

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter written in August 1599 by the Dowager Countess of Bedford to Sir Robert Cecil (1563-1612). At the time the letter was written, Oxford's daughter, Susan Vere (1587-1629), was living with the Dowager Countess at Chenies in Buckinghamshire. Her sister, Bridget Vere (1584-1631), who had also lived with the Dowager Countess at Chenies, had married the Dowager Countess' grandson, Francis Norris (1579-1622), 2nd Baron Norris of Rycote and 1st Earl of Berkshire, in April of that year, and had presumably gone to live elsewhere. Hence the Dowager Countess' request to Sir Robert Cecil that he deliver Susan Vere from 'this solitary imprisonment.

In the letter the Dowager Countess writes of her grandson that:

Francis Norris is gone this journey without my consent or liking, yet my hope is the same God that preserved him at land will also defend him at sea.

From the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, available online:

In February 1598 Norris went to France on diplomatic service with Sir Robert Cecil. In 1599 he served in the fleet to repel a threatened Spanish invasion.

For further information on the Dowager Countess of Bedford, see TNA SP 12/270/91, f. 159.

Good Master Secretary, I pray bear with these few lines, being so much busied in her Majesty's weightiest affairs as you are. My Lady Susan, I thank God, is very well, and I hope you will remember to deliver her from this solitary imprisonment. I assure you, there are very many good things in her, and I find her very tractable to my understanding. I nothing doubt but you shall reap both many and great comforts by her. Francis Norris is gone this journey without my consent or liking, yet my hope is the same God that preserved him at land will also defend him at sea. And thus with my best wishes unto you, I commit you to the protection of the Almighty.

Your very assured friend,

Bridget Bedford.

Endorsed: (1) To the right honourable my very assured friend, Sir Robert Cecil, knight, Principal Secretary to her Majesty, deliver these; (2) August 1599, Countess of Bedford to my Master.