

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter written from Chenies on 16 April 1599 by Oxford's daughter, Bridget Vere (1584-1631), to Sir Henry Maynard (b. after 1547, d.1610). Maynard had been secretary to Robert Cecil's father, Lord Burghley, to whom he was distantly related by marriage (see TNA SP 14/45/146, f. 205).

At the time she wrote this letter, Oxford's daughter Bridget was living with the Dowager Countess of Bedford at Chenies. The Dowager Countess 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. She died on 12 January 1601. The Dowager Countess of Bedford was thus the step-grandmother of the 2nd Earl of Bedford's heir, his grandson, Edward Russell (1572-1627), 3rd Earl of Bedford, who in 1591 was suggested as a husband for Oxford's eldest daughter, Elizabeth Vere (1575-1627), (see TNA SP 12/238/69, f. 147).

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). See also see Brayley, Edward Wedlake, *The Beauties of England and Wales*, Vol. VII, (London: Thomas Maiden, 1808), p. 302, available online at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?oe=UTF-8&id=nd0uAAAAMAAJ&q=watford#v=snippet&q=watford&f=false>.

The will of the Dowager Countess of Bedford also suggests that she lived at Chenies until her death, and it seems likely that Oxford's two younger daughters, Bridget and Susan, lived with her there for a number of years. Bridget Vere and Lady Bedford's grandson, Francis Norris, were married at Chenies shortly after 28 April 1599 (see TNA SP 12/270/91, f. 159).

Sir John Russell (1552-1593), the brother of Thomas Russell (1570-1634), the overseer of the will of William Shakespeare (1564-1616) of Stratford upon Avon, was brought up in the household of Francis Russell (1526/7-1585), 2nd Earl of Bedford, and was a close friend of Oxford's companion, William Russell (c.1553-1613), 1st Baron Russell of Thornhaugh, youngest son of the 2nd Earl of Bedford, whom he made one of the executors of his will. Sir John Russell was 14 years of age when Bridget Hussey married the 2nd Earl of Bedford in 1566, and Sir John Russell and the Dowager Countess of

Bedford must therefore have known each other well. Moreover Sir John Russell (1552-1593) and the family of Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth (nee Trentham) De Vere (d.1613), were connected by marriage. For the will of Sir John Russell (1552-1593), see TNA PROB 11/92, ff. 52-5.

Some sources have confused Bridget Hussey, the Dowager Countess of Bedford, with Lucy (nee Harington) Russell (bap. 1581, d. 1627), Countess of Bedford, who on 12 December 1594 married Edward Russell (1572-1627), 3rd Earl of Bedford, who had originally been intended as a husband for Oxford's eldest daughter, Elizabeth Vere (see above).

For a memorandum dated 21 September 1603 in which the Earl of Lincoln defends himself for his failure to report to King James in a timely manner his conversations with the French ambassador Christophe de Harlay, Comte de Beaumont, with a Mr Trudgion, and with the Earl of Oxford, see TNA SP 14/3/77, ff. 134-5.

The letter is badly damaged on the right side, leaving only the beginning of each line on the left side intact, as indicated in the transcript below.

My Maynard, whereas it
to give leave to this bearer, Mr
to be at liberty from her for
(he having now a present opp
offered him in London, if he
or two of a certain company
to request you in his behalf
letters as effectually as you can, where
gratify me, and pleasure a friend that will in
very thankful unto you. And thus not doubting
friendly care and furtherance in his behalf, I commit
to God. From Chenies, April 16, 1599.

Your loving

Bridget Vere

Endorsed: (1) To my very loving friend, Mr Maynard, at his house in Westminster or elsewhere, give these; (2) 16 April(?), the Lady Bridget Vere to Mr Maynard in favour of Mr Arnold, chaplain to the Countess of Bedford.