

SUMMARY: The document below is a translation in the Calendar of State Papers Venetian of a letter dated 29 March 1618 written from Udine by Zuane Basadonna to the authorities in Venice describing a duel fought between Sir John Vere and one Milander at Cortello near Udine on 23 March 1618 in which Henry de Vere (1593-1625), 18th Earl of Oxford, was peripherally involved.

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, available online, after the death of his mother in early 1613, Henry de Vere embarked upon an extended tour of Europe, remaining overseas for over five years, first in the Spanish Netherlands, then in France, and finally, in Venice. The letter below indicates that he was at Udine in early 1618. He returned to England in October of that year.

With King James' approval, he offered to raise 6000 men for the Republic's service, an offer which the Venetian Senate declined.

Sir John Vere was the illegitimate son of Oxford's first cousin, John Vere (d.1624) of Kirby Hall. In his youth Sir John Vere was a page to Count Maurice (1567-1625) of Nassau (see Hinds, No. 196). In a letter from Basadonna dated 16 April 1618, Count Maurice is referred to as Sir John Vere's 'leader for twenty years' (see Hinds, No. 322), and it was to Count Maurice (termed 'his Excellency' in the letter below) to whom the dispute between Sir John Vere and Milander was referred. For Sir John Vere's service as Lieutenant to Count John Ernest (1582-1617) of Nassau in the Low Countries, and as a captain in Flanders for 20 years, see also Hinds, No. 32. At the time of the writing of the letter below, Sir John Vere was 'Vice-Colonel of the company of the late Count Ernest of Nassau' at Udine. For the will of Sir John Vere, dated 13 December 1630 and proved 14 November 1631, see TNA PROB 11/160, ff. 433-4. For other documents in the State Papers Venetian mentioning Sir John Vere, see Hinds, Nos. 32, 73, 196, 382 and 579.

The quarrel between Sir John Vere and Milander which led to their duel appears to have been over the question of who should succeed to the command of the late Count John Ernest's company. Sir John Vere hoped to succeed to the command himself. However the late Count John Ernest's brother, Count John (1583-1638) of Nassau also wished to succeed to the command, and his aspirations were supported by Milander:

Nothing of moment has happened here except that some months ago General Barbarigo ordered Sir John Vere, Vice-Colonel of the company of the late Count Ernest of Nassau, not to leave this town without his permission because he had quarrelled with Milander, Sergeant Major of that company, a partisan of Count John of Nassau, and they had challenged each other to a duel.

For Piero Barbarigo, see <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=88712>.

A letter dated 16 April 1618 from Basadonna to the authorities in Venice advised that Sir John Vere had been imprisoned as a result of the duel (see Hinds, No. 322). According to the report of an audience granted by the Venetian authorities to the English ambassador,

Sir Henry Wotton (1568-1639), Sir John Vere was still in prison on 11 June 1618, although orders had been sent from Venice to Udine ordering his release (see Hinds, No. 400).

Zuane Basadonna was a Venetian merchant and informal agent for Venetian affairs who had resided in England from 1593 to 1599. See Smith, Logan Pearsall, *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, Vol. I, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), p. 299. See also Brown, Horatio F., ed., *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice and in Other Libraries of Northern Italy*, Vol. IX, 1592-1603, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1897), pp. 387-92, at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=95537>.

Basadonna appears to have been unaware that the Doge of Venice, Giovanni Bembo (1543-1618), had died on 16 March 1618. Bembo was succeeded as Doge by Nicolo Donato (1539-1618), who reigned for only 35 days, from his election on 10 April until his death on 9 May 1618.

The transcript below is taken from Hinds, Allen Banks, ed., *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice and in Other Libraries of Northern Italy*, Vol. XV, 1617-19 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1909), p. 184. See also <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=88674>.

March 29
Senato, Secreta
Dispacci, Udine
Venetian Archives

297. Zuanne Basadonna, Venetian Lieutenant of Udine, to the Doge and Senate.

Nothing of moment has happened here except that some months ago General Barbarigo ordered Sir John Vere, Vice-Colonel of the company of the late Count Ernest of Nassau, not to leave this town without his permission because he had quarrelled with Milander, Sergeant Major of that company, a partisan of Count John of Nassau, and they had challenged each other to a duel. After Vere had been here some weeks I was asked by the General Barbarigo to get him to submit his differences to his Excellency, to which Milander had agreed. I succeeded in inducing him to consent to this. He appointed the Earl of Oxford his representative, and sent him the powers. The Earl gave it to his Excellency, who declared that their differences were over, and they should love and honour each other, and within three months he would give his opinion upon the matter.

This decision did not seem to satisfy either of them, and neither appeared to accept it. At length, last Friday, the 23rd, Milander sent a message to Vere here in Udine telling him that he would expect him on the following day in the country between Palma and this city

with a boy only, and they would settle their quarrel by the sword. Vere replied that if he knew the place he would willingly go to meet him. On the following day a boy returned to Vere's house and told him to follow him and he would take him to the place where Milander was. Vere went immediately with a youth to a place called Cortello, four miles off. There he met Milander and dismounted from his horse. Having exchanged some words in a loud voice at some distance apart, they sent their boys to each other to see if they had pistols in their doublets. They removed their doublets and shoes, and began to fight in their shirts with sword and dagger. After half an hour's combat Milander received two wounds, one in the right shoulder and the other in the left side. Vere received two slight hurts, one in the left hand and the other in the left arm. On hearing the noise a gentleman ran up and separated them. They put on their doublets and embraced. They went off together to a mill, obtained water and food, and at an inn they took wine together, and thus after exhausting their anger they have become friends.

Udine, the 29th March, 1618.

[Italian]