

SUMMARY: The document below is an account by Roger Townshend (c.1544-1590) of events of 18 June 1582 apparently prepared at the request of the Privy Council. The account appears to be in Townshend's own hand.

Townshend was in the service of Philip Howard (1557–1595), 13th Earl of Arundel, the son and heir of Oxford's first cousin, Thomas Howard (1538-1572), 4th Duke of Norfolk. As indicated in his account below, Townshend dined on 18 June 1582 at a 'table' maintained by 'one Jones' with Arundel, Arundel's brother, Lord Thomas Howard (1561-1626), Thomas Knyvet (1545/6-1622), Thomas Butler (1531-1614), 10th Earl of Ormond, and other noblemen and gentlemen. While they were at dinner Townshend was told by one of his men of rumours 'that my Lord of Oxford's company meant to set upon Mr Knyvet in the company of whomsoever they met him, or in the company of my Lord of Arundel & my Lord Thomas'. Concerned to protect Arundel, Townshend sent his man back to Willoughby House, where Oxford was with his brother-in-law, Peregrine Bertie (1555-1601), Lord Willoughby d'Eresby, to determine further of the validity of the rumour. After delaying Arundel, and convincing him to go to Arundel House that afternoon rather than Howard House, Townshend and the rest left Jones' establishment. Just as they were leaving, Townshend's man returned with confirmation that the rumour was false. The party then proceeded to the Blackfriars, where Knyvet and his men were attacked, although Townshend was too far behind to identify the attackers or determine exactly what had happened. Still concerned to protect Arundel, Townshend got him into a boat, and they left for Arundel House. Later that evening, Townshend sought out Lord Willoughby and learned that Oxford, too, had been provoked by false rumours, having been told that 'Mr Knyvet, with others, came braving hard by the door' of Willoughby House. Townshend assured Lord Willoughby that that could not have happened since Knyvet had been with him at the time in question.

It seems clear from Townshend's account that both Oxford and Knyvet were being deliberately provoked by false rumours in the hope that one or the other would rise to the bait, and that Knyvet and his men had no intention of entering into a fray when they were set upon by two men, Gastrell and Horsley, neither of whom was in Oxford's service, but both of whom purported to be for purposes of the fray. In BL MS Add. 15891 Lord Burghley, writing to Sir Christopher Hatton (c.1540-1591) on 12 March 1583, says that Gastrell 'was not then [Oxford's] man nor yet is, though Mr Knyvet report him so to be'. It thus seems clear that Gastrell and Horsley were provocateurs. Given the long-standing animosity between Oxford and Leicester, it may have been Leicester who set Gastrell and Horsley on. In addition to Townshend's account of the false rumours which had been flying all day, TNA SP 12/151/11, ff. 20-21 also confirms the existence of false rumours, for which it seems likely that Gastrell and Horsley were responsible.

The fray on 18 June 1582 was an offshoot of earlier events. Thomas Knyvet (1545/6-1622), later 1st Baron Knyvet of Escrick and the discoverer of the Gunpowder Plot, was the uncle of Anne Vavasour, who had borne Oxford's illegitimate son on 21 March 1581, an indiscretion for which Queen Elizabeth imprisoned Oxford in the Tower and banished him from court for two years. In 1582, Knyvet was one of only seven Grooms of the

Queen's Privy Chamber (see *Notes & Queries* 1849.11.17). Knyvet and Oxford had fought several months earlier on 21 February 1582, and both men had been hurt. As well, Knyvet had killed one of Oxford's men, Robert Breninges (see BL MS Cotton, Appendix 47, f. 7v, Guildhall Library MS 4515), and was awaiting trial (see BL MS Add. 15891, f. 65v).

Thomas Knyvet's relationship to the persons named in Townshend's account underscores the fact that his quarrel with Oxford was a family matter. Sir Thomas Knyvet (c.1485–1512) of Buckenham, Norfolk, Master of the Horse to King Henry VIII, was the second husband of Muriel Howard (d.1512), sister of Thomas Howard (1473-1554), 3rd Duke of Norfolk. Their third son, Sir Henry Knyvet (d.1546), a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber to King Henry VIII, married Anne Pickering, by whom he fathered two sons, his heir Sir Henry Knyvet (1537?-1598) of Charlton near Malmesbury in Wiltshire, one of Queen Elizabeth's Gentleman Pensioners, and a second son, Thomas Knyvet (1545-1622), Oxford's foe mentioned in the document below. The Sir Henry Knyvet (d.1546), who married Anne Pickering was thus a first cousin of Henry Howard (1517?-1547), the poet Earl of Surrey, father of Oxford's first cousin, former friend and current foe, Lord Henry Howard (1540-1614). TNA SP 12/151/46, ff. 103-4 contains an allegation by Charles Arundel that Oxford made an 'oath to kill Sir Harry Knyvet at the privy chamber door for speaking evil of him to his niece'. The niece in question was Oxford's mistress, Anne Vavasour, who was related to Sir Henry Knyvet (1537?-1598) 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). Sir Henry Knyvet (1537?-1598) and his younger brother Thomas Knyvet (1545-1622) were therefore both uncles to Anne Vavasour.

Another strand in this web of family relationships links Thomas Knyvet (1545-1622) and Thomas Howard (1561-1626), younger brother of Philip Howard (1557-1595), 13th Earl of Arundel. According to Townshend's account, Thomas Knyvet (1545-1622) arrived at Arundel House in the company of Lord Thomas Howard (1561-1626). The two men were already related since Lord Thomas Howard was a grandson of the poet Henry Howard (1517?-1547), Earl of Surrey. They were destined to become even more closely linked the next year, 1583, when Lord Thomas Howard married Thomas Knyvet's niece, Catherine (b.1564), daughter of Sir Henry Knyvet (1537?-1598) of Charlton, Wiltshire. It was in the context of these family relationships that the violent fray of 21 February 1582 between Anne Vavasour's uncle, Thomas Knyvet (1545-1622), and Oxford occurred.

For Sir Thomas Knyvet (c.1485–1512), Sir Henry Knyvet (1537?–1598), and Thomas, Baron Knyvet (1545/6–1622) see entries in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, available online. For Oxford's conveyance of Castle Rising on 22 June 1578 to Philip Howard's officers, Roger Townshend (c.1544-1590) and Robert Buxton, referred to as 'Mr Buxton' in the document below, see NRO HOW 144.

According to your Honours' commandments, I have set down my knowledge & remembrances of my speeches concerning causes of my Lord of Oxford's & Mr Knyvet's, which is as followeth.

Upon the 18th of June I was entreated by one Jones to dine that day at his house, which house before Mrs Arundell did keep her table in, there to accompany sundry noblemen & gentlemen that meant to further & give credit & countenance unto his new-erected table.

In the morning I went to my Lord of Arundel, and after I had dispatched my business with him, he asked me where I dined. I answered him, at the place above-recited. Then he told me that himself was thither bidden. Thereupon I said unto him that I would go to Westminster Hall & come back again, and attend on him to the place where he dined, which I did. And at my coming to Arundel House there was nobody with him (to my remembrance) but his own men. And being ready to go forth, my Lord Thomas Howard and Mr Knyvet came in, and understood whither my Lord went, and did accompany him to the place where we dined, where we met my Lord of Ormond & other noblemen & gentlemen.

Presently after dinner one of my men came unto me & told me that he heard some speech that my Lord of Oxford's company meant to set upon Mr Knyvet in the company of whomsoever they met him, or in the company of my Lord of Arundel & my Lord Thomas. This in effect, but the very direct words I cannot perfectly remember. I asked my man where he heard it, & what proof he had of it. He answered me he heard it at my Lord Willoughby's house, where my Lord of Oxford & my Lord Willoughby were, and that some of the company had borrowed a sword or swords of my men & a buckler. I, thinking it was but some rash suspicion or speech of some ill-disposed person, willed him to repair thither again to bring me certain knowledge thereof, and so accordingly he returned to my Lord Willoughby's house, and there stayed some while and inquired further of the matter.

In the meantime, being desirous to prevent the worst, willed my man not to speak to anybody of it, and I made choice of my Lord of Ormond to make him privy to the speech I heard, hoping of his good advice and aid to prevent this mischief, if there were any intended. He answered me he thought the report was not true, but notwithstanding wished me to send one of my men to understand further of the cause. I told him that I had so done already, and further I told him that my Lord of Arundel was determined to go presently to Howard House, which I did very much mislike till I had heard some certainty how the company before spoken of were determined. Thereupon there was some persuasion for my Lord of Arundel to go to play, who would not play himself, but willed me to play his money. I answered I would not play unless his Lordship stood by. He answered me he would not go away until such time as we had made an end of our play.

Our play continued very little while, and then my Lord of Arundel said he would go to Howard House, for he had appointed his officers to meet with him there concerning his own business. I answered him that it were very good for his Lordship this afternoon to talk with his counsel. He answered me that he had taken order with Mr Buxton & Mr Dix so to do, and would go to dispatch some other business. I said to him again that if his Lordship would go himself to his counsel, his presence would do more good with them than a week's attendance of his officers. Then he desired me to will one of his men to cause Mr Buxton & Mr Dix to come to him to Arundel House.

And thereupon we went presently down the stairs to go to the Blackfriars, and even at the door my man came to me and told me that he had been at my Lord Willoughby's where my Lord of Oxford & my Lord Willoughby both were, and that he did perceive there was no such intent as was before spoken of. And so we went to the Blackfriars where Mr Knyvet (going before us) was set upon, but who they were that did it I know not, for I was so far behind as I could not discern what they were. And so I took boat with my Lord of Arundel & went to Arundel House. Being in the boat with him, he asked me why I did not tell him of that I had told my Lord of Ormond. I answered him again I was very unwilling to tell anybody of it, but that I was desirous of all the quiet that might be as long as he & theirs were in the company, and therefore I made choice of my Lord of Ormond as a man best experienced to advise in the cause if there had been any such action in hand. He answered me again, You might very well have made me privy, for you may be sure I would not join with any man willingly to be party in any quarrel.

In the evening, finding my Lord Willoughby walking in his garden, I desired to speak with him. So going talking with him, I told him that I thought my Lord of Oxford & he would not think me so idly occupied as that I would join in any quarrel against them. Then he said to me that he did perceive there had flying tales come to us as well as to them, For, saith he, it was told my Lord of Oxford that Mr Knyvet, with others, came braving hard by the door here. Thereupon my Lord of Oxford himself (and also his men) was somewhat grieved at it. I answered my Lord I thought that was very untrue, for Mr Knyvet was not out of my company all the afternoon, & before dinner we came all together, & went no farther than Aldersgate, and that truly I did think in my conscience there was no such intent, for there was none in the company prepared to any such purpose. Truly, cousin Townshend, said my Lord Willoughby, if the matter had grown to any further extremity I would have sent both to the Mayor & to the Recorder, but whether he said he did send or no, I do not very well remember.

Endorsed: Mr Townshend's declaration touching the bruit given out that the Earl of Oxford should have attempted somewhat against Mr Thomas Knyvet