

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter from Oxford to Lord Burghley dated 8 September 1590 dealing with financial matters, most of them relating to the Queen's extents against Oxford's lands for his debt to the Court of Wards.

Oxford states that he has sent his servant, Thomas Hampton, to Lord Burghley to advise him of his 'proceedings' in the 'country', presumably in connection with repercussions from the Queen's extents. At this point Oxford was unaware that Hampton had been assisting former purchasers of Oxford's lands to defraud Oxford, including Thomas Skinner (d.1596) and, likely, Thomas Coe. By 18 May 1591 Oxford had learned of at least some of Hampton's 'evil dealings', and in a letter of that date thanks Lord Burghley for punishing Hampton for his part in the fraud of Thomas Skinner. See BL Lansdowne 68/6, ff. 12-13:

My Lord, I do thank your Lordship for the punishment of Hampton, whose evil dealings towards me, being put in trust with my causes in law, I hope your Lordship will think them sufficient to deserve your disgrace, especially knowing his corruptions, which for the more assured knowledge of your Lordship I have sent unto the parties themselves from whom he hath drawn money to his own behoof, whose confirmations, so soon as they can be brought out of the country, they shall be delivered to your Lordship.

Oxford mentions in the letter below that Thomas Skinner has 'often' met with him to try to arrange a settlement, but it is not clear whether Oxford was aware at this point of Thomas Hampton's involvement in Skinner's fraud:

Skinner hath been often with me for a composition, upon what points(?) of law Hampton is to inform your Lordship.

For Oxford's letter to Lord Burghley dated 30 June 1591 in which he describes Hampton's fraudulent dealings with many of the former purchasers of Oxford's lands, and in particular Hampton's fraudulent collusion with Thomas Skinner, see BL Lansdowne 68/11, ff. 22, 23, 28:

Now, my Lord, at the first taking of this land in lease, Thomas Hampton, being put in trust to follow the cause after her Majesty's grant obtained, having an intention both to gain by me and Skinner, took my lease out of the Court of Wards for £400 (whereas he should have taken it for a 11,000) and kept the lease from the lessee, bearing me in hand that it was a perfect lease during the sum of the £11,000. At length, when it should come to the reading in open court, his falsehood appearing, he made excuse that your Lordship would make no better till you saw how this was used. Now, finding that he was not likely to make further commodity by these extents, having taken money of all those with whom he dealt, and knowing that the lease was to be ended when £400 were paid, went unto Skinner and offered him (for the moiety of his extents and 13 hangings) to help him to his land again.

For Oxford's dealings with Thomas Skinner, see also other documents on this website.

For Thomas Coe, and his possible fraud against Oxford in connection with a lease of the rectory of Walter Belchamp, see TNA C 2/Eliz/O2/13 and TNA REQ 2/276, Item 62.

Oxford also requests in the letter below that the lease of Lavenham in the name of his servant, Arthur Milles, be made over to another of his servants, Nicholas Mynne.

Lavenham had come into the Queen's hands by means of an extent issued against it on the basis of £2100 worth of forfeited penal bonds made by Oxford on 1 July 1571 to guarantee payment of £1400 to the Court of Wards (the £1400 being part of the £2000 fine originally levied against Oxford by the Court of Wards for his marriage to Anne Cecil, often referred to as the fine for his 'wardship'). Having extended against Lavenham on 21 February 1589, the Queen leased it to Oxford's servant Arthur Milles on 13 April 1590 for as many years as the extent should remain in force at the yearly rent of £66 13s 4d (i.e., 100 marks).

It is worth noting that by the date of this indenture a considerable portion of Oxford's original debt of £3306 to the Court of Wards had already been repaid under the scheme instituted in 1587 whereby the purchasers of Oxford's lands undertook to repay his original debt to the Court of Wards (but not the amounts forfeited by Oxford under penal bonds). In consequence, the extent by the Queen against Lavenham on 21 February 1589 was issued, as the indenture itself states, not for payment of Oxford's original debt to the Court of Wards, but on the basis of the £11,446 worth of bonds which Oxford had forfeited to the Court of Wards for non-payment of his original debt.

Other documents indicate that this lease and a lease of Castle Camps and Fowlmire to another of Oxford's servants, Nicholas Mynne, were granted by the Queen for the purpose of relieving Oxford from the consequence of the felony by which Skinner had caused Oxford to forfeit a penal bond in the amount of £20,000. However, through the fraud of Thomas Hampton, Skinner quickly regained control of all three manors.

For the lease of Lavenham, see TNA WARD 9/118, ff. 234-5.

Oxford also advises Lord Burghley that one Bellingham intends to complain directly to the Queen. The circumstances are obscure, but Oxford states that his actions are based on his status as 'lord of the manor by escheat', whereby certain assets (likely including a lease in which Bellingham had an interest) had escheated to him because Bellingham, after being pardoned for three burglaries, had breached the conditions of his pardon, and had thereby forfeited the pardon, triggering the escheat. It appears Bellingham's mother had been 'put forth of the castle' before the escheat had been triggered, a situation rectified by a letter from Lord Burghley to the sheriff, albeit according to Oxford Bellingham's mother had been dealt with even more favourably than the letter to the sheriff had directed as a result of Thomas Hampton's intervention, which raises the possibility that Hampton had engaged in fraud in this matter as well.

Bellingham has not been identified, but if 'the castle' is a reference to Castle Hedingham, he may be the 'Henry Bellingham, esquire' 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 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=gLEtmA5t-t8C&pg=PA599&lpg=PA599&dq=%22Hedingham%22+%22Bellingham%22&source=bl&ots=sJ98t4nIG5&sig=ota89OUwM8Eb82W9Oy4hvEzMU2M&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjegKjtkN7TAhVO2WMKHRXbCiIQ6AEIRDAJ#v=onepage&q=%22Hedingham%22%20%22Bellingham%22&f=false>.

Captain Henry Bellingham commanded the *Rainbow* under Drake at Cadiz in 1587, and the *George Noble* during the Armada invasion of 1588, and may be the individual referred to in Oxford's letter below.

Square brackets in the letter below indicate words which have faded to illegibility.

I would have been with your Lordship before this but that I have not had my health. Nevertheless, Hampton being returned from the country, I have sent him to your Lordship that he may advertise you of his proceedings there.

At Oatlands I think your Lordship remembers a complaint of [] Bellingham's son of his mother's putting forth of the castle, which was before anything done, whereupon your Lordship directed a letter unto the sheriff, [] whereof, as it seems, Thomas Hampton had dealt with more favour towards her than the letters unto the sheriff imported. Notwithstanding, I understand Bellingham is gone to the court, encouraged I know not by what friends, to complain, as he did report here in town, not to your Lordship, but to her Majesty's self. My Lord, it was ever meant that he should have consideration as reason and conscience might afford him. 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. For those things which falls to me by escheat I do not doubt that her Majesty will, against her law, give any ear, or hearken to such wrongful complaint.

Skinner hath been often with me for a composition, upon what points(?) of law Hampton is to inform your Lordship, referring myself wholly to your Lordship who in all my causes I find mine honourable good Lord, and to deal more fatherly than

friendly with me, for the which I do acknowledge, and ever will, myself in most especial wise bound.

And whereas there is a lease in Arthur Milles' hand of the manor and lands of Lavenham, I desire your Lordship to cause him to make over his trust unto my servant Mynne, to whom the other lease is made.

If there be complaints made unto your Lordship (as I doubt not but that there will) against the proceedings of mine officers, I most earnestly desire that there may be some reasonable time appointed for the answering of them because my counsel is not in town, but shall be before or at the beginning of the term to satisfice your Lordship and answer their particular complaints. London, this 8th of September.

Your Lordship's to command,
Edward Oxeford

Addressed: To the right honourable and his very good Lord, the Lord Treasurer of England, give these at the court

Endorsed: 8 September 1590, Earl of Oxford to my Lord. [*Crossed out*: By Mr Hampton.] [*In another later hand*: Touching a contest between him & one Bellingham, who had been pardoned for burglary & bound to the good behaviour, the forfeit of whose pardon he was minded to prosecute.]