

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dating from January 1602 from Oxford to Sir Robert Cecil in which Oxford expresses disappointment at Cecil's change of attitude and the delays which have hindered Oxford's suit to recover for the Queen the lands which had escheated to her on the attainder of Sir Charles Danvers, beheaded on Tower Hill 18 March 1601.

From the *ODNB*:

Sir Charles Danvers (c.1568–1601), *soldier and conspirator*, was the eldest son of Sir John Danvers (1540–1594) of Dauntsey, Wiltshire, and thus heir to extensive estates in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, and Yorkshire. Through his mother, Elizabeth (1545×50–1630), youngest daughter and coheir of John Neville, fourth Baron Latimer (d. 1577), he was connected to the Cecil, Percy, and Cornwallis families. According to family tradition, Lady Danvers exhibited 'prodigious parts for a woman', having 'Chaucer at her fingers' ends' and being fluent in Italian (*Brief Lives*, 1.193).

For Sir Charles Danvers, see also:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/danvers-charles-1568-1601>.

Sir Charles Danvers' mother, Elizabeth Neville was related to Oxford and to the Cecil family, and through her second marriage, to the Queen. For the relationships, see TNA C 54/1000, Part 19, and the will of Lucy Neville, Lady Latimer, TNA PROB 11/65/170. Presumably Oxford was familiar with the lands which had descended to Sir Charles Danvers through Elizabeth Neville because of their common descent from John de Vere (1408-1462), 12th Earl of Oxford.

Danvers' father died on 19 December 1594, and in 1598 his mother married Sir Edmund Carey (c.1637), son of Queen Elizabeth's first cousin, Henry Carey (4 March 1526 – 23 July 1596), 1st Baron Hunsdon.

Oxford's letter reveals the basis of his suit. Sir Edmund Carey had used his influence to protect Sir Charles Danvers' lands to the extent that by fraud the value of the lands which escheated to the Queen was found to be a mere 26 shillings. Oxford's efforts had unmasked the true value of the lands, and after many delays a panel of judges had heard the evidence and reached a decision, and were ready to make their report to the Queen. However efforts were being made on the Danvers side to delay the report in order to persuade the Queen to reach an agreement independently of the judges' decision. Oxford had objected to one of the judges, Sir Thomas Walmesley (1537 – 26 November 1612), because he had 'matched in the house of Danvers'. This appears to be a reference to the marriage of the judge's son, Thomas Walmesley, to Sir Charles Danvers' sister, Elinor Danvers (d. September 1601). See Burke, John, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland*, (London: Henry Colburn, 1836), Vol. III, p. 231 at:

http://books.google.ca/books?id=qf4GAAAQAAJ&pg=PA231&lpg=PA231&dq=%22Sir+Thomas+Walmesley%22+%22Danvers%22&source=bl&ots=3q6-H_OsFE&sig=vZUED4AX0usoUchO91T01FW1mIM&hl=en&sa=X&ei=GRRQU_ujBOfZ2wWH0ICIAg&ved=0CEQQ6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=%22Sir%20Thomas%20Walmesley%22%20%22Danvers%22&f=false.

Oxford's letter indicates the benefit he hoped to receive for his efforts in preserving the Queen's rights:

Last of all I shall desire you to remember that I craved of this escheat only what I could recover in Wiltshire and Gloucester shires, leaving to her Majesty the lands of Oxford, Leicester, Northampton and Yorkshire, which is of much more value.

Oxford also refers in the letter to additional lands of which the Queen was being defrauded, and which had not been the subject of the hearing before the judges which had already taken place ('to obscure the rest of the lands which descend from the mother on [the] Latimer side to her Majesty, which is as clear her Majesty's as this . . . this case hath opened her right to a far greater matter than this of Danvers if her Majesty's right and interest be not cunningly suppressed'). These lands are itemized in CP 206/63.

For other documents concerning the Danvers escheat case and Sir Edmund Carey's conduct, see TNA SP 12/279/123; TNA SP 12/281/45; ERO D/DRg 2/26; CP 85/103; CP 88/101; CP 89/124; CP 89/148; CP 146/19; CP 146/20; CP 182/23; and CP 206/63. See also the *ODNB* article on Sir Charles Danvers.

It is now almost a year sithence by the promises of your help and assistance, when the escheat of Danvers was found nothing for her Majesty (26 shillings excepted), that I did undertake to recover it.

Now brother, I do not by these letters make challenge of your words, for if you list to forget them, my putting in remembrance will be bitter and to small purpose. Only this now is mine intention, not to tell any new thing, but that which is already known unto you. The matter, after it had received many crosses, many inventions of delay, yet at length hath been heard before all the judges (judges, I say, both unlawful and lawful, for so may I affirm sith Walmsley, who had matched in the house of Danvers, besides some other, were admitted to the deciding of the cause, notwithstanding long sithence I did except against him, and it was then thought reasonable). But now time and truth have unmasked all difficulties, and I do understand the judges are, if they will be indifferent, to make a good report to her Majesty. Yet I know not by what unfortunate star, there are so many disposed to withstand it as the truth, much oppressed by the friends of the contrary part, is likely, if not wholly to be defaced, yet so extenuated as the virtue thereof will be of little effect.

Now forsomuch as I understand it is meant to delay the report to the end to get a composition of her Majesty, and so to bring all my hope in her Majesty's gracious words to smoke, I am earnestly to solicit her to call for the report, which I should not have needed to do if gospel had been in the mouths of the Lord Chief Justice and the Attorney, who did assure me that, at the next hearing, which then was appointed the second day of this term, it should have a full end.

Now the matter depending in this sort, I find my state weak and destitute of friends, for having only relied always on her Majesty I have neglected to seek others, and this trust of mine, many things considered, I fear may deceive me.

Another confidence I had in yourself, in whom (without offence let me speak it) I am to cast some doubt, by reason as in your last letters I found a wavering style much differing from your former assurances, I fear now to be left in *medio rerum omnium certamine et discrimine*, which, if it so fall out, I shall bear it, by the grace of God, with an equal mind sith time and experience have given me sufficient understanding of worldly frailty. But I hope better, though I cast the worst howsoever, for *finis coronat opus*, and then everything will be laid open, every doubt resolved into a plain sense. In the mean season I now at the last (for now is the time) crave this brotherly friendship, that as you began it for me with all kindness, so that you will continue in the same affection to end it. And so I will end, these things only desiring you to remember that you may know I do not forget how honourably you dealt with her Majesty at what time you first moved her, showing how out of nothing to her (for so in manner it was found), if by mine industry I could of this nothing make something, she should yet give a prop and stay to my house.

Again I know and well perceive how that this escheat of Danvers shall be made a great matter to cross my good hap and to obscure the rest of the lands which descend from the mother on [the] Latimer side to her Majesty, which is as clear her Majesty's as this.

Last of all I shall desire you to remember that I craved of this escheat only what I could recover in Wiltshire and Gloucester shires, leaving to her Majesty the lands of Oxford, Leicester, Northampton and Yorkshire, which is of much more value. In the beginning the whole was thought desperate, and yet you shall see now the law to be clear of the Queen's side, notwithstanding it hath endured all the crosses that can be possible; yea, moreover, I will say to you that I must inform, this case hath opened her right to a far greater matter than this of Danvers if her Majesty's right and interest be not cunningly suppressed, and therefore I hope her Majesty, after so many gracious words which she gave me at Greenwich upon her departure, exceeding this which I expect, will not now draw in the beams of her princely grace to my discouragement and her own detriment. Neither will I conceive otherwise of your virtue and affection towards me now at the end than I apprehended all good hope and kindness from you in the beginning.

Thus with a lame hand to write I take my leave, but with a mind well disposed to hope the best of my friends till otherwise I find them, which I fear nothing at all, assuring myself your words and deeds dwell not asunder.

Your loving brother-in-law,

Edward Oxenford

Endorsed: To my very well beloved brother-in-law, Sir Robert Cecil, of her Majesty's Privy Council, and Principal Secretary

Endorsed: January 1601, The Earl of Oxford to my Master