



# EDWARD DE VERE NEWSLETTER NO. 27

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## **To whom was Humfrey Martyn related through his mother, Letitia Pakington?**

Humfrey Martyn is known to students of Elizabethan literature and history as the young man to whom the Langham *Letter* describing Queen Elizabeth's entertainment by the Earl of Leicester at Kenilworth in the summer of 1575 is addressed. There can be little dispute that Humfrey Martyn was well known to the author of *Letter*. The vexed question of the authorship of the *Letter* can thus perhaps be illuminated by determining Humfrey Martyn's place in Elizabethan society.

On the maternal side, Humfrey Martyn was related to the Pakingtons of Westwood. Humfrey's mother, Letitia Pakington, was the daughter of Humphrey Pakington (1502-1556) and his wife, Elizabeth Harding (Hussey 31). Humphrey Pakington and two of his brothers -- Robert and Augustine -- were all members of the Mercers' Company in London. Another brother, John Pakington (d.1551), was a lawyer (Pakington 3).

Apart from a brief mention of him in Hall's Chronicle, little is known of Augustine Pakington.

John Pakington is better known. His legal career prospered. He was appointed Chorographer of the Court of Common Pleas, Treasurer of the Inner Temple and Justice of North Wales, and at his death in 1551 he owned thirty-one manors, including Hampton Lovett, Chaddesley Corbett, Harvington, Westwood, and property in London. Henry VIII granted him a rare honour -- permission to wear his

hat in the King's presence. He was knighted, and made a member of the Council for the Welsh marches (Pakington 3-6).

Robert Pakington (1496-1537), the fourth brother, was a Member of Parliament and married a rich heiress, Catherine, daughter of Sir John Baldwin. In 1537, according to Stow, he was slain in the streets of London while on his way to church (Pakington 5).

After the deaths of the four Pakington brothers, Robert's son Thomas (d.1571) became head of the senior branch of the family. He supported Mary Tudor's claim to the Crown, and was knighted for defending Aylesbury against the Duke of Northumberland. In middle age, he married Dorothy Kitson, the daughter of Sir Thomas Kitson of Hengrave, Suffolk (Pakington 7-8).

Sir Thomas Pakington was succeeded by his son, Sir John Pakington (1548-1625). It was perhaps Sir John's good looks and height (he was over six feet tall) which caught the attention of Queen Elizabeth during a progress to Worcester in 1574. Elizabeth invited him to court, where she nicknamed him "Lusty Pakington" on account of his great strength and physical prowess. He once made a wager that he could swim from Westminster Steps to Greenwich, but the Queen forbade the match. His days at court are perhaps also commemorated in the piece of Elizabethan dance music entitled "Pakington's Pound". By the late 1580's, Sir John had left court and retired to his Worcestershire estates, where he built the magnificent mansion at Westwood which

still survives today. In 1587, he was made a Knight of the Bath, and in 1598 married Dorothy Smith, widow of Benedict Barnham, a wealthy merchant and London alderman. This appears to have been Sir John's second marriage, since his mother, in a letter of the early 1570's, had asked to be remembered to "you and your Ladyship", indicating an earlier marriage. His eldest step-daughter, Alice, married Sir Francis Bacon. That Sir Francis Bacon should have married into the Pakington family is not surprising: his uncle James Bacon (d.1573) had married Letitia Pakington's sister Anne. It is possible that Alice Pakington (or one of her sisters) is the "Mistress Pakington" named in the Huntingdon Library manuscript of Lady Derby's entertainment, which has become well known as a result of Peter Levi's suggestion that the verses for the entertainment were written by Shakespeare (Levi 354). In 1603 Sir John entertained King James I at Aylesbury. He died in 1625, at the age of 77 (Pakington 9, 12, 15).

The head of the junior branch of the family at this time was Humphrey Pakington's son John (1530-1578), Letitia's brother, who had his seat at Harvington Hall. John married Elizabeth Newport, daughter of Sir Thomas Newport of High Ercall, County Salop, and Anne Corbet. (In passing, it is interesting to note that John Pakington's wife Elizabeth Newport was an aunt of Magdalene Newport Herbert -- mother of the poet George Herbert and friend of the poet John Donne.) (Burke 314; Charles 33). John and Elizabeth had a son, Humphrey, who attended Shrewsbury school contemporaneously with Sir Philip Sidney. Throughout the Reformation, this branch of the family remained staunchly Catholic (Harvington Hall has a number of priest holes), and suffered accordingly. Humphrey was married in 1602 to Bridget, widow of the Elizabethan soldier Sir Thomas Norris (whose nephew, Francis, married Oxford's daughter, Bridget De Vere, in 1599), and, after her death to Abigail, daughter of Henry Sacheverell, who supplied a man and horse for Charles I's army during the Civil War (Pakington 8, 10, 17-8).

As the foregoing discussion indicates, Humfrey

Martyn's kinsmen on his mother's side were wealthy merchants and landowners, with connections at court. These family connections indicate that Humfrey Martyn held a significant place in Elizabethan society, and suggest that he would have been known to Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, at the time the Langham *Letter* was written. At the turn of the century, relations between the Pakingtons and the de Veres became even closer when, in 1599, Oxford's daughter Bridget married Sir Francis Norris (Ogburn 743), whose uncle Thomas's widow, Bridget, as has been said, married Humphrey Pakington three years later in 1602. In 1606, Sir Francis Bacon, a first cousin of Oxford's first wife, Anne Cecil, further cemented the connections between the two families by marrying one of the step-daughters of Sir John Pakington. All these relationships confirm the hypothesis that Oxford and Humfrey Martyn were well known to one another, and strengthen the claim for Oxford's authorship of the Langham *Letter*.

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## HUMFREY MARTYN'S PAKINGTON CONNECTIONS

