

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter written from Chenies on 28 April 1599 by the Dowager Countess of Bedford to Sir Robert Cecil (1563-1612). At the time the letter was written, Oxford's daughter, Bridget Vere (1584-1631), was living with the Dowager Countess at Chenies in Buckinghamshire, and as indicated in the letter, was to be married there to the Dowager Countess' grandson, Francis Norris (1579-1622), 2nd Baron Norris of Rycote and 1st Earl of Berkshire.

The Dowager Countess of Bedford was born Bridget Hussey (1525/6-1601), the eldest daughter of John Hussey (1465/6-1537) of Sleaford, Lincolnshire, and his second wife, Lady Anne Grey. Bridget Hussey married firstly, Sir Richard Morison (c.1510-1556); secondly, Henry Manners (1526-1563), 2nd Earl of Rutland; and thirdly, Francis Russell (1526/7-1585), 2nd Earl of Bedford.

By her first husband, Sir Richard Morison (c.1510-1556), the Dowager Countess of Bedford was the mother of Sir Charles Morison (1549-1599); Jane Sibylla Morison (1552-1615), who married Edward Russell (d.1573), eldest son and heir of Francis Russell (1526/7-1585), 2nd Earl of Bedford, and secondly, Arthur Grey (1536-1593), 14th Baron Grey of Wilton; and Elizabeth Morison, who married firstly, William Norris (d.1579), and secondly, Henry Clinton (1539-1616), 2nd Earl of Lincoln. By her first husband, William Norris, Elizabeth Morison was the mother of Oxford's son-in-law, Francis Norris (1579-1622), 2nd Baron Norris of Rycote and 1st Earl of Berkshire. The will of the Dowager Countess of Bedford, in which she refers to 'Francis Norris, son of my daughter, Lady Elizabeth, Countess of Lincoln', confirms this relationship (see TNA PROB 11/97, ff. 41-3).

For another letter on the same topic, see TNA SP 12/270/91, f. 159.

Sir, I have now fully resolved to take such course for effecting of this marriage as yourself have appointed, and to have it kept in this place, only desiring that (considering you wish it private, which well agrees with my own disposition) if any offence be taken by friends of either part, you will take upon you the excuse, as better able to undertake that burden than I am, and for my own part I will not look for any guests but such as you shall be pleased to invite and bring with you to keep you company, as I have acquainted my Lady Bridget, whom I find so pliant to your will as she seems best pleased with whatsoever you shall think good to prescribe, and in all other her actions & carriage so honourably and virtuously inclined as I do (I assure you) receive exceeding comfort in her company. And so commending my best wishes to yourself, and you to the happy protection of the highest, I end. Chenies, this 28 of April 1599.

Your ever assured friend,

Bridget Bedford.

Endorsed: (1) To the right honourable Sir Robert Cecil, knight, Principal Secretary to her Majesty, deliver these; (2) 28 April 1599, Lady Bedford to my Master.