
SUMMARY: As the excerpt below indicates, Lewis Majendie was the first to discount in print a persistent tradition that Oxford had destroyed his inheritance in revenge for Lord Burghley's failure to save Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, from execution. However while exonerating Oxford of the specious claim that he destroyed his inheritance out of spite, Majendie makes the equally dubious claim that pursuant to a warrant from Oxford all the buildings at Castle Hedingham were taken down except for the great keep prior to Oxford's transfer of the property to Lord Burghley in 1592. It is possible that Majendie saw a warrant from Oxford to that effect which no longer exists, but this seems doubtful because apart from Majendie's assertion there is no historical evidence that buildings were taken down at Castle Hedingham prior to 1592. Israel Amice's survey of Castle Hedingham in 1592, prepared after Lord Burghley had taken possession of the property, shows, in addition to the great keep which still stands today, a gatehouse, a hall and pantries, a chapel, a great chamber, stone lodgings, a stable and barnyard, tennis courts, and an orchard. Amice's survey thus directly contradicts Majendie's statement, and would seem to be incontrovertible evidence that all the buildings were still standing after Lord Burghley took possession of the property. Moreover Castle Hedingham was in the Queen's hands via an extent for an undetermined period of time from March 1588 on (see PRO SP 46/35, f. 28).

IN 1562, UPON THE DEATH of John de Vere, the 16th Earl, it passed to his son Edward, the 17th Earl of Oxford, who seems to have been much in favour of Queen Elizabeth. His first countess was Anne, eldest daughter of the Lord High Treasurer Burghley, by whom he had three daughters. It has been said that this Earl, being the great friend of Thomas, Duke of Norfolk, interceded with the Treasurer to save his life, in danger from what was laid to his charge touching the Queen of Scots, but not succeeding, he grew so incensed with the Lord Treasurer as to determine to ruin his daughter, and accordingly not only forsook her bed but sold and consumed that great inheritance descended to him from his ancestors.

As I believe there is no proof to substantiate this assertion I shall not insist upon it, considering it rather as a traditional report; it seems indeed most natural to conclude that the misfortunes which befell this Earl originated rather from his boundless and well-known extravagance than from a wish to gratify a resentment against the Lord Treasurer to the detriment not only of the Countess but of his three daughters and himself also. It is, however, very certain that many noble estates in this country were alienated by this Earl, and from indisputable evidence now before me it appears that the Lord Treasurer in the year 1592 (several years after the death of his daughter, who died in 1588) secured to himself by agreement with the Earl the honour and castle of Hedingham, with a view doubtless of providing for his three daughters, more especially as about this time the earl married again.

But previous to this agreement the Earl committed great waste upon the castle hill, and by warrant from him most of the buildings except the keep were rased to the ground. The

castle from this time ceased to be a place of residence; the parks which were three in number ... were parted and let to several tenants in allotments.

The Earl's second countess was Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Trentham of Rocester in the county of Stafford ... By her he had a son Henry, who after his father's death became the 18th Earl of Oxford.

From Majendie, Lewis, *An Account of Hedingham Castle in the County of Essex* (London: J. Nichols, 1796), as printed in Bowen, Gwynneth, 'Oxford Exonerated', *Shakespeare Authorship Review* (Autumn 1960), pp.2-9 at p.3.