venice on 13 April 1575, see *CSP Rome*, No. 395.

⁷⁹⁸ Nelson, p. 135.

⁷⁹⁹ Henri III's younger brother, Francois, Duke of Alencon (1555-1584).

⁸⁰⁰ For Henri III's foreign forces, see Holt, Mack P., *The Duke of Anjou and the Politique Struggle During the Wars of Religion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 64. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=Mt5sraGYbWcC&pg=PA64>.

⁸⁰¹ Nelson, p. 135.

agreed to provide 16,000 troops for an invasion of France. Catherine de Medici negotiated a 7-month treaty with her son, Alençon, which was signed on 21 November 1575. However Alençon had no control over Condé and John Casimir, and in December their army of 20,000 men crossed the Meuse, taking the King, who had not prepared for war, completely by surprise. He was forced to stand by helplessly as the army pillaged Burgundy. Alençon, seeing his advantage, repudiated the truce in December, and went to Villefranche where he was joined by Turenne with 3000 arquebusiers and 400 horse. On 5 February 1576, Henry of Navarre also escaped from court, and repudiated Catholicism. Two weeks later a delegation representing Navarre, Alençon, Condé and Damville presented 93 articles to the King, demanding the free exercise of the Protestant religion throughout France and many other concessions. The King was unable to oppose the forces arrayed against him. Alençon and Condé joined at. John Casimir and most of his German reiters were camped nearby. Navarre and his troops were in Poitou. Alençon was pressured to march on Paris. For a time he delayed. On 9 April 1576 he announced his decision: 'We have decided to exploit the means that God has given us to win by force the peace and tranquillity that we could not achieve by way of reason'.⁸⁰²

Faced with this situation, on 6 May 1576 Henri III signed the Edict of Beaulieu (the 'Peace of Monsieur').

If Oxford travelled from Lyons to Paris via Roanne and Moulins, he would have passed through Alençon's camp at Moulins and close to Duke Casimir's camp near Le Bec d'Allier.⁸⁰³

On 3 April 1576, Giovanni Francesco Morosini (1537-1596), the Venetian ambassador in France, who had noted Oxford's arrival in Paris a year earlier, informed the Venetian Signory that Oxford had now returned to Paris on his way back to England, and that Oxford was appreciative of the 'numerous courtesies' he had received in Venice.

The Earl of Oxford, an English gentlemen, has arrived here. He has come from Venice, and, according to what has been said to me by the English Ambassador here resident [Dale], speaks in great praise of the numerous courtesies which he has received in that city, and he reports that on his departure from Venice your Serenity had already elected an Ambassador to be sent to his Queen, and the English Ambassador expressed the greatest satisfaction at the intelligence. I myself, not having received any information from your Serenity or from any of my correspondents, did not know what answer to give concerning this matter.⁸⁰⁴

Although on 31 March Valentine Dale stated that Oxford intended to remain in Paris until

⁸⁰² Knecht, R.J., *The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France 1483-1610*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 406 ff. URL: <http://www.anonymous-shakespeare.com/cms/index.311.0.1.html>.

⁸⁰³ See Holt, *supra*, p. 65.

⁸⁰⁴ CSP Venice, 1558-1580, No. 653; Nelson, p. 135.

Alençon's arrival, he appears to have left Paris on 10 April.⁸⁰⁵ As he crossed the Channel, his ship was attacked by pirates. On 21 April 1576 Mauvissiere⁸⁰⁶ described the encounter in a letter to Henri III:⁸⁰⁷

*[The Queen] has also been marvelously angry that the Earl of Oxford, returning from Italy, son-in-law of the Lord Treasurer and one of the premier earls of this land, was left naked and stripped to his shirt, treated very badly, and in danger of his life if he had not been recognized by a Scotsman. The said Queen sent Lord Howard to him at Dover, to welcome and console him, because it is said that he brought an infinity of beautiful things from Italy which were taken from him, for which his regret is infinite. Your Majesty may be assured that the said Lord Treasurer is very greatly offended, and will do them injury if he can, and has already begun to speak of putting some ships to sea, [and is] awaiting the return of the said Beale, and what he will report back.*⁸⁰⁸

As noted by Mauvissiere, the outrage against Oxford as well as other depredations on English shipping by the Flushingers caused the Queen and Privy Council to send Robert Beale⁸⁰⁹ to Flanders to meet with Prince William of Orange (1533-1584).⁸¹⁰ Beale's efforts to have Oxford's goods restored were, however, ultimately unsuccessful.⁸¹¹

Oxford's capture by pirates was memorialized in verse by Nathaniel Baxter:⁸¹²

Naked we landed out of Italy,

⁸⁰⁵ Nelson, p. 135.

⁸⁰⁶ Michel de Castelnau (c.1520-1592), Sieur de Mauvissiere, served as Henri III's ambassador to England from 1575 to 1585.

⁸⁰⁷ For the Privy Council's instructions on 16 April to Robert Beale and Lord Burghley's letter of the same date, see Lettenhove, Baron Kervyn de, ed., *Relations Politiques des Pays-Bas et de l'Angleterre sous le Regne de Philippe II*, (Brussels: F. Hayez, 1889), Vol. VIII, pp. 339-40. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/relationpolitiqu08nethuoft/page/338/mode/2up>

⁸⁰⁸ TNA PRO 31/3/27, ff. 75-8.

⁸⁰⁹ Bell, Gary M., "Beale, Robert (1541–1601)", *ODNB*.

⁸¹⁰ Dasent, John Roche, ed., *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, New Series, Vol. IX, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1894), pp. 102-3. URL:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=Hlc0AQAAAJ&pg=PA102>

⁸¹¹ For a letter dated 16 April 1576 from Lord Burghley to Sir Francis Walsingham (c.1532-1590), concerning the attack on Oxford by pirates and Robert Beale's embassy, see TNA SP 70/138, ff. 42-3. See also TNA SP 70/138, ff. 44-5 and TNA SP 70/138, f. 46. For a letter from Robert Beale to Lord Burghley dated 5 June 1576 indicating the unlikelihood that Oxford's goods would be recovered or the offenders punished, see BL Cotton MS Galba C V, ff. 252-3. See also Nelson, pp. 135-7; *ECDBD* (1576), p. 18.

⁸¹² Hadfield, Andrew, "Baxter, Nathaniel (fl. 1569–1611)", *ODNB*. For a letter mentioning Baxter dated 15 June 1598 from Sir Walter Raleigh to Sir Thomas Norris, see Latham, Agnes and Joyce Youings, eds., *The Letters of Sir Walter Raleigh*, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), pp. 177-8.

*Enthralled by pirates, men of no regard,
Horror and death assailed nobility,
If princes might with cruelty be scarred;
O thus are excellent beginnings hard.*⁸¹³

During Oxford's absence from England, his wife, Anne, had given birth to a daughter, Elizabeth Vere (1575-1627), on 2 July 1575.⁸¹⁴ Had her first-born child been a son, it seems likely things would have turned out very differently for both Oxford and Anne.

Elizabeth Vere was christened at Theobalds on 10 July, the Queen acting as godmother.⁸¹⁵ The news of Anne's pregnancy had reached Oxford on 17 March 1575 while he was in Paris, at which time he wrote to Lord Burghley expressing his pleasure that what Lord Burghley had mentioned doubtfully in an earlier letter had turned out to be true:

*My Lord, your letters have made me a glad man, for these last have put me in assurance of that good fortune which your former mentioned doubtfully. I thank God therefore with your Lordship that it hath pleased him to make me a father where your Lordship is a grandfather. And if it be a boy I shall likewise be the partaker with you in a greater contentation. But thereby to take an occasion to return, I am far off from that opinion, for now it hath pleased God to give me a son of mine own (as I hope it is), methinks I have the better occasion to travel sith whatsoever becometh of me I leave behind me one to supply my duty and service either to my prince or else my country.*⁸¹⁶

Although Elizabeth was born at the beginning of July, for unexplained reasons Oxford did not learn of the birth until 24 September.⁸¹⁷ When he returned to England he was met by his first cousin, Lord Henry Howard,⁸¹⁸ and it appears that immediately after landing at Dover, he refused to meet with his wife. Although he never named the cause openly, Oxford appears to have been told that Anne's daughter, Elizabeth, was not his child:

*The Earl of Oxford arrived being returned out of Italy, he was enticed by certain lewd persons to be a stranger to his wife.*⁸¹⁹

The most Oxford would allow himself to say on the subject to Lord Burghley was that:

Until I can better satisfy or advertise myself of some mislikes I am not determined as touching my wife to accompany her. What they are, because some are not to be spoken of or written upon as imperfections, I will not deal withal; some that otherways

⁸¹³ *Sir Philip Sidney's Ourania* (1606), *supra*.

⁸¹⁴ CP 140/14v; CP 334/2; Nelson, p. 127.

⁸¹⁵ *ECDbD* (1575), p. 26.

⁸¹⁶ CP, 8/24; Nelson, p. 123.

⁸¹⁷ CP 160/74; Nelson, p. 129.

⁸¹⁸ Croft, Pauline, "Howard, Henry, earl of Northampton (1540–1614)", *ODNB*.

⁸¹⁹ Nelson, p. 142.

*discontent me I will not blaze or publish until it please me. And last of all, I mean not to weary myself any more with such troubles and molestations as I have endured.*⁸²⁰

Numerous memoranda compiled by Lord Burghley at the time reveal a flood of complaints by Oxford against his wife's family; however the crux of the matter seems to have been his unspoken conviction that Anne's daughter, Elizabeth, was not his child.⁸²¹ Oxford took rooms at Charing Cross. He allowed Anne to attend the Queen at court, but only when he himself was not present, and stipulated that Lord Burghley must make no further appeals to him on Anne's behalf.⁸²²

On 20 December 1576 Sir William More (1520-1600) of Loseley granted Richard Farrant⁸²³ a 21-year lease of 'six upper chambers' in the Blackfriars.⁸²⁴ According to notes made by More after Easter term 1584,⁸²⁵ he had granted a lease 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 to two other persons, for which infraction More claimed Farrant had forfeited his lease. Before More could regain possession, however, Farrant died, leaving the lease in his will⁸²⁶ to his widow, Anne Farrant, the daughter of Richard Bower (d.1561),⁸²⁷ Master of the Choristers of the Chapel Royal.

After her husband's death, and after intervention by Leicester with Sir William More on behalf of William Hunnis (d.1597),⁸²⁸ 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.⁸²⁹ More brought suit against Evans, and was granted possession of the property in Easter term 1584, and the first Blackfriars theatre was closed.⁸³⁰

In 1576 eight poems by Oxford were published in *The Paradise of Dainty Devises*, a collection in which all the poems were meant to be sung.⁸³¹ Oxford's eight poems in the

⁸²⁰ CP 9/1; Nelson, pp. 145-6.

⁸²¹ Nelson, pp. 141-154.

⁸²² CP 9/15; Nelson, p. 154.

⁸²³ Bowers, Roger, "Farrant, Richard (c. 1528–1580)", *ODNB*.

⁸²⁴ For the lease, see Folger MS L.b.350, and Wallace, Charles William, *The Evolution of the English Drama up to Shakespeare*, (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1912), pp. 132-6.

⁸²⁵ See Folger MS L.b.425.

⁸²⁶ See his will, TNA PROB 11/63/120.

⁸²⁷ See his will, TNA PROB 11/44/299.

⁸²⁸ Ashbee, Andrew, "Hunnis, William (d. 1597)", *ODNB*.

⁸²⁹ Hunter, G.K., "Lyly, John (1554–1606)", *ODNB*.

⁸³⁰ See Wallace, *supra*, pp. 147-77, and Smith, Irwin, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse* (New York University Press, 1964), pp. 135, 148-53, 467-8.

⁸³¹ May, Stephen W., ed., 'The Poems of Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford and of Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex', *Studies in Philology*, Vol. LXXVII,

Paradise 'create a dramatic break with everything known to have been written at the Elizabethan court up to that time.'⁸³²

At New Year's in 1577 Anne Cecil gave the Queen a jewel which appears to have featured a head of agate bearing a laurel garland garnished with rubies:

*Item, a jewel, being an agate head garnished with gold, and a laurel garland garnished about with sparks of rubies, and a pendant of gold garnished with 8 sparks of rubies, with an opal in the midst. Given by the Countess of Oxford.*⁸³³

On 16 February 1577 Thomas Screven⁸³⁴ reported to the Earl of Rutland that Oxford's sister, Mary de Vere, would marry Lord Fitzgerald,⁸³⁵ a first cousin of Mary Browne, wife of Henry Wriothesley, 2nd Earl of Southampton.

By 2 July, however, Mary de Vere had another suitor. On that date the Duchess of Suffolk⁸³⁶ informed Lord Burghley that 'my wise son⁸³⁷ has gone very far with my Lady Mary Vere, I fear too far to turn'.⁸³⁸ The Duchess and her second husband, Richard Bertie,⁸³⁹ strongly opposed the marriage, as did Oxford. About this time Peregrine Bertie wrote to Mary de Vere to let her know '. . . how uncourteously I am dealt with by my Lord, your brother, who, as I hear, bandeth against me and sweareth my death, which I fear nor force not but lest his displeasure should withdraw your affection towards me.

Number 5, (Early Winter 1980), pp. 68-73; May, Steven W., *The Elizabethan Courtier Poets; The Poems and Their Contexts* (Columbia, Missouri: The University of Missouri Press, 1991), p. 53; May, Steven W., "Early Courtier Verse: Oxford, Dyer and Gascoigne" in Cheney, Patrick, ed., *Early Modern English Poetry: A Critical Companion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 66.

⁸³² May, 1991, p. 53.

⁸³³ See Nichols, John, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, (London: John Nichols and Son, 1823), Vol. II, p. 52. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/progressesandpu00nichgoog/page/n76/mode/2up>

⁸³⁴ The Earl of Rutland's agent.

⁸³⁵ HMC Rutland i, p. 111; Nelson, p. 172. Gerald Fitzgerald (1559–1580) was the eldest son and heir of Gerald Fitzgerald (1525–1585), 11th Earl of Kildare, and his wife, Mabel Browne (d.1610), the sister of Anthony Browne (1528–1592), 1st Viscount Montagu, the father of Mary Browne (d.1607), mother of Henry Wriothesley (1573–1624), 3rd Earl of Southampton. 'Lord Garrett' is mentioned as an associate of Oxford's in TNA SP 12/151/46, ff. 103-4.

⁸³⁶ Wabuda, Susan, "Bertie [née Willoughby; other married name Brandon], Katherine, duchess of Suffolk (1519–1580)", *ODNB*.

⁸³⁷ Trim, D.J.B., "Bertie, Peregrine, thirteenth Baron Willoughby of Willoughby, Beck, and Eresby (1555–1601)", *ODNB*. For his will, see TNA PROB 11/98/204.

⁸³⁸ Nelson, pp. 172-3; CP, xiii, pp. 146-7 (CP 202/136). URL:

<https://archive.org/details/calendarofmanusc13greauoft/page/146/mode/2up>

⁸³⁹ Wabuda, Susan, "Bertie, Richard (1517–1582)", *ODNB*.

*Otherwise I think no way to be so offended as I cannot defend.*⁸⁴⁰ Bertie complained that he was confined to Willoughby House by his parents, 'locked up so fast as I could scarce get pen and paper to be the present messengers of my poor goodwill'.

In the summer of 1577 Oxford may again have attempted to see service in the French wars of religion on the side of Henri III. Leicester wrote to Lord Burghley on 13 June 1577:

*I am sorry my Lord of Oxford should for any respect think any more of going over sea.*⁸⁴¹

Two of Oxford's cousins were already in France. On 10 July the English ambassador, Sir Amias Paulet,⁸⁴² wrote to Sir Francis Walsingham advising that 'the two young Veres',⁸⁴³ Oxford's servant, Denny, and Walter Williams⁸⁴⁴ were in Poitiers, and 'resolved to follow the Duke of Guise⁸⁴⁵ into Champagne'.⁸⁴⁶

Oxford's cousin, Sir Francis Vere, recalled his time in France in a letter written to Sir Robert Cecil on 17 November 1605:

*. . . such a man I saw when I was very young at Paris by reason of the company I kept with Sir Roger Williams and one Denys, a Frenchman, followers of my Lord of Oxford's.*⁸⁴⁷

Sir Amias Paulet names Francis Vere's companion as Walter Williams, while Francis Vere recalls that he was with the famous soldier, Sir Roger Williams.⁸⁴⁸ Both may have been in France at the time.

Sir Roger Williams has been proposed as the model for Shakespeare's Welsh captain, Fluellen. The fact that Sir Francis Vere terms him a 'follower' of Oxford's in 1577 has perhaps not been sufficiently remarked upon.

⁸⁴⁰ 8 Ancaster 1/10; Nelson, p. 176. The letter is an undated draft.

⁸⁴¹ Nelson, p. 169, citing CP ii, p. 154 (160/129).

⁸⁴² See Hicks, Michael, "Paulet, Sir Amias (c. 1532–1588)", *ODNB*.

⁸⁴³ One of the 'two young Veres' was Francis. Bossy, *infra*, identifies the other as his brother, Robert Vere. However the *ODNB* suggests that Francis Vere's companion was his eldest brother, John Vere (d.1624) of Kirby Hall. For the latter's will, see TNA PROB 11/143/706.

⁸⁴⁴ Unidentified. Sir Roger Williams had a brother who was killed by the Spanish in 1582, as well as cousins who 'enlisted for the Protestant war effort'.

⁸⁴⁵ Henri de Lorraine (1550-1588), Duke of Guise, who in 1576 had formed the Catholic League.

⁸⁴⁶ Ogle, Octavius, ed., *Copy-book of Sir Amias Poulet's Letters Written During his Embassy to France (A.D. 1577)*, (London: J.B. Nichols, 1866), pp. 55-6; Nelson, p. 169.

⁸⁴⁷ CP 113/16; Nelson, p. 171.

⁸⁴⁸ Trim, D.J.B., "Williams, Sir Roger (1539/40–1595)", *ODNB*.

In later years, Sir Francis Vere considered his brief service on the side of the King of France a youthful error, recalling that he had been quickly brought to heel by the Queen:

*. . . it is true I was for a time with the Duke of Guise, as your Lordship may have heard. I was called thence by her Majesty's commandment, and made to know the error of that course, which hath serve me for a warning ever since.*⁸⁴⁹

The Queen's recall of Francis Vere exemplifies the ambivalence of her position throughout the French wars of religion. Secretly favouring the Huguenot rebels, she offered them aid and allowed young Englishmen to serve in the Protestant forces led by the Prince of Condé. To counterbalance this, she occasionally allowed Englishmen to serve in the Catholic forces of Henri III, but drew the line at members of the English nobility and their kinsmen since the ruling elite in England were almost exclusively Protestant.

While Oxford's cousins were in France, on 12 July 1577 Henri III wrote to Mauvissiere explicitly rejecting overtures made to Mauvissiere by unidentified members of a Catholic party in England who had suggested armed rebellion against the Queen if Henri III would support such action.:

*And it has been very well done by you, as you write me in your said dispatches, to have already turned a deaf ear to those of the Catholic party of England who have brought word to you of taking up arms with a great number of their adherents if I would be willing to lend a helping hand for the establishment of their religion, the exercise of which has been forbidden there, believing that it is but a dissimulation, & in order to make proof of the goodwill which I might have, to return to the said Lady Queen of England that which she lends me, as you avow yourself, knowing many of those of the said nation to be double, & in whom there is little faithfulness. Also I very much wish to tell you that even though it might be that they were making these overtures sincerely, nevertheless I would not wish to hear of it, considering that I would [+have preferred to] have seen that the said Lady Queen would have used the same respect towards me, & would not have fomented the ill will of my said raised subjects by the help which she promises them & takes in hand, & for that it will suffice that you let these people speak who make these offers without showing that you find them good, & approve in any way whatsoever.*⁸⁵⁰

The members of the Catholic party who had advocated armed rebellion against the Queen to Mauvissiere are unidentified.⁸⁵¹ However because Oxford and Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, are mentioned in the next paragraph of the King's letter, Bossy erroneously states that it was Oxford who had approached Mauvissiere:

⁸⁴⁹ CP 113/16; Nelson, p. 171.

⁸⁵⁰ Laboureur, Jean Le, *Les Memoires de Messire Michel de Castelnau Seigneur de Mauvissiere*, 3 vols., (Brussels, 1731), Vol. III, pp. 519-21.

⁸⁵¹ It is perhaps not unreasonable to suspect Lord Henry Howard and Charles Arundel, both of whom are known to have intrigued with foreign powers.

*Oxford was already known in France, and some time in June 1577 went to the French Ambassador, Castelnau de Mauvissiere, offering, with his friends and adherents, to lead a revolt of the "Catholic Party", if France would support it. The ambassador's reaction was not encouraging: still, he forwarded the proposal to Paris, where it aroused a benevolent, if timid, curiosity. The King replied with some ambiguity that so long as the Queen of England did not support rebellion in his dominions, he would refrain from doing so in hers. On the other hand, it would not be amiss to encourage Oxford and his friends in their good intentions, and to present the earl with a jewel as a token of esteem.*⁸⁵²

There is no evidence in Henri III's letter that it was Oxford who had made overtures to Mauvissiere on behalf of the Catholic party, nor can Henri III's reaction be described as ambiguous; he rejected outright the idea of supporting armed Catholic rebellion in England ('I would not wish to hear of it').

On the other hand, the King considered it prudent to maintain the goodwill of members of the nobility in England who were well affected to him, including Oxford, whom he had met personally on 6 March 1575, and Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, eldest son and heir of Oxford's first cousin, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk:

Also I say to you that it will be well done by you to preserve the young Earl of Oxford in the good affection which he demonstrates to have to the welfare and prosperity of my affairs & service, & similarly the son of the late Duke of Norfolk, his cousin. But watch that it be so secretly and dexterously that they not fall into suspicion & bad opinion over there because of it. I will send you soon a jewel in order to make a present on my behalf to the said Earl of Oxford, & to serve him as a token of the amity and goodwill which I bear him.

In 1577 John Brooke⁸⁵³ dedicated to Oxford a translation entitled *The Staff of Christian Faith*,⁸⁵⁴ 'the only work by the popular writer Guy de Brès to be printed in English'.

I, understanding right well that your Honour hath continually, even from your tender years, bestowed your time and travail towards the attaining of the same, as also the university of Cambridge hath acknowledged in granting and giving unto you such commendation and praise thereof as verily by right was due unto your excellent virtue and rare learning, wherein verily Cambridge, the mother of learning and learned men, hath openly confessed, and in this her confessing made known unto all men that your Honour, being learned and able to judge as a safe harbour and defence of learning, and therefore one most fit to whose honourable patronage I might safely commit this my poor and simple labours.

⁸⁵² Bossy, John A., 'English Catholics and the French Marriage 1577-1581', *Recusant History*, Vol. V, (Bognor Regis: The Arundel Press, 1959-60), pp. 2-16 at p. 3.

⁸⁵³ Kennedy, Kathleen E., "Brooke, John (d. 1582)", *ODNB*.

⁸⁵⁴ STC 12476.

In July of the same year John Stanhope⁸⁵⁵ wrote to Lord Burghley indicating that as a result of Oxford's suit to the Queen for the grant of Castle Rising, a property which had been forfeited to the Crown on Norfolk's attainder in 1572, 'some unkindness and strangeness ensueth betwixt my Lord of Surrey, my Lord Harry, and his Lordship'.⁸⁵⁶

In late July, Oxford's former servant, William Weekes, allegedly killed Oxford's former servant, William Sankey.⁸⁵⁷ It seems likely that the slaying was the result of a private dispute between Weekes and Sankey, possibly because Weekes had given information to Oxford about Sankey which had caused Oxford to turn Sankey out of his service. The preposterous claim that Oxford had *ordered* Weekes to kill Sankey, and that Weekes had duly followed Oxford's orders, and that the authorities had done nothing about it, came almost four years after the fact from Lord Henry Howard and Charles Arundel in late 1580/early 1581 at a time when they were in fear for their lives and were hurling improbable accusations at Oxford in order to discredit him as a witness against them. Moreover Lord Henry Howard made the further bizarre allegation that Sankey was turned out of Oxford's service because he had refused to stab Rowland Yorke:

*Thus Weekes was commanded to kill Sankey, my Lord's man, and so he did, after he was turned away because he would not give the stab to Yorke when he met him in Holborn. Weekes confessed with what violence he had been set on by my Lord after he had wounded him to the death without either cause or courage, and Sankey told it on his death both to the minister, his wife, and divers others. Thus laid he such straight wait for Rowland Yorke that George Whitney had like to be slain for him one night at the Horsehead in Cheap.*⁸⁵⁸

Similarly, Charles Arundel:

*4 Caused Weekes to murder Sankey because he would not kill Rowland Yorke.*⁸⁵⁹

Arundel adds further details:

*And I would be as loath to omit the killing of Sankey (being sometime a special favourite to this monster) by his servant Weekes, who at the gallows confessed to the minister that he was procured to this villainy by commandment of his monstrous master, who gave him a hundred pounds in gold after the murder committed to shift him away, and so much was found about when he was apprehended.*⁸⁶⁰

⁸⁵⁵ Hicks, Michael, "Stanhope, John, first Baron Stanhope (c.1540–1621)", *ODNB*.

⁸⁵⁶ CP 9/70; Nelson, p. 173.

⁸⁵⁷ Nelson, pp. 174–6.

⁸⁵⁸ BL Cotton Titus C.6, ff. 7–8.

⁸⁵⁹ TNA SP 12/151/46, ff. 103–4.

⁸⁶⁰ TNA SP 151/45, ff. 110–102.

This appears to be a combination of hearsay and imagination. Moreover the nuncupative will of William Sankey, gentleman, of East Barnet states that Sankey was 'lying on his death-bed about the latter end of July or the beginning of August anno Domini 1577' surrounded by family and friends, and was thus obviously not slain outright by Weekes. In fact, it is not entirely clear that the William Sankey of East Barnet who made this nuncupative will was Oxford's former servant, although that conclusion is supported by a recognizance dated 26 June 1573 requiring William Sankye of Wivenhoe, gentleman, to keep the peace against Edward Jobson, gentleman, taken before several of Oxford's relations and officers, including Oxford's first cousin, John Darcy, 1st Baron Darcy of Chiche, and Oxford's uncle, Henry Golding, whose stepdaughter, Mary Waldegrave,⁸⁶¹ was bigamously married to a William Sankey.⁸⁶²

The allegation that Oxford had procured Weekes to kill Sankey, together with all the other allegations made by Howard and Arundel in 1580-81, were entirely ignored by the Queen and Privy Council, who were in a position to judge the veracity of such claims, the court being the tight circle that it was.

In 1577 Oxford invested £25 in the second of Martin Frobisher's⁸⁶³ expeditions in search of the Northwest Passage.⁸⁶⁴

By 11 November the Queen had still not given her consent to the marriage of Mary de Vere and Peregrine Bertie, nor was Oxford yet entirely persuaded, as Thomas Screven advised the Earl of Rutland:

*The marriage of the Lady Mary Vere is deferred until after Christmas, for as yet neither has Her Majesty given licence, nor has the Earl of Oxford wholly assented thereto.*⁸⁶⁵

By 15 December, not only were the Duchess of Suffolk and Mary de Vere on good terms, but Oxford and the Duchess as well. The Duchess wrote to Lord Burghley describing a

⁸⁶¹ Mary (nee Forster) Waldegrave, was the daughter of George Forster (d.1556) of Little Birch, Essex, and the stepdaughter of Oxford's maternal uncle, Henry Golding (d.1576). In a lawsuit in 1579 she described herself as the 'widow' of William Sankey, having bigamously married Sankey on 13 January 1572 while her lawful husband, Robert Waldegrave, was still living. See the will, TNA PROB 11/39/125, of Mary Forster's grandfather, Robert Forster (d.1545) of Little Birch, Essex, and the will, TNA PROB 11/44/318, of Robert Waldegrave's brother, Sir Edward Waldegrave (d. 1 September 1561) of Borley, Essex, in which he recounts his purchase of the marriage.

⁸⁶² ERO Q/SR 47/38. On 27 November 1577 the Privy Council ordered Weekes to be brought to London from Durham. See Nelson, p. 174; *APC 1577-78*, p. 103; 'Pages 101-126', in *Acts of the Privy Council of England Volume 10, 1577-1578*, ed. John Roche Dasent (London, 1895), pp. 101-125. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/acts-privy-council/vol10/pp101-125>.

⁸⁶³ McDermott, James, "Frobisher, Sir Martin (1535?-1594)", ODNB.

⁸⁶⁴ Nelson, p. 187.

⁸⁶⁵ HMC Rutland, p. 115; Nelson, p. 176.

plan she and Oxford's sister had devised by which Oxford could see his daughter, Elizabeth, without drawing too much attention to the fact that he had done so.⁸⁶⁶ Whether the scheme came to fruition is unknown.⁸⁶⁷

Mary de Vere and Peregrine Bertie were married sometime after Christmas 1577 and before 12 March 1578.⁸⁶⁸ The wedding must have been a private one, and there appear to be no record of the Queen sending a gift.

At New Year's in 1578, Anne Cecil gave the Queen an embroidered satin doublet which she had likely worked herself, as was customary with gifts of that type:

*By the Countess of Oxford a doublet of white satin alov'(?) embroidered with flowers of gold and lined with straw-coloured sarcenet.*⁸⁶⁹

The Queen gave the Countess a bowl of silver and gilt, 'Brandon', of 20 $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces.⁸⁷⁰ 'Brandon' suggests that it might once have belonged to Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, former husband of the Queen's aunt, Mary Tudor (1496-1533). As noted above, the Duke attended the 16th Earl of Oxford's wedding in 1536.

It is possible Oxford gave the Queen a jewel in that year, as no less than four expensive and elaborate jewels were given to the Queen for which the name of the giver is not recorded,⁸⁷¹ however against that hypothesis is that fact that there was no reciprocal gift of plate from the Queen to Oxford.

On 15 January 1578, the Queen's grant of Castle Rising to Oxford was finalized.⁸⁷² As noted earlier, Oxford had sold his inherited lands in Cornwall, Staffordshire and Wiltshire prior to his continental tour. On his return to England in 1576 he sold his manors in Devonshire. Sales continued apace in the following two years, and by the end of 1578 he had sold at least seven additional manors, including his recent grant of Castle Rising.⁸⁷³

On 9 March 1578, Mary, Queen of Scots' mother-in-law, the Countess of Lennox,⁸⁷⁴ died at King's Place in Hackney, the house in which Oxford later lived from 1597 until his death. According to the anonymous author of *Leicester's Commonwealth* (1584), she was poisoned by Leicester:

⁸⁶⁶ BL MS Lansdowne 25/27, ff. 56-8; Ward, pp. 154-6; Nelson, pp. 176-7.

⁸⁶⁷ See BL MS Lansdowne 25/27, f. 56.

⁸⁶⁸ HMC Rutland, I, p. 115; Nelson, p. 179.

⁸⁶⁹ Nichols, *Progresses . . . Elizabeth, supra*, Vol. II, p. 68.

⁸⁷⁰ Nichols, *Progresses . . . Elizabeth, supra*, Vol. II, p. 83.

⁸⁷¹ Nichols, *Progresses . . . Elizabeth, supra*, Vol. II, p. 79.

⁸⁷² TNA C 66/1165, mm. 34-7; NRO HOW 144; Nelson, pp. 178-9.

⁸⁷³ Pearson, *supra*, p. 229.

⁸⁷⁴ Marshall, Rosalind K., "Douglas, Lady Margaret, countess of Lennox (1515–1578)", *ODNB*.

It hath been told me also by some of the servants of the late Lady Lennox, who was also of the blood royal by Scotland, as all men know, & consequently little liked by Leicester, that a little before her death or sickness, my Lord took the pains to come and visit her with extraordinary kindness at her house at Hackney, bestowing long discourses with her in private, but as soon as he was departed, the good lady fell into such a flux as by no means could be stayed so long as she had life in her body, whereupon both she herself and all such as were near about her, and saw her disease and ending-day, were fully of opinion that my Lord had procured her dispatch at his being there. Whereof let the women that served her be examined, as also Fowler,⁸⁷⁵ that then had the chief doings in her affairs, and since hath been entertained by my Lord of Leicester. Mallet⁸⁷⁶ also, a stranger born, that then was about her, a sober and zealous man in religion, and otherwise well qualified, can say somewhat in this point (as I think) if he were demanded. So that this art and exercise of poisoning is much more perfect with my Lord than praying, and he seemeth to take more pleasure therein.

Oxford was personally acquainted with the Countess of Lennox; Lord Burghley's notes indicate that she, Oxford and other guests were at Theobalds on 19-20 September 1574.⁸⁷⁷ The Countess appointed Lord Burghley an overseer of her will.

In 1578 Oxford sank £3000 into the third Frobisher expedition. It appears he financed this investment by selling Castle Rising, which the Queen had granted him six months earlier.⁸⁷⁸ Oxford also sold the manor of Gaywood, parcel of the Castle Rising grant, and the manor of Easton Maudit at this time, probably for the same purpose.⁸⁷⁹ The 'gold' ore brought back by Frobisher turned out to be worthless, and Oxford lost his entire investment.⁸⁸⁰

In the summer of 1578 Oxford attended the Queen on her progress through East

⁸⁷⁵ Thomas Fowler, confidential secretary to the Countess, and executor of her will (TNA PROB 11/60/. For the Countess' will, see TNA PROB 11/60/174). See also Strickland, *Agnes, Lives of the Queens of Scotland and English Princesses Connected with the Regal Succession of Great Britain*, 2nd ed., (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1854), Vol. II, p. 450. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=5vgQAAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA450>

⁸⁷⁶ Peter Malliet, a relative of the Swiss Protestant reformer Ulrich Zwingli, and tutor to the Countess' son. See Strickland, *supra*, Vol. II, pp. 437-8, 450-1. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=5vgQAAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA437>

⁸⁷⁷ Nelson, p. 117; CP xiii, p. 144(140/15(2)); *Historical Manuscripts Commission. Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquis of Salisbury &c., &c., &c., Preserved at Hatfield House. Hertfordshire*, Part XIII. (Addenda.), (Hereford: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1915), p. 144. URL: <https://archive.org/details/calendarofmanusc13greauoft/page/144/mode/2up>

⁸⁷⁸ See TNA C 66/1165, mm. 34-7; Norfolk Record Office HOW 146 342 x 6; and TNA C 54/1043, Part 20.

⁸⁷⁹ See TNA C 54/1045, Part 22 and TNA C 54/1043, Part 20.

⁸⁸⁰ TNA SP 12/149/42(15), f. 108v; Nelson, pp. 186-8.

Anglia.⁸⁸¹ On 15 July Lord Burghley wrote to Dr Richard Howland ‘from the court at Havering’, suggesting that if the Queen were to visit Cambridge, the university ‘should do well to provide for the Earl of Leicester, the Lord Chamberlain and the Earl of Oxford some gloves with a few verses in a paper joined to them, proper to every of their degrees, so that in number they exceed not eight verses’.⁸⁸² The royal party stayed at Lord Henry Howard's residence at Audley End from 26-31 July,⁸⁸³ where Gabriel Harvey⁸⁸⁴ dedicated his *Gratulationes Valdinenses*⁸⁸⁵ to the Queen. The volume consists of four ‘books’, the first addressed to the Queen, the second to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, the third to Lord Burghley, and the fourth to Oxford, Sir Christopher Hatton, and Philip Sidney.⁸⁸⁶ Harvey's encomium to Oxford is double-edged, praising his English and Latin verse and prose while encouraging him to ‘put away your feeble pen, your bloodless books, your impractical writings’.⁸⁸⁷ A contretemps occurred during the progress in mid-August when the Queen twice requested Oxford to dance before the French ambassadors Bacqueville and Quissy, who were in England to negotiate a marriage between the Queen and the Duke of Alencon.⁸⁸⁸ Oxford refused on the ground that he ‘would not give pleasure to Frenchmen’.⁸⁸⁹

On 23 December 1578 Geoffrey Gates⁸⁹⁰ dedicated to Oxford his *Defense of Military Profession*.⁸⁹¹

At New Year's in 1579 Oxford gave the Queen a jewel featuring a gold helmet, while Anne Cecil gave the Queen an embroidered forepart:

By th' Earl of Oxford a very fair jewel of gold wherein is a helmet of gold and small diamonds furnished, and under the same is five rubies, one bigger than th' rest, and a small diamond broken, and all th' rest of the same jewel furnished with small diamonds.

*By the Countess of Oxford, a forepart of a kirtle of white satin embroidered with flowers of silver, and two borders of gold and seed pearl embroided upon black velvet.*⁸⁹²

⁸⁸¹ Ogborne, Elizabeth, *The History of Essex*, (London, 1814), p. 113; Terry, George, *Memories of Old Romford and Other Places Within the Royal Liberty of Havering-atte-Bower*, (London: Straker Bros. & Co., 1880), pp. 126-7; Nelson, p. 180.

⁸⁸² Nelson, p. 180;

⁸⁸³ Jameson, Thomas Hugh, *The Gratulariones Valdinensis of Gabriel Harvey*, unpublished Yale University dissertation (1938).

⁸⁸⁴ Scott-Warren, Jason, “Harvey, Gabriel (1552/3–1631)”, *ODNB*.

⁸⁸⁵ STC 12901.

⁸⁸⁶ Woodhuysen, H.R., “Sidney, Sir Philip (1554–1586)”, *ODNB*.

⁸⁸⁷ Nelson, pp. 181.

⁸⁸⁸ Francois (1555-1584), Duke of Alencon.

⁸⁸⁹ CSP Spanish, 1568-79, p. 607; Nelson, p. 181.

⁸⁹⁰ Trim, D.J.B., “Gates, Geoffrey (fl. 1566–1580)”, *ODNB*.

⁸⁹¹ STC 11683.

⁸⁹² Nichols, *Progresses . . . Elizabeth, supra*, Vol. II, pp. 250-1. URL: <https://archive.org/details/progressesandpu00nichgoog/page/n288/mode/2up>

The Queen's gift to Oxford was a basin and ewer 'of our store' of 72 $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces, and a pair of pots, 'Brandon', of 120 $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces, while to Anne Cecil she gave a gilt bowl with a cover 'Keele' of 20 $\frac{1}{4}$ ounces.⁸⁹³

In a letter of 5 March 1579 Gilbert Talbot wrote to his father of a 'show' presented by Oxford and his kinsmen before the Queen:

It is but vain to trouble your Lordship with such shows as was showed before her Majesty this Shrovetide at night. The chiefest was a device presented by the persons of th' Earl of Oxford, th' Earl of Surrey, the Lords Thomas Howard & Windsor. The device was prettier than it had hap to be performed, but the best of it (& I think the best liked) was two rich jewels which was presented to her Majesty by the 2 Earls.⁸⁹⁴

On 8 April the Spanish ambassador, Bernardino de Mendoza, wrote to Philip II of Spain that it had been proposed that if Alencon were to travel to England in connection with negotiations for his marriage to the Queen, Oxford, Surrey and Windsor should be hostages for his safe return.⁸⁹⁵ Alencon himself did not arrive in England until the end of August, but his ambassadors were in England from the 15th to the 27th of that month. Oxford was sympathetic to the proposed marriage, but Leicester and his nephew Philip Sidney were adamantly opposed to it. This difference of opinion may have triggered the well known quarrel between Oxford and Sidney on the tennis court at Whitehall. The most detailed version of the quarrel survives in the account of Sidney's friend, Fulke Greville.⁸⁹⁶ It is not entirely clear from Greville's account who was playing on the court when the quarrel erupted. What is clear is that Oxford 'scornfully call[ed] Sir Philip by the name of puppy', and that Sidney responded by giving Oxford the lie, averring that 'all the world knows puppies are gotten by dogs, and children by men'. All this was overheard by the French ambassadors, who 'had that day audience in those private galleries whose windows looked into the tennis court'. What happened next is not entirely clear from the conflicting accounts, but it appears that whether it was Sidney who challenged Oxford to a duel or the other way around, Oxford failed to take the duel any further, and the Queen personally took Sidney to task for not recognizing the difference between his status and Oxford's. Sir Christopher Hatton and Sidney's friend Hubert Languet (1518-1581) also tried to dissuade Sidney from pursuing the matter, and it was eventually dropped.⁸⁹⁷

Oxford was also in confrontation with Leicester about this time. A memorandum from 1579 details 'Articles whereof Oxford would have accused Leicester', and Oxford was confined to his chamber at Greenwich for a time 'about the libelling between him and my

⁸⁹³ Nichols, *Progresses. . . Elizabeth, supra*, Vol. II, p. 265.

⁸⁹⁴ Talbot Papers, Vol. F, f. 295; Nelson, p. 190.

⁸⁹⁵ CSP Spanish, 1568-79, p. 662; Nelson, p. 190.

⁸⁹⁶ Gouws, John, "Greville, Fulke, first Baron Brooke of Beauchamps Court (1554–1628)", *ODNB*.

⁸⁹⁷ Ward, pp. 164-76; Nelson, pp. 195-200.

Lord of Leicester'.⁸⁹⁸

In 1579 Anthony Munday⁸⁹⁹ dedicated to Oxford his *Mirror of Mutability*.⁹⁰⁰

At New Year's in 1580 Oxford gave the Queen a jewel, while Anne Cecil gave her a pair of bracelets:

Item, a fair jewel of gold, being a ship garnished fully with diamonds, and a mean pearl pendent.

*Item, a pair of bracelets of gold containing 24 pieces, whereof in seven of them are two pearls in a piece and six stones, being lapis lazareus [lapis lazuli], and six cloud stones or shells of the sea. Given by the Countess of Oxford.*⁹⁰¹

On 18 January 1580, Oxford's paternal uncle, Aubrey Vere (c.1518?-1580) of Castle Hedingham, made a brief will.⁹⁰² He was buried 14 March 1580 in the parish church at Castle Hedingham. His first wife⁹⁰³ had earlier been buried in the same church on 11 July 1562.⁹⁰⁴ According to the will of the 16th Earl,⁹⁰⁵ he had five children living in 1562: two sons, Hugh and John, and three daughters, Anne, Bridget and Jane. Hugh Vere married Ellen or Eleanor Washe on 23 August 1575. The burials of two of their children are recorded in the parish register of Castle Hedingham: Susan, who was buried 24 April 1580, and Margery, who was buried 31 July 1583.⁹⁰⁶

On 27 January 1580 Arthur Throckmorton (c.1557-1626) wrote in his diary that Oxford had written a challenge to Sidney, and that on the 29th Oxford had been commanded to keep his chamber, not being released until 11 February. The cause of the challenge and of Oxford's confinement to quarters by the Queen is unknown.⁹⁰⁷

⁸⁹⁸ TNA SP 12/151/50, f. 110; Nelson, pp. 200-1, 203.

⁸⁹⁹ Bergeron, David M., "Munday, Anthony (bap. 1560, d. 1633)", *ODNB*.

⁹⁰⁰ STC 18276; Nelson, pp. 237-8.

⁹⁰¹ Nelson, p. 229; Nichols, *Progresses . . . Elizabeth, supra*, Vol. II, p. 289. URL: <https://archive.org/details/progressesandpu00nichgoog/page/n332/mode/2up>

⁹⁰² ERO D/AMR 3/281/1. In his will he mentions only his son, John, and daughter, Bridget.

⁹⁰³ The identity of his first wife is unclear. She may have been Margaret Spring, niece of the wealthy clothier, Thomas Spring (d.1523) of Lavenham, Suffolk. See the will of Thomas Spring, TNA PROB 11/21/179, and Betterton, Alec, and David Dymond, *Lavenham: Industrial Town*, (Lavenham: Terence Dalton Limited, 1989), p. 51. His second wife was Bridget Gibbon, the daughter of Sir Anthony Gibbon (or Guybon) of Lynn, Norfolk. See Markham, *supra*, p. 383.

⁹⁰⁴ Sperling, *supra*, p. 260.

⁹⁰⁵ TNA PROB 11/46/247.

⁹⁰⁶ Sperling, *supra*, p. 260.

⁹⁰⁷ Rowse, A.L., *Raleigh and the Throckmortons* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1962), pp. 77-8; Nelson, p. 230.

By April 1580, Oxford had taken over the Earl of Warwick's⁹⁰⁸ playing company:

*The Duttons and their fellow-players forsaking the Earl of Warwick, their master, became followers of the Earl of Oxford and wrote themselves his comedian, which certain gentlemen altered and made chameleons.*⁹⁰⁹

The company may have included the famous comedian, Richard Tarleton.⁹¹⁰ At this time Oxford also patronized boy actors, as indicated by an entry for 1580-1 recording payment for a performance in Bristol of 'my Lord of Oxford's players', consisting of '1 man and 9 boys'.⁹¹¹ John Lyly,⁹¹² the playwright and author of *Euphues*, was in Oxford's service from at least as early as 1580.⁹¹³

On 9 June 1580 Lord Burghley wrote to John Hatcher, Vice-chancellor of the University of Cambridge, requesting that Oxford's Men be allowed to 'repair to that university and there to make show of such plays and interludes as have been heretofore played by them publicly, as well before the Queen's Majesty as in the city of London'. Hatcher denied the request, citing various reasons.⁹¹⁴

On 15 June 1580 Oxford purchased a tenement and seven acres of land near Aldgate in London from the Italian merchant Benedict Spinola⁹¹⁵ for £2500. The property was known as the Great Garden of Christchurch in the parish of St Botolph's, London, and had formerly belonged to Magdalene College, Cambridge.⁹¹⁶

In 1580 Oxford also purchased a London residence, a mansion in Bishopsgate known as Fisher's Folly. According to Lord Henry Howard, writing to the Queen in early January 1581, Oxford had paid a large sum for the property and for renovations to it:

*Walking on the terrace at Howard House, I began to deal with him about the trimming up of Fisher's Folly, and no great portion of his Lordship's wisdom, considering the price he told me that he was in hand with it.*⁹¹⁷

In the summer of 1580 Gabriel Harvey, apparently motivated by a desire to ingratiate

⁹⁰⁸ Adams, Simon, "Dudley, Ambrose, earl of Warwick (c.1530–1590)", *ODNB*.

⁹⁰⁹ Nelson, p. 239.

⁹¹⁰ Thomson, Peter, "Tarlton, Richard (d. 1588)", *ODNB*; Nelson, p. 242.

⁹¹¹ Nelson, p. 247.

⁹¹² Hunter, G.K., "Lyly, John (1554–1606)", *ODNB*.

⁹¹³ Nelson, p. 247.

⁹¹⁴ TNA SP 12/139/26, f. 76; Nelson, pp. 244-5.

⁹¹⁵ Bennell, John, "Spinola, Benedict (1519/20–1580)", *ODNB*.

⁹¹⁶ TNA C 54/1080; TNA REQ 2/178/60; Pearson, pp. 46-51; Jones, N.G., "Kelke, Roger (1523/4–1576)", *ODNB*.

⁹¹⁷ BL Cotton Titus C.6, ff. 7-8; Nelson, pp. 230-1.

himself with Leicester,⁹¹⁸ satirized Oxford in verses entitled 'Speculum Tuscanismi' in *Three Proper and Witty Familiar Letters*.⁹¹⁹ Over a decade later, Harvey's satire was pilloried in Thomas Nashe's⁹²⁰ *Strange News* in 1592:

*Needs he must cast up certain crude humours of English hexameter verses that lay upon his stomach; a nobleman stood in his way as he was vomiting, and from top to toe he all-to-bewrayed him with Tuscanism.*⁹²¹

In 1580 three works were dedicated to Oxford, John Hester's⁹²² *A Short Discourse . . . of Leonardo Fioravanti, Bolognese, upon Surgery*,⁹²³ John Lyly's *Euphues and his England*,⁹²⁴ and Anthony Munday's *Zelauto*.⁹²⁵ In the dedication to *Zelauto*, Munday also mentioned having delivered the now lost *Galien of France* to Oxford for his 'courteous and gentle perusing'. Both Lyly and Munday were in Oxford's service at the time, Lyly dedicating his book to 'my very good Lord and master, Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxenford', and Munday identifying himself on the title page as 'Servant to the Right Honourable the Earl of Oxenford'.⁹²⁶ In addition, in his *A Light Bundle of Lively Discourses Called Churchyard's Charge*,⁹²⁷ and *A Pleasant Labyrinth Called Churchyard's Chance*,⁹²⁸ Thomas Churchyard⁹²⁹ promised to dedicate future works to Oxford.⁹³⁰

The Howard/Arundel Affair

At New Year's in 1581, Oxford gave the Queen a jewel, while Anne Cecil gave two dozen gold and pearl buttons :

*Item, a fair jewel of gold, being a beast of opals with a fair lozenged diamond, three great pearls pendent, fully garnished with small rubies, diamonds and small pearls, one horn lacking.*⁹³¹ Given by th' Earl of Oxford.

⁹¹⁸ Nelson, p. 228.

⁹¹⁹ Nelson, pp. 225-6.

⁹²⁰ Nicholl, Charles, "Nashe [Nash], Thomas (bap. 1567, d. c.1601)", *ODNB*.

⁹²¹ Nelson, pp. 225-8.

⁹²² Bennell, John, "Hester, John (d. 1592)", *ODNB*.

⁹²³ STC 10881.

⁹²⁴ STC 17068.

⁹²⁵ STC 18283.

⁹²⁶ Bergeron, David M., "Munday, Anthony (bap. 1560, d. 1633)", *ODNB*; Nelson, pp. 238, 247.

⁹²⁷ STC 5240.

⁹²⁸ STC 5250.

⁹²⁹ Lyne, Raphael, "Churchyard, Thomas (1523?-1604)", *ODNB*.

⁹³⁰ Nelson, p. 238.

⁹³¹ The 'one horn lacking' suggests that the jewel was not new; Oxford may have inherited it from his father.

*Item, 24 buttons of gold enamelled, with one pearl in every button. Given by the Countess of Oxford.*⁹³²

In a letter dated 11 January 1581 to King Henri III, the French ambassador, Mauvissiere, relayed a report that after his return from Italy in 1576 Oxford had made profession of the Catholic religion with some of his relatives and best friends, and that just recently, in late December 1580, Oxford had denounced three of his Catholic friends, his first cousin, Lord Henry Howard, Charles Arundel (d.1587), and Francis Southwell (d.1585),⁹³³ to the Queen.⁹³⁴ Both Howard and Arundel later received pensions from Philip II, and furnished Spain with intelligence against England, suggesting that Oxford's allegations against them in 1581 were not without merit.⁹³⁵

According to Bossy, Leicester had 'dislodged Oxford from the pro-French group',⁹³⁶ that is, the group at court which favoured Queen Elizabeth's marriage to the Duke of Alencon, and had 'persuaded him to make a public confession to the Queen in the ambassador's presence, accusing his former friends of becoming reconciled to Rome and conspiring against the state'. Peck concurs, stating that Leicester was 'intent upon rendering Sussex's allies politically useless'.⁹³⁷ The Spanish ambassador, Mendoza, writing on 9 January 1581 to King Philip II of Spain, was also of the view that Leicester was involved, and that the incident revolved around his opposition to the Queen's projected marriage to Alencon.

A few days ago the Queen took into custody Milord Harry Howard, brother of the Duke of Norfolk, and two other gentlemen, Charles Arundel and Southwell, who were among the most esteemed in her court, and another gentleman having accused them, their great friend, of having received the Holy Sacrament and heard Mass [+and of] reconciling themselves to the Roman Catholic Church four years [+ago]. The three are suspected of treating with familiarity with the ambassador of France and to desire to effect the marriage with Alencon, [+along] with the ladies of the court who were of like affection, and favourites of the Queen. What adds to the mystery of the matter is that they were carried to the Tower, Leicester's having spread the rumour that they were plotting a massacre of the Protestants, beginning with the Queen. His object in this is to inflame the people against them and against the French, as well as against the Earl of Sussex who

⁹³² Nelson, p. 261; Nichols, *Progresses . . . Elizabeth*, Vol. I, p. 300.

⁹³³ Francis Southwell is said to have been born 14 December 1538. For his will, see TNA PROB 11/69/155, and Miller, Terry and Mary, 'The Southwells of Woodrising, Norfolk', 2011, at <http://apling.freeservers.com/Woodrising/Chapter6.htm>.

⁹³⁴ Nelson, p. 249.

⁹³⁵ Archivo General de Simancas, Leg. 835, ff. 121-4; Paris Archives K.1447.130; Paris Archives K.1448.49.

⁹³⁶ Bossy, *supra*, pp. 2-16 at p. 8; Nelson, p. 250.

⁹³⁷ Peck, D.C., ed., *Leicester's Commonwealth: The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge (1584) and Related Documents*, (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985), pp. 16, 19-20; Nelson, p. 250.

*was their close friend.*⁹³⁸

The Privy Council ordered the arrest of Howard and Arundel,⁹³⁹ but before they were arrested, Oxford met secretly with Arundel on the night of 25 December 1580 to enlist Arundel's support for Oxford's allegations against Howard and Southwell.⁹⁴⁰ According to his own later accounts of their meeting, Arundel refused Oxford's offer, and he and Howard sought asylum with the Spanish ambassador, Mendoza, who a year later, on 25 December 1581, wrote to King Philip of Spain that:

*Howard and Arundel] had been in close communication with the French ambassador, but they did not dare to trust him at this juncture, and feared that they would be taken to the Tower and their lives be sacrificed. They therefore came to me in their peril, and asked me to hide them and save their lives. As they were Catholics, I detained them without anyone in the house knowing of it excepting one servant until their friend the Councillor informed them that they would only be placed under arrest in a gentleman's house, whereupon they immediately showed themselves in public.*⁹⁴¹

After giving themselves up, Howard and Arundel were interrogated, and released from the Tower to the custody of members of the Privy Council.⁹⁴² During the first weeks after their arrest they issued a stream of allegations against Oxford in pursuit of a threefold strategy by which they would admit to minor crimes, discredit Oxford as a witness against them, and demonstrate that Oxford posed a danger to the Crown.⁹⁴³ The charges against Oxford were not taken seriously at the time, although the libels found their way into some historical accounts, and Oxford's reputation was forever tarnished.⁹⁴⁴ Charles Arundel later fled England in December 1583 for fear of arrest,⁹⁴⁵ and was declared guilty of high treason in 1585.⁹⁴⁶ He was in receipt of a pension, as well as a grant-in-aid, from Philip II in 1586,⁹⁴⁷ and died in exile in Paris in 1587. His funeral was paid for Bernardino de Mendoza, to whose house he and Lord Henry Howard had fled on the night of 25 December 1580. Mendoza's expenses were reimbursed by the King:

⁹³⁸ Archivo General de Simancas, Leg. 835, f. 6; Nelson, p. 251.

⁹³⁹ Nelson, p. 252.

⁹⁴⁰ TNA SP 15/27A/46, ff. 81-2; Nelson, p. 252.

⁹⁴¹ Archivo General de Simancas, Leg. 835, ff. 121-4; Nelson, pp. 253-4.

⁹⁴² Nelson, pp. 254-9.

⁹⁴³ Nelson, p. 259.

⁹⁴⁴ Cokayne, *supra*, Vol. X, p. 251: 'Howard and Arundel retaliated by bringing extravagantly criminal charges against the Earl, which some writers have been much too ready to accept'.

⁹⁴⁵ Paris Archives K.1561.

⁹⁴⁶ Paris Archives K.1563.122; Paris Archives K.1563.122.

⁹⁴⁷ Ward, p. 220; Paris Archives K 1566/5; Hume, Martin A.S., ed., *Calendar of Letters and State Papers Relating to English Affairs, Preserved Principally in the Archives of Simancas, Vol. III, Elizabeth, 1580-1586*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1896), p. 690. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/calendarofletter03greauoft/page/690/mode/2up>

*I learn by a letter of December 27th [1587] that Charles Arundel had died of lethargy [modorra] and that you had been obliged to assist him with money for his maintenance during his last illness. It was well you did this, for it was an act of true piety, and as the severity of his malady prevented him from giving you a bill for the money so provided, and you had also to find the money for his funeral, he having left no property behind him, I approve of the sum so expended, being vouched for by your certificate only, receipts being furnished by the English doctor who attended him and by his servant for the sums paid to them through his confessor, the English Jesuit, Father Thomas. You may therefore credit yourself in account with these amounts, and this shall be your sufficient warrant. Madrid, January 1588.*⁹⁴⁸

As for Lord Henry Howard, he was again arrested in 1583 and 1585,⁹⁴⁹ but remained in England throughout Queen Elizabeth's reign, having made his peace with Leicester, and was created Earl of Northampton by her successor, King James I.

While Howard and Arundel were under house arrest in January, Oxford was at liberty, and won the prize at a tournament at Westminster on 22 January 1581.⁹⁵⁰ His page's speech at the tournament, describing Oxford's appearance as the Knight of the Tree of the Sun,⁹⁵¹ was published in 1592 in a pamphlet entitled *Plato, Axiochus*.⁹⁵²

Birth of Sir Edward Vere

Oxford's triumph was short-lived. On 23 March 1581 Walsingham advised the Earl of Huntingdon that on 21 March Anne Vavasour,⁹⁵³ one of the Queen's gentlewomen of the bedchamber,⁹⁵⁴ had given birth to a son by Oxford and had been committed to the Tower:

On Tuesday at night, Anne Vavasour was brought to bed of a son in the maidens' chamber. The Earl of Oxford is avowed to be the father, who hath withdrawn himself with intent, as it is thought, to pass the seas. The ports are laid for him, and therefore if he have any such determination, it is not likely that he will escape. The gentlewoman, the selfsame night she was delivered, was conveyed out of the house, & the next day committed to the Tower. Others that have been found anyways parties to the cause have

⁹⁴⁸ Ward, p. 222.

⁹⁴⁹ Paris Archives K.1562; Paris Archives K.1563.72.

⁹⁵⁰ Segar, pp. 95-6.

⁹⁵¹ STC 19974.6.

⁹⁵² Nelson, pp. 261-5.

⁹⁵³ Anne Vavasour was the daughter of Henry Vavasour (d.1584) of Copmanthorpe, Yorkshire, and Margaret Knyvet, the daughter of Sir Henry Knyvet (d.1546?) gentleman of the privy chamber to Henry VIII. See the will of Sir Henry Knyvet, TNA PROB 11/32/4.

⁹⁵⁴ May, Steven W., "Vavasour [married names Finch, Richardson], Anne (fl. 1580–1621)", *ODNB*.

*been also committed. Her Majesty is greatly grieved with the accident, and therefore I hope there will be some such order taken as the like inconvenience will be avoided.*⁹⁵⁵

After the birth of his illegitimate son, Oxford was sent to the Tower.⁹⁵⁶ Both he and Anne Vavasour were still imprisoned there on 29 April according to a letter of that date written to Count Philip Fugger in Augsburg by a correspondent in England:

*The Earl of Oxford, also arrested*⁹⁵⁷ *but soon set at liberty, is again in the Tower for forgetting himself with one of the Queen's Maids of Honour [sic], who is in the Tower likewise. This in spite of his having a pretty wife, daughter of the Treasurer. But he will not live with her.*⁹⁵⁸

On 6 May 1581, while Oxford was in the Tower, Thomas Stocker⁹⁵⁹ dedicated to him his *Divers Sermons of Master John Calvin*, stating in the dedication that he had been 'brought up in your Lordship's father's house'.⁹⁶⁰

Oxford was finally released to house arrest on 8 June 1581, as indicated in a letter of 9 June in which the Privy Council took issue with Sir William Gorges (d.1584), Yeoman Porter of the Tower, for having wrongfully demanded fees of Oxford which could only be lawfully demanded of a prisoner committed for treason or for a criminal offence:

*that where their Lordships understand that the Earl of Oxford, being yesterday by her Majesty's commandment released of his imprisonment in the Tower, at his Lordship's departure he did demand his upper garment and other things as fees due unto him by his office, and hath thereupon caused certain of his Lordship's stuff to be stayed, giving him to understand that forasmuch as his Lordship was not committed thither upon any cause of treason or any criminal cause, it is thought that he cannot challenge any such fees, and therefore do hereby require him to forbear to demand the same, and to suffer the stuff stayed by him to pass, whereof he is to have regard also for that the Earl supposeth he may not a little be touched in honour if he shall be brought to yield unto a custom only upon persons committed to that place for treason, and for that respect especially neither may the Earl well yield thereunto, not he demand it.*⁹⁶¹

Oxford was still under house arrest in mid-July,⁹⁶² and was thus not at court on 13 July

⁹⁵⁵ Huntington Library HA13066; Nelson p. 266.

⁹⁵⁶ Chambers, E.K., *Sir Henry Lee; An Elizabethan Portrait*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), pp. 155-6; Nelson, p. 266.

⁹⁵⁷ In connection with Howard and Arundel's allegations.

⁹⁵⁸ Klarwill, Victor von, ed., *The Fugger Newsletters, 2nd Series*, (London: John Lane, 1926), pp. 55-6.

⁹⁵⁹ Greaves, Richard L., "Stocker, Thomas (fl. 1563–1593)", *ODNB*.

⁹⁶⁰ Nelson, p. 380.

⁹⁶¹ Nelson, pp. 269; Ward, p. 211. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.176090/page/n233/mode/2up>.

⁹⁶² BL Lansdowne 33/6, ff. 12-13; TNA SP 12/149/69, ff. 160-1; Nelson, pp. 270-2.

when Lord Burghley wrote to Sir Christopher Hatton of an open quarrel between 'two great planets', Oxford's enemy, Leicester, and Oxford's friend, Sussex:

*I am most sorry to hear of the disaster fallen out yesterday betwixt two great planets, but I hope they know their Jupiter, and will obey her Majesty rather to content her than to follow their own humours. It is far out of season to have these breaches; our adversaries are ever ready to make them greater, and to leap in also to our common harm.*⁹⁶³

In the fall of 1581, Leicester, Sir Francis Drake and others began organizing an expedition to set up English trade with the famed 'Spice Islands'. Martin Frobisher encouraged Oxford to become a venturer, and on 1 October 1581 reported to Leicester that Oxford was prepared to pay £1500 for the *Edward Bonaventure*:⁹⁶⁴

*I have not moved Sir Francis Walsingham, nor any of the rest but Lord of Oxford, who bears me in hand he would buy the Edward Bonaventure, & Mr Bolland⁹⁶⁵ & I have offered fifteen hundred pounds for her, but they hold her at eighteen hundred.*⁹⁶⁶

Although Oxford did not buy the *Edward Bonaventure*, he invested substantially in the voyage. The *Galleon Leicester*, the *Edward Bonaventure*, and two barks, the *Francis* and the *Elizabeth*, sailed from Southampton for the Moluccas under Edward Fenton's command in May 1582. Having started out too late in the year to round the Cape of Good Hope, Fenton decided, upon arriving at Sierra Leone, to cross the Atlantic to Brazil and reach the Pacific through the Straits of Magellan. An attack by three Spanish warships off the coast of Brazil put an end to these plans, and Fenton set sail for home, reaching England on 29 June 1583. Oxford's entire investment of £500 was presumably lost.

On 17 November Oxford took part in an Accession Day tournament at Whitehall.⁹⁶⁷

Reconciliation With Anne Cecil

After a five year separation, Oxford reconciled with his wife, Anne Cecil, at Christmas 1581.⁹⁶⁸ On 13 July 1581, Lord Burghley had written thanking Sir Christopher Hatton for his intervention with the Queen 'in the case of my daughter of Oxford':

⁹⁶³ BL Lansdowne 104/63, ff. 164-5.

⁹⁶⁴ McDermott, James, "Fenton, Edward (d. 1603)", *ODNB*.

⁹⁶⁵ Richard Bolland.

⁹⁶⁶ Ward, pp. 240-1; Nelson, pp. 188-9, 465; *CSP Colonial, 1513-1616*, No. 156, p. 67, citing BL MS Cotton Otho E.viii, f. 87. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=6dEJAAAIAAJ&pg=PA67>

⁹⁶⁷ Nelson, pp. 277-8.

⁹⁶⁸ See Madox, BL Cotton Appendix 47, f. 7, *infra*, 'The Earl hath company with his wife sith Christmas'.

*Sir, though I cannot always pay my debts. . . . Yet yesterday, being advertised of your good & honourable dealing with her Majesty in the case of my daughter of Oxford, I could not suffer my thanks to grow above one day old, and therefore in these few lines I do presently thank you, and do pray you in any proceeding therein not to have the Earl dealt with strainably, but only by way of advice, as good for himself, for otherwise he may suspect that I regard myself more for my daughter than he is regarded for his liberty. . . .*⁹⁶⁹

Despite these favourable omens, the reconciliation did not take place until five months later. Two letters from Anne Cecil to Oxford survive from December 1581, both copies in Lord Burghley's hand. The first of these letters, dated 7 December 1581, mention efforts toward reconciliation in the summer:

*My Lord, in what misery may I account myself to be, that neither can see any end thereof, nor yet any hope how to diminish it. And now of late, having had some hope in my own conceit that your Lordship would have renewed some part of your favour that you began to show me this summer when you made me assurance of your good meaning, though you seemed fearful how to show it by open actions, now after long silence of hearing anything from you, at the length I am informed (but how truly I know not, and yet how uncomfortably I do feel it) that your Lordship is entered into some misliking of me without any cause in deed or thought. And therefore, my good Lord, I beseech you in the name of that God that knoweth all my thoughts and my love towards you notwithstanding your evil usage of me, let me know the truth of your meaning towards me, upon what cause you are moved to continue me in this misery, and what you would have me do in my power to recover your constant favour, so as your Lordship may not be led still to detain me in calamity without some probable cause, whereof I appeal to God, I am utterly innocent.*⁹⁷⁰

Anne's comment that Oxford 'seemed fearful' to show favour toward her in the summer 'by open actions' makes his true feelings at that time difficult to fathom. Lord Burghley's letter of 13 July suggests that the Queen wanted to make Oxford and Anne's reconciliation a condition of Oxford's release from house arrest. Oxford may have felt he was being dealt with 'strainably'.

Oxford's reply to Anne's letter of 7 December is lost; however it appears he warned her of his financial difficulties, which were serious by late 1581. Anne responded on 12 December:

My very good Lord, I most heartily thank you for your letter, and am most sorry to perceive how you are unquieted with the uncertainty of the world, whereof I myself am not without some taste. But seeing you will me to assure myself of anything that I may as your wife challenge of you, I will the more patiently abide the adversity which otherwise I

⁹⁶⁹ BL Add MS 15891, f. 77; Ward, pp. 224-5.

⁹⁷⁰ BL Lansdowne 104/63, ff. 164-5. Ward, p. 226; Nelson, pp. 278-9.

feel, and if God would so permit it, and that it might be good for you, I would bear the greater part of your adverse fortune, and make it my comfort to bear part with you.

As for my father, I do assure you, whatsoever hath been reported of him, I know no man can wish better to you than he doth, and yet the practices in court, I fear, do seek to make contrary shows. . . .

Good my Lord, assure yourself it is you whom only I love and fear, and so am desirous above all the world to please you, wishing that I might hear oftener from you until better fortune will have us meet together.⁹⁷¹

The reconciliation took place about Christmas 1581, and was common knowledge by 3 February 1582 when Richard Madox⁹⁷² recorded court news in his diary:

Slater and Davis and Waring and I went to Tytiman's and eat fresh sprats and mussels. I heard that my Lord Viscount Bindon was dead on Sunday last in Dorsetshire, that the Monsieur was gone and the Queen to accompany him to Dover, and that the Lord of Leicester, the Lord Charles Howard, the Lord Hunsdon and others would with him over sea, and that my Lord of Oxford had taken his wife again, and that my Lord Treasurer should marry a second daughter to my Lord Wentworth, desiring rather a man than money. God send them all to do for the best.⁹⁷³

At New Year's in 1582, Anne Cecil gave the Queen a jewel:

Item, a jewel of gold, being a serpent, having two emeralds, and the rest garnished with sparks of diamonds and rubies, and a small pearl pendent. Given by the Countess of Oxford.⁹⁷⁴

Frays With The Knyvets

Despite his reconciliation with his wife, Oxford's affair with Anne Vavasour continued to have serious repercussions. Oxford and Sir Henry Knyvet,⁹⁷⁵ Anne Vavasour's uncle, were on bad terms as early as Christmas 1580, when Charles Arundel reported Oxford's 'oath to kill Sir Harry Knyvet at the Privy Chamber door for speaking evil of him to his niece'.⁹⁷⁶ In March 1582 there was a fray in the streets of London between Oxford and

⁹⁷¹ BL Lansdowne 104/64, ff. 166-7; Ward, pp. 226-7; Nelson, pp. 279-80.

⁹⁷² Bennell, John, "Madox, Richard (1546–1583)", *ODNB*. Madox served as chaplain on the ill-fated Fenton voyage in which Oxford lost £500 (see above). He did not return. The final entry in his diary is dated 31 December 1582.

⁹⁷³ BL Cotton Appendix 47, f. 5; Nelson, p. 280.

⁹⁷⁴ See <http://www.larsdatter.com/gifts/1581-2.htm>

⁹⁷⁵ Hartley, T.E., "Knyvet, Sir Henry (1537?–1598)", *ODNB*.

⁹⁷⁶ TNA SP 151/46, ff. 103-4. Chambers, *Sir Henry Lee, supra*, p. 156, confuses Sir Henry Knyvet (1537?–1598) with his brother, Sir Thomas Knyvet (1545/6–1622).

another of Anne's uncles, Sir Thomas Knyvet.⁹⁷⁷ On 3 March Richard Madox⁹⁷⁸ reported that:

*My Lord of Oxford fought with Mr Knyvet about the quarrel of Bess [sic] Bavisar and was hurt, and Garret [sic?], his man, slain, which grieved the Lord Treasurer so much the more for that the Earl hath company with his wife sith Christmas, and taken her to favour, but through this mishap, and through the pains he took at the marriage of another daughter to my Lord Wentford [sic] on Shrove Monday, my Lord Treasurer was sick. God send him health, for he is the health of the whole land.*⁹⁷⁹

Nicholas Faunt⁹⁸⁰ wrote to Anthony Bacon (1558-1601) that both men were hurt, 'but my Lord of Oxford more dangerously' adding that 'You know Mr Knyvet is not meanly beloved in Court, and therefore he is not like to speed ill, whatsoever the quarrel be'.⁹⁸¹ Over a decade later in a letter to Lord Burghley on 25 March 1595 Oxford mentions his lameness;⁹⁸² whether this resulted from an injury sustained in this fray with Knyvet is unknown. There was another fray between Knyvet's and Oxford's men on 18 June, and a third on 22 June in which it was reported that Knyvet had 'slain a man of the Earl of Oxford's in fight'.⁹⁸³

In this troubled period Thomas Watson⁹⁸⁴ dedicated his *Hekatompathia or Passionate Century of Love*⁹⁸⁵ to Oxford, stating in the dedication that Oxford had taken a personal interest in the work:

*For since the world hath understood (I know not how) that your Honour had willingly vouchsafed the acceptance of this work, and at convenient leisures favourably perused it, being as yet but in written hand, many have oftentimes and earnestly called upon me to put it to the press, that for their money they might but see what your Lordship with some liking had already perused.*⁹⁸⁶

⁹⁷⁷ Nicholls, Mark, "Knyvett [Knyvet], Thomas, Baron Knyvett (1545/6–1622)", *ODNB*. For his will, see TNA PROB 11/140/169.

⁹⁷⁸ Bennell, John, "Madox, Richard (1546–1583)", *ODNB*.

⁹⁷⁹ BL Cotton Appendix 47, f. 7v; Ward, pp. 227-8; Nelson, p. 280.

⁹⁸⁰ Levin, Carole, "Faunt, Nicholas (1553/4–1608)", *ODNB*.

⁹⁸¹ Lambeth Palace MS 647, f. 123; British Library MS Cotton App 47, f. 7; Guildhall Library MS 4515; Chambers, *Sir Henry Lee, supra*, pp. 156-7; Ward, p. 227; Nelson, p. 280.

⁹⁸² CP 31/45.

⁹⁸³ Nicolas, pp. 256-7; Nelson, pp. 281-2.

⁹⁸⁴ Chatterley, Albert, "Watson, Thomas (1555/6–1592)", *ODNB*; Sutton, Dana F., *The Complete Works of Thomas Watson*, Philological Museum, University of Birmingham, <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/watson/>.

⁹⁸⁵ STC 25118a.

⁹⁸⁶ Nelson, pp. 287, 381.

In July 1582, Oxford's brother-in-law, Peregrine Bertie, Lord Willoughby d' Eresby,⁹⁸⁷ was sent as a special ambassador to Elsinore⁹⁸⁸ to invest Frederick II with the Order of the Garter. He remained there for several months, perhaps as late as November.

Another of Oxford's men was slain on 21 February 1583,⁹⁸⁹ and on 12 March Lord Burghley wrote to Sir Christopher Hatton mentioning the death of one of Knyvet's men, and thanking Hatton for his efforts 'to bring some good end to these troublesome matters betwixt my Lord and Oxford and Mr Thomas Knyvet'.⁹⁹⁰

On 6 May Nicholas Faunt⁹⁹¹ wrote to Anthony Bacon⁹⁹² that 'God had sent my Lord of Oxford a son, but hath taken it away from him'. Oxford and Anne's infant son was buried in the parish church at Castle Hedingham:

*The Earl of Oxenford's first son was buried the 9th of May 1583.*⁹⁹³

It appears Oxford's son was buried in the vaults beneath the church floor, as his grandfather, the 16th Earl, had been

Oxford's two-year banishment from court ended a month after the death of his son. On 2 June 1583 Roger Manners⁹⁹⁴ wrote to the Earl of Rutland that Oxford had come to the Queen's presence, and 'after some bitter words and speeches, in the end all sins and forgiven, and he may repair to the court at his pleasure. Mr Raleigh⁹⁹⁵ was a great mean herein'.⁹⁹⁶ As May notes, however, Oxford never regained his position as a courtier of the first magnitude.⁹⁹⁷

⁹⁸⁷ Trim, D.J.B., "Bertie, Peregrine, thirteenth Baron Willoughby of Willoughby, Beck, and Eresby (1555–1601)", *ODNB*.

⁹⁸⁸ Kronborg Castle in Helsingor, Denmark.

⁹⁸⁹ Nicolas, pp. 321-4; Nelson, p. 283.

⁹⁹⁰ Nelson, pp. 284-5.

⁹⁹¹ Levin, Carole, "Faunt, Nicholas (1553/4–1608)", *ODNB*.

⁹⁹² Stewart, Alan, "Bacon, Anthony (1558–1601)", *ODNB*.

⁹⁹³ ERO D/P 48/1/1; Nelson, pp. 289-90, citing the parish register, ERO D/P 48/1/1; Sperling, *supra*, p. 260.

⁹⁹⁴ Jack, Sybil M., "Manners, Roger (c.1536–1607)", *ODNB*. See also John, Lisle Cecil. "Roger Manners, Elizabethan Courtier." *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1948, pp. 57–84. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3815874. Accessed 22 May 2020.

⁹⁹⁵ Nicholls, Mark and Penry Williams, "Raleigh, Sir Walter (1554–1618)", *ODNB*.

⁹⁹⁶ HMC Rutland, I, p. 150; Nelson, pp. 285-6.

⁹⁹⁷ May, *Elizabethan Courtier Poets*, p. 269.

F. FINANCIAL DECLINE

On 6 April 1584, Oxford and Anne's daughter, Bridget Vere (1584–1630/31), was born.⁹⁹⁸

In 1584 two works were dedicated to Oxford, Robert Greene's⁹⁹⁹ *Gwydonius; The Card of Fancy*,¹⁰⁰⁰ and John Southern's¹⁰⁰¹ *Pandora*.¹⁰⁰² In the latter, Southern remarked on Oxford's knowledge of astronomy, history, languages and music:¹⁰⁰³

*For who marketh better than he
The seven turning flames of the sky,
Or hath read more of the antique,
Hath greater knowledge in the tongues,
Or understands sooner the sounds
Of the learner to love music?*

Oxford's financial situation was steadily deteriorating. By the mid-1580s Oxford had sold almost all his inherited lands, alienating his principal source of income.¹⁰⁰⁴ Moreover, as he stated in a letter to Lord Burghley on 30 October 1584, as a result of these sales he had:

*entered into a great number of bonds to such as have purchased lands of me to discharge them of all encumbrances, and because I stand indebted unto her Majesty, as your Lordship knoweth, many of the said purchasers do greatly fear some trouble likely to fall upon them by reason of her Majesty's said debt, & especially if the bonds of the Lord Darcy and Sir William Waldegrave should be extended for the same, who have two several statutes of great sums for their discharge, whereupon many of the said purchasers have been suitors unto me to procure the discharging of her Majesty's said debt, and do seem very willing to bear the burden thereof if by my means the same might be stalled payable at some convenient days.*¹⁰⁰⁵

Because Oxford's lands were security for his unpaid debt to the Queen in the Court of Wards, Oxford had had to enter into bonds to the purchasers as a guarantee that he would

⁹⁹⁸ Nelson, pp. 293, 322.

⁹⁹⁹ Newcomb, L.H., "Greene, Robert (bap. 1558, d. 1592)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁰⁰ STC 12262.

¹⁰⁰¹ Smith, Rosalind, "Southern [Soowthern], John (fl. 1584)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁰² STC 22928; Nelson, p. 381.

¹⁰⁰³ Nelson, pp. 59-60.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Pearson, p. 52.

¹⁰⁰⁵ BL Lansdowne 42/39, ff. 97-8; Nelson, p. 294.

indemnify them if the Queen were to extend against the lands for his debt.¹⁰⁰⁶ To avoid this eventuality, the purchasers of his lands were willing to repay Oxford's debt to the Court of Wards if he could persuade the Queen to let them do so by instalments.¹⁰⁰⁷

During the mid-1580s Oxford's Men continued to perform at court, in the countryside, and in London. 'The Earl of Oxford his servants' received £20, paid to John Lyly for performances on 1 January and 3 March 1584, and on 1 January 1585 a troupe performed at court under the name of 'John Symons and other his fellows, servants to th' Earl of Oxford'.¹⁰⁰⁸ Oxford's Men also had success touring the provinces, as indicated by records of performances from the years 1580 through 1587,¹⁰⁰⁹ and in 1587 the company was one of four principal companies performing in London. On 25 January 1587 Maliverny Catlyn complained to Sir Francis Walsingham that:

*The daily abuse of stage plays is such an offence to the godly and so great a hindrance to the Gospel as the papists do exceedingly rejoice at the blemish thereof, and not without cause, for every day in the week the players' bills are set up in sundry places of the city, some in the name of her Majesty's men, some the Earl of Leicester's, some the Earl of Oxford's, the lord Admiral's, & divers others, so that when the bells toll to the lectures, the trumpets sound to the stages, whereat the wicked faction of Rome laugheth for joy while the godly weep for sorrow.*¹⁰¹⁰

Oxford's company of boy players was also still in existence. On 27 December 1584 Henry Evans received payment 'for one play . . . by the children of th' Earl of Oxford'.¹⁰¹¹ According to Chambers, the companies working at the Blackfriars under Lyly and Evans in 1583-4 were 'a combination of Oxford's boys, Paul's and the Chapel'.¹⁰¹² For a time Oxford held a lease of the premises used by the boy companies in the Blackfriars. In a document dating from about 1585, Sir William More of Loseley complained that his property in the Blackfriars had gotten into the hands of a succession of sub-lessees, including Oxford and Lyly, after More had leased it to Richard Farrant:¹⁰¹³

Immediately after, [Anne Farrant] let the house to one Hunnis,¹⁰¹⁴ and afterward to one Newman or Sutton, as far as I remember, and then to Evans, who sold his interest to the Earl of Oxford, who gave his interest to Lyly, and the title thus was posted over from one

¹⁰⁰⁶ TNA PRO 30/34/14, No. 3.

¹⁰⁰⁷ BL Lansdowne 77/80; TNA C 2/Eliz/T6/48; TNA PRO 30/34/14, Nos. 2, 4 and 5; Pearson, p. 35.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Nelson, pp. 247-8; *ECDbD* (1585), p. 1.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Nelson, pp. 245-6.

¹⁰¹⁰ Nelson, pp. 246-7.

¹⁰¹¹ Nelson, p. 247.

¹⁰¹² Nelson, p. 248.

¹⁰¹³ Bowers, Roger, "Farrant, Richard (c.1528–1580)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰¹⁴ Ashbee, Andrew, "Hunnis, William (d. 1597)", *ODNB*.

to another from me, contrary to the said condition.¹⁰¹⁵

According to Wallace, Oxford gave Lyly four leases in the Blackfriars: the Farrant lease noted above; two leases which Lyly sold to Henry Carey (1526-1596), 1st Baron Hunsdon, who used the premises as his residence after selling King's Place in Hackney to Sir Rowland Hayward in 1583; and a fourth lease which Lyly sold to the Italian master of fence, Rocco Bonetti (d.1587), alluded to by Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet* as 'the very butcher of a silk button'.¹⁰¹⁶

Oxford also patronized a company of musicians at this time, as evidenced by payments in 1584-5 by the cities of Oxford and Barnstaple to 'the Earl of Oxford's musicians'.¹⁰¹⁷

A letter thought to date from November 1584¹⁰¹⁸ written by Mary, Queen of Scots, to Queen Elizabeth includes scandalous gossip against the Queen gleaned from Bess of Hardwick,¹⁰¹⁹ including the claim 'that even the Earl of Oxford dared not cohabit with his wife for fear of losing the favour which he hoped to receive by making love to you'¹⁰²⁰ ('que mesme le comte d'Oxford n'osoit ce rappointer avecque sa femme, de peur de perdre la faveur qu'il espéroit recevoir pour vous fayre l'amour'.¹⁰²¹ Nicolas suggests that Mary's accusation refers to 'the Queen's flirtation with Oxford in 1573',¹⁰²² this seems plausible, since 1573 is the only time at which Oxford is recorded as being high in the Queen's favour.

On 19 January 1585 Anne Vavasour's brother, Thomas, sent Oxford a written challenge, which Oxford appears to have ignored.¹⁰²³

¹⁰¹⁵ Smith, Irwin M., *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse: Its History and Its Design* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 467; Nelson, pp. 247-8.

¹⁰¹⁶ Wallace, Charles William, *The Evolution of the English Drama up to Shakespeare*, (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1912), pp. 186-7, 194.

¹⁰¹⁷ Nelson, p. 248.

¹⁰¹⁸ Labanoff, Alexandre, *Lettres, Instructions et Mémoires de Marie Stuart, Reine d'Écosse, Publiés sur les Originaux et les Manuscrits du State Paper Office de Londres et des Principales Archives et Bibliothèques de l'Europe*, (London: Charles Dolman, 1844), Vol. VI. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/lettresinstructi06maryuoft/page/52/mode/2up>

¹⁰¹⁹ Goldring, Elizabeth, "Talbot [née Hardwick], Elizabeth [Bess; called Bess of Hardwick], Countess of Shrewsbury (1527?–1608)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰²⁰ 'To pay amorous attention; to court, woo'. See the *OED*. The usage at the time did not imply sexual relations.

¹⁰²¹ Nelson, p. 293; 'que mesme le Comte d'Oxford nosoit ce rappointer avecques sa femme de peur de perdre la faveur qu'il espéroit recevoir par vous fayre l'amour'. See Murdin, William, *A Collection of State Papers Relating to Affairs in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth From the Year 1571 to 1596*, (London: William Bowyer, 1758), pp. 558-60. URL: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uva.x000880864&view=1up&seq=185>

¹⁰²² Nicolas, pp. 15-16.

¹⁰²³ BL Lansdowne 99/93, ff. 252-3; Nelson, pp. 295-6.

In 1585 negotiations were underway for King James to come to England to discuss the release of his mother, Mary, Queen of Scots, and on 4 March Mendoza wrote to the King of Spain that Oxford was to be sent to Scotland as one of the hostages for the King's safety.¹⁰²⁴

In late summer of that year Oxford was commissioned to command a company of horse in the Low Countries.¹⁰²⁵ On 9 September it was reported that 'Five or six thousand English soldiers have arrived in Flanders with the Earl of Oxford and Colonel Norris'.¹⁰²⁶ However in October Leicester was appointed General of the English forces, and on 21 October William Davison¹⁰²⁷ reported that 'My Lord of Oxford is returned this night into England, upon what humour I know not'.¹⁰²⁸

Additions¹⁰²⁹ to *Leicester's Commonwealth* published in 1585 alleged that Leicester had nourished discord between Oxford and his wife, Anne:

The same [practices] he attempted between the Earl of Oxford and his lady, daughter of the Lord Treasurer of England, and all for an old grudge he bare to her father, the said Lord Treasurer.

Although the circumstances referred to are unclear, the statement perhaps implies that Leicester was in some way involved in Oxford's refusal to live with his wife after his return from his continental tour in 1576.

On 25 June 1586 the Queen, who had played a significant role in Oxford's financial downfall,¹⁰³⁰ granted him an annuity of £1000 a year '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'.¹⁰³¹

In October of that year Oxford was at Fotheringay Castle in Northamptonshire for the trial of Mary, Queen of Scots, and was among the peers who on 13 October 'went unto her in her lodging', and 'remained with her almost the space of two hours, signifying unto her that if she would not come forth before the Commissioners they would proceed

¹⁰²⁴ CSP Spanish, 1580-86, p. 533; Nelson, p. 296.

¹⁰²⁵ CSP Spanish, 1580-86, pp. 545-6.

¹⁰²⁶ Paris Archives K.1563.122; Trim, D.J.B., "Norris [Norreys], Sir John (c.1547x50–1597)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰²⁷ Adams, Simon, "Davison, William (d. 1608)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰²⁸ CSP Foreign, 1580-86, p. 104; Ward, pp. 252-5; Nelson, pp. 296-7.

¹⁰²⁹ For the 1585 additions, see <http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/leicester.html>.

¹⁰³⁰ For a fuller discussion of the Queen's role in Oxford's financial downfall, see Green, *Fall of the House of Oxford*, pp. 73-93, and Green, Nina, "An Earl in Bondage", *The Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter* (Summer 2004), Vol. 40, no. 3, at 1, 13-17.

¹⁰³¹ TNA E 403/2597, ff. 104v-105; Nelson, p. 301.

against her' in her absence.¹⁰³²

In 1586 Angel Day¹⁰³³ dedicated to Oxford his *The English Secretary*,¹⁰³⁴ the first epistolary manual for writing model letters in English, noting that Oxford was one 'whose infancy from the beginning was ever sacred to the Muses'.¹⁰³⁵ In the same year William Webbe¹⁰³⁶ wrote in his *Discourse of English Poetry*¹⁰³⁷ that:

*I may not omit the deserved commendations of many honourable and noble Lords and gentlemen in her Majesty's court which in the rare devices of poetry have been and yet are most excellent skilful, among whom the right honourable Earl of Oxford may challenge to himself the title of the most excellent among the rest.*¹⁰³⁸

Oxford and Anne's daughter, Susan Vere (1587-1629), was born on 26 May 1587.

On 1 July 1587 the Queen granted Oxford lands which had belonged to Edward Jones, who had been attainted and executed for his part in the Babington¹⁰³⁹ plot. The grant was made in the name of two trustees in order to protect it from Oxford's creditors.¹⁰⁴⁰

On 3 July 1587, Oxford acknowledged the grant of Edward Jones' lands, and in consideration of it granted the honour of Hedingham (i.e. Castle Hedingham) to the Queen on condition that she would regrant it to Oxford and the heirs of his body by his wife, Anne Cecil, with remainders over for default of such issue.¹⁰⁴¹ At the date of Oxford's deed, 3 July 1587, the heirs of Oxford's body by Anne Cecil were his four daughters, Elizabeth, Bridget, Frances and Susan. Absent Oxford's deed, Castle Hedingham, the ancient seat of the Oxford earldom, would have passed on Oxford's death without male heirs to his cousin, Hugh Vere, eldest son and heir of Oxford's uncle, Aubrey Vere (d.1580), either by the ancient entail or by the 16th Earl's indenture of 2 June 1562¹⁰⁴² As agreed, Queen Elizabeth regranted Castle Hedingham to Oxford, with remainder to the heirs of his body by Anne Cecil, by letters patent dated 18 November

¹⁰³² Nelson, pp. 3, 302; *Historical Manuscripts Commission, 14th Report, Part IV: The Manuscripts of Lord Kenyon*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1894), pp. 621-2 at: <https://archive.org/details/manlordkenyon00greauoft/page/620/mode/2up>

¹⁰³³ Cerasano, S.P. "Day, Angell (fl. 1563–1595)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰³⁴ STC 6401.

¹⁰³⁵ Beebee, Thomas O., *Epistolary Fiction in Europe, 1500-1850*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 32; Nelson, p. 381.

¹⁰³⁶ Heale, Elizabeth, "Webbe, William (fl. 1566?–1591)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰³⁷ STC 25172.

¹⁰³⁸ Nelson, pp. 386-387.

¹⁰³⁹ Williams, Penry, "Babington, Anthony (1561–1586)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁴⁰ TNA SP 12/201/3, ff. 4-6; TNA SP 12/210/16, f. 28; TNA C 66/1291, mm. 5-7; Nelson, pp. 303-6.

¹⁰⁴¹ TNA E 211/35.

¹⁰⁴² TNA C 54/626.

1587.¹⁰⁴³

On 25 July John Poole, then a prisoner in Newgate on suspicion of coining, made complaints against the Queen, Leicester and others during conversations with a government informant, John Gunstone, including an obscure reference to Oxford, saying that 'the Queen did woo him, but he would not fall in at that time'.¹⁰⁴⁴ Poole's vague statement may refer to the fact that Oxford, reported as being high in Queen Elizabeth's favour in 1573, quickly fell out of favour with his unauthorized flight to the continent in 1574.

On 12 September, Oxford and Anne's daughter, Frances Vere, was buried at the parish church of All Saints, Edmonton.¹⁰⁴⁵ Although her birthdate is unknown, she must have been between one and three years of age at the time of her death.¹⁰⁴⁶

Earlier in the year a plan had finally been devised for the purchasers of Oxford's lands to pay his debt to the Court of Wards, and on 29 November 'the decree was made whereby the Earl's whole debt of £3306 18s 9-1/4d was appointed to be paid by the purchasers' over a five-year period, finishing in 1592.¹⁰⁴⁷ By 1 July 1591 only £800 remained unpaid.¹⁰⁴⁸

On 15 December 1587 Lord Burghley defended himself against accusations that he had not tried to further Oxford's advancement, writing to Oxford in part:

*Secondly, that there hath been no ways prepared for your preferment I do utterly deny, and can particularly make it manifest by testimony of Councillors how often I have propounded ways to prefer you to services, but why these could not take place I must not particularly set them down in writing, lest either I discover the hinderers, or offend yourself in showing th' allegations to impeach your Lordship from such preferments.*¹⁰⁴⁹

On 5 June 1588 Oxford's first wife, Anne Cecil, died at court of a fever at the age of 31.¹⁰⁵⁰ On 14 June Philip Gawdy¹⁰⁵¹ wrote to his brother, Bassingborne Gawdy.¹⁰⁵²

¹⁰⁴³ TNA C 66/1318, mm. 14-15.

¹⁰⁴⁴ TNA SP 12/273/103, ff. 185-6; Nelson, p. 306. John Poole was likely related to Lord Burghley, whose sister, Margaret Cecil, married as her second husband, Erasmus Smith, the son of Dorothy (nee Cave) Smith Poole of Withcote, Leicestershire (for her will, see TNA PROB 11/81, ff. 158-9), whose second husband, Henry Poole of Withcote, esquire, mentions a John Poole in his will. For the will of Henry Poole, dated 18 April 1558 and proved 17 February 1559, TNA PROB 11/42A/379.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Nelson, p. 306, citing LMA DRO 40/A1/1, f. 76.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Nelson, p. 306.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Nelson, p. 306.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Pearson, p. 35.

¹⁰⁴⁹ BL MS Lansdowne 103/38, ff. 91-2; Nelson, pp. 306-7.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Nelson, pp. 309-10.

*Brother, I forgot to write to you of the death of a great Lady upon Thursday last in the forenoon. My Lady of Oxford died at the court, and is interred at Westminster. There is a great funeral a-preparing, and I need not to write to you of the heaviness and mourning of many of her best friends.*¹⁰⁵³

Anne was buried in Westminster Abbey.

On 19 July 1588 England was threatened by the Spanish Armada. In his *Annals*, Camden¹⁰⁵⁴ mentions Oxford as among those who hired ships at their own expense:

*But so far was [the Armada] from terrifying the sea-coast with the name of 'invincible', or with the terrible spectacle, that the youth of England with a certain incredible alacrity, leaving their parents, wives, children, cousins and friends, out of their entire love to their country hires ships from all parts at their own private charges, and joined with the fleet in great number, and amongst others the Earls of Oxford, Northumberland, Cumberland, Thomas and Robert Cecil, Henry Brooke, Charles Blount, Walter Raleigh, William Hatton, Robert Carey, Ambrose Willoughby, Thomas Gerard, Arthur Gorges and others of good note.*¹⁰⁵⁵

Richard Hakluyt¹⁰⁵⁶ also lists Oxford as among those 'great and honourable personages' who flocked to the English Channel to serve prince and country,¹⁰⁵⁷ and the manuscript of a pamphlet published in 1588 contains an interlineation in Lord Burghley's hand that 'the Earl of Oxford also in this time repaired to the sea-coast for service of the Queen in the navy'.¹⁰⁵⁸

The nature of Oxford's service is unclear. On 28 July Leicester advised Walsingham that Oxford had gone to London 'for his armour and furniture' and would return to Tilbury. Leicester asked for instructions, stating that 'I trust he be free to go to the enemy, for he seems most willing to hazard his life in this quarrel'.¹⁰⁵⁹ On 1 August Leicester wrote to

¹⁰⁵¹ Philip Gawdy (1562-1617). See Rowe, Joy, "Gawdy family (*per. c.* 1500–1723)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁵² Sir Bassingborne Gawdy (1560-1606).

¹⁰⁵³ Jeayes, Isaac Herbert, ed., *Letters of Philip Gawdy of West Harlilng, Norfolk, and of London to Various Members of his Family, 1579-1616*, (London: J.B. Nichols and Sons, 1906), pp. 37-8. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/cu31924027985260/page/n65/mode/2up>

¹⁰⁵⁴ Herendeen, Wyman H., "Camden, William (1551–1623)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁵⁵ STC 4496.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Payne, Anthony, "Hakluyt, Richard (1552?–1616)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Hakluyt, Richard, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffics and Discoveries of the English Nation*, ed. by Edmund Goldsmid, Vol. VII, (Edinburgh: E. & G. Goldsmid, 1888), pp. 148-9, available online; Nelson, pp. 311-12.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Nelson, pp. 314-16.

¹⁰⁵⁹ TNA SP 12/213, ff. 92-3; Nelson, p. 316.

Walsingham that the Queen had consented to allow Oxford to serve, and had appointed him to take charge of the port of Harwich, 'a place of trust & of great danger'. According to Leicester, Oxford thought 'that place of no service nor credit', and went to court to persuade the Queen to change her mind. Leicester ended his letter with a postscript stating that 'I am glad to be rid of my Lord of Oxford seeing he refuseth this, & I pray you let me not be pressed any more for him, what suit soever he make'.¹⁰⁶⁰

The Marprelate Tracts

In October 1588 the first of the Marprelate tracts, Martin's *Epistle*, was printed by Robert Waldegrave¹⁰⁶¹ on a secret press at Mistress Crane's manor of East Molesey across the Thames from Hampton Court palace. For over 400 years Martin Marprelate's identity has remained a mystery, despite the fact that he reveals much about himself in his writings. He is a Londoner, writing primarily to other Londoners, and knows a great deal about printing, which was confined almost exclusively to London at the time. He has had some legal training. He has had a superior education: he uses Latin expressions as a matter of course, and knows Greek and Hebrew and at least two modern languages, French and Italian. The breadth of his reading is extraordinary, and his allusions cover a wide spectrum. He is a brilliant literary stylist, with a marvellous sense of humour and a penchant for puns. He moves effortlessly from formal argument to an informal colloquial style. His interests, however, are not confined to scholarly pursuits. He is a man of the world. He is knowledgeable about field sports and music, and his casual references to drinking and gambling betray little of the Puritan attitude toward such matters. He is aware of what goes on at court, and is possessed of much inside information which would only be available to someone with influential connections. He displays an air of supreme self-confidence in lambasting the bishops, and mentions details which indicate that he knows some of them personally. He speaks of Queen Elizabeth as one who is privileged to know her mind on certain matters. He is independently wealthy, and calls himself 'gentleman'. Furthermore, he clearly identifies himself with the interests of the nobility against the wealth and political power of the upstart bishops. His theology is orthodox Church of England, tempered with a reforming bent characteristic of the powerful Protestant nobles who dominated the Elizabethan scene in the 1570s and early 1580s - Lord Burghley, the Earls of Leicester, Warwick, Bedford, Pembroke, Huntingdon et al. His attitude, when dealing with the less fortunate, has a distinctive tone of noblesse oblige. Moreover, in a significant slip in his final tract, the *Protestation*, he identifies himself with the nobility in his use of the phrase "myself and other great men". Finally, it is clear from several allusions in the tracts that he is somewhere between 35 and 45 years of age. He mentions events which occurred up to twenty years previously, suggesting that he was at least in his late teens in 1568. Yet, to Martin, men such as bishop Thomas Cooper¹⁰⁶² are 'old', indicating that he himself is nowhere near their age.

¹⁰⁶⁰ TNA SP 12/214, ff. 2-3; Nelson, pp. 317-18.

¹⁰⁶¹ Mann, A.J., "Waldegrave, Robert (c. 1554–1603/4)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁶² Bowker, Margaret, "Cooper, Thomas (c. 1517–1594)", *ODNB*.

All these characteristics suggest rather strongly that Oxford could have been the author of the Marprelate tracts.

The identification of Oxford as Martin Marprelate leads naturally to the question of motivation. What would have induced a privileged member of the nobility to undertake this dangerous enterprise?

It has often been stated that Martin wrote the tracts to advance the Puritan cause. However the tracts themselves make it clear that Martin was not a Puritan, and that his motives differed from theirs. Martin wrote the Marprelate tracts because of his disgust at the lawlessness of Archbishop Whitgift's repressive policies which, from 1583 on, had turned the Court of High Commission into a virtual Spanish Inquisition. Martin was not alone in his opposition to Whitgift. Many powerful nobles - including the Earl of Leicester and Lord Burghley - had expressed their disapproval through regular channels, but to little avail. It was at this juncture that Martin threw down the gauntlet. His cause was the cause of reformation in the Church of England, but he approached it, not from the narrow perspective of Puritan aspirations, but from the broader perspective of the danger which the bishops' lawless proceedings held for the safety and good government of the realm. Furthermore, it is quite evident from the tracts that Martin felt considerable alarm at the return of clerics to the Council table, as well as distaste at the corruption of the Elizabethan bishops and the ostentatious display of their rising power and wealth, which rivalled that of the old nobility.

The ultimate victory in the contest between Martin and the bishops went to Archbishop John Whitgift,¹⁰⁶³ who was backed by the Queen and who had the pursuivants and the rack at his disposal. However, in the contest in print, Martin clearly came off the victor. The bishops' attempts to defend themselves against his charges were feeble and evasive, and there can be little doubt that Martin spoke the truth, however unpalatable.

Sale of Fisher's Folly

By 20 December 1588 Oxford had secretly sold his London mansion of Fisher's Folly to Sir William Cornwallis (c.1551-1611).¹⁰⁶⁴

In 1588 Anthony Munday dedicated to Oxford the two parts of his *Palmerin d' Oliva*.¹⁰⁶⁵ The title page state that the original was 'written in Spanish, Italian and French and from them turned into English by Anthony Munday', and the dedication attests to Oxford's proficiency in these languages:

If Palmerin hath sustained any wrong by my bad translation, being so worthily set down in other languages, your Honour, having such special knowledge in them, I hope will let

¹⁰⁶³ Sheils, William Joseph, "Whitgift, John (1530/31?-1604)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁶⁴ CP 166/80; CP 17/60; Nelson, pp. 319-20.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Bergeron, David M., "Munday, Anthony (bap. 1560, d. 1633)", *ODNB*.

*slip any fault escaped in respect I have done my goodwill, the largest talent I have to bestow.*¹⁰⁶⁶

On 14 April 1589 Oxford was among the peers who found Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, the eldest son and heir of Oxford's cousin, Thomas, Duke of Norfolk, guilty of treason.¹⁰⁶⁷

In that year *The Arte of English Poesie*,¹⁰⁶⁸ usually attributed to George Puttenham,¹⁰⁶⁹ placed Oxford among a 'crew' of courtier poets:

*And in her Majesty's time that now is are sprung up another crew of courtly makers, noblemen and gentlemen of her Majesty's own servants, who have written excellently well as it would appear if their doings could be found out and made public with the rest, of which number is first that noble gentleman, Edward, Earl of Oxford; Thomas, Lord of Buckhurst,¹⁰⁷⁰ when he was young; Henry, Lord Paget; Sir Philip Sidney; Sir Walter Raleigh; Master Edward Dyer; Master Fulke Greville; Gascoigne; Breton; Turberville, and a great many other learned gentlemen.*¹⁰⁷¹

Puttenham also considered Oxford among the best comic playwrights of the day:

*Of the later sort I think thus, that for tragedy the Lord of Buckhurst & Master Edward Ferrers, for such doings as I have seen of theirs, do deserve the highest prize, th' Earl of Oxford and Master Edwards of her Majesty's Chapel for comedy and interlude.*¹⁰⁷²

In 1590 Edmund Spenser¹⁰⁷³ appended a sonnet to Oxford in his *Faerie Queen*,¹⁰⁷⁴ referring to 'the love which thou dost bear/ To th' Heliconian imps and they to thee', likely in reference to Oxford's literary proteges Lyly, Munday, Greene and Watson, 'and now, at least prospectively, Spenser himself':

To the right honourable the Earl of Oxenford, Lord High Chamberlain of England etc.

*Receive, most noble Lord, in gentle gree
The unripe fruit of an unready wit,*

¹⁰⁶⁶ STC 19157.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Nelson, p. 321.

¹⁰⁶⁸ STC 20519.

¹⁰⁶⁹ May, Steven W., "Puttenham, George (1529–1590/91)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Zim, Rivkah, "Sackville, Thomas, first Baron Buckhurst and first earl of Dorset (c.1536–1608)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁷¹ STC 20519; Willcock, Gladys Doidge and Alice Walker, eds., *The Arte of English Poesie by George Puttenham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1936, reprinted 1970), p. 61.

¹⁰⁷² Willcock, p. 63.

¹⁰⁷³ Hadfield, Andrew, "Spenser, Edmund (1552?–1599)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁷⁴ STC 23081.

*Which by thy countenance doth crave to be
 Defended from foul envy's poisonous bit,
 Which so to do may thee right well befit
 Sith th' antique glory of thine ancestry
 Under a shady veil is therein writ,
 And eke thine own long-living memory,
 Succeeding them in true nobility,
 And also for the love which thou doest bear
 To th' Heliconian imps and they to thee,
 They unto thee, and thou to them most dear;
 Dear as thou art unto thyself, so love
 That loves and honours thee, as doth behove.*¹⁰⁷⁵

In 1590¹⁰⁷⁶ Lord Burghley, the Dowager Countess of Southampton,¹⁰⁷⁷ and Anthony Browne, 1st Viscount Montagu,¹⁰⁷⁸ who were related by marriage through the Cooke family,¹⁰⁷⁹ began negotiations for a marriage between Oxford's daughter, Elizabeth Vere, and Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton,¹⁰⁸⁰ then a royal ward.¹⁰⁸¹ On 15 July of that year Sir Thomas Stanhope,¹⁰⁸² whose wife and daughter had recently visited the Dowager Countess at Cowdray, wrote a placating letter to Lord Burghley, assuring him that he had never sought to marry his own daughter¹⁰⁸³ to Southampton, knowing that Lord Burghley intended him for Elizabeth Vere.¹⁰⁸⁴

On 23 July 1590, in connection with Oxford's debt to the Court of Wards, Lord Burghley

¹⁰⁷⁵ Nelson, p. 383.

¹⁰⁷⁶ According to Ward, p. 313, these negotiations were underway as early as the winter of 1589/90.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Lay, Jenna, "Wriothesley, [*née* Browne; *other married names* Heneage, Hervey], Mary, countess of Southampton (in or before 1552, *d.* 1607)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Viscount Montagu was Southampton's grandfather. See Elzinga, J.G., "Browne, Anthony, first Viscount Montagu (1528–1592)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁷⁹ For the relationship between Lord Burghley, the Dowager Countess of Southampton and Viscount Montagu through the Cooke family, see the will of Lord Burghley's father-in-law, Sir Anthony Cooke (1505 – 11 June 1576), TNA PROB 11/59/110.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Honan, Park, "Wriothesley, Henry, third Earl of Southampton (1573–1624)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁸¹ Akrigg, G.P.V., *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 31-2, 35, 39-40, 46.

¹⁰⁸² Sir Thomas Stanhope (d. 3 August 1596) of Shelford, who married Margaret Port, by whom he was the father of Oxford's brother-in-law, Sir John Stanhope (d.1611). See the will of Sir Thomas Stanhope's brother, Sir Edward Stanhope, TNA PROB 11/111/228.

¹⁰⁸³ Anne Stanhope (1576-1651) married Sir John Holles (d.1637), 1st Earl of Clare, the son of Denzel Holles (1538?–1590) by Oxford's first cousin, Eleanor Sheffield, the daughter of Edmund Sheffield (1521-1549), 1st Baron Sheffield, and his wife, Anne de Vere (d.1572), sister of the 16th Earl of Oxford.

¹⁰⁸⁴ *CSPD*, 1581-90, p. 680, (TNA SP 12/233/11, f. 24); Akrigg, *supra*, pp. 31-2, 35, 39-40, 46.

issued a warrant authorizing extents against several properties which had been sold by Oxford, including the manors of Lavenham and Wivenhoe.¹⁰⁸⁵

On 8 September 1590, Oxford wrote to Lord Burghley, likely in connection with one of these extents, advising that Bellingham's son¹⁰⁸⁶ intended to take complain directly to the Queen:

*But sithence he taketh a violent course and refuseth reasonable offers I have sent Hampton to inform your Lordship the state of the man, who hath received heretofore a pardon for three burglaries and stands bound to the good behaviour, which behaviour, for sundry and manifest breaches thereof which I can prove, he hath lost the benefit of his pardon, whereby as lord of the manor by escheat I am to deal with him as he hath given me occasion, and herein I hope her Majesty will have consideration sith the same case hath been seen once in Henry the Seventh's time and one example in this, her Majesty's.*¹⁰⁸⁷

On 6 January 1591 Thomas Churchyard wrote to Juliana Penne (d.1592) concerning rent owing for rooms he had taken in her house on behalf of Oxford.¹⁰⁸⁸

On 6 March 1591, Roger Manners,¹⁰⁸⁹ acting on behalf of the Countess of Warwick,¹⁰⁹⁰ who was Edward Russell's aunt and guardian, wrote to Lord Burghley mentioning the possibility of a marriage between Elizabeth Vere and the Countess' nephew, Edward Russell, 3rd Earl of Bedford:¹⁰⁹¹

¹⁰⁸⁵ BL Lansdowne 68/11, f. 24.

¹⁰⁸⁶ The person referred to in Oxford's letter may have been the son of Captain Henry Bellingham, who commanded the *Rainbow* under Drake at Cadiz in 1587, and the *George Noble* during the Armada invasion of 1588. A 'Henry Bellingham, esquire' is referred to in Israel Amyce's 1592 survey of Castle Hedingham. See Harrod, H., 'Survey of Hedingham Castle in 1592', in Urban, Sylvanus, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. XXX, New Series, January-June 1853, pp. 598-600. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=gLEtmA5t-t8C&pg=PA599>

¹⁰⁸⁷ BL Lansdowne MS 63/76, ff. 191-2.

¹⁰⁸⁸ BL Lansdowne MS 68, f. 207r, f. 209r, f. 253r, f. 255r and f. 257r; Smith, Alan G.R., *Servant of the Cecils; The Life of Sir Michael Hickes, 1543-1612* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977), pp. 87-8; Nelson, pp. 328-9.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Jack, "Manners, Roger", *ODNB*, *supra*.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Adams, Simon, "Dudley [*née* Russell], Anne, countess of Warwick (1548/9–1604)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁹¹ Francis Russell (d. 27 July 1585), third son of Francis Russell (1527-1585), 2nd Earl of Bedford, on 15 July 1571 married Juliana Foster or Forster, by whom he was the father of Edward Russell (1572-1627), 3rd Earl of Bedford. See the will of the 3rd Earl of Bedford's stepmother, Bridget Hussey, TNA PROB 11/97/10. It appears from Mary Harding's letter, *infra*, that in 1594 Roger Manners suggested a match between the 3rd Earl of Bedford and Bridget Manners.

*May it please your Lordship, I have been at North Hall with the Countess of Warwick, and find her Ladyship very well inclined to the match of my Lord of Bedford with my Lady Vere, and desired to know of me if your Lordship had either a desire or liking of it. Further that she did acknowledge herself so much beholding to your Lordship that she would gladly do that might be to your Lordship's best liking.*¹⁰⁹²

On 18 May 1591 Oxford, clearly weary of the unsettled life of a courtier, wrote to Lord Burghley outlining a plan to purchase the demesnes of Denbigh in Wales if the Queen would consent, offering to pay for the lands by commuting his £1000 annuity and relinquishing his claim to the Forest of Essex:

Whereas I have heard her Majesty meant to sell unto one Middleton, a merchant, and one Carmarden the demesnes of Denbigh which, as I am informed, is £230 by yearly rent now as it is, I would be an humble suitor to her Majesty that I might have had this bargain, paying the £8000 as they should have done, accepting for £5000 thereof the pension which she hath given me in the Exchequer, and the other £3000 the next term, or upon such reasonable days as her Majesty would grant me by her favour. And, further, if her Majesty would not accept the pension for £5000, that then she would yet take unto it, to make it up that value, the title of the forest which, by all counsel of law, and conscience, is as good right unto me as any other land in England. And I think her Majesty makes no evil bargain, and I would be glad to be sure of something that were mine own and that I might possess.

Oxford concludes: 'So shall my children be provided for, myself at length settled in quiet and, I hope, your Lordship contented, remaining no cause for you to think me an evil father, nor any doubt in me but that I may enjoy that friendship from your Lordship that so near a match, and not fruitless, may lawfully expect'.¹⁰⁹³

In the spring of 1591 the plan by which the purchasers of Oxford's lands were repaying his debt to the Court of Wards was disrupted by extents by the Queen against some of the lands.¹⁰⁹⁴ In the same letter of 18 May 1591 Oxford complained that his servant, Thomas Hampton, had fraudulently taken advantage of these extents by taking money from the tenants of the lands to his own use, and had also fraudulently colluded with another of Oxford's servants, Israel Amyce, to pass a document under the Great Seal of England to Oxford's detriment.¹⁰⁹⁵ Although the details are unclear, Thomas Skinner (d.1596) was also involved in the fraud occasioned by the Queen's extents against Oxford's lands.¹⁰⁹⁶ On 30 June 1591 Oxford wrote to Lord Burghley reminding him that he had agreed with the Queen to forebear his claim regarding the Forest of Essex for three reasons, including the Queen's reluctance to punish Skinner's felony:

¹⁰⁹² TNA SP 12/238/69, f. 100.

¹⁰⁹³ BL Lansdowne 68/6, ff. 12-13; Nelson, pp. 331-2.

¹⁰⁹⁴ BL Lansdowne 68/11, f. 24; Pearson, p. 35, Nelson, p. 334.

¹⁰⁹⁵ BL Lansdowne 68/6, ff. 12-13; Nelson, p. 330.

¹⁰⁹⁶ BL Lansdowne 68/6, ff. 12-13; Nelson, p. 334.

*First in consideration of her promise, then for the forbearing of Skinner's felony, which was proved by witnesses examined, confessed by his fellow Catcher, and yet resting in the hands of her Majesty's Attorney. Last of all to disburden me of the £20,000 bonds and statute which the same Skinner had caused me to forfeit by procuring of his own land to be extended for the £400 which he did agree with the rest of the purchasers to pay for his portion into the Court of Wards, minding to benefit himself by the same.*¹⁰⁹⁷

In 1591 the composer John Farmer¹⁰⁹⁸ was in Oxford's service, and dedicated to his 'very good Lord & master' *The First Set of Divers & Sundry Ways of Two Parts in One*,¹⁰⁹⁹ mentioning in the dedication Oxford's own love of music:

*I was the rather emboldened for your Lordship's great affection to this noble science.*¹¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁹⁷ BL Lansdowne 68/11, f. 22; Nelson, pp. 332-3.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Brown, David, "Farmer, John (fl. 1591–1601)", *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁹⁹ STC 10698.

¹¹⁰⁰ Nelson, pp. 381-2; Eggar, Katherine E., 'The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford as Musician, Poet, and Controller of the Queen's Revels', *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, Vol. 61, 1934, pp. 39-59 at p. 41. URL: www.jstor.org/stable/765654.

G. REMARRIAGE AND SUITS TO THE QUEEN

On 4 July 1591 Oxford sold the Great Garden property at Aldgate to John Wolley¹¹⁰¹ and his future brother-in-law, Francis Trentham (d.1626).¹¹⁰² The arrangement was stated to be for the benefit of Elizabeth Trentham, then one of the Queen's Maids of Honour, whom Oxford married later that year. An entry records a gift from the Queen to 'the Countess of Oxford at her marriage the 27 of December Anno 34'.¹¹⁰³

In June 1592, Mary Harding¹¹⁰⁴ wrote from court to the widowed Countess of Rutland,¹¹⁰⁵ suggesting that, since Oxford's daughter, Elizabeth Vere, was unwilling to marry the Earl of Northumberland,¹¹⁰⁶ the Countess should propose a marriage between her daughter, Bridget Manners,¹¹⁰⁷ and Northumberland:

I have heard of another motion, which is my Lord of Northumberland. There was earnest suit made by my Lord Treasurer for my Lady Vere, but my Lady Vere hath answered her grandfather that she cannot fancy him, and it is thought by divers that the matter were very easy to be had for my Lady. It must be procured by your Honour's means or some by your Honour's procurement, for your Honour doth know that such great matters must have means. If it happen, I hope your Honour shall have great comfort; if not, it can be no dishonour unto her Ladyship, for there must either offers be made, or else I fear me her Ladyship shall stay too long in this place. But she is in very great favour with her Majesty, and is employed with the nearest service about her, for she carves at all times, and is no way at commandment but by her Majesty. All the rest of the ladies and others doth like very well of her disposition. So I trust in God your Ladyship shall have much comfort, for she groweth every day better to be liked of.

I durst not make Mr Roger Manners¹¹⁰⁸ acquainted in these matters because I think him

¹¹⁰¹ Parry, Glyn, "Wolley, Sir John (d. 1596)", *ODNB*.

¹¹⁰² TNA SP 15/39, f. 141; Nelson, p. 335; Pearson, p. 49.

¹¹⁰³ BL MS Add. 5751A, f. 225; Nelson, pp. 336-7.

¹¹⁰⁴ Maid to Bridget Manners. See Daybell, James, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 92. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=ZrRwDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA92>

¹¹⁰⁵ Elizabeth Charlton (d.1595), widow of John Manners (d.1588), 4th Earl of Rutland. Nelson misidentifies the Countess of Rutland as Bridget Hussey; see pp. 337, 515, 520.

¹¹⁰⁶ Nicholls, Mark, "Percy, Henry, ninth earl of Northumberland (1564–1632)", *ODNB*.

¹¹⁰⁷ Bridget Manners (1577 – 10 July 1604). In July 1594 she secretly married her mother's ward, Robert Tyrwhitt (c.1573-1617) of Kettleby, Lincolnshire. See John, "Roger Manners", *supra*, pp. 73-9.

¹¹⁰⁸ Jack, "Manners, Roger", *ODNB, supra*.

*so slow.*¹¹⁰⁹

In July 1592 Oxford applied to the Queen for a licence to import oils, fruits and wools, citing the promise the Queen had given him when he had abandoned his suit for the Forest of Essex at her command.¹¹¹⁰ As an indication of the potential value of such licences, Chamberlain reported to Sir Dudley Carleton on 4 August 1621 that ‘The Earl of Arundell hath the impost of currants granted him at so easy a rate that it is thought he will gain four of five thousand a year by them at least’.¹¹¹¹ Had the Queen granted Oxford any one of the licences or offices he petitioned for, his financial difficulties would have been at an end.

In 1591-2 Oxford disposed of the last of his large estates. In Michaelmas term 1591 he sold Castle Hedingham, the seat of the Oxford earldom, to Lord Burghley in trust for his three surviving daughters by his first marriage, Elizabeth, Bridget and Susan Vere.¹¹¹² On 7 February 1592 he sold Colne Priory to Roger Harlakenden, who purchased in the name of his son, Richard.¹¹¹³ The sale resulted in lawsuits by Oxford for fraud against Roger Harlakenden which dragged on into the next generation.¹¹¹⁴

On 24 February 1593 Oxford's only surviving son and heir, Henry de Vere,¹¹¹⁵ was born at Stoke Newington, where 'the Earl of Oxford is sometime resident in a very proper house'.¹¹¹⁶

On 25 October 1593 Oxford wrote to Lord Burghley concerning his suit for a licence to import oils, fruits and wools, again citing the Queen's promise made to him when she had commanded him to abandon his claim to the Forest of Essex¹¹¹⁷:

My very good Lord, I hope it is not out of your remembrance how long sithence I have been a suitor to her Majesty that she would give me leave to try my title to the forest at

¹¹⁰⁹ *Historical Manuscripts Commission. Twelfth Report, Appendix, Part IV. The Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Rutland, G.C.B., Preserved at Belvoir Castle.* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1888), Vol. I, p. 300. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/hists52199677/page/n327/mode/2up>

¹¹¹⁰ Nelson, pp. 337-8.

¹¹¹¹ McClure, Vol. II, p. 395.

¹¹¹² TNA E 211/35; TNA CP 25/2/133/1707/29/30ELIZIMICH, Item 45; TNA C 66/1318, mm. 14-15; TNA C 66/1392, MM. 30-31; TNA C 66/1392, mm. 18-19; Nelson, pp. 335, 367.

¹¹¹³ TNA C 66/1392, mm. 23-4; ERO D/DU 256/1; Pearson, pp. 192-3.

¹¹¹⁴ TNA C 24/239/46; Huntington Library MS El 5871; Huntington Library MS El 5872; TNA C 78/104, mm. 27-8; TNA C 33/95; TNA C 24/277, Piece 77; TNA C 24/280, Piece 41; TNA C 2/JasI/O1/58; Pearson, pp. 192-6; Nelson, pp. 346-8.

¹¹¹⁵ Stater, Victor, “Vere, Henry de, eighteenth earl of Oxford (1593–1625)”, *ODNB*.

¹¹¹⁶ Nelson, p. 343.

¹¹¹⁷ For the claim made on 14 January 1465 by the 13th Earl to the office of master forester of Essex, tracing the claim back to Thomas de Clare, see Ross, p. 54.

the law, but I found that so displeasing unto her that, in place of receiving that ordinary favour which is of course granted to the meanest subject, I was browbeaten and had many bitter speeches given me.

Oxford reminds Lord Burghley that the Queen had committed the matter to Sir Christopher Hatton for arbitration, but when Hatton was ready to deliver his report, the Queen:

*. . . flatly refused therein to hear my Lord Chancellor, and for a final answer commanded me no more to follow the suit for, whether it was hers or mine, she was resolved to dispose thereof at her pleasure.*¹¹¹⁸

On 7 July 1594 Oxford wrote to Lord Burghley concerning abuses in his office of Lord Great Chamberlain which had prejudiced both himself and the Queen.¹¹¹⁹

Elizabeth Vere's Marriage

While Oxford was occupied with attempting to rectify these abuses in his office, the marriage of his daughter, Elizabeth Vere, again came to the fore. The records which have survived from this period suggest that Oxford was more involved in his daughter's marriage than has been suggested hitherto.

The catalyst for Elizabeth Vere's marriage was the sudden death on 16 April 1594 of Ferdinando Stanley, 5th Earl of Derby.¹¹²⁰ The 5th Earl had no male heir, and his younger brother, William Stanley,¹¹²¹ unexpectedly inherited the earldom, elevating him from a second son with limited prospects to a wealthy nobleman and possible husband for Elizabeth Vere. Matters were complicated, however, by the fact that on his deathbed the 5th Earl had willed his unentailed lands to his wife, Alice Spencer,¹¹²² and their three young daughters, which left the new Earl little in the way of landed income to support the title:

Thus began the 'great lawsuit', a complex and infamous affair, financially draining on Derby (already burdened by the excesses of the two previous Derby earls), which would

¹¹¹⁸ BL Harley 6996/22, ff. 42-3; Nelson, pp. 343-4, 351-2.

¹¹¹⁹ BL Lansdowne 76/74, ff. 168-9; Paul, Christopher, 'The Earl of Oxford's 'Office' Illuminated', *Brief Chronicles: Volume 2* (2010), pp. 171-211. URL: www.briefchronicles.com; Nelson, p. 348.

¹¹²⁰ Kathman, David, "Stanley, Ferdinando, fifth earl of Derby (1559?-1594)", *ODNB*.

¹¹²¹ Daugherty, Leo, "Stanley, William, sixth Earl of Derby (bap. 1561, d. 1642)", *ODNB*; Nelson, pp. 349-50.

¹¹²² Knafla, Louis A., "Spencer [*married names* Stanley, Egerton], Alice, countess of Derby (1559-1637)", *ODNB*.

*all but consume him for the next five years and not reach final settlement until 1610, by which time he had finally won or bought back most of the estate.*¹¹²³

The 5th Earl had a claim to the throne through his mother, and had been the subject of plots. For that and other reasons, his sudden death was viewed as suspicious. In August 1594 Captain Edmund Yorke¹¹²⁴ and Captain Richard Williams¹¹²⁵ were prisoners in the Tower, having plotted to kill the Queen.¹¹²⁶ In the course of giving evidence against them, Henry Young mentioned a dinner at which Yorke had attributed the 5th Earl's death to poisoning by Lord Burghley with the alleged object of marrying the 6th Earl of Derby to Elizabeth Vere:

*Yorke spake, being at dinner with Stanley,¹¹²⁷ Williams being present and myself, about the death of the young Earl of Derby, they musing how he came by his end. Yorke said, 'It is no marvel when Machiavellian policies govern England. I durst pawn my life,' said he, 'that the Lord Treasurer caused him to be poisoned, that he being dead, he might marry the young Lady Vere unto the brother of the said Earl of Derby. It is time,' said he, 'to cut them off that go about to be kings'.*¹¹²⁸

As early as 9 May 1594, the 5th Earl's widow was aware of the rumour that her brother-in-law, William Stanley, now 6th Earl of Derby, might marry Elizabeth Vere. Fearing that the marriage would cause Elizabeth Vere's uncle and grandfather, Sir Robert Cecil and Lord Burghley, to support the 6th Earl's claim to the Derby lands, she speedily wrote to Sir Robert Cecil:

I must entreat the continuance of your kind favours towards me in a cause wherein I have written to the Lords and others of the Privy Council, and for that it will come to your view, I must desire you to effect what I have entreated their Honours unto, the matter being so just as you shall find it is, and I hope my Lord your father's wonted favour will not be drawn from me by any means or persuasions, albeit I hear of a motion of marriage

¹¹²³ Daugherty, *ODNB*, *supra*.

¹¹²⁴ For the will of his father, Edmund Yorke, see TNA PROB 11/89/243.

¹¹²⁵ Father Henry Garnett calls them both 'captains'. See Foley, Henry, ed., 'The Life of Father Henry Garnett', *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus*, Vol. IV, 9th, 10th and 11th Series, (London: Burns and Oates, 1878), pp. 35-194 at p. 48. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=DDbdNjrNWaAC&pg=PA48>

¹¹²⁶ Yorke and Williams were executed at Tyburn in February 1595. See Hammer, Paul E.J., *The Polarization of Elizabethan Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 158. URL:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=VbKM-1eXuBkC&pg=PA158&lpg=PA158>

¹¹²⁷ Rapple, Roy, "Stanley, Sir William (1548–1630)", *ODNB*.

¹¹²⁸ TNA SP 12/249/92; Nelson, p. 345. Nelson erroneously identifies 'Yorke' as Rowland Yorke, who had died six years earlier. See Clayton, Sarah, "Yorke [York], Rowland (d. 1588)", *ODNB*.

*between the Earl, my brother [=brother-in-law], and my lady Vere, your niece, but how true the news is I know not, only I wish her a better husband.*¹¹²⁹

The 5th Earl's widow was supported in her effort to retain the Derby lands by her brother-in-law, Sir George Carey, later 2nd Baron Hunsdon,¹¹³⁰ husband of her sister, Elizabeth Spencer. Carey considered the 6th Earl a 'nidicock', and on 22 April wrote to his wife expressing his confidence that the 5th Earl's widow would retain the Derby lands, enabling her daughters to make excellent marriages:

*. . . in the time of his sickness, finding himself at the first stricken with death . . . [the 5th Earl] hath by good advice in law given Lathom, Knowsley, Colham, the Isle of Man and whatsoever he hath in England, besides what Henry the 7th gave to his ancestors, from the nidicock his brother, to your sister and her daughters, whereby we yet hold that both she and they will be exceeding great marriages.*¹¹³¹

On 13 September 1594, the 6th Earl wrote to Lord Burghley concerning his prospective marriage with Elizabeth Vere, seeming to consider the matter settled:

*My very honourable good Lord, I understand by my servants Ireland and Doughty that according to your Lordship's last speech they have thoroughly acquainted your Lordship with my estate, and that now it pleaseth your Lordship partly to refer the further proceeding to my liking, either now or the next term to be consummated. How grateful the message was unto me I leave to your Lordship's censure. . . .*¹¹³²

The letter indicates that Lord Burghley had accepted the Earl's uncertain financial situation, and had left it up to the Earl to decide when the marriage would take place. These developments make it clear that earlier negotiations for a marriage between Elizabeth Vere and the Earl of Southampton had come to nothing,¹¹³³ and that other spouses were now being considered for both of them. As noted above, as early as 9 May 1594 the 5th Earl's widow had heard that Elizabeth Vere might marry the new 6th Earl of Derby, and on 5 July 1594, Mary Harding wrote to the widowed Countess of Rutland indicating that Roger Manners considered Southampton a possible husband for the Countess' daughter, Bridget Manners, a possibility which Lady Bridget herself rejected on the ground that Southampton was 'so young and fantastical':¹¹³⁴

¹¹²⁹ Ward, p. 317; Nelson, p. 345; CP 170/142.

¹¹³⁰ George Carey (1548-1603) was the eldest son of Henry Carey, 1st Baron Hunsdon.

¹¹³¹ Nelson, p. 345.

¹¹³² BL Lansdowne 76/76, ff. 172-3; Ward, pp. 317-18.

¹¹³³ It should be noted that before Southampton refused to marry Elizabeth Vere, *Venus and Adonis* was printed in 1593 by Richard Field at his printing house in the Blackfriars located next door to the house of Lord Burghley's sister-in-law, Elizabeth (nee Cooke) Hoby Russell. See Laoutaris, Chris, *Shakespeare and the Countess*, (London: Fig Tree, 2014), pp. 7, 221, 315.

¹¹³⁴ John, "Roger Manners", *supra*, p. 76.

I beseech your Ladyship will give me leave to put your Honour in mind of a match for my Lady which your Ladyship might procure. It would be better than any she is like to get here. My Lord Wharton.¹¹³⁵ I have asked her Ladyship how she could like of it. She hath told me that she thought she should live a more happier life with him than with the greatest Lord here. The worst is his children, but I think my Lady so kind a nature that she would ever love them and imagine them her own. If it pleased God to bless herself with any, she would not doubt but he that sent them would provide for them. Truly, if your Honour could bring it to pass, my Lady would think herself very happy. I think if your Ladyship ask Mr Manners his advice, he will speak straight of my Lord of Bedford¹¹³⁶ or my Lord of Southampton, which is exceeding unlikely. If they were in her choice, she saith she would choose my Lord Wharton before them for they be so young and fantastical, and would be so carried away that if anything should come to your Ladyship but good, being her only stay, she doubteth their carriage of themselves, seeing some experience of the like in this place. Therefore I thought good to acquaint your Ladyship with my Lady's mind as near as I can, and would wish it if it might so stand with your Honour's pleasure, for if your Ladyship did know how weary my Lady were of the court, and what little gain there is gotten in this time, her Majesty's favourable countenance excepted, which my Lady hath, your Honour would willingly be contented with a meaner fortune to help her from hence. If your Honour would ask Mr Manners his advice, he would have the most cunning to get her away. I think the nearest way were to feign the measles, so she might have leave for a month to see your Ladyship, to air her. And when she were once with your Honour, you might sue to get the Queen's favour. It would be easily granted when she were so far from her.¹¹³⁷

This judgment of Southampton by the level-headed Lady Bridget raises the question of whether Oxford, and perhaps even Lord Burghley, would in 1594 have considered Southampton a suitable husband for Elizabeth Vere. Lady Bridget's weariness with court life is also of interest, since it is a sentiment Oxford clearly shared; in a letter of 18 May 1591 he had described himself as 'weary of an unsettled life, which is the very pestilence that happens unto courtiers that propound to themselves no end of their time therein bestowed'.¹¹³⁸

Although it appears to have been settled by September 1594 that Elizabeth Vere would marry the 6th Earl, the ceremony did not take place until January of the following year.

¹¹³⁵ Philip Wharton (1555-1625), 3rd Baron Wharton. See Dale, Bryan, *The Good Lord Wharton*, rev. ed., (London: The Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1906), pp. 24-9. URL: <https://archive.org/details/goodlordwharton00dalegoog/page/n36/mode/2up>

¹¹³⁶ See TNA SP 12/238/69, f. 100, *supra*, for Roger Manner's letter of 6 March 1591 suggesting a match between Elizabeth Vere and the 3rd Earl of Bedford.

¹¹³⁷ *Historical Manuscripts Commission. Twelfth Report, Appendix, Part IV. The Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Rutland, G.C.B., Preserved at Belvoir Castle*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1888), Vol. I, p. 321. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/hists52199677/page/n347/mode/2up>

¹¹³⁸ BL Lansdowne 68/6, ff. 12-13; Nelson, p. 332.

Two reasons for the delay are alluded to in a letter from the Jesuit Henry Garnett,¹¹³⁹ purportedly addressed to the Jesuit Robert Parsons,¹¹⁴⁰ and endorsed 'Father Garnett, November 19th, about Cecil Fixer, 1594':

Here is no news that I can learn, for we live all as it were in a wilderness. Her Majesty hath been in danger by a short sickness, but thanks be to God, well recovered, and was yesterday at the triumphs all in yellow, that it was comfortable to behold her so fresh and lusty.

The marriage of the Lady Vere to the new Earl of Derby is deferred by reason that he standeth in hazard to be unearled again, his brother's wife being with child, until it is seen whether it be a boy or no. The young Earl of Southampton, refusing the Lady Vere, payeth £5000 of present payment. . . .¹¹⁴¹

The reference to 'the triumphs' dates the letter to 18 November, the day after the Queen's Accession Day festivities on 17 November 1594.

Despite the fact that other marriages were actively under consideration for both Elizabeth Vere and Southampton as early as the spring of 1594, Father Garnett's letter suggests that Elizabeth Vere's marriage to the 6th Earl was deliberately delayed until Southampton came of age on 6 October 1594 and legally refused to marry her, thus triggering the fine to which his legal guardian¹¹⁴² was entitled under the wardship system. Whether Southampton ever paid, or was realistically expected to pay, this fine is unknown.

The rumour of Alice Spencer's pregnancy appears to have been a tactic to buy time in her legal battles with the 6th Earl over the Derby lands; no child is known to have been born to her after her husband's death.¹¹⁴³

The marriage between the 6th Earl of Derby and Elizabeth Vere was celebrated on 26 January 1595 at Greenwich, with the Queen in attendance:¹¹⁴⁴

The 26 of January, being Friday, in the year of [Our Lord] 1594 and the 37 of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, at Greenwich with great solemnity and triumph was William, Earl of Derby, brother and heir male to Ferdinando, Earl of Derby, and the son of Henry, Earl of Derby,¹¹⁴⁵ & of his wife, Margaret,¹¹⁴⁶ daughter to the Earl of Cumberland, married to

¹¹³⁹ McCoog, Thomas M., "Garnett, Henry (1555–1606)", *ODNB*.

¹¹⁴⁰ Houlston, Victor, "Persons [Parsons], Robert (1546–1610)", *ODNB*.

¹¹⁴¹ Foley, *supra*, p. 49.

¹¹⁴² For Southampton's wardship and the fine, see Akrigg, *supra*, pp. 22, 39–40. But *quaere* whether the Queen was not still Southampton's legal guardian in terms of levying a fine for his marriage.

¹¹⁴³ Ward, p. 318, erroneously states that Alice Spencer gave birth to a daughter after the 5th Earl's death.

¹¹⁴⁴ Ward, p. 318.

¹¹⁴⁵ Knafla, Louis. A., "Stanley, Henry, fourth earl of Derby (1531–1593)", *ODNB*.

(blank), one of the daughters of Edward, Earl of Oxford, by his first wife, Anne, the daughter of William Cecil, Lord Burghley, Treasurer of England.¹¹⁴⁷

A play was presented by the Lord Chamberlain's Men on the same day, likely as part of the wedding festivities.¹¹⁴⁸ On 31 January 1595, Sir George Carey's younger brother, John Carey, later 3rd Baron Hunsdon,¹¹⁴⁹ having heard of the upcoming marriage, wrote from Berwick to Lord Burghley:

*Touching the latter part of your letter wherein your Honour writes of the marriage of your daughter [=granddaughter] the Lady Vere, I am glad as a feeling member of your Lordship's joy, and rejoice at her Ladyship's good fortune in preserving your Honour's life so long whereby th' imperfections of her father shall be no blemish to her honour, whom I pray God make as happy a couple as ever were of that name, being also very glad that her Majesty will vouchsafe so honourably to solemnize the matter with her royal presence, which will be, I dare say, a great comfort to your Lordship and a great honour to the young couple.*¹¹⁵⁰

Carey's gratuitous comment that Elizabeth Vere owed everything to Lord Burghley in terms of the arrangements for her marriage is belied by the fact that it was Oxford who directly confronted the 6th Earl about an allowance for Elizabeth Vere's maintenance. On 24 April 1595, Oxford wrote to Sir Robert Cecil,¹¹⁵¹ stating that he had 'dealt with the Earl of Derby about my daughter's allowance', and that Derby had promised to assure his new bride £1000 a year¹¹⁵² but was now about to leave for Lancashire without having made any financial provision for her:

Sir Robert Cecil, whereas I have dealt with the Earl of Derby about my daughter's allowance, and that he hath promised me to assure her to that intent a thousand pound a year, forsomuch as I now understand upon some discontentment that he hath not attained to that honour which it seemeth he did at this time expect, he determines tomorrow to depart into Lancashire, and that he hath neither in his house or for herself set down any stay whereby either in her own lodging or if she shall follow her attendance upon her Majesty she is provided as his wife.

¹¹⁴⁶ Margaret Clifford (1540–1596), daughter of Henry Clifford (1517–1570), 2nd Earl of Cumberland.

¹¹⁴⁷ BL MS Stowe 1047, f. 264v; Ward, p. 318; Nelson, pp. 349–50.

¹¹⁴⁸ Ward, p. 318; Nelson, p. 350.

¹¹⁴⁹ John Carey (d.1617), 3rd Baron Hunsdon, was the third son of Henry Carey, 1st Baron Hunsdon. See MacCaffrey, *supra*, ODNB.

¹¹⁵⁰ Nelson, p. 350.

¹¹⁵¹ Croft, Pauline, "Cecil, Robert, first earl of Salisbury (1563–1612)", ODNB.

¹¹⁵² That Elizabeth Vere was expected to spend £1000 a year is indicative of the expense of living at Queen Elizabeth's court. Ward, p. 319, says that 'the Stanleys were reputed to be the richest family in England, which accounts for the size of this very generous allowance'.

I do therefore most heartily desire you as her uncle and good friend to deal earnestly with my Lord Treasurer, unto whom I have also written, that he would send unto him or else speak with him to the end that either he should fulfil his promise, or until such time as he shall, to take that order which is fit for her place wherein she serves her Majesty, and for his wife.

I do understand by my daughter how good an uncle she finds you, and how ready to friend her, wherein I also take myself beholding unto you. Of what fancies his humours are compounded you know well enough, and therefore I pray you to be earnest with my Lord that he may deal effectually upon so good a ground as his word and honour which he hath given.

Also I understand that my Lady Russell,¹¹⁵³ for some offence conceived of my daughter, hath lately written to my Lord Treasurer to discourage and dissuade him to urge the Earl of Derby, but for that she was herself the first that moved this allowance, and hath sithence altered her mind upon some conceit, I hope my Lord will not be carried away upon such unconstant balance. Yet if you find any such hindrance, I pray you nevertheless stick to your niece and further her in what you can, sith her desire is just in that it is his promise, & reasonable in that she is his wife.

Thus what you shall do for her, esteeming it mine own bond, I refer her whole cause to your kindness.¹¹⁵⁴

On 1 July 1595 a certificate prepared for Lord Burghley stated that the purchasers of Oxford's lands had repaid most of Oxford's debt to the Court of Wards 'so as there now remaineth of the whole due debt payable at Candlemas [=2 February] 1594 but £800, whereof part is paid already'.¹¹⁵⁵

On 7 August 1595 Oxford mentioned to Lord Burghley the 6th Earl's recent fair words unaccompanied by action, saying that his daughter had put him in trust to remind both Lord Burghley and her husband of the promised allowance of £1000 a year:

. . . at my coming hither from Cannon Row, the Earl of Derby was very earnest that he might assure a thousand pound a year for my daughter's finding, adding farther that he marvelled that Sir Robert Cecil, her uncle, & I, her father, were so slack to call upon it. Wherefore I shall desire your Lordship, as you shall choose best time, that something may be done therein. My daughter hath put her trust in me both to remember [=remind] your Lordship and her husband, wherefore I would be glad that some certainty were effected to her mind.¹¹⁵⁶

Oxford was still pursuing the matter of an allowance for Elizabeth Vere's maintenance a

¹¹⁵³ Lady Burghley's sister, Elizabeth (née Cooke) Hoby Russell (1528-1609).

¹¹⁵⁴ Cecil Papers 31/106; Nelson, pp. 350-1.

¹¹⁵⁵ BL Lansdowne 68/11, f. 24.

¹¹⁵⁶ TNA SP 12/253/68, ff. 100-1.

year and half later. On 6 September 1596 he wrote to Sir Robert Cecil, expressing frustration at the 6th Earl's 'delays and shifts':

The writing which I have is in the country, for I had such care thereof as I carried it with me in a little desk; tomorrow or the next day I am to go thither, and so soon as I come home, by the grace of God, I will send it you. The Earl of Derby should have set his hand and seal to this copy as he had done to yours, but his promises being but delays and shifts, in the mean season I caused his officer Ireland¹¹⁵⁷ and another to set their hands unto it to witness that it was a true copy.

I named to you in haste in my last letter Mr Hicke,¹¹⁵⁸ but I had forgot myself; it was Mr Barrnarddeux¹¹⁵⁹ whom my Lord employed in that cause, and therefore I think him able to satisfice all such doubts as my Lord may cast. I do not doubt but if my Lord had then any care thereof, or Mr Barrnarddeux, but that this assurance is as firm as the law can make it; there was employed in it the Master of the Rolls, then and now Lord Keeper, and others of my Lord's learned counsel in law, who I hope are sufficient to pass greater matters than it.¹¹⁶⁰

Oxford wrote again on 17 September 1596, again expressing frustration that the matter of the pension of £1000 for Elizabeth Vere's maintenance had still not been dealt with, and expressing deep concern as well for her reputation at court:

I have sent you by this bearer the copy which was in my hands, but perusing the same it seemeth to be not as I took it, but rather a counterpane¹¹⁶¹ of her jointure¹¹⁶² than of her pension. How my daughter's occasions are to use the same I am ignorant, being made rather acquainted therewith by common report than from herself or any of her friends. But I doubt not but that my Lord and you did so well look to the same when it was to be performed that what assurance was to be made was done with good advice. I know that Barnardeux [=Bernardeau?] was the man who was employed, and that the intent was for a pension of one thousand pounds by years to be assured her so long as my Lord of Derby lived, and to that end a lease to her use was to be made over unto you and myself. How it was followed, if this be not it, I know not. Wherefore I pray you, good Sir Robert

¹¹⁵⁷ The History of Parliament entry for George Ireland (d.1596) of the Hutt in Halewood, Lancashire, mentions a Thomas Ireland of Gray's Inn, 'servant and lawyer to the 5th [sic] Earl of Derby from 1596 onwards'.

¹¹⁵⁸ One of Lord Burghley's two principal secretaries. See Smith, A.G.R., "Hicke, Sir Michael (1543–1612)", *ODNB*.

¹¹⁵⁹ Lord Burghley's servant, Bernard Dewhurst (c.1533-c.1597). For his will, see TNA PROB 11/89/138.

¹¹⁶⁰ CP 44/63.

¹¹⁶¹ *OED*: The counterpart of an indenture.

¹¹⁶² *OED*: A competent livelihood of freehold for the wife of lands and tenements, to take effect upon the death of the husband for the life of the wife at least' (Coke upon Littleton, 36 b).

Cecil, peruse this, and if it be not as I take it, yet have that care of your niece that if it be in the hands of Barnardeux it may be sought out.

Also I am most earnestly to desire you that as you are her uncle and nearest to her next myself, that you will friendly assist her with your good advice. You know her youth and the place wherein she lives, and how much to both our houses it imports that she carry herself according to her honour. Enemies are apt to make the worst of everything, flatterers will do evil offices, and true and faithful advice will seem harsh to tender ears. But sith my fortune hath set me so far off as I cannot be at hand in this her troublesome occasions, I hope you will do the good office of an uncle, and I commit unto you the authority of a parent in mine absence.

Thus confounded with the small understanding of her estate, and the care of her well-doing, I leave to trouble you any farther, most earnestly desiring you as you can get leisure to advertise me how her causes stand and upon what terms, whereof I assure you, I cannot yet tell what to think.¹¹⁶³

The matter of Elizabeth Vere's maintenance was still unsettled as late as July 1597. In a letter dating from 29-31 July, Sir Edward Fitton¹¹⁶⁴ wrote to Sir Robert Cecil concerning the arrival of the 6th Earl and Elizabeth Vere at Knowsley, indicating that although Cecil had been led to believe that the 6th Earl had signed a lease guaranteeing Elizabeth Vere's maintenance, the only assurance in existence was that made for Elizabeth Vere's jointure, signed by the 6th Earl, Oxford, Lord Burghley and Sir Robert Cecil:

Now Sir, for the lease made to my Lord of Oxford and you, there is no other lease nor assurance but the lease made for my Lady's jointure, which lease is warranted by fine, and the deed doth remain, as Mr Ireland assureth me, under my Lord Treasurer's hand, the Earl of Oxford's and yours, with my Lord, and my Lord Treasurer hath the deed under the Earl of Derby's hands, whereby the very interest of the possession is in your Honour instantly. It were good you caused my Lord, your father, to seek it up and peruse it, but this is most true if Ireland say true. But I beseech your Honour, keep this to yourself till I see you, for it is better for me to speak all I know than write.¹¹⁶⁵

These letters establish that Oxford was involved for several years in negotiations regarding the marriage of his eldest daughter, and particularly in ensuring that her new husband provided her with a suitable jointure, and sufficient funds to live on.

Oxford's letter of 24 April 1595 also reveals that Lady Elizabeth Russell, Elizabeth Vere's great-aunt, played an otherwise unnoticed role in proposing that the 6th Earl

¹¹⁶³ CP 44/101; Nelson, p. 360.

¹¹⁶⁴ Cunningham, Bernadette, "Fitton, Sir Edward (1548/9–1606)", *ODNB*. For his will, see TNA PROB 11/107/223. His younger daughter, Mary Fitton, became a maid of honour to Queen Elizabeth in 1595, and is thought by some scholars to be the Dark Lady of Shakespeare's Sonnets.

¹¹⁶⁵ CP 54/110.

should provide her with maintenance amounting to £1000 a year. Another revealing aspect of the letter is the oblique wording which suggests that both Lady Russell and the 6th Earl felt that Elizabeth Vere was engaging in certain improprieties, a concern expressed more directly in Oxford's letter of 17 September 1596. Hammer suggests that this may have been a flirtation, or perhaps an affair, with Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex.¹¹⁶⁶

Although the couple [i.e. Elizabeth Vere and the Earl of Derby] soon had a daughter, also named Elizabeth, the marriage initially proved to be a disaster. A passing reference by Anthony Standen¹¹⁶⁷ to rumours about Essex and 'the neue coyned countes' suggests that Lady Derby may have been involved with Essex as early as May 1595 (LPI, MS 651, fol. 122r). This may have been one of the 'divers injuries and wrongs' which her father, the earl of Oxford, complained he had received from Essex by October 1595. The countess was clearly more interested in the delights of Court than in her husband and, by July 1596, Burghley was upset that she was even ignoring her child (PRO, SP 12/259, fol. 140r). Derby himself was frustrated that she did not behave like a dutiful wife, but he could do little to change her behaviour.¹¹⁶⁸

Daugherty mentions both Essex and Sir Walter Raleigh:¹¹⁶⁹

The early years of the marriage were stormy, particularly during the stressful period of the lawsuit, marked by rumours of Elizabeth's infidelity with both Essex and Raleigh, Elizabeth's alarming bouts of sickness, much bitter quarrelling, and periods of separation.¹¹⁷⁰

The scandal concerning possible infidelities reached the ears of another of Elizabeth Vere's great-aunts, Lady Anne Bacon,¹¹⁷¹ who in a letter dated 1 December 1596 bluntly admonished Essex for having compromised the reputation of her great-niece, whom she also did not spare, describing her as 'unchaste and impudent':

Hearing, my singular good Lord, of your Honour's return from the sea-coasts this day,

¹¹⁶⁶ Hammer, Paul E.J., "Devereux, Robert, second earl of Essex (1565–1601)", *ODNB*. In his *ODNB* article, Hammer writes: 'The resultant long periods of separation from his wife also perhaps help to explain Essex's dalliances with other women, including Elizabeth Southwell, a maid of honour (which resulted in the birth of his illegitimate son, Walter Devereux, at the end of 1591), and Elizabeth Stanley, countess of Derby, in 1596–7. Early in 1598 he was also reported as having revived a relationship with 'his fairest B', who was perhaps Elizabeth Brydges, the elder daughter of Giles Brydges, third Lord Chandos.'

¹¹⁶⁷ Hammer, "Standen, Sir Anthony (*d.* in or after 1615)", *ODNB*.

¹¹⁶⁸ Hammer, *Polarization*, *supra*, p. 321.

¹¹⁶⁹ Nicholls, Mark and Penry Williams, "Raleigh, Sir Walter (1554–1618)", *ODNB*.

¹¹⁷⁰ Daugherty, *ODNB*, *supra*.

¹¹⁷¹ Magnusson, Lynne, "Bacon [*née* Cooke], Anne, Lady Bacon (c. 1528–1610)", *ODNB*.

and I going hence tomorrow, if the Lord so will, I am bold, upon some speeches of some, and with some person(s)(?) at the court where lately I was, to impart somewhat hereof to your Honour because it concerned a party there more near to me than gracious to her stock. I will not deny but before this great suspicion of her unwifelike and unshamefast demeanour hath been brought to me, even into the country, but loath to believe, I laid it up with secret sadness in my breast. And truly, my good Lord, I did not a little but greatly rejoice in heart that it pleased God of his mercy and goodness with the late famous honour he gave you in your late martial exploit with renowned good success, he did also work in you such a change of your mind, before by report inclined to court carnal dalliance, that that honourable and Christian bruit was carried about joyfully to the much gladding of many that unfeignedly loved your Honour's true prosperity.

But proh dolor, my good Lord, I perceived by some eyewitnesses here, and which must needs hear and mark, that of late a backsliding to the foul impudent doth plainly appear, and though they did marvel and much blame your dishonourable, and dangerous to yourself, course taking to the infaming a nobleman's wife, and so near about her Majesty, yet she was utterly condemned as too bad, both unchaste and impudent, with as it were an uncorrigible unshamefastness. The Lord speedily by his grace amend her, or cut her off before some sudden mischief. It hath already made her ancient noble husband to undo his house by feeling/falling(?) as one out of comfort, but if a desperate rage, as commonly followeth, he will revenge his provoked jealousy and most intolerable injury, even desperately. And the more because it is said he loveth her, and greatly, as with grief, laboureth to win her. It is great pity she is not delivered to him, and the court to be cleansed by sending away such an unchaste gaze and common byword in respect of her place and husband.¹¹⁷²

Essex' reply of the same date only partly refutes the allegations; he states that 'since my departure from England towards Spain I have been free from taxation of incontinency with any woman that lives', but fails to deny earlier transgressions:

Madam, that it pleaseth you to deal thus freely with me in letting me know the worst you hear of me, I take it as great argument of God's favour in sending so good an angel to admonish me, and of no small care in your Ladyship of my well-doing. I know how needful these summons are to all men, especially to those that live in this place. And I had rather with the poor publican knock my breast and lie prostrate, or with thee(?) confess, when I have done all I can, I am an unprofitable servant, than Pharisaically to justify myself. But what I write now is for the truth's sake, and not for mine own. I protest before the majesty of God, and my protestation is voluntary and advised, that this charge which is newly laid upon me is false and unjust, and that since my departure from England towards Spain I have been free from taxation of incontinency with any woman that lives. I never saw or spoke with the Lady you mean but in public places, and others being seers and hearers, who if they would do me right could justify my behaviour. But I live in a place where I am hourly conspired against and practised upon. What they

¹¹⁷² Lambeth Palace MS 660, ff. 149-50; Allen, Gemma, ed., *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, Camden Fifth Series, Vol. 44, (Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 262-5

*cannot make the world believe, that they persuade the Queen unto, and what they cannot make probable to the Queen, that they give out to the world.*¹¹⁷³

On her reply of 4 December 1596, Lady Bacon gave no sign as to whether she accepted the Earl's protestations, merely advising him to 'walk circumspectly', and beseeching God to 'grant you safety from all crafty treacheries & subtle snare whatsoever'.¹¹⁷⁴

As noted above, on 29-31 July 1597 Sir Edward Fitton¹¹⁷⁵ wrote to Sir Robert Cecil concerning the arrival of the 6th Earl and Elizabeth Vere at Knowsley. Fitton's next letter to Cecil makes it clear that the 6th Earl's suspicions had not abated, and that he was in such a jealous rage against his wife that even his own servants remonstrated with him:

Right Honourable, although my Lady hath had a tedious journey, yet she hath by courtesy & virtue got the love of all here.

This journey hath also deciphered my Lord's humour of frenzy, for when her Ladyship lived at court in the eye of the world, then you know and with grief I witnessed his violent course, but now here yesterday, upon letters from my Lord Cobham, the Countess of Warwick and my Lady Raleigh, he is in such a jealous frame as we have had such a storm as is wonderful; but such it appeareth, though her Ladyship lived in a cell unseen, all is one.

Mr Ireland, the lawyer, did in wisdom upon conference with me prevail so much with all my Lord's officers, seeing my Lord's madness & my Lady's patience, whose only defence was patience with tears, as they all went to my Lord when he was looked to go to the court & leave my Lady here to shift for herself, & told him that as they had served him and his father & been the same by them, if he held this jealousy in that force as he did, themselves, seeing my Lady's carriage of herself and managing my Lord's estate with that honourable care of his house & himself that never any the like, if he would hate her and [+not?] desist from this humour, they must all hate him and follow her in those honourable courses she professeth and performeth, wishing him to desist from this jealousy and bitterness to her Ladyship, & not dishonour himself, or else they would hate him, & bring her to my Lord and you, if all Ireland had would do it. If my Lord had come, I think scarce one man would have come with him to attend his Honour(?).

You, Sir, in my simple opinion, you may do well [+to ask?] my Lord Treasurer to write to my Lord without knowing of this. Assure yourself, my Lady wanteth not friends serviceable(?) to our purposes, wise and well experienced in this humorous house.

¹¹⁷³ Lambeth Palace MS 660, f. 281; Allen, Gemma, *supra*, pp. 266-7.

¹¹⁷⁴ Lambeth Palace MS 660, f. 151; Allen, Gemma, *supra*, pp. 267-8.

¹¹⁷⁵ Cunningham, Bernadette, "Fitton, Sir Edward (1548/9-1606)", *ODNB*. For his will, see TNA PROB 11/107/223. His younger daughter, Mary Fitton, became a maid of honour to Queen Elizabeth in 1595, and is thought by some scholars to be the Dark Lady of Shakespeare's Sonnets.

Thus having nakedly delivered the truth for the honour I bear to your old father, who I love above any subject, keep this from him till I see you, for now all is well, but write to my Lady to comfort her, and direct your letters to me. You may always send them in the packet to the mayor of Chester, who will convey them safe to me.

Relations between the 6th Earl and his wife had improved by the time of Fitton's next letter to Cecil on 11 August 1597. Moreover it appears that the issue of Elizabeth Vere's maintenance had finally been settled. Fitton indicates that the 6th Earl had assured an income to his wife through the appointment of feoffees, chief among them George Clifford, 3rd Earl of Cumberland,¹¹⁷⁶ his maternal half uncle, the 6th Earl being the grandson of Henry Clifford, 2nd Earl of Cumberland's first marriage, and George Clifford the son of the 2nd Earl of Cumberland's second marriage:

Right Honourable, I formerly writ of a storm which I did wish to be kept from my Lord Treasurer, but now I write of a calm, as by the enclosed will appear, which my Lord of Derby in degrees to show his love to his Lady promised to me upon Tuesday last, but hath in sort performed by articles and by statute bond to make assurance with my Lord of Cumberland, who truly hath showed himself a kind friend to my Lady and a good uncle to the Earl.

My Lady taketh kindly my Lord the Earl of Derby's trust, but whether herself will take the charge or those feoffees named, whereof my Lord of Cumberland is chief, her Ladyship will do by my Lord Treasurer's direction and your advice at her Ladyship's coming to you.

And as you bade me then when I spake with you of this cause that my Lady might appoint her own receiver if we could bring it to pass, so my Lady now hath power to do if my Lord of Cumberland perform the trust.

For myself, I can do nothing but wish my Lady that good which her courtesy, patience and virtue deserveth, to my poor power as I promised your Honour. I am ready to do my Lady any service whatsoever.¹¹⁷⁷

After this stormy beginning, Elizabeth Vere's marriage eventually not only survived, but prospered,¹¹⁷⁸ which must have been a comfort to Oxford in his final years.

While the marriage negotiations for Elizabeth Vere were ongoing, on 25 September 1594, King Henry IV of France wrote to Oxford, thanking him for 'the good offices you have performed on my behalf in [the Queen's] presence'.¹¹⁷⁹

About this time Anthony Munday dedicated to Oxford his *Primaleon; The First Book*.

¹¹⁷⁶ Holmes, Peter, "Clifford, George, third earl of Cumberland (1558–1605)", *ODNB*.

¹¹⁷⁷ CP 54/21.

¹¹⁷⁸ Daugherty, *ODNB*, *supra*.

¹¹⁷⁹ Nelson, p. 349.

The dedication is lost; however, in the dedication of the second edition¹¹⁸⁰ in 1619 to Oxford's heir, Munday recalls that 'these three several parts of *Primaleon of Greece* were the tribute of my duty and service' to 'that most noble Earl, your father'.¹¹⁸¹

In February 1595, Captain Edmund Yorke, the nephew of Oxford's friend, Edward Yorke, was executed, together with Richard Williams, for their involvement in a plot to kill the Queen.¹¹⁸²

The Tin Mines

From March to August of 1595 Oxford actively pursued a suit, in competition with Lord Buckhurst, to farm¹¹⁸³ the tin mines in Cornwall.¹¹⁸⁴

On 20 March 1595 he wrote to Lord Burghley:

*[I] heartily desire your lordship to have a feeling of mine infortunate estate, which although it be far unfit to endure delays, yet have consumed four or five years in a flattering hope of idle words. But now, having received this comfortable message of furtherance & favour from your Lordship, although her Majesty be forgetful of herself, yet by such a good mean I do not doubt if you list but that I may receive some fruit of all my travail. This last year past I have been a suitor to her Majesty that I might farm her tins, giving £3000 a year more than she had made.*¹¹⁸⁵

Oxford says he originally offered the Queen, for the farm of the tin monopoly, £3000 a year in excess of what she was currently receiving, and that his competitors, who had originally offered only 1000 marks [=£666], had tried to buy him off if he would drop his suit. When he did not, they made an artificial offer of £10,000 to the Queen to drive him out of the bidding, a ploy which succeeded.

Having driven Oxford out of the bidding with an artificially high offer of £10,000, and not wanting to go through with such an unprofitable offer, Oxford's competitors then sought to make their offer of £10,000 unacceptable to the Queen. To bring this about, they added to their offer of £10,000 a condition that the Queen lend them £30,000 or £40,000 as a stock of money to purchase the entire production of tin, thinking she would flatly refuse, and that their offer of £10,000 would then be rejected out of hand, and with

¹¹⁸⁰ STC 20367.

¹¹⁸¹ Nelson, p. 381.

¹¹⁸² *ECD* (1594), pp. 31-3. See also TNA SP 12/269/63, ff. 63-4, 66; TNA SP 12/249/98, f. 111; TNA SP 12/249/117.

¹¹⁸³ To lease or let the proceeds or profits of (customs, taxes, tithes, an undertaking) for a fixed payment. (*OED*)

¹¹⁸⁴ Pearson, pp. 56-7; Nelson p. 355.

¹¹⁸⁵ CP 170/126; Nelson, p. 355.

Oxford out of the competition they could then put forward a new offer at a much lesser amount.

However in the meantime the Queen had seen a memorandum of Oxford's which made her aware of how profitable the revenues from tin could be to her if properly managed. Lord Burghley had also seen the memorandum, and had sent Oxford a message by Michael Hicke that he would favour Oxford's suit. After receiving Lord Burghley's message, Oxford revised the material in the memorandum which had been seen by Burghley and the Queen, which he says had been in rough form ('altogether undigested'). This revision would appear to be CP 25/76, a memorandum endorsed 9 March 1595, in which Oxford outlines a plan by which the Queen could take the tin monopoly into her own hands, putting up her own money to purchase the yearly production, and selling it to the tin merchants at a profit of £7000 a year.

However if the Queen does not want to put up her own money, Oxford offers an alternative plan. He says that he was originally encouraged to consider bidding for the tin monopoly by a group of merchants ('these merchants which first set me on work'). If the Queen refuses to put up her own money to purchase the entire annual production of export tin, this group of merchants is prepared to pay £4000 a year for the right to exercise her pre-emptive right¹¹⁸⁶ in her stead, and to buy up all the tin at a fixed price, for which purpose they will provide £20,000 to be used to purchase the tin. Since they cannot make an offer directly to the Queen, if she will grant their suit in Oxford's name, he will nominally be given a one-fifth share in the profits, which he estimates will amount to £2000. However Oxford will not retain this £2000, but will give it to the Queen, which, when added to the £4000 to be paid to her by the merchants, will yield her an annual profit of £6000. When the annual profit of £3283 which the Queen currently receives for customs and impost¹¹⁸⁷ on tin is added to this £6000, the total is very near the £10,000 which had been offered to the Queen by Oxford's competitors. To make up the difference, Oxford says that if the Queen will grant his suit for the licence to transport tin, that is, to farm the export tax on tin, he will give her £500 in certainty, and will do what he can to make up the remaining £200 or £300 pound difference to bring the total offer up to the artificially high £10,000 which had been offered to the Queen by his competitors.

Oxford also points out that even though the merchants who are involved with him in this offer will, of course, make a certain amount of profit, this is only equitable since they must put up £20,000 and bear the other hazards of the enterprise. Moreover, the Queen can readily inform herself of the amount of profit they are making since the fifth part of that profit will come to her through Oxford's hands. The advantage to the Queen of this plan is that she will not have to use her own stock of money to purchase the tin by pre-emption, yet she will still realize a profit of £10,000 a year from tin, which greatly exceeds the £3283 profit she is currently receiving.

¹¹⁸⁶ Pre-emptive right: the right to purchase something before it is offered to others.

(*OED*)

¹¹⁸⁷ A tax, duty, imposition, tribute; *spec.* a customs-duty levied on merchandise. (*OED*)

Oxford's letters and memoranda indicate that he pursued his suit into early 1596 and renewed it again in 1599, but was ultimately unsuccessful,¹¹⁸⁸ and the Queen continued to be deceived as to the profits she should have received from the customs duties on tin. A letter dated 26 February 1602 from Thomas Bellot to Sir Robert Cecil attests to the widespread practices by which the Queen was routinely deprived of her customs revenues:

*I am bold to be a suitor in behalf of one Robert Weigge, one of your Honour's waiters at the Custom house, to accept him to be your man, not that he shall be chargeable to you any manner away [=of way?], for I assure you he is an honest man and one of experience in all trade of merchants, who fear him above all the rest of the waiters, for he is acquainted with all the practices which they use to deceive the Queen of her customs.*¹¹⁸⁹

On 20 October 1595 Oxford wrote to Sir Robert Cecil mentioning friction between himself and the Earl of Essex,¹¹⁹⁰ partly over the Forest of Essex:

*[Lord Burghley] wisheth me to make means to the Earl of Essex that he would forbear to deal for it [i.e. the Forest of Essex], a thing I cannot do in honour sith I have already received divers injuries and wrongs from him which bar me of all such base courses.*¹¹⁹¹

The next day Oxford wrote again to his brother-in-law on the subject of his claim to the Forest, terming him 'the only person that I dare rely upon in the court'. Unlike Lord Burghley, however, Sir Robert Cecil seems to have done little to further Oxford's interests.¹¹⁹²

On 28 March Oxford advised Michael Hickeys¹¹⁹³ that he was unable to go to court because he had not yet fully recovered from an illness. On 4 June he wrote to Lord Burghley that 'I have been this day let blood',¹¹⁹⁴ and on 7 August he wrote to Burghley

¹¹⁸⁸ CP 170/126; CP 25/106; CP 31/45; CP 31/52; CP 31/54; CP 31/68; CP 31/79; CP 31/83; CP 31/93; TNA SP12/252/57, ff. 108-9; TNA SP12/252/69, ff. 133-4; TNA SP12/252/70, ff. 135-6; TNA SP12/252/76, ff. 144-5; TNA SP12/253/60, ff. 100-1; CP 31/11; CP 71/23; CP 71/26; EL 2337; BL Lansdowne 86/66, ff. 169-70; CP 25/76; TNA SP12/252/49, ff. 96-7; EL 2335; EL 2336; EL 2338; EL 2344; EL 2345; EL 2349; Nelson, pp. 357-8.

¹¹⁸⁹ Barnett, *Place, Profit and Power*, p. 34; *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquis of Salisbury*, Part XI – XII, (Dublin: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1906), pp. 61-2. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/calendarofmanusc11greauoft/page/60/mode/2up>

¹¹⁹⁰ Hammer, Paul E.J., "Devereux, Robert, second Earl of Essex (1565–1601)", *ODNB*.

¹¹⁹¹ CP 35/84; Nelson, p. 352.

¹¹⁹² CP 172/81; Nelson, pp. 352-3.

¹¹⁹³ Smith, A.G.R., "Hickeys, Sir Michael (1543–1612)", *ODNB*.

¹¹⁹⁴ TNA SP12/252/49, ff. 96-7.

from Byfleet, where he gone for his health:

*I most heartily thank your Lordship for your desire to know of my health, which is not so good yet as I wish it. I find comfort in this air, but no fortune in the court.*¹¹⁹⁵

On 9 November 1595, Rowland Whyte (d.1640) ended a letter to Sir Robert Sidney¹¹⁹⁶ with the comment, 'Some say my Lord of Oxford is dead'.¹¹⁹⁷ Whether the rumour of Oxford's death was related to the illness mentioned in his letters earlier in the year is unknown.

On 11 January 1597 Oxford wrote to Sir Robert Cecil concerning a petition to the Privy Council by Thomas Gurlyn against Oxford's wife, Elizabeth. The background to Gurlyn's petition is obscure, but appears to relate to events which transpired shortly after Oxford's arrival in the Low Countries on 27 August 1585. Gurlyn's claim was dismissed at trial.¹¹⁹⁸

Early Negotiations for Bridget Vere's Marriage

On 6 April 1597, Oxford's daughter, Bridget Vere, would turn thirteen, and her prospective marriage was already under consideration. On 16 March 1597, Rowland Whyte, writing to Sir Robert Sidney, mentioned in passing that she was betrothed to Henry Brooke, 11th Baron Cobham.¹¹⁹⁹

*I am credibly informed that the Lord Cobham, who shall marry my Lord Oxford's daughter, hearing how disdainfully my Lord of Essex speaks of him in public, doth likewise protest to hate the Earl as much.*¹²⁰⁰

Henry Brooke's father, William Brooke, 10th Baron Cobham,¹²⁰¹ was Lord Burghley's closest friend. Their children had married:¹²⁰² Lord Cobham's daughter, Elizabeth Brooke, was the wife of Lord Burghley's son, Sir Robert Cecil. Elizabeth Brooke died on 24 January 1597, and was given a state funeral, to which 'Cecils, Brookes, their relations and friends turned out in force'.¹²⁰³

¹¹⁹⁵ TNA SP12/253/60, ff. 100-1; Nelson, pp. 353, 357.

¹¹⁹⁶ Shephard, Robert, "Sidney, Robert, first earl of Leicester (1563–1626)", *ODNB*.

¹¹⁹⁷ Nelson, p. 354; Brennan, Michael G. et al, eds., *The Letters (1595-1608) of Rowland Whyte*, (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2013), p. 82.

¹¹⁹⁸ CP 37/66(a); CP 37/66(b); TNA REQ 2/388/28; Nelson, pp. 361-7.

¹¹⁹⁹ Nicholls, Mark, "Brooke, Henry, eleventh Baron Cobham (1564–1619)", *ODNB*.

¹²⁰⁰ Nelson, p. 367; Brennan, *supra*, p. 173.

¹²⁰¹ Lock, Julian, "Brooke, William, tenth Baron Cobham (1527–1597)", *ODNB*.

¹²⁰² McKeen, David, *A Memory of Honour; The Life of of William Brooke, Lord Cobham*, (Salzburg: Insitut Fur Anglistik Und Amerikanistik, 1986), Vol. II, p. 676.

¹²⁰³ McKeen, Vol. II, pp. 666-7.

Lord Cobham had been made Lord Chamberlain on Sunday, 8 August 1596:

*. . . the Lord Cobham, Lord Warden of the Cinq Ports, was made Lord Chamberlain by her Majesty in delivering to his Lordship the white staff before her Majesty went to the chapel in the forenoon.*¹²⁰⁴

Presumably this appointment brought with it the patronage of the company which produced Shakespeare's plays, the Lord Chamberlain's Men.

Lord Cobham's tenure as Lord Chamberlain lasted only seven months. His health was in decline in the winter of 1596–7, and Rowland Whyte's comment suggests that his thoughts had turned to arranging the marriage of his eldest son and heir. Before he could bring this to pass, however, he died at his house in the Blackfriars just after midnight on 6 March.¹²⁰⁵ Later that same week Sir William Hatton,¹²⁰⁶ the husband of Lord Burghley's granddaughter, Elizabeth Cecil (1578-1646),¹²⁰⁷ died unexpectedly. The deaths of these close friends and relations reduced Lord Burghley to tears:

*This Saturday morning Sir William Hatton died in Holborn. . . . My Lord Treasurer takes it very heavily, and weeps pitifully, calling to remembrance the many late crosses he hath been afflicted withal by the death of his friends.*¹²⁰⁸

According to the *ODNB*, it was at Lord Burghley's insistence that an elaborate funeral was held for Lord Cobham:

. . . . after a grand funeral procession through north Kent—insisted upon by Burghley despite the will's rejection of 'vanity'—was buried at the church of St Mary Magdalene, Cobham, on 5 April.

Rowland Whyte's comment that Henry Brooke 'shall marry my Lord Oxford's daughter' was thus made only ten days after Henry Brooke had succeeded his father. However if negotiations had progressed to the stage of a betrothal before Lord Cobham's death on 6 March, nothing ultimately came of them, and the following year there were rumours that Henry Brooke would marry Elizabeth Compton (d.1632),¹²⁰⁹ 'and have with her £12,000'.¹²¹⁰

A proposal for Bridget Vere's marriage about which more details are known was made a

¹²⁰⁴ McKeen, Vol. II, p. 647.

¹²⁰⁵ McKeen, Vol. II, p. 675.

¹²⁰⁶ Formerly Sir William Newport. He took the surname Hatton when he became heir to his uncle, the Lord Chancellor, Sir Christopher Hatton (d.1591). See Brennan, p. 599.

¹²⁰⁷

¹²⁰⁸ McKeen, Vol. II, p. 676; Brennan, pp. 170, 599.

¹²⁰⁹ The daughter of Sir John Spencer (d.1610), Lord Mayor of London. See Brennan, p. 591.

¹²¹⁰ Brennan, p. 310.

few months later. On 16 August 1597, Henry Herbert, 2nd Earl of Pembroke,¹²¹¹ wrote to Lord Burghley concerning a marriage between his eldest son and heir, Henry Herbert, later 3rd Earl of Pembroke,¹²¹² and Bridget Vere:

*My good Lord, Massinger¹²¹³ is now returned by me with my wife's letters reporting my son's liking of your daughter[=granddaughter]. I do assure your Lordship I am not a little glad of that which I hear, and therefore now, as heretofore, I refer the proceeding herein to your Lordship. What you shall conceive best, that shall I best like of. Massinger hath already acquainted you with my meaning in some things, and of anything else your Lordship shall desire to be further informed, upon hearing thereof from your Lordship, I will speedily advertise you.*¹²¹⁴

The Earl wrote again on 3 September 1597, appearing to consider the marriage between his heir and Bridget Vere all but concluded:

My servant Massinger has delivered your most kind letters and acquainted me in reference to the intended marriage between my eldest son and the Lady Bridget. First, that your daughter is but 13 years of age, and that you are doubtful whether a marriage would bind her now as it would my son. Secondly, whether she should, in the time of my son's travel, remain with you or with my wife. Thirdly, that for perfecting of conveyances between us, you chose Justice Owen to join with Baron Ewens, whom I had named for myself. Lastly, that if I would come up to Parliament, this matter might be concluded with more convenience.

For the first, I have often heard that after a woman has attained 12 years she can by law consent and be bound by marriage. If this be the case, the marriage of your daughter may lawfully proceed, and she by it shall be no less bound than my son, yet their continuance together may be deferred until you think good. But for preventing many inconveniences, I prefer a marriage to a contract.

For the second, I think it most convenient that after the marriage, and my son is gone to travel, your daughter should remain with my wife, whose care of her shall answer the nearness whereby she shall then be linked unto her.

¹²¹¹ Williams, Penry, "Herbert, Henry, second earl of Pembroke (*b.* in or after 1538, *d.* 1601)", *ODNB*.

¹²¹² Stater, Victor, "Herbert, William, third Earl of Pembroke (1580–1630)", *ODNB*. *The Complete Peerage* erroneously states that the negotiations involved William Herbert's younger brother, Philip Herbert: 'As early as August 1597, she, then only 13, had been engaged to Philip, Earl of Montgomery, who ultimately married her younger sister Susan in 1604'. See Cokayne, Vol. IX, p. 647.

¹²¹³ Arthur Massinger (c.1550-1603), father of the playwright, Philip Massinger. See Garrett, Martin, "Massinger, Philip (1583–1640)", *ODNB*.

¹²¹⁴ TNA SP 12/264/84, f. 117.

For the third, I very well like of Justice Owen to be joined with Baron Ewens, and doubt not but through their good care all things shall be concluded to our contentments.

For the fourth, I cannot come to Parliament without extreme peril to my health, and my presence for this private business is not of necessity, for I will make a jointure proportionable to what you will give in marriage with your daughter.

I seek not by this match to enrich myself or advance my younger children, for whatsoever you give I am content that the young couple presently have, and will increase the same with as great a yearly allowance as my estate and course of life can spare. Upon hearing from you, I will so instruct Baron Ewens that my absence shall be no hindrance. My son shall come up himself at the beginning of Parliament, both to attend her Majesty's pleasure for his intended travel, and to perform what shall be agreed upon for his proposed marriage.¹²¹⁵

On 8 September 1597 Oxford wrote to Lord Burghley concerning the proposed marriage, giving his approval:

My very good Lord, I have perused these letters which, according to your Lordship's desire, I have returned. I do perceive how both my Lord and Lady do persevere, which doth greatly content me for Bridget's sake, whom always I have wished a good husband such as your Lordship and myself may take comfort by. And as for the articles which I perceive have been moved between your Lordship and them, referring all to your Lordship's wisdom and good liking I will freely set down mine opinion, according to your Lordship's desire.

My Lord of Pembroke is a man sickly, and therefore it is to be gathered he desireth in his lifetime to see his son bestowed to his liking, to compass which methinks his offers very honourable, his desires very reasonable; again, being a thing agreeable to your Lordship's fatherly care and love to my daughter, a thing which, for the honour, friendship and liking I have to the match, very agreeable to me, so that all parties desire but the same thing. I know no reason to delay it but, according to their desires, to accomplish it with convenient speed. And I do not doubt but your Lordship and myself shall receive great comfort thereby, for the young gentleman, as I understand, hath been well brought up, fair conditioned, and hath many good parts in him. Thus, to satisfice your Lordship I have, as shortly as I can, set down my opinion to my Lord's desires; notwithstanding, I refer theirs, and mine own, which is all one with theirs, to your Lordship's wisdom.¹²¹⁶

The extant letters indicate that the 2nd Earl of Pembroke and the Countess initiated the negotiations, and that the prospective bridegroom, William Herbert, was favourably

¹²¹⁵ TNA SP 12/264/106; Young, Frances Berkeley, *Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke*, (London: David Nutt, 1912), pp. 64-6. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/marysidneycounte00younuoft>

¹²¹⁶ TNA SP 12/264/111, f. 151; Ward, p. 330; Nelson, p. 369.

impressed by Bridget Vere. Oxford expressed approval, and Lord Burghley appeared ready to proceed, although he expressed concern about Bridget's youth. However for reasons which are unclear, the marriage did not take place.

In his letter of 8 September Oxford again speaks of ill health:

I am sorry that I have not an able body which might have served to attend her Majesty in the place where she is, being especially there, whither without any other occasion than to see your Lordship I would always willingly go.

While the matter of Bridget Vere's marriage was under discussion, on 2 September 1597 the Queen granted licence¹²¹⁷ to the executors of Sir Rowland Hayward¹²¹⁸ to sell King's Place in Hackney to Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, her brother, Francis Trentham (d.1626),¹²¹⁹ her maternal uncle, Ralph Sneyd (d.1620), and her first cousin, Giles Yonge.¹²²⁰ Oxford lived there for the remainder of his life. A description of the house in the Tudor period survives in a legal document from 1547 when it was granted to William Herbert, 1st Earl of Pembroke:¹²²¹

. . . there is a Manor place which is a Fayre House all of bricke [in fact only parts were brick built] havinge a Fayre Hall and a parlor a faire ketchyn a Pastory a drye larder with Buttry Pantery and all other houses of Office necessary and many Fayre Chambers a Faire long Galerye a proper Chapell and a Closet commynge out of the great Chamber over the Chapell a proper lybrayre to laye bokes in many other proper Roomes wythin the same Place And also a Fayre barne to ley haye a Faire Stable Roome able for stabling horses And the said house is inclosid on the backside wyth a greate brode dyche and without that a Fayre large garden inclosid to the sayd House with a pale necessary for a garden or an Orcharde And at the furder ende of the sayd house [an] Orcharde havinge but Fewe trees of Frute therin wiche conteyneth di acre or thereaboutes And at the Hither end of the House comynge from London ys a Faire large garden grounde

¹²¹⁷ TNA C 66/1476, m. 19; Nelson, p. 368. Ward, p. 319, erroneously dates the purchase to 1596.

¹²¹⁸ Slack, Paul, rev.; "Hayward [Heyward], Sir Rowland (c.1520–1593)", *ODNB*. For his will, see TNA PROB 11/83/228. As noted earlier, Henry Carey 1st Baron Hunsdon, had sold King's Place to Sir Rowland Hayward in 1583.

¹²¹⁹ He was buried at Rocester on 13 October 1626. For his will, see Lichfield Record Office B/C/11.

¹²²⁰ Giles Yonge was the son of William Yonge (d. December 1583), gentleman, of Caynton (in Edgmond), Shropshire, and his first wife, Anne Sneyd, the sister of both Ralph Sneyd (d.1620) and Elizabeth Trentham's mother, Jane Sneyd. After Anne Sneyd's death, William Yonge married Mary Bonner, who later married, on 10 January 1586, Thomas Combe, gentleman, of Stratford upon Avon, Warwickshire. For the will of Thomas Combe, dated 22 December 1608 and proved 10 February 1609, see TNA PROB 11/113/130. For the relationship between Elizabeth Trentham's family and the Combes of Stratford upon Avon, see Richardson, *Magna Carta Ancestry*, Vol. IV, p. 387.

¹²²¹ Griffiths, R.A., "Herbert, William, first earl of Pembroke (c. 1423–1469)", *ODNB*.

*inclosyd with a bricke wall.*¹²²²

On 14 December 1597 Oxford attended Parliament for the last time. According to Nelson, there were forty sessions; Oxford attended only one, perhaps another indication of his failing health.¹²²³

Oxford's last surviving paternal uncle, Robert Vere, died on 2 April 1598, and was buried at Charlton.¹²²⁴

At some time in 1598, Oxford again received recognition in print of his abilities as a dramatist. In his *Palladis Tamia*,¹²²⁵ Francis Meres¹²²⁶ adjudged Oxford as one of 'the best for Comedy amongst vs'.¹²²⁷

Ruswell Lawsuit

On 21 May 1598 Oxford was sued by Judith Ruswell, widow of William Ruswell, for an alleged debt of £500 for services rendered by Ruswell as a tailor eighteen or twenty years earlier. Oxford defended the suit, alleging that not only had he paid Ruswell, but that Ruswell had subsequently absconded with 'cloth of gold and silver and other stuff' belonging to Oxford worth £800.¹²²⁸ According to the answer of Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, in a lawsuit in 1609, Judith Ruswell's claim was overthrown by the evidence of Edward Hubberd, one of the Six Clerks of Chancery and a former servant of Oxford's:

*. . . she to her now remembrance never heard of any workman or other person whatsoever that ever made demand or challenge of any debt owing to him by the said late Earl except one by one (blank) [=William Ruswell], who having been a tailor for the said late Earl his servants, did first demand & after sue for a certain debt he pretended to be due & owing unto him by the said Earl, supposing the same Earl could not have proved any payment or satisfaction of that debt, but yet prevailed not for that when that cause came to trial one Hubberd, then one of the Six Clerks of the Chancery, who formerly had been employed in the said Earl his affairs, did make plain & manifest proof when & how the said debt was clearly & fully satisfied & discharged.*¹²²⁹

¹²²² Nelson, p. 368. See also 'Hackney's Royal Palace'. URL: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/tudorhackney/localhistory/lochhy2.asp>

¹²²³ Nelson, p. 369.

¹²²⁴ Ward, p. 7. For his will see TNA PROB 11/91/503.

¹²²⁵ STC 17834.

¹²²⁶ Kathman, David, "Meres, Francis (1565/6–1647)", *ODNB*.

¹²²⁷ Nelson, pp. 386-7.

¹²²⁸ TNA C 2/Eliz/R8/29; TNA C 24/269, Part 1, No. 68 (interrogatories); Nelson, pp. 376-9.

¹²²⁹ TNA REQ 2/388/28.

Bridget Vere's Marriage

On 4 August 1598 there was a major upheaval in the Cecil family. Lord Burghley died at the age of 78. In his will he named two executors, his steward, Thomas Bellot,¹²³⁰ and Gabriel Goodman, Dean of Westminster,¹²³¹ and placed a substantial sum of money under Bellot's control to eventually provide marriage portions for Bridget and Susan Vere on a sliding scale dependant on whether they married into the nobility:

*Item, where Thomas Bellot hath in his charge in my plate-house certain portions of money and some bonds for money to be paid to me, I do commit so much trust to him as I will require him to make Doctor Goodman, Dean of Westminster, privy thereto, and I do make them two executors of this my will, and to dispose the same money to the advancement of the Lady Bridget and Lady Susan for their marriages, with these conditions, that which of them shall be married with an earl or the heir apparent of an earl shall have four thousand pounds, part of the money left with the said Thomas Bellot, and if they shall marry with a baron or the heir apparent of a baron, then but three thousand pounds, and if under that degree, then but two thousand pounds.*¹²³²

According to John Chamberlain, writing to Dudley Carleton¹²³³ on 30 August 1598 after Lord Burghley's funeral, people were saying that Burghley had not been as wealthy as had been thought, and that his younger son, Sir Robert Cecil, was letting it be known that the lands he had inherited would generate income of only £1600 a year:

*Of his private wealth there is but £11,000 come to light, and that all in silver, whereof £6000 (with eight or nine hundred pound land) he bequeathed to his two nieces of Oxford, the rest in other legacies. And his lands seem not so great as was thought, for Master Secretary says his own part will not rise to £1600 a year upon the rack.*¹²³⁴

On 12 October 1598, Bridget Vere wrote to Sir Robert Cecil from Theobalds, where she and her sister were in the care of Lord Burghley's widowed sister, Anne White:¹²³⁵

Good uncle, my duty remembered unto you, giving you thanks for your kind receiving of my letter, better than it deserved by a great deal, and more for your good and fatherlike counsel in your letter, which I pray God give me the grace to follow, as I trust he will. As for the working of slips, it is some part of our daily exercise, and the drawing of them. I

¹²³⁰ For Thomas Bellot (1534-1611) see his will, TNA PROB 11/118/247, and Richard C., *Place, Profit and Power; A Study of the Servants of William Cecil, Elizabethan Statesman*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), pp. 32-40.

¹²³¹ Knighton, C.S., "Goodman, Gabriel (1528-1601)", *ODNB*.

¹²³² TNA PROB 11/92/316. See also Ward, pp. 331-2; Nelson, pp. 370-3.

¹²³³ Reeve, L.J., "Carleton, Dudley, Viscount Dorchester (1574-1632)", *ODNB*.

¹²³⁴ TNA SP 12/268/33; McClure, Norman Egbert, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1939) Vol. I, pp. 41-2.

¹²³⁵ She married Thomas White (d.1580) of Tuxford.

*trust with exercise to frame in some sort to it. My Aunt White hath her duty remembered unto you, giving you great thanks for your kind remembrance.*¹²³⁶

Any hope Oxford might have had of assuming parental care of his daughters was dashed by Cecil, who wrote to Michael Hicke shortly after Lord Burghley's death:

Mr Hicke, I thank you for your letter and for your care. As for my Lord of Oxford's claim, if Mr Bellot do but turn him to us, we shall do well enough, and above all things we desire that he [=Bellot] do say, though not swear, that such charge was given him by parol, which Mr Maynard shall witness.

For the Doctor's cavil to defeat them of their portion, God knows I never intend it, but be you sure my brother thinks so hardly to have none of the jewels as I fear me he will stand now upon all advantages, but I will never consent in such a kind to break my father's testament. . . .

*Tell Mr Bellot if the Earl of Oxford should desire the custody he cannot have them of anybody, for if he look upon the deeds whereby my Lord hath conveyed them their lands, he shall find that for default of issue their land comes to the heirs of his body, nor whether he that never gave them groat, hath a second wife and another child be a fit guardian, consider you. If once my Lady Bedford were come in town we would quickly conclude. I wish Mr Bellot to have good care they be not stolen away by his means. I would they had some honest man there while Mr Bellot's eye is absent from them. When you are there, I pray you, take order with my wardrobe that any stuff they want or anything else may be given them.*¹²³⁷

It appears Oxford had sent word to Thomas Bellot at Theobalds that he wished to see his daughters. Cecil suggests that if this has put Bellot in a difficult position, he will deal with Oxford himself ('turn him to us').

Cecil's next words are obscure. He appears to be saying that Bellot, backed by Henry Maynard, should tell Oxford that before his death Lord Burghley had, by word of mouth, put either Cecil or Bellot in charge of Oxford's daughters. However Bellot is not to swear to the statement.

Cecil then says that one of the executors, Dr Gabriel Goodman, has raised a specious legal argument which would defeat Oxford's daughters of their marriage portions. Cecil implies that this has been done at the behest of his elder brother, Thomas Cecil, 1st Earl of Exeter,¹²³⁸ who is infuriated that Lord Burghley bequeathed all his jewels to them. Cecil says he will have no part of his brother's scheme to break their father's will; however since it appears the legal argument raised by Goodman was unlikely to succeed, this pious sentiment probably cost Cecil nothing.

¹²³⁶ TNA SP 12/268/74, f. 120.

¹²³⁷ BL MS Lansdowne 87/34, f. 96; Nelson, p. 373.

¹²³⁸ Milward, Richard, "Cecil, Thomas, first earl of Exeter (1542–1623)", *ODNB*.

Cecil then returns to the issue of custody of Oxford's daughters, telling Michael Hikes to advise Bellot that Oxford cannot have custody under any circumstances, hinting darkly that if Oxford's daughters were to die without issue, Oxford's heirs would inherit the lands Lord Burghley had left them. In fact, this outcome was precisely what Oxford and Lord Burghley had intended when Oxford parted with Castle Hedingham. It was left to Lord Burghley for life, then to Oxford's three daughters and their issue, and if all three daughters were to die without issue, then to the heirs of the 16th Earl, that is, Castle Hedingham would revert back to the de Vere family which had owned it for centuries.¹²³⁹ The agreement Oxford and Lord Burghley had made with regard to the descent of Castle Hedingham seems eminently fair, and it is difficult to attribute Cecil's objection to anything other than animosity towards Oxford.

Cecil's next objection is equally specious. As an argument that Oxford should not have custody of his daughters, Cecil rails that he 'never gave them groat, hath a second wife and another child'. In fact, Oxford had given his three daughters much more than a groat; he had given them Castle Hedingham. Moreover his second wife had been in attendance on Queen Elizabeth for many years, and was exactly the sort of person who could be trusted to raise Oxford's daughters appropriately. In addition, Oxford had a commodious home at Hackney which would offer them suitable accommodation.

Cecil ends his letter by insinuating that Oxford plans to steal his daughters away before Cecil can place them in the custody of the Dowager Countess of Bedford.

The depth of Cecil's animus towards Oxford is evident. He had likely long been resentful of the humiliation his family had endured when Oxford had refused to live with Anne Cecil in 1576, and had subsequently become involved in a scandalous relationship with Anne Vavasour. He was likely also well aware that even after Oxford and Anne reconciled, her life was unhappy. This background prevented Cecil from considering the issue of the custody of Oxford's daughters with objectivity. Would it have been best for them to live with their father and his new wife and family near London, or to be immured at Chenies in Buckinghamshire with the aged Dowager Countess of Bedford?

Cecil's letter indicates that he had already chosen the latter option, and shortly thereafter Oxford's two younger daughters, Bridget and Susan, were placed in the care of Bridget (nee Hussey) Morison Manners Russell (d. 12 January 1601), Dowager Countess of Bedford.¹²⁴⁰ The Dowager Countess was the daughter of John Hussey,¹²⁴¹ 1st Baron Hussey of Sleaford, a courtier in favour with both Henry VII and Henry VIII who was executed in 1537 for his role in the Pilgrimage of Grace. She was also a first cousin of

¹²³⁹ See TNA SP 12/266/99, f. 137.

¹²⁴⁰ For her will, see TNA PROB 11/97/10.

¹²⁴¹ Hoyle, R.W., "Hussey, John, Baron Hussey (1465/6–1537)", *ODNB*.

Elizabeth Hussey,¹²⁴² the 'Mistress Crane' at whose manor of East Molesey the first of the Marprelate tracts was printed in October 1588 (see above).

The close relationship between the Dowager Countess of Bedford and the Cecil family is indicated by the fact that the Countess' step-grandson, Edward Russell, 3rd Earl of Bedford, was in 1591 suggested as a husband for Oxford's eldest daughter, Elizabeth Vere (see above); that her grandson, Francis Norris, married Oxford's second daughter, Bridget Vere; and that her grandson, Charles Morison,¹²⁴³ was proposed as a husband for Oxford's youngest daughter, Susan Vere.

The Dowager Countess had written to Sir Robert Cecil on 9 January 1598, several months before Lord Burghley's death, requesting that Cecil allow her grandson, Francis Norris,¹²⁴⁴ to accompany him on an embassy to France:

*Sir, having a great desire and care to see Francis Norris brought up in some degree answerable to his birth and the quality he is like to hold in his country (if God shall lend him life), to the end he may hereafter be the better able to do her Majesty service, and both I and mine having been so exceeding much beholding to yourself in your many favours and love towards us, and now hearing that you are very shortly to go ambassador from her Majesty to the French King, I would be most glad, for his further experience, to commend him (one of my chiefest jewels) to so faithful a friend, under whose countenance and protection I do assure myself of his chiefest safety, he being young and little experienced how to direct himself in courses fitting in a strange country. Herein as you shall bind us still more and more beholding, so shall you ever find me ready as I may to requite, and him by all serviceable endeavors to deserve your great favours.*¹²⁴⁵

Bridget Vere was with the Dowager Duchess at Chenies for only a few months. Two letters from her at that time have survived. On 7 April she wrote to Cecil, mentioning the loss of her grandfather, Lord Burghley:

Good uncle, having no business wherewith to trouble you at this time but only in this slender measure of thankfulness to acknowledge the manifold kindnesses which I have always found in you towards me, the which as far as in me lieth I will endeavour to deserve. And now that he is gone that was so dear unto you and me, you are unto me as a father in his stead, and in having you I shall think the want of him to be the less. So with my kind remembrance unto you, I leave to trouble you any further. I commit you to

¹²⁴² For 'Mistress Crane', see the will of her father, Sir Robert Hussey (d.1546), TNA PROB 11/31/244, and the will of her first husband, Anthony Crane, Cofferer of the Household, TNA PROB 11/65/507.

¹²⁴³ For Charles Morison (1587-1628), see the will of his father, Sir Charles Morison (1549 - 31 March 1599), TNA PROB 11/94/168.

¹²⁴⁴ Burns, F.D.A., "Norris, Francis, Earl of Berkshire (1579-1622)", *ODNB*.

¹²⁴⁵ CP 48/83. See also her letter of thanks dated 29 January 1597, CP 49/1.

*the protection of the Almighty.*¹²⁴⁶

The fact that Bridget speaks of Sir Robert Cecil as a 'father' now that Lord Burghley is dead suggests that Oxford was not a strong presence in her life. They had likely not lived in the same household since Anne Cecil's death in 1588, when Bridget was only four years old.

On 16 April Bridget wrote to Henry Maynard,¹²⁴⁷ requesting a favour on behalf of the chaplain of the Dowager Countess.¹²⁴⁸

Bridget had turned fifteen on 6 April, and was married to the Dowager Countess' grandson, Francis Norris, shortly thereafter. The prospective marriage had been mentioned as early as 1 March 1599 by John Chamberlain in a letter Dudley Carleton:

*The match is made up twixt young Norris and the Lady Bridget, second daughter to the Earl of Oxford.*¹²⁴⁹

At the time of the marriage Norris had no title, nor was he able to provide Bridget with a jointure. Whether Oxford approved of the marriage, or was even consulted about it, is unknown.

At Sir Robert Cecil's direction, the wedding was a very private one at Chenies. The Dowager Countess wrote to Cecil on 21 April 1599:

*Sir, this present morning I have received your letters, and have considered of your good advice concerning the solemnizing of your niece's marriage, and whereas you write that you think it not decent to make a public matter thereof, so was it farthest from my mind, only desiring such a course as might be both answerable to the expectation of some of their honourable friends & in some sort pleasing to your niece. . . .*¹²⁵⁰

The Dowager Countess wrote again on 28 April, indicating that Bridget was 'pliant' to her uncle's wishes with respect to the ceremony:

Sir, I have now fully resolved to take such course for effecting of this marriage as yourself have appointed, and to have it kept in this place, only desiring that (considering

¹²⁴⁶ Nelson, p. 375, citing Cecil Papers 178/144; *Historical Manuscripts Commission. Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury, K.G., Preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1902), Part IX, p. 190. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/calendarofmanusc09greauoft/page/n167/mode/2up>

¹²⁴⁷ Lord Burghley's chief secretary. See Barnett, *Place, Profit and Power*, pp. 94-103; and Mears, Natalie, "Maynard, Sir Henry (b. after 1547, d. 1610)", *ODNB*.

¹²⁴⁸ TNA SP 12/270/82, f. 147.

¹²⁴⁹ TNA SP 12/270/48; McClure, Vol. I, p. 70; Nelson, p. 375.

¹²⁵⁰ TNA SP 12/270/91, f. 159.

*you wish it private, which well agrees with my own disposition) if any offence be taken by friends of either part, you will take upon you the excuse, as better able to undertake that burden than I am, and for my own part I will not look for any guests but such as you shall be pleased to invite and bring with you to keep you company, as I have acquainted my Lady Bridget, whom I find so pliant to your will as she seems best pleased with whatsoever you shall think good to prescribe, and in all other her actions & carriage so honourably and virtuously inclined as I do (I assure you) receive exceeding comfort in her company.*¹²⁵¹

The Dowager Countess' reservations concerning the appropriateness of the arrangements are evident in her letters, and the possibility cannot be overlooked that Sir Robert Cecil's insistence on such a simple wedding for the daughter of an earl was motivated partly by parsimony and partly by animus towards Oxford. There is also the issue of Bridget's marriage portion. Had she married an earl, it would have been £4000; since she married the heir presumptive to a baron it was, in the words of Lord Burghley's will, 'but three thousand pounds'. Whether this diminution of Bridget Vere's marriage portion resulted in an additional £1000 being available as residue of the estate to Sir Robert Cecil and his brother is unclear. Cecil was preoccupied with other matters at the time of Bridget Vere's wedding, having been appointed Master of the Court of Wards and Liveries on 21 May 1599.

After the wedding, Francis Norris joined the fleet assembled to repel a threatened Spanish invasion. Bridget may have gone to live at Rycote with her husband's paternal grandparents.

As early as 23 November 1599, there were problems in the marriage. Rowland Whyte wrote on that date to Sir Robert Sidney that:

*. . . it is reported that young Mr Norris and the lady Bridget cannot agree, that Mr Secretary was fain to deal roundly with him to use her according to her birth and fortune.*¹²⁵²

On 9 May 1599 John Tyndall¹²⁵³ of Lincoln's Inn informed Cecil that Oxford's daughter,

¹²⁵¹ TNA SP 12/270/101, f. 176.

¹²⁵² Payne, Helen, 'Cecil Women at Court', in Croft, Pauline J., ed., *Patronage, Culture and Power: The Early Cecils*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 272; Collins, Arthur, ed., *Letters and Memorials of State in the Reigns of Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, King James, King Charles the First, Part of the Reign of King Charles the Second, and Oliver's Usurpation*, (London: T. Osborne, 1746), Vol. II, p. 142. URL: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015014689569&view=1up&seq=166>

¹²⁵³ For Sir John Tyndall (d. 12 November 1616), whose wife, Anne, was the sister of Stephen Egerton, preacher at the Blackfriars, see Waters, Robert Edmond Chester, *Genealogical Memoirs of the Extinct Family of Chester of Chicheley*, (London: Robson and Sons, 1878), Vol. I pp. 278-9. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=JeoJAwAAQBAJ&pg=PA278>

Elizabeth Vere, and her husband had gone to Castle Hedingham intending to remain at a lodge there for a month, but instead had returned to London the following day, having spent the night at the home of Oxford's first cousin, John Vere of Kirby Hall:

*Right honourable, I am informed by one Mr Edmunds that dwelleth in one of the parks belonging to Castle Hedingham manor that my Lord of Derby and the Lady, his wife, were at the Castle upon Saturday last, and pretended to make their abode thereabouts for a month, and for that purpose did in the morning send unto this gentleman to give him warning that they were desirous to have that lodge for that purpose, and in the afternoon their Honours came themselves and viewed the house, but then spake nothing thereof. But after their departure Mr John Vere came to Edmunds and told him that their pleasures was that he should within one month remove from thence for that they minded to take that house and ground into their own hands. They lay that night at Mr Vere's, and the next morning returned to London. This in my duty I thought fit to signify unto your Honour, that as occasion shall be offered your Honour may know of his Lordship his further purpose. And as I shall learn more, I will be ready to acquaint your Honour therewith.*¹²⁵⁴

After Bridget Vere's marriage, Oxford's twelve-year-old daughter, Susan, was left alone at Chenies with the aged Dowager Countess, an arrangement the Dowager Countess herself thought unsuitable. On 23 June the Dowager Countess wrote to Henry Maynard:

*. . . My Lady Susan has complained these three or four days, but whether it will prove the worms or measles I cannot perceive. My earnest request to Mr Secretary is to send down one most fit to look after her estate,¹²⁵⁵ and to advise what is to be done; without this I shall not be satisfied. I desire you to pray his favour herein, ad you will make me much beholden.*¹²⁵⁶

A letter written in August by the Countess to Cecil himself makes it clear that by 'estate' she was not referring to Susan Vere's inheritance, but to Susan's well-being. It seems Cecil had by then promised to do something, since the Dowager Countess reminds him that he is to deliver Susan from 'this solitary imprisonment':

Good Master Secretary, I pray bear with these few lines, being so much busied in her Majesty's weightiest affairs as you are. My Lady Susan, I thank God, is very well, and I hope you will remember to deliver her from this solitary imprisonment. I assure you, there are very many good things in her, and I find her very tractable to my understanding. I nothing doubt but you shall reap both many and great comforts by her.

Francis Norris is gone this journey without my consent or liking, yet my hope is the same

¹²⁵⁴ TNA SP 12/270/108, f. 186.

¹²⁵⁵ State or condition in general, whether material or moral, bodily or mental. (OED).

¹²⁵⁶ CSPD 1598-1601, p. 217; Nelson, p. 379, citing TNA SP 12/270/101, f. 176. Nelson omits the Dowager Countess' firm request that Cecil send someone to Chenies to deal with matters concerning Susan Vere.

*God that preserved him at land will also defend him at sea.*¹²⁵⁷

Susan likely went to live with her newly-married sister, Bridget, at Rycote at about this time. On 26 February 1602, in a letter to Cecil, Thomas Bellot indicated that he had offered to pay for board for Susan and two servants:

*I offered to pay my Lord [Norris] for my Lady Susan and two servants' board, but he would take nothing.*¹²⁵⁸

Susan was already at court by February 1602, and it appears Bellot was offering to pay Francis Norris for her board when she and her servants had lived at Rycote earlier.

On 23 August 1599 John Chamberlain mentioned in a letter to Dudley Carleton that Oxford's wife, Elizabeth Trentham, had been the Queen's deputy at the christening of Lady Hatton's¹²⁵⁹ daughter:

*The Lady Hatton is brought abed of a daughter, which stops the mouth of the old slander. It was christened with great solemnity, the Queen (by her deputy the Lady of Oxford), and the Countess Dowager of Derby being godmothers, and the Lord Treasurer¹²⁶⁰ godfather.*¹²⁶¹

In 1599 John Farmer dedicated a second book to Oxford, *The First Set of English Madrigals*,¹²⁶² expressing gratitude for Oxford's patronage, and alluding to Oxford's own musical ability:

*I have presumed to tender these madrigals only as remembrances of my service and witnesses of your Lordship's liberal hand by which I have so long lived, and from your honourable mind that so much have loved all liberal sciences. In this I shall be most encouraged if your Lordship vouchsafe the protection of my first-fruits, for that both for your greatness you best can, and for your judgment in music best may, for without flattery be it spoken, those that know your Lordship know this, that using this science as a recreation your Lordship have overgone most of them that make it a profession.*¹²⁶³

Two entries in the Stationers' Register attest to the continued existence of Oxford's Men

¹²⁵⁷ TNA SP 12/272/95, f. 150. Nelson, p. 379, erroneously states that Francis Norris 'went abroad'.

¹²⁵⁸ *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquis of Salisbury*, Part XI – XII, (Dublin: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1906), pp. 61-2. URL: <https://archive.org/details/calendarofmanusc11greauoft/page/60/mode/2up>

¹²⁵⁹ Aughterson, Kate, "Hatton, Elizabeth, Lady Hatton [*née* Lady Elizabeth Cecil; *other married name* Elizabeth Coke, Lady Coke] (1578–1646)", *ODNB*.

¹²⁶⁰ Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst.

¹²⁶¹ TNA SP 12/272/68; McClure, Vol. I, p. 85; Nelson, p. 379.

¹²⁶² STC 10697; Nelson, pp. 381-2; Eggar, *supra*, pp. 41-2.

¹²⁶³ Nelson, pp. 381-2.

in the early 1600s. *The Weakest Goeth to the Wall* was registered on 23 October 1600 as having been 'sundry times played by the right honourable the Earl of Oxenford, Lord Great Chamberlain of England, his servants', while *The True History of George Scanderbeg* was registered on 3 July 1601 'as it was lately played by the right honourable the Earl of Oxenford his servants'.¹²⁶⁴

In the same year, George Baker dedicated a second book to Oxford, his *Practice of the New and Old Physic*,¹²⁶⁵ a translation of a work by Conrad Gesner, stating that he had published it under Oxford's 'honourable protection . . . because your wit, learning and authority hath great force and strength in repressing the curious crakes of the envious'.¹²⁶⁶

In 1599, Elizabeth Trentham had exchanged gifts New Year's gifts with the Queen,¹²⁶⁷ she did so again in 1600:

*By the Countess of Oxenford, one round kirtle of silver tabin [=silk taffeta] with slips of white silk like velvet and tufts of carnation silk. with some gold. Delivered to the Robes.*¹²⁶⁸

1600 the epistle 'To the Reader' in *Bel-vedère or The Garden of the Muses* stated that the volume contained unidentified excerpts from Oxford's poetry.¹²⁶⁹

On 6 April 1600, Sir Walter Raleigh wrote to Henry, Lord Cobham, concerning the post of Governor of the Isle of Jersey held by the dying Sir Anthony Paulet:¹²⁷⁰

*I can write your Lordship nothing from hence but that we live. I have written to Master Secretary [Cecil] that I would be glad that her Majesty were but proved [=decided] for Paulet's matter, though I hope not after it, or aught else, but if there be neither honour nor profit, I must begin to keep sheep by time betimes.*¹²⁷¹

After Paulet's death on 22 July 1600, likely unaware that Raleigh had approached Cecil months earlier, Oxford requested Cecil's help in securing the position, again citing the Queen's unfulfilled promises to him:

¹²⁶⁴ Nelson, p. 391.

¹²⁶⁵ STC 11799.

¹²⁶⁶ Nelson, p. 382.

¹²⁶⁷ Nelson, p. 374, citing Folger Shakespeare Library MS Z.d.17, 'New Year's gift roll of Elizabeth I, Queen of England [manuscript], 1598/9 January 1'.

¹²⁶⁸ Nelson, p. 394; Nichols, John, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, (London: John Nichols and Son, 1823), Vol. III, p. 446. URL: <https://archive.org/details/progressespublic03nichuoft/page/446/mode/2up>

¹²⁶⁹ *Bodenham's Belvedere, or The Garden of the Muses*, (Spenser Society, 1875). URL: <https://archive.org/stream/bodenhamsbelved00bodegoog#page/n27/mode/2up>

¹²⁷⁰ Sir Anthony Paulet (d. 22 July 1600) was the son of Sir Amias Paulet. He married Katherine Norris, the aunt of Oxford's son-in-law, Francis Norris.

¹²⁷¹ Latham, p. 189.

*Although my bad success in former suits to her Majesty have given me cause to bury my hopes in the deep abyss and bottom of despair rather than now to attempt, after so many trials made in vain & so many opportunities escaped, the effects of fair words or fruits of golden promises, yet for that I cannot believe but that there hath been always a true correspondency of word and intention in her Majesty, I do conjecture that with a little help that which of itself hath brought forth so fair blossoms will also yield fruit. Wherefore having moved her Majesty lately about the office of the Isle*¹²⁷²

The Queen bestowed the post on Raleigh, who was appointed Governor of Jersey on 26 August 1600.¹²⁷³

On 2 February 1601 Oxford again wrote to Cecil for his support, this time for the office of President of Wales.¹²⁷⁴ As with his former suits, Oxford was again unsuccessful.

About this time Oxford was also listed on the Pipe Rolls as owing £20 for the subsidy.¹²⁷⁵

At some time in 1601 Thomas Raynton, a former servant of Lord Burghley who was now attendant on Oxford's youngest daughter, Susan de Vere, requested of Cecil the wardship of the son of John Cave of Chancery Lane,¹²⁷⁶ 'the lands being of small yearly value'.¹²⁷⁷

The Danvers Escheat

After the abortive Essex rebellion on 8 February 1601, Oxford was 'the senior of the twenty-five noblemen' who rendered verdicts at the treason trials of Essex and Southampton.¹²⁷⁸ Essex's co-conspirator, Sir Charles Danvers,¹²⁷⁹ was executed on 18 March 1601, and Oxford became involved in a complicated law suit concerning the Queen's right to lands which had escheated to the Crown at Danvers' attainder, a suit opposed by Danvers' kinsmen.¹²⁸⁰ On 7 August Lord Buckhurst and Sir John Fortescue¹²⁸¹ wrote to the Attorney-General, Sir Edward Coke,¹²⁸² that 'my Lord of Oxford doth desire that he may have a copy of the case as you have collected it out of the

¹²⁷² CP 251/28; Nelson, p. 394.

¹²⁷³ Nicolas, Nicholas Harris, *The Poetical Rhapsody*, (London: William Pickering, 1826), Vol. I, p. xcix. URL:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=UdUIAAAQAAJ&pg=PR99>

¹²⁷⁴ CP 76/34; Nelson, pp. 396-8.

¹²⁷⁵ Nelson, p. 396.

¹²⁷⁶ For the will of John Cave (d. 21 November 1601), see TNA PROB 11/98/483.

¹²⁷⁷ CP Petitions 229.

¹²⁷⁸ Nelson, p. 397.

¹²⁷⁹ Hammer, Paul E.J., "Danvers, Sir Charles (c.1568–1601)", *ODNB*.

¹²⁸⁰ CP 89/124; ERO D/DRg 2/26; Nelson, pp. 398-402, 407.

¹²⁸¹ Lowe, J. Andreas, "Fortescue, Sir John (1533–1607)", *ODNB*.

¹²⁸² Boyer, Allen D., "Coke, Sir Edward (1552–1634)", *ODNB*.

evidences showed before us to the intent he may consider thereof with his learned counsel for the benefit of her Majesty, as he affirmeth, the which we think fit he have'.¹²⁸³

While pursuing the Danvers suit, Oxford continued to suffer from ill health. On 7 October he wrote to Cecil saying that 'if my health had been to my mind, I would have been before this at the court'.¹²⁸⁴ On 22 November he wrote again, saying that 'In that I have not sent an answer to your last letter as you might expect, I shall desire you to hold me for excused sith ever sithence the receipt thereof by reason of my sickness I have not been able to write', and asking that Cecil 'bear with the weakness of my lame hand'.¹²⁸⁵

On 4 December Oxford wrote again to Cecil, expressing shock that Cecil, who had encouraged him to undertake the Danvers suit, had now withdrawn his support:

*I cannot conceive in so short a time & in so small an absence how so great a change is happened in you, for in the beginning of my suit to her Majesty I was doubtful to enter thereinto both for the want I had of friends and the doubt of the Careys, but I was encouraged by you, who did not only assure me to be an assured friend unto me, but further did undertake to move it to her, which you so well performed that that after some dispute her Majesty was contented. In that good beginning I was promised favour, that I should have assistance of her Majesty's counsel in law, that I should have expedition, but for favour the other party hitherto hath found much more, and as for assistance of her Majesty's counsel, who hath been more, nay only against me, the expedition hath been such that what might have been done in one month is now almost a year deferred.*¹²⁸⁶

As with his other suits aimed at improving his financial situation, the last of Oxford's suits to the Queen ended in disappointment. On 22 March 1602 he wrote to Cecil: 'It is now a year sithence by your only means her Majesty granted her interest in Danvers' escheat. I had only then her word from your mouth. I find by this waste of time that lands will not be carried without deeds.'¹²⁸⁷

Oxford's only successful suit to the Queen during these years involved his playing company. On 31 March 1602 the Privy Council sent a letter to the Lord Mayor of London, Sir John Garrard (d.1546-1625):

We received your letter signifying some amendment of the abuses or disorders by the immoderate exercise of stage plays in and about the city by means of our late order renewed for the restraint of them, and withal showing a special inconvenience yet remaining by reason that the servants of our very good Lord the Earl of Oxford, and of me, the Earl of Worcester, being joined by agreement together in one company, to whom, upon notice of her Majesty's pleasure at the suit of the Earl of Oxford, toleration hath

¹²⁸³ TNA SP 12/281/45, f. 90; Nelson, p. 399.

¹²⁸⁴ CP 88/101; Nelson, p. 400.

¹²⁸⁵ CP 89/124; Nelson, pp. 400-1.

¹²⁸⁶ CP 89/148; Nelson, p. 401.

¹²⁸⁷ CP 181/99; Nelson, p. 401.

*been thought meet to be granted, notwithstanding the restraint of our said former orders, do not tie themselves to one certain place and house, but do change their place at their own disposition, which is as disorderly and offensive as the former offence of many houses, and as the other companies that are allowed, namely of me, the Lord Admiral, and the Lord Chamberlain, be appointed their certain houses, and one and no more to each company, so we do straitly require that this third company be likewise appointed to one place. And because we are informed the house called the Boar's Head is the place they have especially used and do best like of, we do pray and require you that that said house, namely the Boar's Head, may be assigned unto them, and that they be very straitly charged to use and exercise their plays in no other but that house, as they will look to have that toleration continued and avoid farther displeasure.*¹²⁸⁸

Early negotiations for Susan Vere's marriage

In early 1602, when she was a few months short of her fifteenth birthday,¹²⁸⁹ Susan Vere wrote to Sir Robert Cecil, assuring him that she would never marry without his consent.

Right honourable my very good uncle, now give me leave to presume to write these lines in grief for fear of your hard opinion of me. I hear by my brother [=brother-in-law] Norris that there is some speeches given out, which I am very sorry that you should have such a hard conceit of me, which I protest, as I have any truth in me, I will never match with any without your consent. I desire nothing so much than to have the truth to be known in this matter, and then I trust you would be satisfied.

*I know not what to say or do, but remain in sorrow for the speeches that many will speak of, but I hope you will not give credit unto them. I beseech you to think so much as my heart doth vow to you, that I will never see nor hear of any in that sort but such as shall be appointed by you.*¹²⁹⁰

The basis for the rumours of Susan's marriage which had reached Cecil's ears is disclosed in a letter written to him on 3 February 1602 by Dorothy Clerke Long Morison (d.1618), daughter-in-law of the Dowager Countess of Bedford, concerning a proposed marriage between Susan and her son, Charles Morison (see above):

I beseech your Honour, seeing it pleaseth not God to afford me the happiness to be able myself to attend your Honour, grant leave to these lines to answer a conceived error that I should commit which I entreated my honourable Lord Grey to deliver the truth of to your Honour, both touching myself and my son, who forbare to presume to wait on you then, in respect he heard you were so much incensed against us both for seeking to take unfitting courses towards my honourable Lady Susan Vere, to whom neither of us will live to be so forgetful of the honour we owe to yourself, as also the due that we will ever

¹²⁸⁸ Nelson, pp. 391-2; Chambers, p. 225.

¹²⁸⁹ The letter is endorsed '1601', but likely dates from 1602 New Style.

¹²⁹⁰ CP 183/123.

acknowledge to her, whom I assured myself would do nothing without your knowledge and honourable consent, which I had no good grounds to presume to trouble your Honour for, of whose favour, as my son and I have already tasted, and rest most bound to your Honour for, so would we further have presumed to have acquainted your Honour with the cause before it had been laid open to the speech of the world, which I beseech you think proceeded from neither of us, nor with our consents.

*But seeing it hath so fallen out to be brought in question, and that it rests wholly in your honourable liking and consent, I humbly entreat you to allow my son the favour to seek to deserve the pretty Lady's affection (who both for the virtues and kindness we have found from her will ever honour, holding it more precious than what she shall be worth besides), which we only leave to your honourable favour and direction and the rest of her honourable friends, and my son by you to be disposed of, who is most dear unto me, and shall be much the more if it will please your Honour to grace him with your good conceit, which I will do my best to make his deserts worthy of.*¹²⁹¹

It seems likely that while Susan was living at Chenies, or perhaps with her sister, Bridget, at Rycote, she had met the Dowager Countess' grandson, Charles Morison. After this contretemps Cecil appears to have speedily placed Susan at court. She is recorded as being 'of the privy chamber' in 1602,¹²⁹² and on 16 December of that year her signature appears beneath the description of a gown in an inventory of the Queen's wardrobe:

*23 Item, one round gown of yellow satin cut and lined with black sarcenet, wrought all over with short staves billet-wise with flat silver, with a like passment.
Susanna Veare.*¹²⁹³

From 31 July to 3 August 1602, the Queen was at Harefield visiting the Lord Keeper, Sir Thomas Egerton, and his third wife, Alice Spencer, widow of Ferdinando Stanley, 5th Earl of Derby, whom he had married in October 1600.¹²⁹⁴ Included in the entertainment was a lottery in which some of the verses were accompanied by gifts such as rings and writing tables, while other verses had no accompanying gifts. One of the latter was drawn by Oxford's daughter, Susan Vere. Her verses contain a clever play on the words 'nothing' and 'told' (in the sense of 'reckoning the value of'):

Nothing's your lot. That's more than can be told,

¹²⁹¹ CP 85/8; Nelson, p. 406.

¹²⁹² See Emerson, Kathy Lynn, 'A Who's Who of Tudor Women', entry for Susan Vere. URL: http://www.tudorwomen.com/?page_id=713

¹²⁹³ BL Stowe 557, f. 26v.

¹²⁹⁴ See Baker, "Egerton, Thomas", *ODNB*, *supra*. The marriage was not a success. In 1610 Egerton wrote: 'I thank God I never desired long life, nor ever had less cause to desire it than since this, my last marriage, for before I was never acquainted with such tempests and storms'.

*For nothing is more precious than gold.*¹²⁹⁵

¹²⁹⁵ Sorlien, Robert Parker, *The Diary of John Manningham of the Middle Temple 1602-1603*, (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1976), pp. 182, 376. For a list of the ladies present at Harefield, see Chambers, E.K., *The Elizabethan Stage*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1923), Vol. IV, pp. 67-8. URL: <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.2906/page/n79/mode/2up>

H. FINAL YEARS

At New Year's 1600, Elizabeth Trentham exchanged gifts with the Queen.¹²⁹⁶

In the early morning of 24 March 1603 Queen Elizabeth died without naming a successor.¹²⁹⁷ A few days before the Queen's death Oxford entertained Henry Clinton, 2nd Earl of Lincoln, a nobleman known for his erratic and violent behaviour, at his house at Hackney. Lincoln was well known to Oxford, as by his second marriage he was the son-in-law of the Dowager Countess of Bedford,¹²⁹⁸ with whom Oxford's daughters, Bridget and Susan Vere, had lived after Lord Burghley's death, and from whose house at Chenies Oxford's daughter, Bridget Vere, had been married to the Dowager Countess' grandson, Francis Norris.

By his first marriage to Katherine Hastings, the daughter of Francis Hastings, 2nd Earl of Huntingdon,¹²⁹⁹ and Katherine Pole,¹³⁰⁰ Lincoln had a nephew with royal blood, and after they had dined, Oxford attempted to determine whether Lincoln was planning to support his nephew's claim to the crown:

*[He] discourse[d] with him of the impossibility of the Queen's life, and that the nobility, being peers of the realm, were bound to take care for the common good of the state in the cause of succession, in the which himself, meaning the Earl of Lincoln, ought to have more regard than others because he had a nephew of the blood royal, naming my Lord Hastings, whom he persuaded the Earl of Lincoln to send for, and that there should be means used to convey him over into France where he should find friends that would make him a party, of the which there was a precedent in former times.*¹³⁰¹

Lincoln relayed his conversation with Oxford to Sir John Peyton,¹³⁰² Lieutenant of the Tower, who later defended his refusal to take Lincoln's report as a serious threat to King

¹²⁹⁶ Nelson, p. 409, citing PRO C 47/3/41 ('Rolls of New Year's Gifts Given to and by Elizabeth I').

¹²⁹⁷ Nelson, p. 408.

¹²⁹⁸ The 2nd Earl of Lincoln was the second husband of the Dowager Countess of Bedford's daughter, Elizabeth Morison. See TNA SP 12/270/101, f. 176.

¹²⁹⁹ Cross, Claire, "Hastings, Francis, second earl of Huntingdon (1513/14–1560)", *ODNB*.

¹³⁰⁰ Daughter and coheir of Henry Pole, Baron Montagu, and granddaughter of Sir Richard Pole (1458/9–1504) and Margaret Plantagenet (1473–1541), Countess of Salisbury, daughter of George, Duke of Clarence. See Meyer, T.F., "Pole, Henry, Baron Montagu (1492–1539)", *ODNB*.

¹³⁰¹ TNA SP 14/4/14, ff. 27-9; Nelson, p. 414. The precedent was the 13th Earl of Oxford's support for the future Henry VII while he was in France (see above).

¹³⁰² Evans, Helen M.E., "Peyton, Sir John (1544–1630)", *ODNB*.

James¹³⁰³ accession:

*At the first apprehension of my Lord of Lincoln's discovery I was much moved and troubled, but when he had made me understand what great person it was whom he meant, I knew him to be so weak in body, in friends, in ability and all other means to raise any combustion in the state as I never feared anything to proceed from so feeble a foundation.*¹³⁰⁴

Clearly, Peyton and Lincoln were thoroughly taken in by Oxford's indirect probing of Lincoln's loyalties, since five or six days after the Queen's death Peyton and Lincoln had a fourth conversation in which Lincoln expressed his surprise at finding Oxford's name on the proclamation of James as King of England on March 24th.¹³⁰⁵

Neither Peyton nor Lincoln was aware that Oxford was almost certainly the person code-named '40' in the secret correspondence between King James and a few select individuals in England prior to the Queen's death. On the other hand, Cecil, to whom Peyton addressed both his letter and report, was the person code-named '10' in that secret correspondence, and would have known that Oxford was '40' and that Oxford's loyalties lay with King James, and that he was acting on James' behalf in sounding out Lincoln's position. The rewards Oxford received immediately after King James' accession also lend support to the hypothesis that Oxford was '40'.

On 25 and 27 April 1603 Oxford wrote to Cecil:

*I have always found myself beholding to you for many kindnesses and courtesies, wherefore I am bold at this present, which giveth occasion of many considerations, to desire you as my very good friend and kind brother-in-law to impart to me what course is devised by you of the Council & the rest of the Lords concerning our duties to the King's Majesty, whether you do expect any messenger before his coming to let us understand his pleasure, or else his personal arrival to be presently or very shortly. And, if it be so, what order is resolved on amongst you, either for the attending or meeting of his Majesty for, by reason of mine infirmity, I cannot come among you so often as I wish, and by reason my house is not so near that at every occasion I can be present, as were fit.*¹³⁰⁶

In the same letter Oxford expressed his grief at the late Queen's death, and his fears for the future:

I cannot but find a great grief in myself to remember the mistress which we have lost, under whom both you and myself from our greenest years have been in a manner brought

¹³⁰³ Wormald, Jenny, "James VI and I (1566–1625)", *ODNB*.

¹³⁰⁴ TNA SP 14/4/14, ff. 27-9; TNA SP 14/3/77, f. 134; Nelson, p. 415.

¹³⁰⁵ Folger Library MX X.d.30(42); STC 8297; Larkin, James F. and Paul L. Hughes, *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, Vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp. 1-4; Nelson, p. 415.

¹³⁰⁶ CP 99/150; Nelson, pp. 418-9.

*up, and although it hath pleased God after an earthly kingdom to take her up into a more permanent and heavenly state wherein I do not doubt but she is crowned with glory, and to give us a prince wise, learned and enriched with all virtues, yet the long time which we spent in her service we cannot look for so much left of our days as to bestow upon another, neither the long acquaintance and kind familiarities wherewith she did use us we are not ever to expect from another prince, as denied by the infirmity of age and common course of reason. In this common shipwreck, mine is above all the rest who, least regarded though often comforted of all her followers, she hath left to try my fortune among the alterations of time and chance, either without sail whereby to take the advantage of any prosperous gale or with anchor to ride till the storm be overpassed. There is nothing therefore left to my comfort but the excellent virtues and deep wisdom wherewith God hath endued our new master and sovereign Lord, who doth not come amongst us as a stranger but as a natural prince, succeeding by right of blood and inheritance, not as a conqueror but as the true shepherd of Christ's flock to cherish and comfort them.*¹³⁰⁷

Oxford fears were ill-founded, however. In letters to Cecil in May and June 1603 he again pressed his decades-long claim to be restored to the keepership of Waltham Forest and the house and park of Havering, and on 18 July 1603 the new King granted his suit.¹³⁰⁸ On 25 July Oxford was among those who officiated at the King's coronation.¹³⁰⁹ He also submitted a claim to serve as Queen's chamberlain at her coronation.¹³¹⁰ On 2 August King James confirmed Oxford's annuity of £1000.¹³¹¹

When Oxford's daughter Susan went to meet the new Queen, Anne of Denmark, in the spring of 1603, Thomas Bellot helped defray her expenses.¹³¹²

In a letter dated 22 July 1611 written by Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham (see *infra*),¹³¹³ we learn that Oxford's son, Henry de Vere, entered the service of James I's son, the Prince of Wales, at about this time.

Two of Oxford's daughters were included in the masques at court in the Christmas season of 1603-4. On 15 January, Dudley Carleton described the festivities to John Chamberlain:

We have had here a merry Christmas. . . . The first holidays we had every night a public play in the great hall, at which the King was ever present, and liked or disliked as he saw

¹³⁰⁷ CP 99/150; Nelson, p. 419.

¹³⁰⁸ TNA SP 14/2/63, f. 160; TNA C 66/1612, mm. 27-28; Nelson, pp. 420-1, 423.

¹³⁰⁹ Nichols, John, *The Progresses, Processions and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First*, Vol. I (London: J.B. Nichols, 1828), pp. 230, 233.

¹³¹⁰ Nelson, p. 423. The 13th Earl served as Queen's chamberlain at the coronation of Elizabeth Woodville in May 1465; see Ross, p. 58.

¹³¹¹ TNA E 403/2598; Nelson, p. 423.

¹³¹² Barnett, *Place, Profit and Power*, p. 34, citing HMC Salisbury XV, p. 391.

¹³¹³ TNA SP 14/65/49, ff. 76-8.

*cause, but it seems he takes no extraordinary pleasure in them. The Queen and Prince were more the players' friends, for on other nights they had them privately, and have since taken them to their protection.*¹³¹⁴

It is sometimes asserted that King James was fond of plays, but Dudley Carleton's first-hand impression suggests otherwise. Carleton next describes a masque in which Oxford's two daughters, as well as Susan's future husband, Philip Herbert, all played their parts:

On New Year's night we had a play of Robin Goodfellow, and a masque brought in by a magician out of China. . . .for the ordinary measures they took out the Queen, the Ladies of Derby, Hertford, Suffolk, Bedford, Susan Vere, Southwell the elder, and Rich. In the corantoes they ran over some other of the young ladies, and so ended as they began, with a song, and that done, the magician dissolved his enchantment and made the masquers appear in their likeness to be the Earl of Pembroke, the Duke, Monsieur d'Aubigny, young Somerset, Philip Herbert the young Bucephal, James Hay, Richard Preston, and Sir Henry Goodyere. Their attire was rich, but somewhat too heavy and cumbersome for dancers, which put them beside their galliards.

There was another play on the twelfth day of Christmas, and on the Sunday following, 'the great day of the Queen's masque', in which Susan Vere again played a role:

The Lady Bedford and the Lady Susan took out the two ambassadors, and they bestirred themselves very lively, especially the Spaniard, for his Spanish galliard showed himself a lusty old reveller.

On 18 June 1604 Oxford granted the offices of bailiff and keeper of the Forest of Essex and the offices of bailiff and keeper of the King's houses and park of Havering to his son-in-law, Francis Norris, and his first cousin, Sir Francis Vere, for eleven years, until his son and heir, Henry de Vere, came of age.¹³¹⁵ The transaction is recorded in the inquisition post mortem taken after Oxford's death:

[The jurors] say upon their oath that the foresaid Earl of Oxford on the day on which he died was seised in his demesne as of fee of the office of bailiff of the whole forest in and of Essex in the foresaid county of Essex, and of keeper and steward of the same forest, and also of and in the bailiwick and keeping of the park and houses of the Lord King of Havering in the said county of Essex, and also of divers fees, profits, commodities, advantages, immunities and privileges to the foresaid offices belonging and appertaining, as by divers evidences in writing to the foresaid jurors in manifest evidences more fully is clear and appears;

And the foresaid jurors further say upon their oath that the foresaid Earl, seised of the foresaid offices in the form aforesaid, before his death by his deed sealed by his seal at

¹³¹⁴ TNA SP 14/6/21; Nelson, p.

¹³¹⁵ Ward, p. 347; Nelson, p. 425.

*arms bearing date the eighteenth day of June in the second year [=18 June 1604] of the reign of the said Lord King of England, France and Ireland, and of Scotland the thirty-seventh, to the foresaid jurors similarly [+appearing] in manifest evidences, for the considerations in the foresaid deed mentioned and expressed, demised and granted to Francis, Lord Norris, and Francis Vere, knight, of [sic] the offices of keeper and steward of the foresaid forest and all and singular the profits and commodities to the same offices appertaining and(?) of them and of any of them appertaining, to have and hold to the same Francis, Lord Norris and Francis Vere, knight, their executors and assigns, from the feast of the Annunciation of Blessed Mary the Virgin then last past until the end and term of eleven years thereafter next following and fully to be completed, by virtue of which demise the same Francis, Lord Norris, and Francis Vere, knight, were and still are possessed thereof.*¹³¹⁶

Six days later Oxford died on 24 June 1604¹³¹⁷ of unknown causes¹³¹⁸ at King's Place, Hackney, without leaving a will, and was buried on 6 July in the parish church of St Augustine.¹³¹⁹ St Augustine's no longer exists:

*The body of the church was pulled down in 1798, regretted by some as an antiquity that was sound, spacious, and unusually rich in monuments.*¹³²⁰

There are two registrations of Oxford's burial:

*Edward de Veare Erle of Oxenford was buried the 6th daye of Iulye Anno 1604.*¹³²¹

*Edward Veare earl of Oxford.*¹³²²

In her will, his widow, Elizabeth Trentham, requested that she be buried as near to Oxford as possible, and that a tomb be erected to their memory:

. . . in which hope and full assurance of a joyful resurrection at the last day I joyfully

¹³¹⁶ TNA C 142/286/165; Ward, p. 347; Nelson, p. 425.

¹³¹⁷ TNA C 142/286/165; Ward, p. 347; Nelson, p. 425.

¹³¹⁸ Ward's speculation, p. 347, that Oxford died of the plague, is discounted by Nelson, p. 426.

¹³¹⁹ Ward, p. 347. Nelson, p. 425, erroneously states that Oxford was buried in the churchyard.

¹³²⁰ 'Hackney: The Parish Church', in *A History of the County of Middlesex: Volume 10, Hackney*, ed. T F T Baker (London, 1995), pp. 115-122. *British History Online*. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/middx/vol10/pp115-122>

¹³²¹ London Metropolitan Archive P79/JN/21, f. 197v. According to Paul, this is the original register. See Paul, Christopher, 'A Monument Without a Tomb; The Mystery of Oxford's Death', *The Oxfordian*, Vol. VII, 2004, pp. 6-68 at pp. 29-31. URL: <https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/the-oxfordian/>

¹³²² London Metropolitan Archive P79/JN1/22. According to Paul, *supra*, a copy of the foregoing. See also Nelson, p. 425.

*commit my body to the earth from whence it was taken, desiring to be buried in the Church of Hackney within the County of Middlesex as near unto the body of my said late dear and noble lord and husband as may be, and that to be done as privately and with as little pomp and ceremony as possible may be, only I will that there be in the said church erected for us a tomb fitting our degree, and of such charge as shall seem good to mine executors hereafter named.*¹³²³

Although the Countess's will did not specify the amount to be bestowed on the tomb, John Chamberlain, writing to Sir Ralph Winwood on 9 January 1613, mentions a figure of £500:

*The Countess of Oxford is dead of this new disease,¹³²⁴ and left her son toward £1500 land and all her jewels and stuff on condition he pay her legacies, which rise to £2000, and bestow £500 on a tomb for his father and her.*¹³²⁵

Whether Elizabeth Trentham's executors carried out her wishes is unknown. If Winwood's claim that the Countess' bequests exceeded her assets is more than mere gossip, the executors may have found themselves with insufficient funds. If they were successful in carrying out her wishes, it seems possible the tomb was originally in what came to be called the Rowe chapel, built in 1614:

*The church of St. John, which stood east of Church Street, was called St. Augustine's from the 14th to the 17th century. From c. 1660 it was known as St. John of Jerusalem, St. John the Baptist, or simply as St. John at Hackney. Only the 16th-century tower survives from what may have been a complete rebuilding. . . . The so-called Rowe chapel, properly a mausoleum, was built on the south side of the chancel in 1614.*¹³²⁶

The possibility that this was the tomb of Oxford and Elizabeth Trentham is supported by the fact that there is some admitted confusion concerning Sir Thomas Rowe's monument:

*Dr. Robinson [in his 'History of Hackney'] mentions a beautiful monument to Sir Thomas Roe, dated 1612, in the south wall of the chancel. This is the same date as the one in the Rowe Chapel, and there appears to be some confusion, as no such monument appears in the plan in the possession of J.R. Daniel-Tyssen, Esq. It may have been set up in the chancel, and removed to the chapel when the latter was finished in 1614.*¹³²⁷

Although the Countess's will and the parish registers confirm Oxford's burial at Hackney,

¹³²³ TNA PROB 11/121/171.

¹³²⁴ Nelson, p. 440, speculates that the Countess died of typhoid fever.

¹³²⁵ McClure, Vol. I, pp. 402-6; Nichols, James, Vol. II, p. 450, note 4.

¹³²⁶ URL: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/middx/vol10/pp115-122>.

¹³²⁷ Simpson, R., *Some Notices of the Life of Henry, Lord Percy, Sixth Earl of Northumberland, and of the Parish Church of St. Augustine, Afterwards St. John at Hackney*, (Guildford, Surrey: Billing and Sons, 1879), p. 49. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=-J4HAAAQAQAJ&pg=PA48-IA3>

Percival Golding,¹³²⁸ son of the translator, Arthur Golding, stated in *The Arms, Honours, Matches and Issues of the Ancient and Illustrious Family of Vere* that his body lies at Westminster:

*Edward de Vere, only son of John, born the twelfth day of April Anno 1550, Earl of Oxenford, High Chamberlain, Lord Bulbeck, Sandford and Badlesmere, Steward of the Forest in Essex and of the Privy Council to the King's Majesty that now is, of whom I will only speak what all men's voices confirm: he was a man in mind and body absolutely accomplished with honourable endowments. He died at his house at Hackney in the month of June Anno 1604, and lieth buried at Westminster.*¹³²⁹

¹³²⁸ Percival Golding (1579-1635) was the son of Oxford's uncle, the translator, Arthur Golding, and thus Oxford's first cousin of the half blood. See the will of John Golding, TNA PROB 11/32/177.

¹³²⁹ BL MS Harley 41, f. 89; College of Arms, MS Vincent 445, f. 51, according to Nelson a copy of Harley 41, f. 89; Ward, p. 348; Nelson, pp. 431, 486.

PART III LITERARY REPUTATION

A stream of dedications attests to Oxford's intellectual reputation and his lifelong patronage of writers, musicians and actors. Stephen May terms Oxford 'a nobleman with extraordinary intellectual interests and commitments', whose biography exhibits a 'lifelong devotion to learning'.¹³³⁰ Concerning Oxford's patronage, he writes:

*The range of Oxford's patronage is as remarkable as its substance. . . . Among the thirty-three works dedicated to the Earl, six deal with religion and philosophy, two with music, and three with medicine; but the focus of his patronage was literary, for thirteen of the books presented to him were original and translated works of literature. Thus forty percent of the books offered to the Earl were literary, and even if we subtract all seven dedications by the prolific Munday, this category would still account of almost one fourth of the total. By contrast, peers of similar means and with some reputation for cultivating the arts were rather less sought after by Elizabethan men of letters.*¹³³¹

As noted above, Oxford maintained companies of boy actors and men players in the years from 1580 to 1602, held the lease of the Blackfriars Theatre for a time, and patronized a company of musicians.

Oxford also had a high reputation as a poet amongst his contemporaries, and his verses were published in several miscellanies. Both Webbe and Puttenham praised his poetic ability, and the latter quoted his verses:¹³³²

*When wert thou borne desire?
In pompe and pryme of May,
By whom sweete boy wert thou begot?
By good conceit men say,
Tell me who was thy nurse?
Fresh youth in sugred ioy.
What was thy meate and dayly foode?
Sad sighes with great annoy.
What hadst thou then to drinke?
Vnfayned louers teares.
What cradle wert thou rocked in?
In hope deuoyde of feares.*

¹³³⁰ May, 'The Poems of Edward de Vere', *supra*, p. 8.

¹³³¹ May, *The Poems of Edward de Vere*, p. 9.

¹³³² Willcocks, 1936, p. 206.

In *Shakespeare Identified*,¹³³³ published in 1920, J. Thomas Looney, an English schoolteacher, proposed Oxford as a candidate for the authorship of Shakespeare's works. His theory, based on perceived analogies between Oxford's life and poetic techniques and Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, gradually replaced Francis Bacon's¹³³⁴ ascendancy in the field.

¹³³³ Looney, J. Thomas, "*Shakespeare*" *Identified* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1920). URL: <http://www.shakespearefellowship.org/etexts/si/00.htm>

¹³³⁴ Peltonen, Markku, "Bacon, Francis, Viscount St Alban (1561–1626)", *ODNB*.

PART IV HEIRS AND INHERITANCE

A. Oxford's Widow, Elizabeth Trentham

Oxford died intestate, having arranged prior to his death for the inheritance of his remaining offices, lands and other legal interests. This was a carefully considered and deliberate decision designed to avoid repercussions from extents¹³³⁵ by the Crown against his former lands. Although Oxford's debt to the Court of Wards had been settled years earlier, there was always the possibility that some unforeseen problem connected to it could arise.

Apart from the lingering possibility of repercussions from his debt to the Court of Wards, Oxford died debt-free, and had been debt-free from as early as his marriage to Elizabeth Trentham in 1592. In the Johnson lawsuit (see *infra*), Elizabeth Trentham says that after their marriage only three claims for debt were ever made against either Oxford or against her as his widow – a claim made against Oxford during his lifetime by Judith Ruswell, which was unsuccessful; a claim made against herself as Oxford's widow by Thomas Gurling, which was unsuccessful; and the Johnson lawsuit itself, which was ultimately unsuccessful.

Elizabeth Trentham did not take formal administration of Oxford's estate,¹³³⁶ a carefully considered decision taken for the same reason -- the possibility of an unforeseen problem with respect to Oxford's debt to the Court of Wards. It seems certain, however, that she carried out Oxford's wishes with respect to his personal property.

The inquisition post mortem¹³³⁷ taken at Brentwood on 27 September 1604, three months after Oxford's death, included the following offices and interests in lands, tithes and annuities:

- (1) The offices of bailiff, keeper and steward of the Forest of Essex, and of bailiff and keeper of the King's park and houses at Havering in the Forest of Essex.
- (2) The office of Lord Great Chamberlain.
- (3) Interests in the manor of Bretts and other lands in West Ham and Flatwick, and in the farm of Plaistow in Halstead.
- (4) Interest in the rectory of Walter Belchamp.

¹³³⁵ (In full writ of extent): A writ to recover debts of record due to the Crown, under which the body, lands, and goods of the debtor may be all seized at once to compel payment of the debt. (*OED*)

¹³³⁶ Nelson, p. 431.

¹³³⁷ TNA C 142/286/165.

(5) Interest in tithes in Stansted, Aldham, Marks Tey, Sible Hedingham, Maplestead, Bures St. Mary, Aldham and Lavenham, and in a meadow called Ashmill marsh in Whatfield in Essex.

(6) Interest in an annuity of £66 13s 4d purchased from Sir John Wotton.

(7) Interest in lands and tenements in Ardleigh, Stisted, Messing, Marks Tey and Coggleshall reserved for the maintenance of the schoolmaster at Earls Colne.

The Johnson Lawsuit

Oxford's interest in the farm of Plaistow in Halstead led to a spurious lawsuit against the Dowager Countess. On 11 February 1609, almost five years after Oxford's death, a joiner,¹³³⁸ Edward Johnson of the parish of St Ethelburga in Bishopsgate, filed a bill of complaint against her in the Court of Requests for work allegedly done at Oxford's request at a house in Plaistow in Essex during the years 1588-1596.

As noted above, Oxford did own a farm in Plaistow, valued at 20s a year in his IPM, but at most this property had a tenant's cottage on it, and cannot by any stretch of the imagination have been a house on which Johnson and his men laboured for eight years installing wainscot,¹³³⁹ as alleged in the bill of complaint. Oxford also owned a manor¹³⁴⁰ in an entirely different part of Essex near the village of Plaistow. This was the manor of Bretts,¹³⁴¹ located in West Ham. It is possible that Johnson had heard of these two properties, and conflated them.

In his bill of complaint Johnson alleges that in 1588 Oxford requested that Johnson do some joiner's work on a house in Plaistow, which Johnson and his men did to the value of £40 in wages and £18 in goods, and that only £3 of the amount due had been paid. After Johnson allegedly did the work in 1588 more than twenty years passed before he filed suit, and in the interim Oxford died intestate in 1604. It was only on 11 February 1609, according to the endorsement on his bill of complaint, that Johnson finally filed suit against Oxford's widow, claiming that since she had taken control of all Oxford's goods and chattels after his death, she was liable for payment of the alleged debt.

¹³³⁸ A worker in wood who does lighter and more ornamental work than that of a carpenter, as the construction of the furniture and fittings of a house, ship, etc. (OED)

¹³³⁹ A superior quality of foreign oak imported from Russia, Germany, and Holland, chiefly used for fine panel-work. (OED)

¹³⁴⁰ An estate in land consisting of demesnes and services. (OED). A manor did not necessarily have a manor house on the land.

¹³⁴¹ For the manor of Bretts in West Ham, which Oxford purchased in 1584 from Sir Roger Townshend, see Lysons, Daniel, *The Environs of London*, 2nd ed., (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1811), Vol. I, Part II, p. 730. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=JJcjAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA730>

In her answer to the bill of complaint, the Dowager Countess quickly disposes of Johnson's allegations, stating that heretofore his claim had been solely for work done at Oxford's house near Bishopsgate called Fisher's Folly, and that it was not until she read the bill of complaint that she ever heard of any allegation by Johnson that he was owed money for work allegedly done for Oxford on a house in Plaistow. The Countess points out that Johnson has left blank in his bill of complaint the name of the county, which she takes as proof that he does not even know where the house on which he claims to have worked is located. Moreover the Countess says that Johnson's claim that Oxford contracted personally with him for the work to be done is manifestly false since it is well known to everyone that Oxford invariably handled all such matters through his officers. The Countess says further that Oxford always maintained while he was alive that he owed Johnson nothing, and that any money she herself gave Johnson after Oxford's death was not in payment of any alleged debt, but merely for charity because of Johnson's claims of poverty. Incidentally, Oxford's characteristic generosity did not desert him in the last years of his life; his former servant, Francis Columbell, deposed that although Oxford was impatient with Johnson's baseless claims, 'sometimes he hath awarded money there, as forty shillings at a time'.

Four witnesses – Johnson's former workmen John Bennett and Thomas Harvey, Johnson's friend, Robert Mefflin, and Oxford's former servant, Francis Columbell – were deposed to answer to interrogatories. Columbell, Oxford's servant, stated that he had never heard of Oxford owning a house in Essex called 'Plaistow House', and none of the other three witnesses was able to offer any proof that any such house existed. The fact that these three witnesses insisted on the existence of a house which no one else had heard of suggests their collusion with Johnson, particularly when there appears to be no contemporary historical record of any kind which mentions the existence of a 'Plaistow house' in Essex, let alone a 'Plaistow House' owned by Oxford.

Nothing further is heard of the proceedings. Since no one could identify the location of the house where the alleged work was done, the case was likely dismissed.¹³⁴²

In 1609 the Dowager Countess set about a very ambitious project, the repurchase of Castle Hedingham from Oxford's three daughters for the benefit of Oxford's son and heir, Henry de Vere. There is no record as to how the Countess obtained the consent of Oxford's daughters, but the fact that she did so indicates that they were on friendly terms. The Countess then acquired the necessary funds by the sale of King's Place, Hackney, where she and Oxford had lived for most of their married lives. On 1 April 1609 she obtained licence¹³⁴³ to alienate King's Place to Fulke Greville.¹³⁴⁴ The sale was a 'family'

¹³⁴² TNA REQ 2/388/28.

¹³⁴³ TNA C 66/1819, m. 36.

¹³⁴⁴ Gouws, John, "Greville, Fulke, first Baron Brooke of Beauchamps Court (1554–1628)", *ODNB*.

transaction as Fulke Greville was a first cousin of Oxford's half sister, Katherine de Vere.¹³⁴⁵

The Countess then went through with the purchase:

*By indenture of 8 July [1609] they [=Oxford's three daughters] conveyed all the lands late of Edward, Earl of Oxford, in Essex, Suff, Norf, Cambs and Herts, of their inheritance or purchased to their use by Lord Burleigh successively, to the use of the Countess for life, to the Earl in tail male, to all his daughters and the heirs of their bodies; in default, to the Countess and the heirs of her body, and, finally to her bro. Francis Trentham, esq., and his right heirs.*¹³⁴⁶

However in addition to the funds realized from the sale of King's Place, the Countess had had to money to make the purchase, and to repay the loan she determined to sell the manor of Bretts in which she held a life estate, with the reversion to Oxford's son and heir, Henry de Vere. Since Henry de Vere was a minor and a ward of the Crown, the sale had to be authorized by a private Act of Parliament:

*An Act for the sale of the manor of Bretts & farm of Plaistow in the county of Essex, parcel of the possessions of Henry, Earl of Oxenford, towards the repurchasing of the castle, manor & parks of Hedingham in the same county, being the ancient inheritance & chief mansion-house of the Earls of Oxenford.*¹³⁴⁷

The Act explains that the Countess had now purchased the castle and manor of Hedingham in which she now held a life estate, with reversion to Henry de Vere and the heirs of his body, and that to make the purchase she had sold properties worth £400 a year and had borrowed a substantial sum at interest which she could not repay without selling the manor of Bretts:

And whereas your said suppliant, being very desirous to uphold and raise the ancient and most honourable house of Oxenford what in her doth lie, to that end hath lately bought the castle and manor of Hedingham in the said county of Essex which was the ancient inheritance and chief seat of the said Earls of Oxenford and hath continued in their name and possession almost from the time of the Conquest until the same was lately sold by the said Edward, Earl of Oxenford, which manor of Hedingham is of the value of seven hundred pounds [£700] by year, besides divers liberties, royalties and privileges that are thereto belonging, which said castle and manor your suppliant hath caused to be assured to herself for life and after to the said Henry, Earl of Oxenford, and the heirs of his body, and the same hath cost your suppliant a great sum of money, towards the payment whereof your suppliant hath sold above four hundred pounds [£400] by year of her own inheritance, and besides your suppliant was enforced by herself and her friends to take

¹³⁴⁵ Fulke Greville's mother, Anne Neville (d.1582), was a younger sister of Dorothy Neville, first wife of the 16th Earl of Oxford, and mother of Katherine de Vere.

¹³⁴⁶ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. , citing Close Roll, 7 Jas. I, pt. 5.

¹³⁴⁷ HL/PO/PB/1/1609/7J1n33.

up a great sum of money at interest for which your suppliant standeth yet still engaged, and hath no sufficient means of her own to satisfy the same but by sale of some part of the lands of the said Earl, and for that there is no part of his lands more fit to be sold than the said manor of Bretts and other the premises, which both your suppliant (that hath the interest of the said extent for fourscore years and an estate for your suppliant's life in part of the rest as aforesaid), and also the said Earl himself, are willing to depart with but as yet can make no good assurance thereof for that the said Earl is still your Majesty's ward and not of the full age of one and twenty years but wanteth some few years thereof, and for that if present sale may not be made of the said manor of Bretts and farm of Plaistow and other the said premises then the said manor of Hedingham must be dismembered, which will be much to the hurt of the said Earl.

Bretts had had a complicated history while in Oxford's hands. Oxford purchased the manor from Roger Townshend on 7 March 1584. On 6 May 1588, Oxford granted Colne Priory to the Queen by a fine in the Court of Common Pleas,¹³⁴⁸ and on 8 June 1588 the Queen regranted Colne Priory and the manor of Bretts to Oxford.¹³⁴⁹ Clearly, Colne Priory was in the Queen's hands in 1588 because Oxford had transferred title to her, but how Bretts had come into the Queen's hands in 1588 is unclear.¹³⁵⁰ It may have done so by virtue of the extent the Queen had placed on Bretts for 80 years for Oxford's debt to the Court of Wards.¹³⁵¹

Three years later, in a letter to Lord Burghley dated 18 May 1591, Oxford put forward a proposal to the Queen which involved the manor of Bretts. If the Queen allowed him to purchase Denbigh, Oxford promised to 'presently deliver in possession' Bretts and other properties in Essex to Lord Burghley for the support of his three daughters, Elizabeth, Bridget and Susan, by his first wife, Anne Cecil:¹³⁵²

¹³⁴⁸ see TNA CP 25/2/261.

¹³⁴⁹ See TNA C 66/1321, mm. 8-9 and ERO T/B 177/3.

¹³⁵⁰ There is a brief mention of 'Brettes' in the fine. However Emmison states that this was the manor of Brettes in White Colne, and distinguishes it from the manor of Bretts in West Ham. See Emmison, F.G., *Feet of Fines for Essex, Vol. VI 1581-1603*, (Oxford: Leopard's Head Press, 1993), pp. 60, 197.

¹³⁵¹ See TNA C 66/1385, mm. 9-10 which records the Queen's grant by letters patent dated 8 June 1592 to John Drawater (d.1597) and John Holmes of a 100-year lease of properties of Oxford's which had been seised into the Queen's hands for Oxford's debt to the Court of Wards. Included in the grant are Colne Priory and Castle Hedingham, the manors of Barwick Hall, Inglethorpe, Grayes, Prayors, Parkes, Earls Colne, Abbot Hayes, Lamarsh, Crepping Hall, Downham, Sheriffs, Little Yeldham, Great Yeldham, Wivenhoe, Great Bentley, Battleswick, Bretts, Bumpstead Helions and Hinxton, along with rectories and other lands 'Which all & singular the premises now are or lately were parcel of the lands & possessions of our beloved cousin, Edward, now Earl of Oxford, and are now in our hands, having been seised for the debts of the said Earl'.

¹³⁵² See BL Lansdowne 68/6, ff. 12-13.

The effect hereof is, I would be glad to have an equal care with your Lordship over my children, and if I may obtain this reasonable suit of her Majesty, granting me nothing but what she hath done to others, and mean persons, and nothing but that I shall pay for it, then those lands which are in Essex, as Hedingham, Bretts and the rest whatsoever, which will come to some 5 or £600 by year, upon your Lordship's friendly help towards my purchases in Denbigh shall be presently delivered in possession to you for their use. And so much I am sure to make of these demesnes for myself.

The Queen refused Oxford's proposal, and Oxford continued to hold Bretts until a few days before his death, at which time, by a deed dated 18 June 1604, he sold his interest in both the manor of Bretts and the farm of Plaistow in Halstead to his brother-in-law, Francis Trentham (d.1626), for a term of 60 years, with a proviso indicating that the transaction was for the benefit of the Countess.

As noted above, the Countess obtained a private Act of Parliament granting her licence to sell Bretts and, effectively, clear the title of any prior claims. After the passage of the Act, the Countess sold Bretts to Henry Wollaston (d.1619) in 1610. However, the farm of Plaistow and the tithes were still in the Countess' possession at her death, and are mentioned in her will of 25 November 1612 in which she directs that they be sold and the proceeds used to pay her debts and legacies.¹³⁵³

The Dowager Countess died either in late December or very early in January 1613, and was buried on 3 January. In a letter to Sir Ralph Winwood on 9 January 1613, John Chamberlain gave the cause of death as 'this new disease':

*The Countess of Oxford is dead of this new disease, and left her son toward £1500 land and all her jewels and stuff on condition he pay her legacies, which rise to £2000, and bestow £500 on a tomb for his father and her.*¹³⁵⁴

B. OXFORD'S CHILDREN

By his first marriage to Anne Cecil, Oxford had a son, Lord Bulbeck, who died as an infant, and a daughter, Frances Vere, who died young, and three daughters, Elizabeth, Bridget and Susan, who survived to adulthood.

By his mistress, Anne Vavasour, Oxford had an illegitimate son, Sir Edward Vere.

By his second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, Oxford had a son and heir, Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford.

1. Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford

¹³⁵³ TNA PROB 11/121/171.

¹³⁵⁴

By his second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, Oxford had his only surviving legitimate son and heir, Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford, born 24 February 1593 at Stoke Newington. He was christened on 31 March 1593.¹³⁵⁵

As noted earlier, twelve years before his death Oxford had sold his interest in Castle Hedingham to Lord Burghley in trust for his three daughters by his first marriage. After the death of Oxford's widow, Henry de Vere, inherited the remainder of Oxford's estate. Two inquisitions post mortem were taken after Oxford's death, the first in 1604 for his property in Essex, the second in 1608 for his Great Garden property in London.¹³⁵⁶ Magdalene College brought suit against Oxford's heir for the Great Garden property, and legal proceedings continued for decades.¹³⁵⁷ The value of the property to both Magdalene College and Oxford's heir is indicated by a 1615 case in Chancery stating that in 1575:¹³⁵⁸

[T]he Queen at the suit of the said College licensed them to alienThe same was accordingly performed by a conveyance to her Majesty, and from her Majesty to Spinola, and the rectory from Spinola to the College, after which Spinola and the Earl of Oxford, his assignee and his under-tenants have built upon the garden 130 houses, and therein bestowed £10,000, which assignee and his under-tenants have bonds and security given for the enjoyment thereof to the sum of £20,000.

It appears from the private Act of Parliament obtained by the Countess in 1609/10 that although Henry de Vere remained the King's ward, the King had granted the custody of his person [wardship], and marriage to his mother, the Countess:

. . . the said Henry, Earl of Oxenford, was and yet is in ward to your Majesty and his wardship and marriage is granted over to your suppliant. . . .

An entry dated 6 October 1604 in a docket-book records that King James granted him a £200 pension to commence from the date of Oxford's death, 24 June 1604:

*vjto die Octobris 1604 A pension of £200 by the year for Henry, Earl of Oxford, to be paid from midsummer last past during his life.*¹³⁵⁹

In November 1604 he was a member of the Inner Temple.¹³⁶⁰

¹³⁵⁵ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 254.

¹³⁵⁶ TNA C 142/286/165; TNA C 142/305/103; Nelson, pp. 431, 486.

¹³⁵⁷ Purnell, Edward Kelly, *Magdalene College* (London: F.E. Robinson & Co., 1904), pp. 67-72; Pearson, p. 49.

¹³⁵⁸ Purnell, pp. 76-7; Pearson, pp. 48-9; *English Reports*, (Edinburgh: William Green & Sons, 1907), Vol. 77, pp. 1235-52; *English Reports*, Vol. 21, pp. 485-9.

¹³⁵⁹ TNA SP 38/7, ff. 258-9; Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 254.

¹³⁶⁰ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 254.

He served as esquire to Prince Charles on his creation as Duke of York on 6 January 1605.¹³⁶¹

On 30 August 1605 he was awarded the degree of Master of Arts during the King's visit to Oxford.¹³⁶²

On 26 November 1609 a bill was filed by the Master and Fellows of Magdalene College claiming the right to re-enter Oxford's Great Garden property at St Botolph's, Aldgate, part of Henry de Vere's inheritance.

The background to the Bill is complicated. According to Stow, when the priory of Holy Trinity near Aldgate was dissolved, King Henry VIII granted it in July 1531 to Sir Thomas Audley,¹³⁶³ who later became Henry VIII's Lord Chancellor. Audley had the priory church torn down, and built a mansion on the property. In addition to the grounds proper of the priory itself, Henry VIII also granted to Audley, on 23 March 1534, a messuage and a 7-acre parcel of ground outside the city walls called the Great Garden which had belonged to the priory. Audley's daughter and heir, Margaret, married Oxford's first cousin, Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, in 1559, and brought the mansion to the Duke as her marriage portion; the Duke resided there until he purchased the Charterhouse in 1565. However Margaret Audley did not inherit the messuage and Great Garden of 7 acres. By his will of 19 April 1544¹³⁶⁴ Lord Audley left the messuage and Great Garden, along with the rectory of St Katherine Christchurch, a parish church near Audley's mansion, to the Masters and Fellows of Magdalene College, Cambridge:

Also I give to the said Master and Fellows all that my great garden in the said parish of Saint Botolph's in the tenure of one Cacy [=Casey?] for the yearly rent of £9 by the year, to have and to hold the said parsonage and the said garden, except thereof before excepted, unto the said Master and Fellows and to their successors forever for the finding of such number of the Fellows of the said House as shall be limited by the discretion of mine executors and according to such ordinance as they shall devise for the same;

Also I will that my said executors shall devise and make all such statutes & ordinances concerning the said Master and Fellows and the same House as by their discretions shall be thought reasonable and convenient for the wealth and commodity of the said House.

Contrary to the statutes devised by Lord Audley's executors, the Masters and Fellows sold the rectory, the messuage and the Great Garden on 10 December 1574 to Benedict Spinola (d.1580). On 13 December 1574 the Masters and Fellows conveyed the rectory, messuage and garden to the Queen by two separate deeds on condition that the Queen would grant the properties to Spinola by 1 April 1575. This condition was presumably inserted because the Master and Fellows were aware that they were in violation of their

¹³⁶¹ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 254.

¹³⁶² Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 254.

¹³⁶³ Ford, L.L., "Audley, Thomas, Baron Audley of Walden (1487/8–1544)", *ODNB*.

¹³⁶⁴ TNA PROB 11/31/64.

statutes in selling the properties, and a transfer to Spinola through the Queen would cure any defect in title. Accordingly, the Queen granted the rectory, messuage and Great Garden to Spinola by letters patent dated 29 January 1575.

On 15 June 1580 Spinola conveyed the messuage and Great Garden to Oxford.¹³⁶⁵

In the years which followed the sale of the messuage and garden by the Masters and Fellows, its value increased dramatically as a result of its development by Spinola and Oxford and their tenants, and in 1607 Dr Barnaby Goche (d.1626), son of the poet Barnabe Googe,¹³⁶⁶ the then Master of Magdalene, sought to overturn the original sale, basing his case on the fact that the Master and Fellows had not had power to sell the property because of the Statute of 13 Elizabeth, c. 10, a defect which he said had not been cured by the statute of confirmation of grants, 18 Elizabeth, c. 2. Moreover, although it was found by an inquisition post mortem taken on 13 August 1608¹³⁶⁷ that Oxford had died seised of the Great Garden property, Goche argued that Oxford's son and heir had no legal interest in the property because Oxford had sold his interest in July 1591 to his future brother-in-law, Francis Trentham (d.1626), and Sir John Wolley. It is true that Oxford had entered into an indenture of bargain and sale with Trentham and Wolley involving the Great Garden property on 4 July 1591.¹³⁶⁸ However it does not appear to have been a final sale. Its terms stipulate that Oxford retained the right to request Wolley and Trentham to reconvey the Great Garden property to him, and if they failed to do so, Oxford was to receive the revenues and profits from it for life, and after Oxford's death Wolley and Trentham were to dispose of it for the benefit of Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham. Similar terms are found in another indenture of bargain and sale by Oxford to Francis Trentham and Ralph Sneyd (d.1620) of the rectory of Walter Belchamp on 12 March 1592.¹³⁶⁹

The immediate outcome of the 1609 lawsuit is unknown, but in 1620 an injunction was issued against the Master and Fellows of Magdalene for quiet enjoyment of the messuage and Great Garden in favour of Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford, and one Thomas Wood.

Henry de Vere was made a Knight of the Bath on 3 June 1610 at the creation of Prince Henry as Prince of Wales.¹³⁷⁰

In the last years of his mother's life, Henry de Vere's attempts to take his inheritance into his own hands gave her considerable cause for concern. The first hint that something was amiss is an effusive letter to Sir Robert Cecil on 18 July 1611:

¹³⁶⁵ TNA C 54/1080.

¹³⁶⁶ Lyne, Raphael, "Googe, Barnabe (1540–1594)", *ODNB*.

¹³⁶⁷ TNA C 142/305/103.

¹³⁶⁸ TNA C 54/1393, mm. 22-3.

¹³⁶⁹ See Oxford's inquisition post mortem of 27 September 1604 (TNA C142/286/165).

¹³⁷⁰ Cokayne, Vol. X, pp. 254-5.

*Whatsoever I can say to you, my Lord, is short of the sense I have of the kindness you have done me. Acknowledgement is so due to you that you are sure of it at the rate of a whole life, & I wish, if it could be without your disadvantage, that it were ever in my power to let you see how I would return your favour. In the meantime, my Lord, make account of me as one that is passionately your faithful humble servant, Oxford.*¹³⁷¹

The cause of this outpouring of gratitude was almost certainly that Cecil had helped Henry de Vere gain control of his annuity. A note dated 19 July 1611 signed by Sir Francis Windebank,¹³⁷² a Clerk of the Signet,¹³⁷³ indicates that a letter had gone from the King to the Lord Treasurer directing that from thenceforth Henry de Vere's annuity was to be paid to him directly, despite the fact that he was still a minor:

*A letter to the Lord Treasurer to pay to the Earl of Oxford an annuity of £200 formerly granted to him by his Majesty, & not unto the Countess, his mother, although he be under years, & to receive his acquittance for the same.*¹³⁷⁴

At the time, Cecil was Secretary of State, Lord Treasurer, and Master of the Court of Wards, and it must have been Cecil himself, as Master of the Court of Wards, who persuaded the King to allow payment of the annuity to Henry de Vere personally.

Three days later, on 22 July, the Dowager Countess wrote to Cecil and to Oxford's first cousin, Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, requesting assistance in controlling her son. This was not the first time she had requested their help. As she says in her letter, they had acted to good effect in response to a similar request from her a year earlier. This time, however, the situation was different. The Countess likely did not realize that it was Cecil himself who had advocated for Henry de Vere in the matter of the payment of his annuity.

As had been the case a year earlier, the problem was Henry de Vere's second cousin, John Hunt, whom the Countess describes as 'extremely needy and beggarly in his estate, and no less dissolute and prodigal in his life':¹³⁷⁵

My very good Lords, the apparent danger of my son's ruin (not to be prevented without present remedy) enforceth me, with no little grief, once again to crave your Lordships' help, being bold to commend my suit to you both jointly for that either of you are

¹³⁷¹ CP 147/149.

¹³⁷² Quintrell, Brian, "Windebank, Sir Francis (*bap.* 1582, *d.* 1646)", *ODNB*.

¹³⁷³ Formerly, a clerk in attendance on the royal secretary, in charge of the privy signet for sealing private letters. (*OED*)

¹³⁷⁴ TNA SP 38/10; Nelson, p. 433.

¹³⁷⁵ John Hunt was the grandson of Aubrey de Vere (d.1580), brother of John de Vere, 16th Earl of Oxford, and the eldest son of Henry Hunt of Gosfield, Essex, and his wife Jane Vere, daughter of Aubrey Vere. He was born about 1585, and was thus about twenty-four years of age in 1609 when he first began to exercise an influence over Henry de Vere, who was then only sixteen.

interested in him, one as Master of his Majesty's Wards (whereof he is one), the other by a near conjunction in blood, and both of you as you are principal councillors of state and he a young nobleman neither of years nor judgment to advise himself, wanting the guidance of a father and past the government of a mother.

About a year since I acquainted your Lordships with some courses dangerous and dishonourable to him whereinto he had then been misled by one Hunt, a man of no worth but extremely needy and beggarly in his estate, and no less dissolute and prodigal in his life, whereupon you then vouchsafed me your honourable assistance, which for the present took such good effect as gave me much hope that neither Hunt durst ever afterwards have presumed to seduce him, nor my son have yielded to be drawn by him into the like errors.

But shortly after, Hunt again attempted by underhand messages and letters to solicit my son to withdraw himself from my government and to return to his former courses, pretending to my son fair shows of liberty, delights and pleasures (the ordinary baits for his misjudging years), but intending merely to compass to himself the absolute command and disposal both of my son's person and estate, as may evidently appear to your Lordships by the perusal of the particulars in this enclosed paper which I humbly present unto you, for ever since, having no means or estate of his own, he hath lived at a very high proportion more suitable to the estate and degree of a nobleman than to the means or estate of his father or himself.

The Countess paints a poignant picture of how John Hunt has turned her son against her, and has brought her to the point that she will renounce custody of her son unless Hunt is banished from his company:

And lest my interest in my son should, either in respect of his duty to me or of my love to him, cross those his intended purposes, this Hunt hath plotted first to cause my son to neglect me and my directions, afterwards to distaste and contemn them, and now at length openly to oppose himself against me, which he hath effected by continual suggestions that it is dishonourable for him at these years to be guided by me, that it is fit he should have the absolute command and disposing of all his own maintenance without my oversight, that I am a miserable and unkind mother to him, affording him nothing of mine, but reserving yearly a good part of his proper maintenance to my own use.

Whereas at your Lordships' pleasure I am ready to make it appear unto you that ever since he was put to the Prince, which is now about eight years, I have yearly disbursed, besides all his, a great part of mine own little estate for his maintenance, and have always been well contented to confine myself to a private life and low course of expense that I might in some small measure repair the decayed fortunes of his house, and so shall be willing to do hereafter in whatsoever course your Lordships shall propound or approve as fitting and honourable for him so as he may by your good means be reclaimed to order, duty and honour, and this caterpillar and his confederates be by your power and authority restrained from any resort, intercourse or private intelligence with him, for till then I shall never hope for nor expect any comfort from any course or fortune of his

by travel, marriage or otherwise, well knowing that all your Lordships', mine and all other his friends' endeavours for his good will be wholly frustrate by the cross and opposite counsels and dissuasions of this lewd seducer, and am therefore absolutely resolved, unless I shall presently obtain the absolute banishment of him and his confederates from my son (whereof my assurance of your honourable love and respect unto him giveth me much hope), forthwith to renounce and disclaim any further charge or government of him, as being loath, besides my daily private objects of grief, to draw upon myself a general and public imputation that his ruin hath happened in his nonage and under my charge and by consequence through my want of care or respect unto him, for the world will never believe, except I make it known by a public renouncing of his further government, but I might with suit unto his great and powerful allies and friends have easily procured this ivy to be plucked away from this young oak whose growth is so much hindered by it.

I therefore humbly beseech your Lordships in the midst of your many serious and weighty affaires of the state to afford so much time for the redeeming of an unfortunate young noble orphan out of extreme and imminent ruin as to convent the said Hunt before you, there to answer to such articles as are contained in this enclosed paper, and thereupon to inflict upon him such exemplary punishment as to your Lordships in your wisdoms shall seem fit, so as he and others of like disposition may be hereafter discouraged from the like attempts, but especially that your Lordships will carefully provide that he may be absolutely banished from my son's company and from all private intercourse and intelligence by sending or writing to him.

Lastly I beseech your Lordships to make my son fully and plainly to know his errors, and to afford him your grave and judicious advice whereby, through God's blessing upon it, he may be withdrawn out of these dangerous ways so much tending to his dishonour and utter overthrow, hoping that when ripeness of years shall discover to him the true differences between good and evil he will thankfully acknowledge your honourable care herein vouchsafed to him.¹³⁷⁶

The Dowager Countess' letter is accompanied by a set of articles in which she lists Hunt's misdemeanours, as well as her son's misdemeanours in Hunt's company, including neglect of his service to Prince Henry and to the King himself. Among other things, the articles mention that Hunt has persuaded Henry de Vere to borrow and mortgage jewels belonging to his aunt, Mary de Vere (d.1624), Lady Willoughby, with the result that his annuity of £200 has now been assigned to Lady Willoughby's second husband, Sir Eustace Harte (d.1634), until £300 is repaid:

Besides many other base and unworthy shifts they have made to procure money (which as yet are kept secret from me), Hunt hath been a principal instrument to borrow and mortgage jewels of my Lady Willoughby, his aunt, worth £700 or £800, which they pawned for two hundred pounds or thereabouts, for which his pension in the Exchequer is now assigned to Sir Eustace Harte till £300 be paid him, Hunt's host and hostess' son-

¹³⁷⁶ TNA SP 14/65/49, ff. 76-8; Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 254; Nelson, pp. 433-8.

in-law being the only witnesses to the deed of assignment.

The articles also mention an annuity of £300 per year 'out of the Low Countries' about which nothing further is known. Hunt has managed to have £600 due under the annuity paid to Henry de Vere rather than to his mother, the Countess:

He hath also of late used divers means to procure six hundred pounds due in June now last past out of the Low Countries for two years' annuity to be paid unto my son himself, and not to me, the end of all which Hunt's endeavours is to get the money into his own hands that so he may make what prey thereof he pleaseth, and then turn my son home empty to me to be maintained by me out of mine own estate, as already in part he hath begun to do.

The Countess clearly had no one to turn to other than Cecil and Northampton for help in controlling her son, but whether either had her interests at heart is doubtful. Oxford and his first cousin, Lord Henry Howard, now Earl of Northampton, had likely never fully reconciled after the contretemps of Christmas 1580, and not only was it apparently Cecil himself who was responsible for arranging direct payment to Henry de Vere of his annuity, but he had also expressed hostility towards both the Countess and her son in his letter to Michael Hicke shortly after Lord Burghley's death:

. . . whether he that never gave them groat, hath a second wife and another child be a fit guardian, consider you.

We hear no more of John Hunt by name, but two letters from October 1611 indicate that Henry de Vere was continuing to try to take his inheritance into his own hands while still underage, and that he was still surrounded by friends who were profiting from his youth and inexperience. On 13 October 1611, Sir Thomas Lake¹³⁷⁷ wrote to Cecil concerning Henry de Vere's claim to the keepership of the park of Havering.

During Oxford's lifetime, his rights¹³⁷⁸ to Waltham Forest and Havering Park¹³⁷⁹ had been a subject of lengthy dispute between himself and the Queen. In contrast, only a few months after he came to the throne King James restored Oxford's rights to the Forest and the keepership of the park of Havering.¹³⁸⁰ As mentioned earlier, just before his death Oxford transferred his rights in the Forest to his first cousin, Sir Francis Vere, and his son-in-law, Francis Norris, 2nd Baron Norris, to be held by them until Henry de Vere, came of age.

¹³⁷⁷ Lockyer, Roger, "Lake, Sir Thomas (*bap.* 1561, *d.* 1630)", *ODNB*.

¹³⁷⁸ For a description of the rights claimed by Oxford in Waltham Forest and Havering Park, see TNA SP 14/2/63, f. 160.

¹³⁷⁹ Several sources claim that Oxford owned property at Havering, which was not the case.

¹³⁸⁰ TNA C 66/1612, mm. 27-8.

In his letter of 13 October 1611 Sir Thomas Lake advises Cecil that Henry de Vere has made suit to the King for his right to Havering Park, and that the King is reluctant to agree for fear that neither he nor his mother will protect the game, and is minded, once Henry de Vere comes of age, to take the Forest into his own hands:

My duty to your Lordship most humbly remembered, his Majesty hath commanded me to signify to your Lordship that my Lord of Oxford hath been here this day a suitor for his right to Havering Park. His Majesty is balanced in his mind between care of his game in so fair a ground and unwillingness to do wrong. His game he doth not expect shall be well used or cared for by my Lady of Oxford, nor perhaps by her son, who both desire it but for profit. On the other side, his Majesty is loth to deny right to the meanest subject he hath, much less to a person of his rank.

His Highness therefore desireth your Lordship that for the furtherances of his own resolution my Lord of Oxford may be called and his right looked into, and his Majesty advertised how it standeth, whether so as that immediately the Earl may dispose of it, or whether during his minority it be not in his Majesty's hand, and thereby some course may be taken how both his Majesty may see his game provided for for the present time and yet do the Earl no wrong, with whom his Majesty is purposed hereafter, when his years make him able to contract, to agree for the whole Forest to be taken into his own hands. . . .

This letter to my Lord of Southampton is for a lyam-hound [=bloodhound] to be sent hither, and his Majesty willed me to direct it to your Lordship to be sent away.¹³⁸¹

The instruction to Southampton to send a bloodhound highlights the King's passion for hunting, and explains the concern the Countess expressed in a letter of 6 December 1611 to Sir Christopher Hatton (d.1619)¹³⁸² that her son could forfeit his hereditary rights in the Forest of Essex if he failed to care for the game to the King's satisfaction because the King's view is that to properly protect the game he should take the Forest into his own hands:

Good Sir Christopher, out of my assurance of your love and well-wishing to my son, I think fit to impart some things unto you which much concern him.

You know his Majesty hath been pleased, though not without much difficulty, to give allowance to my son's hereditary interest in the custody of Havering house and park, whereby there is made unto him a fair entrance for recovery of his other rights within the Forest if he use this he hath so as may give his Majesty contentment, but some of his best and greatest friends have in private intimated to me the hazard & danger of this fair

¹³⁸¹ TNA SP 14/66/70, ff. 135-6; Nelson, pp. 438-9.

¹³⁸² Son of the Lord Chancellor's cousin, John Hatton of Longstanton, Cambridgeshire. He inherited the Lord Chancellor's estates after the death of the Lord Chancellor's nephew, Sir William Hatton (d.1597), for whom see above. See also the History of Parliament entry. URL: <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/hatton-christopher-ii-1581-1619>

show of good fortune in obtaining the possession of that which hath been kept from his ancestors so many years past. They have let me know his Majesty's great desire to compass the disposal of the said Forest and park at his own pleasure, and have made me understand the nature & quality of this inheritance, which standeth subject to forfeiture by not using this office as it ought to be. And these cautions I find are not to be neglected.

On thother part, you know my son is young, not able to advise himself, and I know he is too much guided by some about him who aim only at their own private ends without respect either of his honour or profit, whereof some, as I hear, have gotten from him grants or promises of several matters of benefit within the park and house of Havering without ever acquainting me therewith, who by the laws of God, of nature, and of this land have the charge and custody of him, wherein howsoever my son forget his duty to me, yet hoping it rather proceedeth from their ill counsel than from his own disposition, I cannot so far neglect him as not to cease(?) and oppose these proceedings which may so much wrong and prejudice him with his Majesty.

Good sir, let me therefore entreat you for prevention thereof to take notice from me, and as occasion shall serve to make it known, that my Lord, his father, for avoiding of these hazards, did in his life so settle the state both of the custody of the said house and park and also of his rights in the Forest as my son hath naught to do in either till he come of full age, and that therefore till then no act or grant he shall make or do concerning either shall, without my allowance, stand good to any, hoping there ere his full age God will give him to understand better his own good.

*If you come to town, I desire to let you know these things more fully. In the meantime I shall rest upon your love unto him that you will use that interest you have in him to persuade him to that which is truly for his own good.*¹³⁸³

In her efforts to curtail her son's headstrong actions, the Countess was hampered by the King's suspicion that neither she nor her son would care for the game because both were in it merely for profit. Why the Dowager Countess turned to Sir Christopher Hatton for help is unclear, although she indicates that there is a family relationship ('that interest you have in him').

Matters regarding the King's house and park at Havering seem to have been temporarily settled in the Countess' favour. Havering was in her custody a few months before her death, when she planned to entertain him there during his progress at her own expense, as John Chamberlain informed Dudley Carleton on 17 June 1612:

From thence [the King] goes to Havering, which is in the custody of the Countess of

¹³⁸³ Nelson, p. 439, citing BL MS Add. 29549, ff. 31-2.

*Oxford, who entertains him likewise at her own charge.*¹³⁸⁴

A few months later, the Dowager Countess was dead, and on 13 January 1613, Henry de Vere, although still underage, obtained a grant of administration of her estate, contrary to the provisions of her will.¹³⁸⁵ The executors named in the will, Sir Edward More, Francis Trentham, and John Wright, challenged the grant,¹³⁸⁶ and by judicial sentence of 26 June 1613, administration granted to the three executors.¹³⁸⁷

Almost immediately after his mother's death, Henry de Vere went abroad, leaving Sir Christopher Hatton in charge of Havering:

*To all Christian people to whom this shall come, I, Henry de Vere, Earl of Oxenford, Viscount Bulbeck, Lord of Badlesmere and Scales, Lord Great Chamberlain of England, and Keeper in fee of the King's Majesty's house and park of Havering-atte-Bower within the county of Essex, send greeting. Whereas I, the said Henry, Earl of Oxenford, by God's permission intend forthwith to travel beyond the seas, and desire in the time of my absence there to have the said house and park so governed and kept as may give contentment and satisfaction to his Majesty. . . .*¹³⁸⁸

The document gives Hatton 'the oversight, government and direction of the said house and park during all the time of my absence beyond the seas'.

Henry de Vere remained on the continent for five years -- first in the Spanish Netherlands, then in France (he was in Paris in 1614), and finally in Venice. With King James' approval, he offered to raise 6000 men for the Venetian Republic's service; however the Senate refused the offer.¹³⁸⁹

The death of Sir Robert Wroth,¹³⁹⁰ keeper of the Walthamstow and Leyton walks in the

¹³⁸⁴ Nelson, p. 440; Nichols, John, *The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First*, (London: J.B. Nichols, 1828), Vol. II, p. 450 URL: <https://archive.org/details/progressesproces02nichuoft/page/450/mode/2up>

¹³⁸⁵ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 254.

¹³⁸⁶ Henry de Vere, still a minor, was represented by William Milbury, notary public, guardian ad litem.

¹³⁸⁷ TNA PROB 11/121/755.

¹³⁸⁸ Paul, 'A Monument Without a Tomb', citing Northamptonshire Record Office FH3002.

¹³⁸⁹ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 255.

¹³⁹⁰ Sir Robert Wroth (d. 14 March 1614) the younger. His father, Sir Robert Wroth (d. 27 January 1606) the elder, was granted a life estate in a walk in the Forest of Waltham by King James on 22 May 1603. See Paul, 'A Monument Without a Tomb', *supra*, p. 65. See also the will of Sir Robert Wroth the elder TNA PROB 11/107/101, and the will of Sir Robert Wroth the younger TNA PROB 11/123/620. According to the History of Parliament entry for Sir Robert Wroth the younger: 'Like his father, Wroth was an important forest official in western Essex and therefore subordinate to the master forester,

Forest of Waltham from 1603, allowed Henry de Vere to enlarge Hatton's appointment by indenture dated 29 March 1614 to include the Forest of Waltham:

This indenture made the nine and twentieth day of March in the twelfth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord James . . . between the right honourable Henry de Vere, Earl of Oxford, Lord Great Chamberlain of England and Chief Warden in fee of the Forest of Waltham within the county of Essex . . . doth give and grant to the said Sir Christopher Hatton, his Lieutenant of the same Forest, to have, hold, enjoy and exercise the same office of Lieutenant of the said Forest by himself or by his sufficient deputy for whom he will answer for and during the will and pleasure of the said Earl, together with all fees, profits, advantages, pre-eminences and authorities to the said office of Lieutenant belonging or appertaining in as large and ample manner as any Lieutenant of the Forest aforesaid hath heretofore held and enjoyed or of right ought to have held and enjoyed the same;

*And the said Earl further, by this present, will and require all and every the foresters and other officers and ministers of the said Forest whatsoever, that they be obedient, aiding, and assistant to the said Sir Christopher Hatton or to his deputy in the execution of the said office of Lieutenancy of the same Forest.*¹³⁹¹

In a letter dated 31 March 1614, Sir Dudley Carleton advised John Chamberlain that Hatton had, in Henry de Vere's absence from England, persuaded the King to preserve his rights to Waltham Forest, despite opposition from William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke, Robert Sidney, Viscount Lisle,¹³⁹² and others:

Upon the death of Sir Robert Wroth (who was a great commander, or rather by the King's favour an intruder, in Waltham Forest), Sir Christopher Hatton set the Earl of Oxford's claim on foot (being during his absence abroad put in trust with all his business), and hath so wrought with the King that though he had in a manner bestowed and given away all the walks, and notwithstanding the great opposition and contestation of the Earl of Pembroke, the Lord Lisle and others, yet he hath not only preserved the Earl's right, but gotten the disposing of the walks, reserving one to the Lady Wroth,¹³⁹³ one to Sir Thomas Lake, and Sir Thomas Edmondes¹³⁹⁴ challengeth a promise from my

Robert Cecil, 1st earl of Salisbury who, until 1607, owned nearby Theobalds Palace'. See the History of Parliament entry. URL:

<https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/wroth-sir-robert-1576-1614>

¹³⁹¹ Paul, 'A Monument Without a Tomb', citing Northamptonshire Record Office FH3085.

¹³⁹² Shephard, Robert, "Sidney, Robert, first earl of Leicester (1563–1626)", *ODNB*.

¹³⁹³ Lamb, Mary Ellen, "Wroth [*née* Sidney], Lady Mary (1587?–1651/1653)", *ODNB*. 'In 1606 [her husband] Sir Robert assumed his father's offices of forester of Linton Walk, Waltham Forest, and keeper of Woodford Walk in Essex, where he was charged with protecting game and leading royal hunts.'

¹³⁹⁴ Greengrass, M., "Edmondes, Sir Thomas (*d.* 1639)", *ODNB*.

*Lord of another. The rest by the King's own appointment are bestowed on Sir Christopher and his brother Thomas.*¹³⁹⁵

The fact that William Herbert opposed Henry de Vere's interest in the Forest suggests that although Susan Vere was married to Philip Herbert, the 'two noble brethren' of the First Folio were not particularly close to Susan's half brother, Henry de Vere.

While in Venice, Henry de Vere was drawn into Lady Hatton's attempt to prevent the marriage of her daughter, Frances Coke, to Sir John Villiers,¹³⁹⁶ brother of the King's favourite, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. On 18 August 1617, George Gerrard wrote to Dudley Carleton that Lady Hatton claimed her daughter was contracted to Henry de Vere:

*Lady Hatton has published a contract for her daughter, Frances, with the Earl of Oxford, now in Venice. He sends word he will come over and see what he must do, but it is doubtful whether her fair face and the large fortune offered will induce him to risk losing the favour of the King, who urges her match with Sir John Villiers.*¹³⁹⁷

The letter was accompanied by an 'obligation and oath of Frances, younger daughter of Sir Edward Coke, to become the wife of Henry Vere, Earl of Oxford, witnessed by her mother, Lady Hatton, July 10'.

Henry de Vere returned to England in October 1618, and was in attendance at Queen Anne's funeral on 13 May 1619.¹³⁹⁸ However he preferred not to remain in a court dominated by Buckingham, and in June 1620 joined the regiment of his father's first cousin, Sir Horatio Vere, as a captain,¹³⁹⁹ raising 250 men at his own expense. After only a few months' service he left the Palatinate, and was back in England on 11 November.

On 13 January 1621 he was named by King James to the Council of War for the Palatinate.¹⁴⁰⁰ In the first session of the parliament of 1621, he aligned himself with those opposed to a Spanish match, and after speaking injudiciously against the match, was imprisoned for a short time in the Tower in July 1621. To ensure his non-attendance at the next session of the Parliament, King James appointed him in December 1621 as Vice-Admiral of a fleet patrolling the Channel.¹⁴⁰¹ He served in that capacity until he

¹³⁹⁵ TNA SP 14/76/52.

¹³⁹⁶ Frances Coke (1599-1645) did marry John Villiers (c.1591-1658), 1st Viscount Purbeck, but left him for Sir Robert Howard (1584/5-1653) of Clun Castle, Shropshire, fifth son of Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk. See Greaves, Richard L., "Danvers [formerly Wright, Howard, Villiers], Robert, styled second Viscount Purbeck (1624-1674)", *ODNB*.

¹³⁹⁷ *CSPD 1611-1618*, p. 482 [TNA SP 14/94/28].

¹³⁹⁸ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 255.

¹³⁹⁹ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 255.

¹⁴⁰⁰ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 255.

¹⁴⁰¹ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 255.

was removed from the position in March 1622.¹⁴⁰² There was speculation that he had been removed 'out of respect to the States', but the more likely cause, as noted above, was his role in assisting his niece, Elizabeth Norris, to avoid marriage with Buckingham's brother, Christopher Villiers.¹⁴⁰³ In April 1622 he criticized Buckingham in 'rash words which heat of wine cast up at a merry meeting', and was again imprisoned in the Tower.¹⁴⁰⁴ This time the King directed that he be prosecuted in the Star Chamber. On 15 February 1623, John Woodford wrote to Sir Francis Nethersole that he was to be publicly tried the next term.¹⁴⁰⁵

For his 'indiscreet criticisms of the government', he was kept a close prisoner in the Tower for a year and a half, from April 1622 to December 1623.¹⁴⁰⁶ His release was finally brought about on 30 December 1623 by the intervention of Prince Charles and Buckingham prior to an upcoming session of Parliament.¹⁴⁰⁷

Buckingham also supported his marriage, on 1 January 1624, to Diana Cecil,¹⁴⁰⁸ a 'celebrated beauty' whose marriage portion was reputed to be £30,000; Henry de Vere was to have £4000 in money and £1000 in land.¹⁴⁰⁹

In May 1624 he took command of a regiment in the Low Countries in the service of the Elector Palatine, and on 15 May 1625 was lightly wounded in the left arm at the siege of Terheiden.¹⁴¹⁰ Infection appears to have set in, and he died of fever at The Hague between 2 and 9 June 1625.¹⁴¹¹ He was buried in Westminster Abbey on 15 July 1625.

Having no issue, Henry de Vere was succeeded by his second cousin, Robert de Vere (d. 7 August 1632), 19th Earl of Oxford.¹⁴¹² After his death, his widow, Diana Cecil, married Thomas Bruce, 1st Earl of Elgin.¹⁴¹³

2. Elizabeth Vere

¹⁴⁰² Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 255.

¹⁴⁰³ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 255.

¹⁴⁰⁴ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 255, citing Hacket, *Mem. of Arch-Bishop Williams*, Vol. I, p. 70; Birch, *Court and Times of James I*, Vol. II, pp. 307, 445; *CSPD 1619-1623*, pp. 275-77, 378, 621; *CSPD 1623-1625*, pp. 135, 144.

¹⁴⁰⁵ *CSPD 1619-23*, p. 492 [TNA SP 14/138/36].

¹⁴⁰⁶ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 255.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 255.

¹⁴⁰⁸ Diana Cecil (1596-1654) was the second daughter and coheir of William Cecil, 2nd Earl of Exeter, by his second wife, Elizabeth Drury, the daughter of Sir William Drury of Hawsted, Suffolk.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Cokayne, Vol. X, pp. 255-6, citing *CSPD 1619-1623*, p. 532.

¹⁴¹⁰ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 256.

¹⁴¹¹ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 256.

¹⁴¹² Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 256.

¹⁴¹³ Cokayne, Vol. X, p. 256.

As noted above, Oxford's eldest daughter, Elizabeth Vere, married William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby. They had two sons and three daughters:

-James Stanley, 7th Earl of Derby (31 January 1607 – 15 October 1651), who on 26 June 1626 married Charlotte de La Trémoille (1599–1664), granddaughter of William the Silent.

-Sir Robert Stanley (d.1632), who married Elizabeth Gorges.

-Anne Stanley (d.1657), who married firstly, Sir Henry Portman and secondly, Robert Kerr, 1st Earl of Ancram.

-Elizabeth Stanley, who died young

-Elizabeth Stanley (again), who died young.

3. Bridget Vere

As noted above, Bridget Vere married Francis Norris. Both Bridget and her husband were descendants of Richard de Vere, 11th Earl of Oxford: Francis Norris was descended from the 12th Earl, while Bridget was descended from the 12th Earl's younger brother, Robert.¹⁴¹⁴

At the time of the marriage Francis Norris had no title, although two years later he became 2nd Baron Norris of Rycote when his grandfather, Henry Norris, 1st Baron Norris of Rycote,¹⁴¹⁵ died on 27 June 1601.¹⁴¹⁶ It was not until after the death of the 1st Baron Norris that Bridget was provided with a jointure, the amount of which became a subject of dispute. On 26 February 1602, Thomas Bellot wrote to Cecil:

My Lord Norris hath made my Lady a jointure. I made Mr Anthony of the [Court of] Wards peruse the book¹⁴¹⁷ afore it was engrossed. My Lord will allow her for herself and her servants part of the rents at Hedingham, which will be about £250 a year, and too little considering what portion she brought him, and [that] the purchase made with her money is now £300 a year, and will be in four years as good as £400. My Lord Norris hath had of me to his own use £900. My Lady's humble suit is for you to deal with him as

¹⁴¹⁴ See the pedigree in Ross, p. 18, and the Norris pedigree in Napier, Henry Alfred, *Historical Notices of the Parishes of Swyncombe and Ewelme in the County of Oxford*, (Oxford: James Wright, 1858), p. 346. URL:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=JwY5AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA342>

¹⁴¹⁵ Doran, Susan, "Norris, Henry, first Baron Norris (c. 1525–1601)", *ODNB*.

¹⁴¹⁶ Cokayne, Vol. IX, p. 645.

¹⁴¹⁷ A legal document, *esp.* a charter or deed by which land is conveyed. (*OED*)

*you shall think fit. I take that £350 is as little as he should allow her.*¹⁴¹⁸

As noted by Bellot, Bridget brought to the marriage her interest in Castle Hedingham, which Oxford had sold to Lord Burghley in trust for his three daughters in Michaelmas term 1591.¹⁴¹⁹

Bridget Vere's financial situation in the early years of her marriage is revealed in a document, almost certainly prepared by Thomas Bellot, which records receipts for three years ending at Michaelmas 1601. It states that £1256 was realized from the sale of plate, jewels and part of her portion, that her portion in money by will brought in £6537, and rents brought in a further £665. Total revenue for the three-year period thus came to approximately £8460, all of which was spent. Her charges for the first year, ending at Michaelmas 1599, were £1013, for the year 1600 a mere £180, and for 1601 £280. The amount paid for a purchase was £6217, while over the three year period £900 was paid to her husband. A note adds that 'Besides, my Lady Bridget is to answer my Lady Susan for overplus of jewels, £105'.¹⁴²⁰ The fact that so little was paid over the three-year period for Bridget's own maintenance, particularly in the final two years, while £900 was paid to her husband, and £6217 was paid for a single unidentified purchase to benefit Norris (as noted in Thomas Bellot's letter of 26 February 1602 above), raises troubling questions about Francis Norris' use of his wife's money.

Bridget Vere's marriage was unhappy from the outset. As noted above, as early as 23 November 1599, Rowland Whyte had advised Sir Robert Sidney that:

*. . . it is reported that young Mr Norris and the lady Bridget cannot agree, that Mr Secretary was fain to deal roundly with him to use her according to her birth and fortune.*¹⁴²¹

¹⁴¹⁸ Barnett, *Place, Profit and Power*, p. 34; *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquis of Salisbury*, Part XI – XII, (Dublin: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1906), pp. 61-2. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/calendarofmanusc11greauoft/page/60/mode/2up>

¹⁴¹⁹ TNA E 211/35; TNA CP 25/2/133/1707/29/30ELIZIMICH, Item 45; TNA C 66/1318, mm. 14-15; TNA C 66/1392, MM. 30-31; TNA C 66/1392, mm. 18-19; Nelson, pp. 335, 367.

¹⁴²⁰ Figures have been rounded. Cokayne, Vol. IX, p. 647; CP 97/84; *Historical Manuscripts Commission. Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Honourable The Marquis of Salisbury*, Part XI, (Dublin: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1906), p. 399.

URL: <https://archive.org/details/calendarofmanusc11grea/page/398/mode/2up>

¹⁴²¹ Payne, Helen, 'Cecil Women at Court', in Croft, Pauline J., ed., *Patronage, Culture and Power: The Early Cecils*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 272; Collins, Arthur, ed., *Letters and Memorials of State in the Reigns of Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, King James, King Charles the First, Part of the Reign of King Charles the Second, and Oliver's Usurpation*, (London: T. Osborne, 1746), Vol. II, p. 142. URL: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015014689569&view=1up&seq=166>

In March 1605 both Norris and Dudley Carleton were in the retinue of Charles Howard, 1st Earl of Nottingham, when he travelled to Spain in connection with the ratification of the Treaty of London which had ended hostilities between England and Spain in 1604:

*. . . in March 1605 [Nottingham] was sent to Spain as ambassador extraordinary, to interchange ratifications and oaths. His embassy was of almost regal splendour. He had the title of excellency, and a money allowance of £15,000. All the gentlemen of his staff wore black velvet cloaks, and his retainers numbered five hundred.*¹⁴²²

On the return trip, Norris fell seriously ill in Paris, and Carleton remained there to care for him. On 6 October 1605, Carleton wrote to Cecil saying he feared Norris would die. The letter contains the only recorded notice of any affection on Norris' part towards Bridget:

*May I add a few lines to a former letter, though I write with so much grief that I wish non posse scribere. By all conjectures I can make of the state of my Lord Norris' body and the accidents of his disease, I despair of his recovery. Betwixt his fits he has perfect good sense, and though he often thinks of disposing of things, and has bestowed somewhat with his own hands, yet I can give no assurance whether he has made a will or not. . . . The day he fell sick he made me more than ordinary demonstrations of his affection to his Lady, which makes me believe that whatsoever he does shall be the best for her good.*¹⁴²³

Norris was somewhat recovered by 24 October, although he remained in Paris for four more months.¹⁴²⁴ On 12 March 1606 John Chamberlain wrote to Dudley Carleton that Norris was attempting to cross the Channel:

*We hear nothing yet of the Lord Norris nor Sir Thomas Parry's arrival, who they say hath been at sea-side these ten or twelve days.*¹⁴²⁵

Not long after his return to England, in a move reminiscent of Oxford's separation from Anne Cecil, Norris refused to live with his wife. On 11 May 1606, Dudley Carleton wrote to John Chamberlain that Bridget had been 'strangely and suddenly cast' off, and was living at Cope Castle, the home in Kensington built by Lord Burghley's former

¹⁴²² Lee, Maurice, ed., *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, 1603-1624; Jacobean Letters*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1972), p. 8; Winwood, Vol. II, pp. 39, 52.

¹⁴²³ *Historical Manuscripts Commission. Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Honourable the Marquess of Salisbury Preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire*, Part XVII, edited by M.S. Giuseppi, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1938), pp. 447-8. URL:

https://archive.org/details/calendarofmanusc17grea_0/page/446/mode/2up

¹⁴²⁴ TNA SP 14/15/104, TNA 78/52, f. 336, TNA SP 78/82, ff. 342-3; TNA SP 14/16/69.

¹⁴²⁵ TNA 14/19/39.

servant, Sir Walter Cope.¹⁴²⁶

*Sir, I had no sooner written to you the last day but was recalling my letter, having even then received a summons from my Lord Norris to meet my cousin Paulet at Rycote about Saturday next . . . Tomorrow I mean to see in what forwardness the peaches be at Sion, and by the way will take my dinner at Cope Castle, where my Lady Norris remains as an exile, being at this present strangely and suddenly cast off by her melancholy lord, and upon terms of separation.*¹⁴²⁷

In June 1606, Bridget had a miscarriage, and on 19 June Sir Robert Cecil wrote a forceful letter to Norris, to which Norris replied on 29 June.¹⁴²⁸ A heavily-corrected draft of a second letter from Cecil to Norris sets out the background to the separation. It appears Norris had let it be known far and wide that he hated his wife, that he had implied she was unfaithful and that Elizabeth Norris was not his daughter, and that Bridget lived in fear that he might kill her. Cecil ends the letter with a demand that Norris provide Bridget with a suitable pension, and advises that she will live in future with her sister, Elizabeth, Countess of Derby:

My Lord, although I have received from your Lordship a letter so full of profession of your care of my niece, your wife, of your respect to myself, and purpose to afford her all things worthy of her, as I hold it my part to take notice thereof with thanks, yet when I consider how great a contradiction there is between your private professions and those proceedings of yours whereof the world takes notice, I must no longer conceal from you how much her friends have cause to complain of her misfortune, for as there can be nothing more common than the discourse of your Lordship's hatred to live with her, so is there nothing which can make the same more visible now by effect than your proceeding at this time, and therefore because your Lordship may no longer please yourself with thinking it sufficient for you to express care and kindness privately and to set her upon the open stage of scorn and practice, I think it a better dealing for us that have interest in her first to speak clearly what we conceive of your actions, and that done, to move you to resolve of those ways which honour and equity must challenge at your hands.

Whereas you are content to make your quarrel that she is grown so subject to fears of your intention to destroy her, your Lordship hath judgment enough to conclude whether she have cause or no. If there be, it is in you to amend, and not in her. If none, your Lordship shall do well to proclaim her a madwoman, or else that exception will serve to little purpose.

¹⁴²⁶ Allen, Elizabeth, "Cope, Sir Walter (1553?-1614)", *ODNB*. He was a long-time servant of both Lord Burghley and Sir Robert Cecil. See Barnett, *Place, Profit and Power*, pp. 50-4. For his will, see TNA PROB 11/125/121.

¹⁴²⁷ TNA SP 14/21/22. See also Lee, Maurice, ed., *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, 1603-1624; Jacobean Letters*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1972), pp. 83-5.

¹⁴²⁸ Payne, pp. 272, 279, citing Cecil Papers 116/126, 119/76.

If you will say that I have no reason to suspect your love to her when you have professed to me so much by your letters in her behalf, you must pardon me and all her friends to receive much satisfaction by any of them when your Lordship hath left it under the same hand (much about the same day you wrote to me) that the sight of your wife was no better to you than the sight of a basilisk.

If your Lordship will say that those things may be secret, I must answer your Lordship that whensoever Chelsea House hath aught in keeping which may tend to the injury of her father's daughter, it shall want neither art nor malice to divulge it, neither need there any more to overthrow any woman's fortune than once to have it spread that her husband hath left her, be the cause what it will.

Therefore as your Lordship seeth on our side a disposition to use plainness, so am I for my part as ready to yield to the best way of quietness, and as there is no other choice but to go on with a friendly course of separation, I am required in the name of her best friends to offer it you according to your own desire.

Only this is it which we must add, that we expect with this that you will as quietly and certainly resolve us what we shall trust to for her support, not (as we have heard) by offers of weeks' and monthly allowances in petty fragments, somewhat like to the form that noblemen use to pay their servants' board-wages, but in some better fashion by assuring a yearly pension, such being her birth and that addition which she hath given to your fortune, as she hath many friends that will expect no less than is her(?) due in honour and reason.

Thus have I have [sic] thought good directly and clearly to impart our resolution, wherein we desire your Lordship will let it be known with expedition what it is you will allow her and how it shall be assured, lest we that betrayed her to you when she was free should now be accused to neglect her when you have taken the ways to make her miserable.

As for your complaint against the nurse, if she may be believed she hath cause to complain of you, but therein I have nothing to do nor mean to meddle, the same being in my conceit too base a matter to trouble any of us both.

For your child, seeing the mother is now to leave her husband, I could wish your Lordship left the child, if you think good.

And thus expecting to hear from you before her going to the Countess of Derby, where we intend she shall remain without your trouble, I end as one that have ever(?) wished cause to be [no signature].¹⁴²⁹

On 7 September 1606, an inventory was taken of Norris' furniture at Chelsea House.¹⁴³⁰

¹⁴²⁹ CP 119/76.

¹⁴³⁰ Cokayne, Vol. IX, p. 647; CSPD 1603-10, p. 330 [TNA SP 14/81/93]

The reason for the taking of the inventory is unclear.

On 15 July 1608, Bridget was in Lancashire with her sister, the Countess of Derby, when John Chamberlain wrote to Dudley Carleton that Sir Robert Cecil intended to visit them after the King ended his summer progress:

They go this progress as far as Holmby, and then the Lord Treasurer [Sir Robert Cecil] means to make a step toward Lancashire to visit his nieces Derby and Norris.¹⁴³¹

On 30 August 1608 Sir Walter Cope¹⁴³² wrote to Dudley Carleton that Norris was ill, and planning to disinherit his daughter:

Lord Norris [is] not likely to recover, and is practising at Bath to disinherit his daughter. The Earl of Salisbury is desirous that Carleton should go to Bath to prevent so unjust an act. It would confirm the scandal cast upon Lady Norris at the time of her separation from her husband.¹⁴³³

Norris had an illegitimate son, Francis Rose *alias* Norris,¹⁴³⁴ by Sarah Rose.¹⁴³⁵ It appears that in August 1608 he was planning to make his illegitimate son his heir.

Several incidents dating from after the separation reveal Norris as unstable and combative, bearing long-held grudges and taking affront at perceived slights. On 2 May 1610, John Chamberlain reported to Sir Ralph Winwood¹⁴³⁶ that there had been a duel between Norris and Oxford's nephew, Peregrine Bertie:¹⁴³⁷

. . . in one week we had three or four great quarrels, the first twixt the Earls of Southampton and Montgomery that fell out at tennis where the rackets flew about their ears, but the matter was taken up and compounded by the King without further bloodshed. But the matter was not so easily ended twixt young Egerton, eldest son to Sir John, and one Morgan, a lawyer's son of good estate, the first being left dead in the field and the other sore hurt, and yet cannot be bailed nor dispensed withal but that he lies

¹⁴³¹ McClure, Vol. I, p. 261.

¹⁴³² Cope and Carleton were distantly related by marriage; in his letters Carleton occasionally refers to Cope as 'cousin'. See Lee, Maurice, ed., *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, 1603-1624; Jacobean Letters*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1972), p. 9.

¹⁴³³ *CSPD James 1603-1610*, p. 454 [TNA SP 14/35/71].

¹⁴³⁴ Wright, Steven, "Norris, Sir Francis (d. 1669)", *ODNB*.

¹⁴³⁵ Cokayne, Vol. IX, p. 648.

¹⁴³⁶ Greengrass, M., "Winwood, Sir Ralph (1562/3-1617)", *ODNB*.

¹⁴³⁷ Peregrine Bertie, knighted 1610, second son of Oxford's brother-in-law, Peregrine Bertie, Lord Willoughby d'Eresby.

*still by it in Newgate. The Lord Norris likewise went into the field with Peregrine Willoughby upon an old reckoning, and hurt him dangerously in the shoulder.*¹⁴³⁸

On 9 September 1613, Chamberlain reported to Sir Dudley Carleton on several quarrels among the nobility, including a rumour that Norris had fought again with Sir Peregrine Bertie:

*Here is speech likewise that the Lord Norris and Sir Peregrine Willoughby are gone forth for the same purpose*¹⁴³⁹

In 1614, and likely earlier, Norris was considering divorce. On 5 January 1614 John Chamberlain wrote to Dudley Carleton that Norris hoped to marry Frances Howard:¹⁴⁴⁰

*. . . the Lord Norris, who when the nullity¹⁴⁴¹ was on foot and in forwardness, not knowing she was so well provided, made tender of himself to the Lord Chamberlain for this [sic] daughter if he might be rid of his Lady, which he thought an easy matter to do, but was rejected non sine risu of all that heard of it.*¹⁴⁴²

On 12 September 1615 a coroner's inquest delivered a verdict of manslaughter against Norris for having slain a servant of another of Oxford's nephews, Robert Bertie, Lord Willoughby,¹⁴⁴³ at Bath:

*Verdict of manslaughter given by the jury against Lord Norris, for having slain Jonathan Pigott, servant of Lord Willoughby, with a thrust of his rapier; Lords Willoughby and Norris having before had a quarrel, and Pigott having assaulted Lord Norris and his servant.*¹⁴⁴⁴

On 15 September John Chamberlain wrote to Dudley Carleton with further details of the incident:

The Queen I hear is returned from the Bath not so well as when she went. I was told yesterday of an untoward accident happened there in the renewing of an old quarrel twixt

¹⁴³⁸ Winwood, Ralph, *Memorials of Affairs of State in the Reigns of Q. Elizabeth and K. James I*, (London: T. Ward, 1725), Vol. III, pp. 154-5. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/memorialsaffai03winw/page/154/mode/2up>

¹⁴³⁹ McClure, Vol. I, p. 474; *CSPD 1611-1618*, pp. 198-9 [TNA SP 14/74/56].

¹⁴⁴⁰ Bellany, Alastair, "Howard [married names Devereux, Carr], Frances, countess of Somerset (1590–1632)", *ODNB*. She was the daughter of Thomas Howard (1561-1626), 1st Earl of Suffolk, eldest son of Oxford's first cousin, Thomas Howard (1538-1572), 4th Duke of Norfolk.

¹⁴⁴¹ Frances Howard had her marriage to Robert Devereux (1591-1646), 3rd Earl of Essex, annulled so that she could marry Robert Carr (1585/6?–1645), 1st Earl of Somerset.

¹⁴⁴² McClure, Vol. I, pp. 498-9; *CSPD 1611-1618* [TNA SP 14/76/2].

¹⁴⁴³ Thrush, Andrew, "Bertie, Robert, first earl of Lindsey (1582–1642)", *ODNB*.

¹⁴⁴⁴ *CSPD 1611-18*, p. 308 [TNA SP 14/81/93].

*the Lord Willoughby and the Lord Norris wherein the Lord Willoughby, overlaid with number, should be sore hurt, and one of his men slain. If the matter be so foul as is reported, the Lord Norris had need find good friends or else it is like to cost him the setting on.*¹⁴⁴⁵

Copies of Norris' letter to King James claiming he acted in self-defence survive among the State Papers and the Harleian manuscripts:

83. *Lord Norris to the King. His discoursing with Lord Willoughby in a church or churchyard proves that he was not intending to quarrel, but Lord Willoughby assaulted him treacherously and unexpectedly. His slaying Lord Willoughby's man was purely in self-defence, as the man drew upon him. Throws himself on the King's justice and compassion.*¹⁴⁴⁶

39. *A Coppie of the Letter which the Lord Norrice writte to the Kings Majestie after he had slaine one of the Lord Willowbies Servants, upon a Quarrell raised betweene the twoe lords, Anno 1615. fol. 276. b.*¹⁴⁴⁷

George Carew¹⁴⁴⁸ reported the news of Norris' pardon in a letter to Sir Thomas Roe:

*September 1615. The Lords Willoughby and Norris, meeting at the Bath, in communication fell to ill words, and fought in the churchyard, where swords being drawn on either side a man of the Lord Willoughby's was slain by the Lord Norris. The jury found it to be manslaughter, for the which the Lord Norris hath pardon.*¹⁴⁴⁹

Bridget Vere and Francis Norris had one child, a daughter, Elizabeth, *suo jure* Baroness Norris.¹⁴⁵⁰ On 13 January 1620, John Chamberlain reported to Sir Dudley Carleton that Norris was to be made Earl of Thame, and that his daughter would marry Edward Wray (d.1658),¹⁴⁵¹ Groom of the Bedchamber:

¹⁴⁴⁵ McClure, Vol. I, p. 614; *CSPD 1611-1618*, p. 308 [TNA SP 14/81/99]

¹⁴⁴⁶ *CSPD James 1611-18*, p. 306.

¹⁴⁴⁷ *A Catalogue of the Harleian Collection of Manuscripts*, (London: Dryden Leach, 1759), Vol. I, p. 451. URL:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=HGVoAAAACAAJ&pg=PA451>

¹⁴⁴⁸ Lotz-Heumann, Ute, "Carew, George, earl of Totnes (1555–1629)", *ODNB*. See also Maclean, *infra*, pp. viii-ix.

¹⁴⁴⁹ *CSPD James 1611-18*, p. 344 [TNA SP 14/86/16]; Maclean, John, ed., *Letters from George Lord Carew to Sir Thomas Roe*, (London: Camden Society, 1860), p. 16. URL: <https://archive.org/details/lettersoflordcar00camduoft/page/16/mode/2up>

¹⁴⁵⁰ She died shortly before 10 October 1645, and was buried on 28 November 1645 in Westminster Abbey. See Cokayne, Vol. IX, p. 648, *supra*.

¹⁴⁵¹ Edward Wray was the third son of Sir William Wray, 1st Baronet Wray of Glentworth, Lincolnshire, and Lucy Montagu, eldest daughter of Sir Edward Montagu of Boughton, Northamptonshire. See Cokayne, Vol. IX, p. 648.

*We have speech of divers new creations towards, as the Lord Treasurer to be made Earl of Carlisle, the Lord Norris Earl of Thame, and to go Lord Deputy into Ireland in consideration of a marriage twixt young Wray of the bedchamber and his daughter, upon whom he is to assure his land, all save £1000 a year, and Wray to be made a baron, who hath carried himself so well towards that Lord that he hath won his goodwill.*¹⁴⁵²

A years later, on 28 January 1621, Norris was created Viscount Thame and Earl of Berkshire.¹⁴⁵³ His enjoyment of these new honours was short-lived. With a few weeks he was a prisoner in the Fleet. On 16 February 1621, while he and Lord Scrope¹⁴⁵⁴ were in a narrow passage leading to the House of Lords, Scrope pushed past him:

*Losing his temper, Berkshire thrust himself in front of Scrope. The house was sitting at the moment, and Prince Charles was present. The encounter between the two noblemen was brought to the notice of the peers, and Berkshire was committed to the Fleet prison.*¹⁴⁵⁵

John Chamberlain included the news in a letter to Sir Dudley Carleton on 17 February 1621:

*Our new Earl of Berkshire was then likewise committed close prisoner to the Fleet from the higher house for brabbling with the Lord Scrope that carelessly and unawares stepped in at the door before him.*¹⁴⁵⁶

Norris' imprisonment affected his plans for his daughter's marriage. On 4 August 1621, John Chamberlain wrote to Sir Dudley Carleton that:

*Whatever the matter is, the marriage of Master Wray with the Lord Norris' or Earl of Berkshire's daughter hath found some rub, and goes not forward.*¹⁴⁵⁷

Norris was eventually released from the Fleet and returned to Rycote, where on 29 January 1622 he shot himself with a cross-bow and died of his self-inflicted injuries two days later.¹⁴⁵⁸ On 16 February 1622, John Chamberlain wrote to Sir Dudley Carleton implying that orders had been given that the manner of Norris' death was to be glossed

¹⁴⁵² McClure, Vol. II, p. 334.

¹⁴⁵³ Cokayne, Vol. IX, p. 647.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Emanuel Scrope (1584-1630), 11th Baron Scrope of Bolton, was the grandson of Oxford's first cousin, Margaret Howard (d.1591), and Henry Scrope, 9th Baron Scrope of Bolton. See Furgol, Edward M., "Scrope, Henry, ninth Baron Scrope of Bolton (1533/4–1592)", *ODNB*.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Lee, Sidney, "Norris, Francis, Earl of Berkshire (1579–1623)", *Dictionary of National Biography*, 1885-1900, Vol. XLI, p. 120. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=BycJAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA120>

¹⁴⁵⁶ McClure, Vol. II, p. 344; *CSPD 1619-1623*, p. 225 [TNA 14/119/103].

¹⁴⁵⁷ McClure, Vol. II, p. 395; *CSPD 1619-1623*, p. 281 [TNA SP 14/122/60].

¹⁴⁵⁸ Burns, "Norris, Francis", *ODNB*, *supra*.

over, presumably because George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham,¹⁴⁵⁹ the royal favourite, wished to marry his brother, Christopher Villiers,¹⁴⁶⁰ to Norris' daughter, Elizabeth, and Norris' estate would be forfeit if his death were ruled a suicide:

[Your brother Carleton] writes further that letters are come down to the coroner that the evidence touching the Earl of Berkshire's manner of death must not be urged, but the matter made as fair as may be. It is generally thought that Kit Villiers shall carry away his daughter. For all I have heard or can learn, I see no cause of so desperate a resolution but that he had laesum principium [=a crazing of the brain] and the want of God's grace.¹⁴⁶¹

On 27 March 1622, two months after her father's suicide, Elizabeth Norris secretly married Edward Wray at the church of St Mary Aldermanbury.¹⁴⁶² Writing from London to Sir Dudley Carleton on 30 March 1622, John Chamberlain commented that the general consensus was that she married Wray in order to avoid the marriage with Christopher Villiers which would have been forced on her by the King and Buckingham:

On Wednesday Master Wray married the Lady Norris, daughter to the late Earl of Berkshire, who was designed to Kit Villiers. How the matter was carried were too long and too uncertain to relate, but it is so ill taken that he is put out of the bedchamber and commanded not to come at court nor within ten miles' compass. I hear likewise the Lord of Oxford¹⁴⁶³ is forbidden the court about this business. The gentlewoman carried herself very cunningly and resolutely, not so much (as is thought) for the love of the one as to be rid of the other.¹⁴⁶⁴

Elizabeth Norris was aided by her uncle of the half blood, Oxford's son, Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford:

Thomas Locke,¹⁴⁶⁵ in a letter of the same date [=30 March 1622], gives Carleton a few more particulars of this little romance, which furnished a good deal of gossip at the time: -- 'The Earl of Berkshire's daughter, who was kept at the Earl of Montgomery's, got out of the house early, walked three miles on foot, and was then met and taken to Aldermary Church, where she married Mr Wray of the Bedchamber. They thence went to the Earl of Oxford's house in Fleet Street, he being in the plot. Lord Montgomery sent to fetch her away, but Oxford would not give her up. His commission is taken from him, and Wray is put out of the Bedchamber.' Lord Oxford was on unfriendly terms with Buckingham, and

¹⁴⁵⁹ Lockyer, Roger, "Villiers, George, first duke of Buckingham (1592–1628)", *ODNB*.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Pollard, A.F., "Villiers, Christopher, first earl of Anglesey (d. 1630)", *ODNB*.

¹⁴⁶¹ McClure, Vol. II, p. 423; *CSPD 1619-1623*, p. 346. [TNA SP 14/127/101].

¹⁴⁶² The parish church of John Heminges and Henry Condell, where both served as churchwardens.

¹⁴⁶³ Stater, Victor, "Vere, Henry de, eighteenth earl of Oxford (1593–1625)", *ODNB*.

¹⁴⁶⁴ McClure, Vol. II, p. 429; *CSPD 1619-1623*, pp. 365-6 [TNA SP 14/128/96].

¹⁴⁶⁵ Thomas Locke became one of Sir Dudley Carleton's business agents and regular correspondents late in 1618. Lee, p. 287.

seems to have borne the brunt of his displeasure. Wray was imprisoned for several months, for on 15 February 1623 John Woodford wrote Sir Francis Nethersole¹⁴⁶⁶ that 'Wray is set at liberty'.¹⁴⁶⁷

It appears that she slipped away from the house of her uncle, Philip, Earl of Montgomery, to get married, and then took refuge with her uncle (of the half blood), Henry, Earl of Oxford, who in consequence lost his commission and was later sent to the Tower. Edward Wray was imprisoned till February 1622-3.¹⁴⁶⁸

Having offended both the King and his favourite, Oxford not only felt the force of royal displeasure, but also made a powerful enemy in Buckingham.

The Reverend Joseph Mead commented on the consequences of the marriage in a letter dated 13 April 1622:

Mr Wray is turned out of the Bedchamber for marrying the late Earl of Berkshire's daughter, whom Mr Kit Villiers looked for.¹⁴⁶⁹

After Francis Norris' suicide, it was rumoured that his widow, Bridget Vere, had married Sir Philip Mainwaring.¹⁴⁷⁰ It is also alleged that she married Sir Hugh Pollard, and had a daughter by him.¹⁴⁷¹ Although this seems unlikely given the disparity in their ages, the marriage is mentioned in several sources.

The date of Bridget Vere's death and place of her burial are unknown. Sir Thomas Eliot reported a rumour of her death in an undated letter to Lady Joan Barrington written

¹⁴⁶⁶ Pursell, B.C., "Nethersole, Sir Francis (*bap.* 1587, *d.* 1659)", *ODNB*.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Cokayne, Vol. IX, p. 648; *CSPD James 1619-23*, pp. 346, 366, 378, 492.

Williams, W.R., *The Parliamentary History of the County of Oxford*, (Brecknock: Edwin Davies, 1899), pp. 51-2. URL:

<https://archive.org/stream/cu31924030495000#page/n53/mode/2up>

¹⁴⁶⁸ Cokayne, Vol. IX, p. 648; Green, Mary Anne Everett, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series of the Reign of James I. 1619-1623*, (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1858), pp. 346, 366, 378, 492.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Cokayne, Vol. IX, p. 648, citing Harleian MS 389, f. 169.

¹⁴⁷⁰ *CSPD James 1619-23*, p. 492 [TNA SP 14/138/36]; Pogson, Fiona, "Mainwaring, Sir Philip (1589–1661)", *ODNB*.

¹⁴⁷¹ Sir Hugh Pollard (c.1610-1666) was the eldest son of Sir Lewis Pollard (1578 – 19 November 1641), 1st Baronet Pollard, of Kings Nympton, Devon, and Margaret Berkeley, the daughter of Sir Henry Berkeley (d.1601) and Margaret (nee Lygon) Russell Berkeley (d.1617). Through her first marriage to Sir Thomas Russell (d. 9 April 1574), Margaret (nee Lygon) Russell Berkeley was the mother of Thomas Russell (1570-1634), overseer of the will of William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon. See her will, TNA PROB 11/129/781. See Wolffe, Mary, "Pollard, Sir Hugh, second baronet (1603–1666)", *ODNB*. See also the History of Parliament entry for Sir Hugh Pollard. *The Complete Peerage* does not mention the marriage.

between December 1630 and May 1631:

*There is some talk of 2 or 3 Lords and Ladies that they say are lately dead, as the Countess of Berkshire and the Lord St John. . . .*¹⁴⁷²

Her daughter, Elizabeth Norris, died shortly before 10 October and was buried in Westminster Abbey on 28 November 1645.¹⁴⁷³

¹⁴⁷² Cokayne, Vol. IX, p. 648; *Seventh Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, Part I, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1879), p. 546. URL: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=msu.31293104003714&view=1up&seq=568>

¹⁴⁷³ Cokayne, Vol. IX, p. 648.

4. Susan Vere

After Queen Elizabeth's death, Oxford's two elder daughters entered the service of James I's Queen, Anne of Denmark, and by February 1604 were ladies-in-waiting in her 'drawing chamber'.¹⁴⁷⁴

Despite her earlier promise to Sir Robert Cecil that she would never marry without his consent, on 14 October Susan Vere was secretly contracted to Philip Herbert.¹⁴⁷⁵ As a second son, he had limited prospects. On the other hand, an undated memorandum partly in Cecil's hand endorsed '1605' indicates that Susan Vere's assets were substantial. The first part of the memorandum was almost certainly prepared by Thomas Bellot:

17 June 1604. Lady Susan's portion remaining in my hands: money £7537; jewels £487; plate £1454; total £9479.¹⁴⁷⁶ Rents per annun, £240.

The second part of the memorandum is in Cecil's hand:

The portion of the Lady Susan in plate £1500; in jewels £400; in money £5537; a dividend of £500; lands £230. Expenses since her grandfather died almost £4000.¹⁴⁷⁷

Although they were presumably made only a few months apart, the two accounts of Susan Vere's assets are strikingly different: the first states that Susan Vere has £7537 in money; the second reduces that figure by £2000 to £5537. The likely reason for the discrepancy is that Bellot prepared his account before Susan Vere's marriage, when there was a possibility that her marriage portion under Lord Burghley's will could be as much as £4000:

. . . and to dispose the same money to the advancement of the Lady Bridget and Lady Susan for their marriages, with these conditions, that which of them shall be married with an earl or the heir apparent of an earl shall have four thousand pounds, part of the money left with the said Thomas Bellot, and if they shall marry with a baron or the heir apparent of a baron, then but three thousand pounds, and if under that degree, then but two thousand pounds.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Payne, p. 273.

¹⁴⁷⁵ Jeayes, p. 150.

¹⁴⁷⁶ After arriving at a total of £9479 5s 7d, Nelson, p. 429, inexplicably states: 'The Portion of the Lady Susan' thus amounted to £7767.

¹⁴⁷⁷ Figures have been rounded. *Historical Manuscripts Commission. Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Honourable the Marquess of Salisbury Preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, Part XVII*, edited by M.S. Giuseppi, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1938), p. 646 URL:

https://archive.org/details/calendarofmanusc17grea_0/page/646/mode/2up

However when Susan Vere married Philip Herbert, he was neither an earl nor a baron, nor the heir to an earldom or a barony, and it thus seems she received a marriage portion of only £2000.

Cecil's account also mentions expenses of £4000 to be deducted from the total. Susan Vere's portion was thus £3927 plus £230 in rent from Castle Hedingham.

Cecil's initial reaction to the secret betrothal was decidedly negative. On 16 October 1604, William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke, wrote to Gilbert Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury:¹⁴⁷⁸

*. . . . The matter in brief is that after long love and many changes my brother on Friday last was privately contracted to my Lady Susan without the knowledge of any of his or her friends. On Saturday she acquainted her uncle with it, and he me. My Lord of Cranborne seemed to be much troubled with it at the first, but yesterday the King, taking the whole matter on himself, made peace on all sides.*¹⁴⁷⁹

On 24 October 1604, Philip Gawdy relayed the news to his brother, Bassingborne:

*Sir Philip Herbert shall marry my Lady Susan Vere, and Sir Richard Gargrave my cousin Elizabeth Southwell, and it is thought my Lord Willoughby doth favour well my cousin Gargrave, the Maid of Honour.*¹⁴⁸⁰

On the same day Rowland Whyte wrote to Gilbert Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury:¹⁴⁸¹

*There is no day set down for Sir Philip Herbert's marriage, only it is thought it shall be in Christmas holidays. The King hath given order to the Lords to appoint out certain lands to above the value of £1000 per annum for him and his heirs forever, and I hear he shall be created a Viscount. My Lord of Cranborne loves him dearly, and joys in him, and my Lord of Suffolk and Northampton use him kindly and with respect, and I begin to observe some kindness between others and them where much strangeness was before.*¹⁴⁸²

Whyte's final comment indicates that Philip Herbert was not popular at court, perhaps due to the speed with which he had ingratiated himself with the new King, but perhaps also due to negative aspects of his character later commented on by others.

¹⁴⁷⁸ Hicks, Michael, "Talbot, Gilbert, seventh earl of Shrewsbury (1552–1616)", *ODNB*.

¹⁴⁷⁹ Nichols, John, *The Progresses, Processions and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First*, (London: J.B. Nichols, 1828), Vol. I, pp. 221-2. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=3rQvAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA222>

¹⁴⁸⁰ Nelson, p. 429, citing BL MS Egerton 2804, f. 185; Jeayes, p. 150.

¹⁴⁸¹ Hicks, Michael, "Talbot, Gilbert, seventh earl of Shrewsbury (1552–1616)", *ODNB*.

¹⁴⁸² Payne, p. 273; Lodge, Edmund, *Illustrations of British History, Biography, and Manners*, (London: G. Nicol, 1791), Vol. III, p. 241, citing Talbot Papers, Vol. K, f. 223. URL: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433004875286&view=1up&seq=253>

On 18 December 1604 John Chamberlain sent Ralph Winwood news of the forthcoming wedding:

*. . . The King came back from Royston on Saturday, but so far from being weary or satisfied with those sports, that presently after the holidays he makes reckoning to be there again, or as some say, to go further toward Lincolnshire to a place called Ancaster Heath. In the meantime here is great provision for cockpit to entertain him at home, and of masques and revels against the marriage of Sir Philip Herbert and the Lady Susan Vere which is to be celebrated on St John's day. The Queen hath likewise a great masque in hand against Twelfthtide, for which there was £3000 delivered a month ago.*¹⁴⁸³

The wedding took place on 27 December amid the Christmas festivities at court, and was described in detail by Dudley Carleton in a letter to John Chamberlain dated 7 January 1605:

Our Christmas games are now at an end unless the Duke of Holstein¹⁴⁸⁴ come with an after-reckoning, who as they say hath somewhat in hand, and broges about for some others to bear part in the charge, which is not bien séant à un prince.

We began on Saint John's day [27 December] with the marriage of Sir Philip and the Lady Susan, which was performed with as much ceremony and grace as could be done a favourite. The Prince and Duke of Holstein led the bride to church, the Queen followed her from thence, the King gave her, and she bridled and bridled it so handsomely, and indeed became herself so well, that the King said if he were not married he would not give her, but keep her himself. There was none of our accustomed forms omitted of bridecakes, sops in wine, giving of gloves, laces and points which have been ever since the livery of the court, and at night there was sewing into the sheet, casting of the bride's left hose, and twenty other petty sorceries. They were married in the chapel, feasted in the great chamber, and lodged in the council-chamber, where the King gave them in the morning before they were up a reveille-matin in his shirt and his nightgown, and spent a good hour with them in the bed or upon, choose which you will believe best.

It seems possible the King's present was designed to provide a jointure for Susan Vere:

The plate and presents that were given were valued at £2000, but that which the King gave made it a good marriage, which was a book of 500 land lying in the Isle of Sheppey,

¹⁴⁸³ McClure, Vol. I, p. 198; Nelson, p. 485; Winwood, Ralph, *Memorials of Affairs of State in the Reigns of Q. Elizabeth and K. James I*, (London: T. Ward, 1725), Vol. II, p. 41 at:

<https://archive.org/details/memorialsaffai02winw/page/40/mode/2up>

¹⁴⁸⁴ Ulric, Duke of Holstein, brother of Queen Anne. He arrived in England in November 1604. See Lee, *Carleton*, *supra*, p. 69.

whereof Sir Edward Hoby¹⁴⁸⁵ had a lease, passed and delivered that day for the lady's jointure.

At night there was a masque performed by my Lord of Pembroke, my Lord Willoughby, Sir James Hay, Sir Robert Carey, Sir John Lee, Sir Richard Preston, Sir Thomas Germain and Sir Thomas Bager. . . .

The Venetian ambassador was there present, and was a wedding guest all the day, but one thing he took ill, and not without cause, that being brought after dinner to the closet to retire himself, he was there forgotten, and suffered to walk out his supper, which he took afterwards privately in my Lord of Cranborne's chamber. The Spanish ambassador was there likewise, but disguised. The French ambassador, by reason of sickness, hath been a stranger at court all Christmas.¹⁴⁸⁶

On 12 January 1605, the Venetian ambassador, Nicolo Molino,¹⁴⁸⁷ wrote to the Doge and Senate of Venice concerning his attendance at the marriage. His lengthy letter deals more with matters of precedence and the slight he had suffered in being forgotten in his room while dinner was being served than with the celebrations. However he does reveal that the crush of guests was such that the dancing planned to fill the time between dinner and supper was cancelled:

. . . After the banquet was over, and very sumptuous it was, everyone retired to his own apartments till the servants had prepared the room for dancing till suppertime. But so great was the crowd that dancing was out of the question. . . .¹⁴⁸⁸

Even after the wedding, Cecil had not reconciled himself to the marriage. A month after the wedding, Sir Thomas Lake informed Cecil that:

. . . upon reading of the latter clause of your letter, his Majesty has willed me to let you know that you have so often in every letter given scorns to Philip Herbert as he has vowed not to come any more at your niece.¹⁴⁸⁹

This threat perhaps caused Cecil to better conceal his feelings. Moreover, as Payne points, Cecil stood to benefit from the marriage since until 1615 Philip Herbert was the only Englishman in the King's Bedchamber.¹⁴⁹⁰

¹⁴⁸⁵ Sir Edward Hoby was a first cousin of Susan Vere's mother, Anne Cecil. See Knafla, Louis A., "Hoby, Sir Edward (1560–1617)", *ODNB*.

¹⁴⁸⁶ TNA SP 14/12/6, ff. 8-9; Lee, *Carleton, supra*, pp. 66-8; Nelson, p. 429. Nelson erroneously states that the letter was written by Chamberlain to Carleton.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Nicolo Molino was the Venetian ambassador in England from November 1603 to early 1606.

¹⁴⁸⁸ *CSP Venice 1603-1607*. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/calendarstatepa00browgoog/page/n287/mode/2up>

¹⁴⁸⁹ Payne, pp. 273-4.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Payne, p. 274.

On 4 May 1605, as a further mark of the King's favour, Philip Herbert was created Earl of Montgomery. On the same day, Robert Cecil was created Earl of Salisbury, while his brother, Thomas Cecil, was created Earl of Exeter.¹⁴⁹¹

In 1607 an incident occurred at a horse-race at Croydon which tarred Herbert with cowardice. Francis Osborne,¹⁴⁹² a distant relation of the Cecils, scornfully describes how a Scot named Ramsay struck Herbert in the face with a switch, and Herbert failed to retaliate. Osborne's account merits consideration in full because of the political implications of the incident, and because of his aside concerning Susan Vere's conception:

23. Wherefore I shall take my first rise from him that was then Philip Herbert, since Earl of Montgomery, a man caressed by King James for his handsome face, which kept him not long company, leaving little behind it so acceptable as to render him fit society for anybody but himself and such books as posterity may find ordinarily dedicated to him, which might yet have prompted his understanding to a more candid proceeding than he used at Oxford, where he exercised greater passion against learning, that had by teaching books to speak English endeavored to make him wise, than he did towards Ramsey, who by switching him on the face at Croydon rendered him ridiculous. It was at a horse-race where many both Scotch and English met, the latter of which did upon this accident draw together with a resolution to make it a national quarrel, so far as Mr. John Pinchbeck, though a maimed man having but the perfect use of two fingers, rode about with his dagger in his hand, crying, Let us break our fast with them here, and dine with the rest at London.

But Herbert not offering to strike again, there was nothing spilt but the reputation of a gentleman, in lieu of which, if I am not mistaken, the King made him a knight, a baron, a viscount, and an earl in one day, as he well deserved, having for his sake, or rather out of fear, transgressed against all the gradations of honour, for if he had not torn to rags that coat of arms so often in my hearing bragged of, and so stanchd the blood then ready to be spilt, not only that day but all after must have proved fatal to the Scots so long as any had stayed in England, the royal family excepted, which in respect of his Majesty, or their own safety, they must have spared, or the kingdom been left to the misery of seeing so much blood laid out as the trial of so many crabbed titles would have required, there being then, according to report, no less than fourteen, of which Parsons the Jesuit, so impudent is this fraternity, makes the Infanta the first. But they could not be these considerations that restrained Herbert, who wanted leisure no less than capacity to use them, though laid in his way by others. And therefore if that effeminacy produced good to the nation (at that time doubted by many), the honour is only due to God, whose miraculous power was no less manifested (upon so high a provocation and great encouragement as the whole field afforded Philip) in raising so much phlegm in a man nobly born as might master so great a fury than when he discovered to Samson a cold

¹⁴⁹¹ Payne, p. 274; Nelson, p. 430.

¹⁴⁹² Henson, Marie C., "Osborne, Francis (1593–1659)", *ODNB*.

fountain in the jaw-bone of an ass. And such of his friends as blame his youth for doing nothing take away all excuse could have been made for him had he done too much, since all commonly arrive at the years of valour before they can attain to those of discretion.

This I can attest for the man, that he was intolerable choleric and offensive, and did not refrain, whilst he was Chamberlain, to break many wiser heads than his own, Mr. May that translated Lucan having felt the weight of his staff, which had not his office and the place, being a banqueting house, protected, I question whether he would ever have struck again, so disobliging were the most grateful pleasures of the court, whose masques and other spectacles, though they wholly intended them for show, and would not have been pleased without great store of company, he did not spare to affront such as came to see them. . . .

24. *I have been told the mother of Herbert tore her hair at the report of her son's dishonour, who, I am confident, upon a like opportunity would have ransomed her own repute if she had not redeemed her country's. . . .*

25. *In the meantime, the King was much troubled at this accident, not being able to ruminate upon the consequence it might have produced without trembling. Nor could he refrain from letting fall sharp expressions against the insolency of the Scots and folly of the English whose blood he pretended to indulge most [] within and without him. . . . But however remote his affections were, he durst not banish Ramsey the court, a poor satisfaction for Herbert, that was left nothing to testify his manhood but a beard and children by that daughter¹⁴⁹³ of the last great Earl of Oxford, whose lady was brought to bed under the notion of his mistress, and from such a virtuous deceit she is said to proceed.¹⁴⁹⁴*

Osborne's scornful appraisal of Philip Herbert has been echoed by many others over time. White, for example, allows him no good qualities apart from a knowledge of dogs and horses:

Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery, was the younger brother of William, and although they are addressed in this dedication as an 'incomparable paire of brethren', there was little in common between them but their blood. Philip lacked all the accomplishments and almost all the qualities that his brother possessed. He was little more than a low-bred, coarse-mannered country squire, who put no restraint upon a violent and hasty temper, whose only knowledge was in dogs and horses, and whose language was not much better than that of the horse boys and kennel keepers, who were his fittest

¹⁴⁹³ The daughter would have been Oxford's eldest daughter, Elizabeth, not Susan. The story seems to have been invented to explain Oxford's refusal to live with his wife, Anne Cecil, after Elizabeth's birth on 2 July 1575 while he was on his continental tour.

¹⁴⁹⁴ Wing Short Title Catalogue 0515.

*companions.*¹⁴⁹⁵

Lee likewise allows him no redeeming qualities:

*Sir Philip Herbert, later Earl of Pembroke, was a handsome, extravagant, bad-tempered and licentious man. . . .*¹⁴⁹⁶

Lewalski taxes him with being 'barely literate', although acknowledging that he was a good judge of art and architecture:

*Philip was fourth Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, Lord Chamberlain of the household to James I and Charles I, and a great favorite of both. He was physically attractive, extravagant, and a passionate hunter, but also coarse, foul-mouthed, quarrelsome, a notorious libertine, and barely literate, though a sound judge of pictures and architecture.*¹⁴⁹⁷

A noted earlier, in late April or early May 1610, he had a violent altercation with the 3rd Earl of Southampton which the King was forced to settle:

*. . . in one week we had three or four great quarrels, the first twixt the Earls of Southampton and Montgomery that fell out at tennis where the rackets flew about their ears, but the matter was taken up and compounded by the King without further bloodshed.*¹⁴⁹⁸

Whatever his flaws, Philip Herbert has been redeemed by history. He is remembered by the world in the magnificent Van Dyke portrait at Wilton House he commissioned of himself with his family, and as one of the 'two noble brethren' of the *First Folio*.

¹⁴⁹⁵ White, Richard Grant, ed., *The Works of William Shakespeare*, (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1888), Vol. II, p. xxxi. URL:

https://books.google.ca/books?id=M1I_AQAAIAAJ&pg=PR31

¹⁴⁹⁶ Lee, *Carleton*, *supra*, p. 69.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Lewalski, Barbara Kiefer, *Writing Women in Jacobean England*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 129. URL:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=wUqSQOOE21cC&pg=PA129>

¹⁴⁹⁸ Winwood, Ralph, *Memorials of Affairs of State in the Reigns of Q. Elizabeth and K. James I*, (London: T. Ward, 1725), Vol. III, pp. 154-5. URL:

<https://archive.org/details/memorialsaffai03winw/page/154/mode/2up>

5. Sir Edward Vere

By his mistress Anne Vavasour Oxford had an illegitimate son, Sir Edward Vere (1581-1629). Sir Edward Vere may have spent part of his youth in the household of the Queen's Champion, Sir Henry Lee, whose mistress his mother became. He joined the army as a young page, apparently under the aegis of Oxford's kinsman, John Holles,¹⁴⁹⁹ and was close to his father's first cousins, Sir Francis Vere and Horatio Vere. He was knighted at Newmarket by King James on 15 or 16 April 1607 at the same time as Oxford's first cousin, Sir John Vere (d.1624).¹⁵⁰⁰ He was a scholar as well as a soldier: a manuscript of 1010 pages containing his translation into English of *The Histories* of the Greek historian, Polybius, is still extant. He was mortally wounded on 18 August 1629 at the siege of Bois-le-Duc, and buried at Bommel.¹⁵⁰¹ According to John Hampden,¹⁵⁰² writing to Sir John Eliot, he was highly thought of:

*For if Mr Richard Eliot will, in the intermissions of action, add study to practice, and adorn that lively spirit with flowers of contemplation, he will raise our expectations of another Sir Edward Vere, that had this character – all summer in the field, all winter in his study – in whose fall fame makes this kingdom a great loser.*¹⁵⁰³

His portrait is the property of the Minos D. Miller, Sr. Trust.¹⁵⁰⁴

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APC	<i>Acts of the Privy Council</i> , ed. John Roche Dasent
Barnett	<i>Place, Profit and Power</i>
BHOL	British History Online
BL	The British Library

¹⁴⁹⁹ Seddon, P.R., "Holles, John, first earl of Clare (d. 1637)", *ODNB*. Sir John Holles was the son of Oxford's first cousin, Eleanor Sheffield, and Denzel Holles (c.1538-1590).

¹⁵⁰⁰ Shaw, William A., *The Knights of England*, (London: Sherratt and Hughes, 1906), Vol. II, p. 142. URL:

https://archive.org/details/knightsofengland02shaw_0/page/n149/mode/2up

¹⁵⁰¹ Markham, Clements R., *The Fighting Veres*, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1888), pp. 436-8. URL:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=4hFqAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA438>

¹⁵⁰² Russell, Conrad, "Hampden, John (1595–1643)", *ODNB*.

¹⁵⁰³ 'Lord Nugent's Memorials of Hampden' in Macaulay, T. Babington, *Essays, Critical and Miscellaneous*, (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Company, 1858), pp. 151-70 at p. 157. URL: <https://books.google.ca/books?id=-TYPAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA157>.

¹⁵⁰⁴ See Miller, Ruth Loyd, *Shakespeare Identified*, (Jennings, Louisiana: Minos Publishing Company, 1975), Vol. II, p. 100.

Brennan	The Letters (1595-1608) of Rowland Whyte
Carleton	Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, 1603-1624
Cokayne	The Complete Peerage
Correspondance	Correspondance Diplomatique de Bertrand de Salignac
CP	Cecil Papers
CPR	Calendar of the Patent Rolls
CRO	Cornwall Record Office
CSPD Eliz	Calendar of State Papers Domestic, Elizabeth
CSPD James	Calendar of State Papers Domestic, James
CSP Venice	Calendar of State Papers, Venice
<i>Dangerous Queen</i>	Edwards, Francis, <i>The Dangerous Queen</i>
<i>Marvellous Chance</i>	Edwards, Francis, <i>The Marvellous Chance</i>
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
ECDbD	The Elizabethan Court Day By Day
EL	Ellesmere MSS, Henry E. Huntingdon Library
ERO	Essex Record Office
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
Jeayes	<i>Letters of Philip Gawdy</i>
Kemp	<i>The Black Book of Warwick</i>
Latham	<i>Letters of Sir Walter Raleigh</i>
LMA	London Metropolitan Archive
Lodge	<i>Illustrations of British History</i>
McClure	<i>The Letters of John Chamberlain</i>
McKeen	<i>A Memory of Honour</i>
<i>Machyn</i>	<i>The Diary of Henry Machyn</i>
<i>Magna Carta Ancestry</i>	Richardson, Douglas, <i>Magna Carta Ancestry</i> , 2 nd ed., 2011
Nelson	<i>Monstrous Adversary</i>
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
Payne	<i>Patronage, Culture and Power</i>
<i>Plantagenet Ancestry</i>	Richardson, Douglas, <i>Plantagenet Ancestry</i> , 2 nd ed., 2011
Ross	<i>John de Vere, Thirteenth Earl of Oxford 1442-1513</i>
Sharp	<i>Memorials of the Rebellion of 1569</i>
SRO	Staffordshire Record Office
STC	Short Title Catalogue
Strickland	<i>Lives of the Queens of Scotland</i>
Strype, <i>Annals</i>	<i>Annals of the Reformation</i>
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
Ward	Ward, B.M., <i>The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford</i>
Winwood	<i>Memorials of Affairs of State</i>

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