SUMMARY: The document below contains statements taken under oath on 22 and 24 June 1582 from four witnesses to a fray which occurred at the Blackfriars on Monday, 18 June 1582, between Thomas Knyvet (1545/6-1622) and his men, and two men, Gastrell and Horsley, who purported to be Oxford's men.

The fray had its origin in the birth of Oxford's illegitimate son by Anne Vavasour on 21 March 1581. Oxford's mistress, Anne Vavasour, was related to the Knyvet family as follows. Sir Henry Knyvet (d.1546) and Anne Pickering had four daughters, one of whom, Margaret Knyvet, married Henry Vavasour of Copmanthorpe in Yorkshire. According to Chambers, the couple had four children, Oxford's mistress Anne Vavasour, her sisters Frances and Margaret, and her brother Thomas Vavasour (1560-1620) (see Chambers, E.K., *Sir Henry Lee* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), p. 151). The courtier Sir Henry Knyvet (1537?-1598) and his younger brother, Thomas Knyvet (1545-1622), were therefore both uncles to Anne Vavasour.

Three of the four witnesses whose depositions are given below claimed they entered the fray merely to keep the peace. From the evidence of these witnesses, it appears that there was a rumour that Oxford and Thomas Knyvet were going to fight personally 'on thother side in the marsh', but this rumour turned out to be false. Instead, there was a fray between Knyvet and his men, and one Gastrell and a glazier named Horsley, neither of whom was in Oxford's service, although Gastrell apparently purported to be.

Roger Townshend's (c.1544-1590) account of the events of 18 June 1582 explains the events leading up to this fray and the presence of Thomas Knyvet and his men at the Blackfriars (see TNA SP 12/154/13, ff. 23-4). According to Townshend, Knyvet and his men arrived at the Blackfriars on their way back from having dined with Townshend and others, and had no intention of engaging in a fray. However it is also clear both from Townshend's account and the accounts of the witnesses below that rumours had been deliberately put about all day that there would be a fight between Oxford and Knyvet. It thus seems almost certain that Gastrell and Horsley were provocateurs who had been set on by a third party to provoke Knyvet and Oxford into attacking each other.

The owner of the fencing-school at the Blackfriars, named in the document as 'Caverley', may have been Francis Calvert. One of the witnesses to the fray was Turbough(?) Magrerice, usher at the fencing-school. Either Oxford or his servant John Lyly (1554-1606) held the lease on the property in the Blackfriars in which the fencing-school was located at this time. For mention of Francis Calvert as one of the fencers who harassed the master of fence, Rocco Bonetti (d.1587), see TNA PC 2/12, ff. 529, 532-3.

For another affray four days later on Friday, 22 June 1582, involving Gastrell and three or four of Knyvet's men in which Gastrell was hurt, see TNA SP 12/154/12, f. 22.

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Gerard Ashby, servant to Stoddard, a butcher in St. Nicholas shambles, saith that he went by his master's commandment to the marshes at Redriff, having nothing in his hand but a stick, & when he returned he landed at the Blackfriars stairs, & there he heard amongst the watermen that there should be a fray between my Lord of Oxford's [CROSSED OUT: men] & Mr Knyvet, & that they should fight on thother side in the marsh, & hearing that, he tarried there to see the same. And thereupon he went to Caverley's school of fence in the Blackfriars, & there finding the school open, he took a staff about 9 or 10 foot long with a pick in the end, & so he went to the bridge again, & shortly after Mr Knyvet came, & then the fray began, & he seeing that they were but 2 of my Lord's men, & many men on thother side, he went in amongst them to keep the peace. He saw besides 3 with staves, besides watermen with their hooks & staves which they occupy in their boats.

Examined the 24th of June 1582 touching a fray at the Blackfriars between [CROSSED OUT: my Lord of Oxford's] Mr Knyvet's [CROSSED OUT: men] & my Lord of Oxford's men, upon his oath affirmeth the said examination to be true, & the whole truth, & no more or otherwise cannot depose.

Roger Daoby, servant to one Mrs Brekley in St. Nicholas shambles, saith that he was going to Croydon, & went to take a boat at Paul's Wharf, & there a waterman whom he knoweth not told him that there should be a fray at Blackfriars between my Lord of Oxford & Mr Knyvet, whereupon he went to the Blackfriars by water, & tarried there about a quarter of an hour to see the fray, & had in his hand a staff about 3 yards long with a pick. Shortly after he heard 2 or 3 watermen say, Yonder cometh Mr Knyvet, & then he went to see what should be done, & so he drew near to keep the peace, & denieth that he had any other intent to take part, or that he was spoken to by any of my Lord's servants or any other to be there, but he saith that he knew Horsleye, the glazier.

He saw 3 more with staves, & some of the watermen with their hooks that were also there.

He, upon his oath also taken the said 24th of June touching the said affray, saith in effect as he said before, & otherwise cannot depose.

William Brooke, servant to Smyth, a butcher in St. Nicholas shambles

Examined the 24th of June upon his oath saith that upon Monday last his master sent him abroad to buy a couple of calves, & minding to go to Battersea, went by Ludgate Street, where he did see some people running into the Blackfriars, whereupon he followed them, & so went to the water-side, & seeing no business there, took a boat, & then he did see the watermen that stood at the gate run upward, whereupon he came out of the boat, & took his staff with him, being 2 yards long & more, & came to the affray before it was

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ended, & seeing divers men assaulting two, which after they said was my Lord of Oxford, and he did help to rescue them, being then in some danger as he thought, & denieth that he was procured or spoken unto by any to come thither, or that he knew the names of either of my Lord of Oxford's men.

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Turboughe Magrerice, usher to Caverley, saith that he was in the house of one Andrew Berrye, not knowing nor hearing of any intent of a fray, but being there by chance, & seeing swords drawn, & having only about him a single sword, he went in amongst them only to keep the peace, & did nothing else, & none otherwise did meddle in the matter. He taketh there were about 5 or 6 men with staves, & divers of the watermen with their hooks. He knew Gasterill & Horsley, but neither they nor any other made him acquainted with any such thing, nor desired him to take part therein.

Thomas Wilcockes, a butcher, but no man's servant

Endorsed: 22 [INTERLINED: 4] June 1582
Examinations touching the fray between the Earl of Oxford and Mr Knyvet

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