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**Shakespeare's Gloucestershire Contemporaries and the Essex
Rising**

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Shakespeare's Gloucestershire Contemporaries and the Essex Rising

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ON Sunday 8 February 1601, Queen Elizabeth's proud and over-reaching cousin and favourite, the Earl of Essex, hero of Shakespeare, patron of Ben Jonson, Chapman and Spenser, and a poet himself, already in fear of arrest and loss of life, attempted to seize the City, and so to intimidate the Court, in a last desperate move to retain his power and renew his lost influence over the Queen. He left Essex House with some two hundred followers, lords, knights, and gentlemen, and rode into the City shouting, 'For the Queen! A plot is laid for my life!' But the Sunday-strolling citizens upon whose love he had counted for the most part only greeted him civilly, stared and strolled on. Realizing his utter failure Essex turned to retreat, only to find that Sir John Leveson (the brother of Shakespeare's Globe Trustee), had closed Ludgate and drawn a chain across the street by St. Paul's, where he had posted a company of pikemen and musketeers to bar the way.¹ A short skirmish ensued, after which the Earl, with about fifty of his followers, escaped by the river to his house, there to await the doom he had brought upon himself.

With Essex on that fatal day, in whose precedent events Shakespeare was so nearly involved, were the poet's patron, the young Earl of Southampton, and several of his neighbours from the country south of the Avon—Robert Catesby, Thomas Winter, Grey Brydges, later Lord Chandos of Sudeley, near Winchcombe, Sir Charles Percy, 4th son of the 8th Earl of Northumberland, a 'young Mr Tracy' of Toddington, 'beloved of the Earl', who was killed, and Edward Bushell, later Sir Edward, of Broad Marston, Glos.² When, ten years

¹ Leslie Hotson, *I, William Shakespeare* (1937), p. 165.

² *Ibid.*, p. 165 *et seq.*

later, Shakespeare had retired to New Place, Catesby and Winter had lost their lives as a result of the Gunpowder Plot, but Grey Brydges, Sir Charles Percy, and Sir Edward Bushell all had their homes within five to fifteen miles of Stratford, in an area where Shakespeare and his known friends William Reynolds and Thomas Combe II had many friends and kinsmen.¹ What contact is he likely to have had with these survivors of Essex's conspiracy or their families, linking his life in London as actor, dramatist and theatre proprietor with his life as a prosperous gentleman of Stratford, living at ease in his native countryside?

Grey Brydges, Sir Charles Percy, and Edward Bushell were all imprisoned after their capture at Essex House. Brydges, who was but twenty-one, and who seems rather to have been caught up in the last hectic days of the conspiracy, than to have been deeply involved in it, was soon released from the Fleet. Sir Charles Percy and his brother Sir Jocelyn, more deeply implicated, were imprisoned in the Tower and were only released on the payment of fines of £500 each. And Edward Bushell, a minor character, Essex's young lieutenant in Ireland, and his 'servant waiting at his table' in London, was released on bail after two months in the Marshalsea, on the payment of 100 marks.²

Essex had supported James's claim to the English throne, and James, who referred to him as 'my martyr', looked kindly on the former conspirators after his accession. The Earl of Southampton was released from the Tower, where he had been held, his life forfeit, till the end of the old Queen's reign; and Grey Brydges, who had succeeded to the barony of Chandos in 1602, became a favourite at Court. There he lived with such magnificence that he became known as the King of Cotswold, and there he took part in the many lavish tournaments and masques that became increasingly popular under the new king.³ He attended James's Parliament in 1603 and in the same year entered the Middle Temple, probably more as a gentleman for his own pleasure than for the study of the law. Eight months before this William Combe II, the eldest son of Thomas Combe of the College, Stratford, and his wife, Mary Bonner of Campden, had also become a student of the Middle Temple.⁴ In 1604 Lord Chandos was created Knight of the Bath, and in the same year he visited Oxford with the

¹ *Notes and Queries* (Oct. 1961), pp. 364-72.

² Hotson, *I, William Shakespeare*, p. 366. Jardine, *Criminal Trials* (1832). E. B. de Fonblanque, *Annals of the House of Percy* (1889), p. 223. W. B. Devereux, *Lives and Letters of the Devereux, Earls of Essex* (1853).

³ *Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁴ C. H. Hopwood K.C., *Middle Temple Records: minutes of Parliament* (1903).

King, and was made Master of Arts, together with many of the nobility in the royal train. He went as a commanding officer on the expedition to the Low Countries under Lord Edward Cecil in 1610, with Lord Herbert of Cherbury as a fellow officer and companion,¹ but after this date, till his death in 1621, he lived at Sudeley when his health permitted, and when he was not at Court.²

Lord Chandos had married in 1607 Anne, daughter of Ferdinando Stanley Lord Derby,³ patron of Strange's Men, the company which in 1594 became the Chamberlain's Men, of which Shakespeare was so distinguished a member, and on his succession in 1602 he himself had become the patron of Chandos's Men.⁴ Lord Chandos was thus doubly linked with the stage, and, as a wealthy and powerful patron, was no doubt well known to the actors of Shakespeare's day. At Sudeley he dispensed a lavish hospitality, keeping open house to all comers on three days in every week,⁵ but one feels that he lived remote from the warmer world of country gentry who were his neighbours. There is no evidence, and little likelihood that to Shakespeare Lord Chandos was more than a great nobleman of vast wealth and a patron of players; or that to his lordship Shakespeare was more than a successful player who had achieved a modest and rather new-made gentility.

But when we turn to the next of our Gloucestershire survivors of the Essex Rising, Lord Chandos's friend and neighbour, Sir Charles Percy of Dumbleton, we find ourselves on warmer ground.

Sir Charles Percy, a stocky and choleric soldier as his memorial in Dumbleton Church shows him to be, brother of the 9th Earl of Northumberland, settled at Dumbleton, Glos. early in the 17th century, after a rebellious and active military career. A devoted follower of Essex, he went with him on the expedition to support Henry IV of France in 1591, and was knighted before Rouen.⁶ In 1594 he became a gentleman member of the Middle Temple with his brother the Earl of Northumberland, five months before Drayton's country host and friend (and probably Shakespeare's), Sir Henry Rainsford of Clifford Chambers, Glos., and just a year before Shakespeare's cousin Thomas Greene. At this time George Bonner of Campden, Thomas Combe's brother-in-law, was a member, having been admitted in 1591.⁷

¹ *Dictionary of National Biography*.

² Emma Dent, *Annals of Winchcombe and Sudeley*.

³ G. E. C., *The Complete Peerage*, III (1913).

⁴ J. T. Murray, *English Dramatic Companies*, vol. 2, p. 29.

⁵ Emma Dent, *Annals of Winchcombe and Sudeley. Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁶ E. B. de Fonblanque, *Annals of the House of Percy*.

⁷ *Middle Temple Admission Book. Records of the Middle Temple*.

Soon after 1594 Sir Charles was in Ireland with Essex, and there he distinguished himself at Blackwater in 1598, and at Cahir Castle in 1599, and his courage and prowess were frequently mentioned in dispatches by Essex.¹

Sir Charles was one of the group of Essex's officers who returned to England with him on his fatal attempt to justify his conduct to the Queen, and who virtually garrisoned Essex House. His knowledge of and intimacy with the Chamberlain's Company at this time is suggested by the part he played in having Shakespeare's *Richard II*, with its dethronement and subsequent murder of a king, acted on 7 February, on the eve of the rising, to hearten the conspirators and inflame the public. As is well known, on Friday the 6th Sir Charles Percy—said to have been the leader of the deputation—Sir Gelly Merrick, Lord Monteagle, Henry Cuffe and others, including Sir Edward Bushell and Sir Christopher Blount, kinsman of Shakespeare's friend William Reynolds, and of the Combe family, crossed the river to the Globe after a dinner at Gunter's near Temple Bar, saw the players, possibly, but not necessarily including Shakespeare himself, but certainly including his friend and legator Augustine Phillips,² and asked them to play *Richard II* on the next day. After some objection had been made (possibly the players suspected the motive) as to the play's being stale and unlikely to draw an audience, the offer of a bonus of 40s settled the matter, and the play was acted on the 7th.³

The presentation of *Richard II* was more than a mere attempt to rouse passions by the depiction of the usurpation of a throne and the murder of a king. It was a deliberately contrived insult to the Queen and even a public avowal of Essex's crazy intentions, for the Queen had already developed an almost obsessional phobia about the story of Richard II and Henry IV, which had been much increased, as was well known to Essex, by the publication in January 1598-9 of *The First Part of the Raigne of Kinge Henrie IIII* by John (later Sir John) Hayward, with its fulsome and elaborate dedication to Essex, which the Queen considered treasonable.⁴ Both Sir Charles Percy and the players were indeed lucky to get off as they did, and we may imagine that Shakespeare himself, his connection with Essex and his friend the Earl of Southampton, his authorship of the play, and his position in the Chamberlain's Company, so well known, may have felt dangerously

¹ W. B. Devereux, *Lives and Letters of the Devereux, Earls of Essex*.

² Robert Armin was also a legatee of Augustine Phillips. Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, II, p. 73. P.C.C. 31 Haynes.

³ Leslie Hotson, *I, William Shakespeare*, p. 164. E. A. B. Barnard, *New Links with Shakespeare* (1930) p. 65.

⁴ E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, vol. 1, pp. 353-4; vol. 2, pp. 323-7.

near to royal disapproval and prison. The Chamberlain's Men, however, were playing at Court again a few days after Essex's trial and none of them was prosecuted.¹

Sir Charles, released from the Tower before the end of 1601, apparently did not take much further part in politics. He rode a losing race to Edinburgh with Sir Robert Carey to take the official news of the Queen's death to James I in 1603, and was later nearly involved in the Gunpowder Plot—he was offered, but fortunately did not accept, command of the horse in a regiment raised in England with the King's consent, ostensibly for the Low Countries, but in fact earmarked by the conspirators to support them if the Plot succeeded.² After this, and the imprisonment or death of many of his near relatives and friends, he retired to Dumbleton in Gloucestershire.

There he married Dorothy Hutchins, the widow of one Edmund Hutchins, who had died in 1604³ leaving the manor to her. Dorothy Hutchins was the daughter of Thomas Cocks of Bishop's Cleeve, about six miles from Dumbleton,⁴ and the sister of Charles Cocks, who had entered the Middle Temple in May 1603 a few months before Grey Brydges, Lord Chandos, and nine years after Sir Charles himself, and who became a prominent member of the Inn.⁵ Sir Charles lived till 1628 and his wife till 1646. That the marriage was not to Sir Charles's financial disadvantage is shown by the fact that in 1609 he and his wife sold off one sixth of her manor of Dumbleton with twenty messuages to his cousin Sir Alan Percy for the not inconsiderable sum of £240.⁶

It was through this marriage that Sir Charles settled at Dumbleton, where he led the quiet life of a country gentleman, with Grey Brydges Lord Chandos as his nearest neighbour of equal rank, and families such as the Dastons of Dumbleton from among the lesser gentry as his village acquaintance. At Dumbleton Sir Charles, after his life at Court, and military activity, and his involvement in the Essex Rising, followed by his ride to Scotland, and his near complicity in the Gunpowder Plot, may have found life a little dull. At least it was from Dumbleton that he addressed the well-known letter to 'Mr Carlington' (probably Dudley Carleton, secretary to his brother the 9th Earl of Northumberland, who was then in the Tower), which contains the famous reference to Justice Shallow and Justice Silence,

¹ E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, vol. 1, p. 355.

² E. B. de Fonblanque, *Annals of the House of Percy*, p. 252.

³ *Visitation of Worcs.* (1634) (Harl Socy.). *Hockaday Abstracts*, Gloucester Public Library: Dumbleton. Sir Robert Atkyns, *Ancient and Present State of Gloucestershire* (1712) (Dumbleton).

⁴ *Visitation of Worcestershire* (1634).

⁵ *Middle Temple Admission Book. Records of the Middle Temple.*

⁶ *Trans. BGAS*, vol. 17, p. 238.

assuming an intimacy with Shakespeare's plays on the part of his correspondent, which indicates that reference to characters such as Shallow and Silence was already the common coin of the educated.

Justice Shallow and Justice Silence were, be it noted, Gloucestershire magistrates, not Warwickshire; they came from the territory south of the Avon, and they coursed upon Cotswold. Their prototypes, one may imagine, had been observed in the area—Savages, Dastons, Sheldons, Bushells, who knows?

The letter¹ is dated 27 December, but without the year. In another hand there is written on the document '1600', but such dating was often inaccurate. The writer is obviously permanently buried in the country, which Sir Charles could not have been in 1600, but only after his marriage to Dorothy Hutchins, which must have taken place after 1604. We may imagine Sir Charles, having spent a bucolic Christmas in his new home, longing for news of the Court and of London, writing to his friend;

Mr Carlington: I am here so pestered with contrie businesse that I shall not be able as yet to come to London: If I stay heere long in this fashion, at my return I think you will find mee so dull that I shall bee taken for Justice Silence or Justice Shallow. Wherefore I am to entreat you that you will take pittie of mee, and as occurrences shall searve, to send mee such news from time to time as shall happen, the knowledge of the which, though perhaps thee (they) will not exempt mee from the opinion of a Justice Shallow at London, yet I will assure you thee will make mee passe for a very sufficient gentleman in Gloucestershire. If I doe not alwaies make you answere, I pray you doe not therefore desist from your charitable office, the place being so fruitful from whence you write and heere so barren that it will make my head ake for invention. But if anything happen heere that may bee unknowne unto you in those parts you shall not faile but to heare of it. . . .

That Sir Charles is likely to have had need of some enlivening gossip from London is shown by the kind of local event that was no doubt the most exciting news of his chosen retreat at Dumbleton. In 1608 Anthony Daston, of Dumbleton, was assaulted by members of the Greye family, of that village. He filed a Bill of Complaint, seeking redress, and from it we get a glimpse of an affair that must indeed have been news in its time and place. Anthony Daston stated:²

In the month of April 1608 one William Greye the younger of Dumbleton . . . and Francis Greye . . . brother of William Greye, bearing a secret grudge and malice towards (Anthony Daston) . . . did use divers means and many great provocations . . . towards (Anthony Daston) to the intent . . . to cause (him) to

¹ *S. P. Dom. Eliz.* (1598–1601), p. 146.

² Proceedings of the Court of Star Chamber. *Jas. I.* 115. 9.

break His Majesty's Peace (and) . . . did sundry times make assaults . . . and did send divers and sundry challenges . . . And in the end . . . the said William Greye in the open street of Dumbleton . . . with a staff which he had in his hand upon the 20th day of April 1608 . . . did make assault upon (Anthony Daston). Upon which Anthony Daston reminded William Greye that he was the Constable of the village and bade him put in sureties to keep the peace, afterwards warning him that if he refused to do so he would put him in the stocks.

Whereupon with great disdain the said William Greye and Francis Greye . . . with their staves . . . did assault and beat and wound (Daston) . . . and throw (him) down on the ground and . . . did hawle and pole (him) to and fro within the said village of Dumbleton using many scornful and opprobrious words.

Anthony Daston then relates, not without a little irony, that William and Francis Greye 'rescued' William Greye the younger, 'by means of which the said William Greye escaped'. The poor Constable does not relate what happened to himself, and we see him lying in the street of Dumbleton, beaten and discomfited. This was not the end, however, for Anthony Daston continues, and relates how,

Upon the 25th day of August last (he did) appoint George Daston and Robert Stevens, two of (his) menial servants to cut fall and bring into (his) dwelling house . . . certain thorns growing in the common fields of Dumbleton . . . (and they) were cutting and falling the said thorns when Elizabeth Greye wife of . . . William Greye the elder . . . and William Greye the younger and Francis Greye and Judith Greye and Anne Clifford . . . and other persons to the number of 10 to 12 persons at least . . . did . . . with force of arms in very riotous and routeous and unlawful manner . . . with swords, daggers, forest bills, large pykstaves, shepicks and other weapons . . . make assault . . . upon the said George Daston and Robert Stevens . . . and did greivously beat, wound and evil entreat (them) . . . insomuch as without the aid of some others . . . the said Robert Stevens was not able to go out of the field, upon which wounds they . . . did languish by the space of 6 weeks . . . And after the rioters . . . had satisfied themselves in their cruelty they in triumphing and vanity manner did bid (the two servants) go home if they could and send their master . . . swearing . . . that they would give him as much.

Concluding his Bill of Complaint Anthony Daston asks for a writ of subpoena against William Greye and his relatives, to appear in the Star Chamber. The 'answer' of William Greye, as usual, denies all the accusations, and is, for us, the end of the matter, for the judgment does not appear. It is of interest to note that the two litigants employed two of the most distinguished local lawyers to act for them in their dispute, and that the Greyes employed a relative of Anthony Daston's. Daston's Bill of Complaint is signed by Nicholas Overbury of Bourton-on-the-Hill, later Sir Nicholas, a distinguished lawyer of the Middle Temple, where he became Treasurer in 1610. He was Recorder of Gloucester,

Chief Justice of Wales, and father of the unfortunate Sir Thomas Overbury. The Greyes' 'answer' is signed by none other than Richard Daston of Broadway, also of the Middle Temple (where he was Reader in 1597), and a Judge of South Wales.¹ Richard Daston was a cousin of Harry Langston, the father of Anthony Langston, who became Town Clerk of Stratford in 1617 in succession to Francis Collins, and a kinsman of George Savage, Archdeacon of Gloucester, who was brother of Bridget Savage, the mother of Mary Combe and George Bonner.² What Richard Daston's relationship was to Anthony of Dumbleton it is difficult to judge; neither is it possible to discover the relationship of this Anthony to Oliver Daston, the vicar of Dumbleton, till 1615, when he was followed by Nicholas Wallington.

Nicholas Wallington, who would have been well known to Sir Charles Percy, was the son of Anne Wallington, Dorothy Percy's sister-in-law, and the nephew of Edmund Hutchins, Dorothy's first husband.³ He was a contributor, with Michael Drayton, Ben Jonson, Thomas Heywood and others to *Annalia Dubrensia* (1636), a volume of poems in honour of Anthony Langston's friend Robert Dover, the creator of the Cotswold Games,⁴ and through Robert Dover and his kinsmen the Combe family⁵ there would have been another link between Sir Charles and Shakespeare, to reinforce those of local mutual acquaintance, and former probable acquaintance in London.

The Dastons, a family with relationships all over our area, were part of the network of kinship and acquaintance into which Shakespeare was no doubt drawn by his intimacy with the Reynolds and Combe families. Sir Charles Percy's Daston neighbours at Dumbleton, a family of ancient distinction, would most surely have connected him with Anne (Sheldon) Daston's Great Farm at Broadway, the focus of these interrelated families, with its famous hospitality.⁶ There Shakespeare may, with far more justification than mere fantasy suggests, be imagined as a welcome guest,⁷ and at Dover's Games too, held on the Thursday and Friday of Whit week from 1612 onwards, only three miles from Broadway, the whole local world of gentry foregathered.

¹ *Middle Temple Records. Visitation of Gloucestershire* (1623). *Visitation of Warwickshire* (1619).

² P.C.C. Harrington. 14. *Notes and Queries* (Oct. 1961), pp. 364-72.

³ *Visitation of Worcestershire* (1634). *Hockaday Abstracts: Dumbleton*.

⁴ *Annalia Dubrensia* was published in 1636, but many of the poems were written some years before this date. Dover's Games were begun about 1612.

⁵ C. Whitfield, *Robert Dover and the Cotswold Games* (1962), pp. 4-5.

⁶ Thomas Habington, *A Survey of Worcestershire*, vol. 1 (Worcs. Hist. Socy., 1895), p. 108.

⁷ *Notes and Queries* (Oct. 1961), pp. 364-72.

Some four miles from Dover's Hill, towards Stratford, lived the Bushell family. The Dastons were related to the Bushells of Broad Marston and Cleeve Prior, and there were Bushells in Broadway.¹ Sir Edward Bushell, knighted in 1604,² our other survivor of the Essex Rising, may well have been a member of the Broadway society of gentry that has been described, and in it he would have found many kinsmen. There were two links of marriage between the Bushells and the Dastons, and others with the Sheldons and with the family of Dover's friend and patron Endymion Porter. Thomas Bushell of Broad Marston, who died in 1558, had married Anne Norwood of Broadway, whose mother was a Sheldon, and Alice Norwood, Anne's sister, married John Daston of Dumbleton.³ Their son Anthony was the second husband of Anne (Sheldon) Daston.⁴ Her first husband was Francis Savage of Elmley Castle. Later another Anthony Daston, great-grandson of John Daston of Dumbleton, married Anne Bushell of Broad Marston.⁵ He may have been the complainant of the Bill of Complaint that has been quoted.

Edward Bushell, so closely related to the Dastons, the Winters, the Sheldons and Porters, was, as has been noted, released from the Marshalsea in 1601, after paying a fine of 100 marks. He had more known links with Shakespeare than our other two survivors. Before becoming Essex's 'servant' and being involved in the Rising, he had been at Oxford, where he entered Magdalen College in 1582, aged 14, together with his elder brother Thomas, and their neighbour John Davies of Quinton,⁶ a friend of the Combe family. From Oxford he passed into the service of Ferdinando Lord Strange, later Lord Derby,⁷ thus, on occasion, wearing the livery that Shakespeare wore as one of Strange's Men, and he remained in this service till Lord Derby's death in 1594. No doubt he was known to Anne, daughter of Lord Derby, wife of Grey Brydges, Lord Chandos. While in the service of Lord Derby, Edward Bushell, an impoverished younger son of a Catholic family, was involved in several rash escapades. In 1594 he, with several others, robbed the Cathedral Church of Winchester, and coined the stolen plate in Sir Gervase Markham's chambers in Gray's Inn. They went on to attempt the robbery of Whitehall itself with the

¹ Parish Registers of Broadway, Worcs.

² Wm. Arthur Shaw, *The Knights of England* (1906).

³ *Visitation of Gloucestershire* (1623).

⁴ *Notes and Queries* (Oct. 1961). *Visitation of Gloucestershire* (1623). *Visitation of Warwickshire* (1619).

⁵ *Visitation of Gloucestershire* (1623).

⁶ *Alumni Oxonienses*.

⁷ Leslie Hotson, *I, William Shakespeare*, p. 145.

object of stealing the Queen's jewels and plate, but failed. Bushell was then nearly involved in the Lopez plot of 1599, in which his kinsman Ralph Sheldon of Beoley was suspected of complicity.¹

Somehow Edward Bushell escaped punishment, and soon after 1594 he became attached to the Earl of Essex as gentleman-usher till, in 1598, when Essex went to Ireland, he was made one of the lieutenants in his army. There he fought with distinction, more particularly in a skirmish at Rosconnel in Leinster, where he was wounded in the chest with a pike. Four days later, despite his wound, he led a charge against the Irish rebels at Arklow, with Shakespeare's Earl of Southampton, and in 1599 he was sent as a messenger to the Court by Essex.² Later he returned with Essex on his fatal, unauthorized journey to see the Queen, and he was one of the rash band of officers who garrisoned Essex House. Thence he passed, as we have seen, to the Marshalsea.

Who was this Edward Bushell, a dashing soldier, thief, rebel, Catholic plotter, and younger son without means and, as will be shown, kinsman of Robert Dover? When we turn to him and his family we enter a field nearer to Shakespeare's home and better stocked with game than the more distant areas near Winchcombe and Dumbleton. But we are also faced with problems of identity which are not made easier by the fact that the Bushell family had the habit of giving the christian names of Thomas and Edward to its first and second sons through several generations.

The Bushell family was an ancient one, established at Broad Marston, Glos. since the early 13th century. There Sir Alan Bushell, knight, the son of Sir William Bushell, died in 1245.³ From that time the estate passed from father to son through eleven or twelve generations. To establish the more immediate descent of our Edward Bushell it will be best to start with his great grandfather, Thomas Bushell I.

Thomas Bushell I of Broad Marston, the son of Edmund Bushell, married Anne, daughter of John Norwood of Broadway, as has already been stated, and through this marriage comes the kinship not only with the great Sheldon family of Beoley and Broadway, but with the Dastons of Dumbleton and Hinton. When he died in 1558 he made William Sheldon of Beoley his executor and left a legacy to Ralph Sheldon. He was buried at Pebworth.⁴ His only son was Edward Bushell I, who died in 1545 before his father. He left legacies to his

¹ Leslie Hotson, *I, William Shakespeare*, pp. 146-51.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 157-9.

³ J. N. Langston, 'Old Catholic Families of Gloucestershire; the Bushells of Broad Marston', *Trans. BGAS* (1956).

⁴ Parish Registers of Pebworth, P.C.C. Welles 6.

cousin Giles Porter, Endymion Porter's grandfather, to Thomas Porter, to all the children of Edmund Porter, to Endymion's father, and also to William and Ralph Sheldon, all members of prominent Catholic families, as he was himself.¹

Edward Bushell I had two sons and two daughters. The elder son was Thomas Bushell II, and the younger Edward Bushell II. Thomas Bushell II married first Elizabeth Winter,² the daughter of Robert Winter of Huddington, Worcs., and the aunt of Thomas and Robert Winter of the Gunpowder Plot; his second wife was Mary, daughter of Philip Morris.³ By his two wives he had no less than seventeen children. On the death of Thomas Bushell I (Edward I having predeceased him), Thomas II and his brother Edward II inherited all their grandfather's lands, having already inherited their father's as minors in 1545, and they were both rich men, owning and holding land in Long and Broad Marston, Cleeve Prior, Harvington, Bidford, Grafton, Mickleton, Ullington, Tewkesbury, Ilmington, Larkstoke, and Brailes.⁴ At Pebworth, Ullington and Mickleton, it should be noted, the Bonner family of Campden and Mickleton owned land, and had been long established. George Bonner of the Middle Temple, Mary Combe's brother, inherited his father Anthony Bonner's land at Ullington and Pebworth in 1580, and was therefore no doubt well known to the Bushells, though his home was at Charingworth, after he bought the rectorial lands of Ebrington with his brother Anthony in 1607.⁵

Edward Bushell II, who entered the Middle Temple in 1566,⁶ after being at St. John's College, Oxford,⁷ and who was followed in his chambers in 1571 by none other than George Bonner's cousin, William Combe (born at Broadway in 1551),⁸ became a Protestant and went to live at Cleeve Prior, Worcs., but Thomas II stayed at Broad Marston and remained a Catholic, one of the richest recusants in the county.⁹ Here our problem of identity becomes more difficult. The Visitations of Gloucestershire for 1623 and Worcestershire for 1579 and 1634 all state that Edward Bushell II was the Edward Bushell who was knighted by James I in 1604, but he is obviously not the Edward Bushell who is our subject, his age alone making this impossible. Dr Hotson assumes, in contradiction to the visitations, that Edward Bushell II was never

¹ P.C.C. Welles. 6. T. P. Wadley, 'Some Particulars of the Parish of Pebworth', *Trans. BGAS* (1880).

² *Visitation of Gloucestershire* (1623).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Trans. BGAS* (1956).

⁵ P.C.C. Arundel. 43.

⁶ *Middle Temple Admission Book.*

⁷ *Alumni Oxonienses.*

⁸ *Middle Temple Records.* Broadway Parish Registers.

⁹ *Trans. BGAS* (1956).

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knighted, and that it was his nephew who was, and with whom we are concerned. As one would expect, he is right. Edward Bushell II lived quietly at Cleeve Prior till 1617 and had three sons and a daughter by his wife Margaret Delves of Cheshire.¹ His eldest son, to make matters more confusing, was named Thomas. This Thomas's uncle, Thomas Bushell II, brother of Edward II, had, as has been stated, no less than seventeen children by his two wives. His eldest son by Elizabeth Winter was Thomas III, and our Edward Bushell was a younger son of the same marriage. Three other children of Thomas II formed links with the Shakespeare circle: his sister Elizabeth married William Cole, brother-in-law of Robert Dover, thus linking Dover and his wife not only with the Bushells, but with the Porters of Mickleton, the Winters of Huddington, and the Sheldons of Beoley and Broadway;² his step-brother Harry Bushell and his step-sister Eleanor formed links in Stratford itself, which will be referred to later.

The final proof that Edward Bushell III was the Bushell who became Sir Edward in 1604, and who was our Edward Bushell, comes from a Chancery Suit of February 1609.³ It was a suit between the Cannings of Foxcote (another Catholic family) and 'Thomas Bushell the elder, Thomas Bushell the younger, sonne and heir of the said Thomas Bushell the elder, and Edward Bushell of Broad Marston in the county of Glouc, knighte, *being the second sonne of the said Thomas Bushell the Elder*, and Edward Bushell of Cleeve in the county of Worcester, gent, brother of the said Thos Bushell the elder'. The suit concerns the title to certain of the rectorial lands of Ilmington, Warwickshire, and proves beyond doubt that Sir Edward was the brother of Thomas Bushell III, and the nephew of Edward Bushell of Cleeve.

After his experiences in the Essex Rising, Sir Edward, as he became in 1604,⁴ skated warily on the surface of the Gunpowder Plot in which so many of his friends and relatives were implicated, and as a result of which his cousins, the two Winters, lost their lives. He joined with the other conspirators in Ambrose Rookwood's parties at Clopton House, and he is known to have dined with them at least once in London.⁵ He was not further involved, and was examined and exonerated. There is something of a mystery about his connection with the Plot, for among the documents there is a note referring to his

¹ *Visitation of Gloucestershire* (1623).

² *Ibid.*

³ C2JAS I/C24/84.

⁴ Wm. A. Shaw, *The Knights of England*.

⁵ Leslie Hotson, *I, William Shakespeare*, pp. 183-4. E. I. Fripp, *Shakespeare Man and Artist*, II, p. 641.

'declaration' but nothing more is to be found;¹ and an undated letter from him to Salisbury exists in which he offers Salisbury his services 'as one to whom the seriousness of this great business shall be most committed'. The letter was evidently written soon after the discovery of the Plot, but before the trials, and in it Sir Edward says that he had been held to be 'too honest to be trusted in so horrid a practice', and claims that he had 'served Her Majesty hitherto at mine own charges' (under Essex, in Ireland), and that he had lost the greatest part of his maintenance which was 'an annuity of thirty pounds a year for my life, paid to me out of my cousin Robert Winter's lands'—then escheated for Winter's treason. He closes by apologizing for seeking help at such a time and 'in all humbleness' recommends himself to Salisbury.²

The outcome of this appeal, possibly also a reward for his service to the Government in connection with the Plot, was a yearly pension, granted in 1606 of 200 marks 'in consideration of the good and faithful service done unto us by our trusty and well beloved Sir Edward Bushell, knight'.³ What, one wonders, was the 'good and faithful service'? No one in any way implicated or suspected of implication in the Plot was thus rewarded so soon afterwards, unless he had aided the Government. He was also granted the wardship of his kinsman Wintour Grant, heir of his attainted cousin John Grant, another victim of Catesby's lunacy.⁴

From 1606 onward, when he was not at Court, Sir Edward Bushell seems to have lived peaceably at Broad Marston. His elder brother, Thomas III, is shown by the Chancery Suit already cited to have moved to Packwood, Warwickshire in 1609, and so we may imagine Sir Edward living at the family mansion, within five miles of Stratford, where Shakespeare retired a year later—and, be it noted, only four miles from Bidford-on-Avon, where Thomas Rookwood, his servant, and a friend, Master Townsend, were captured after the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot.⁵ Across those flat wet fields, at Milcote, lived Sir Edward's brother-in-law, Sir Edward Greville, knighted at Theobalds in May 1603,⁶ now verging on bankruptcy, but still lord of the manor of Stratford; and in Stratford itself lived Sir Edward's half-brother, Harry Bushell, husband of Mary Lane, whom he married in 1610⁷ thus bringing the Bushells into the kinship of the

¹ Leslie Hotson, *I, William Shakespeare*, p. 200.

² Salisbury MSS VI. 113. art. 139.

³ Leslie Hotson, *I, William Shakespeare*, p. 201.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ E. I. Fripp, *Shakespeare Man and Artist*, II, p. 641.

⁶ Wm. A. Shaw, *The Knights of England*.

⁷ Parish Registers of Stratford-on-Avon. E. I. Fripp, *Shakespeare Man and Artist*, pp. 787-8.

Reynolds, Bonner, Combe circle, and of Shakespeare himself, through his cousin John Green, who married Margaret Lane in 1609.¹

So we come back to Stratford, in whose narrow half-timbered streets Bushells came and went daily, busy with their concerns. Harry Bushell seems to have been something of a black sheep, leading a dissolute life, getting into debt, and causing his wife Mary some trouble. When he died in July 1618, aged 36, he owed Shakespeare's kinsman, Richard Hathaway £6 17s *od* for bread, and a far larger debt of £40 was due to the Quynys.² His brother-in-law Sir Edward Greville was also indebted to the same family to the extent of £30.³ Eleanor Bushell, Harry's sister, married in 1613 Adrian Quyny the eldest son of Richard Quyny, the writer of the famous letter to Shakespeare of 1598, asking for a loan of £30 and offering Thomas Bushell II as security.⁴ Through this marriage the Bushells come closer still to Shakespeare, but sadly late in the day: in February 1616, some two months before Shakespeare's death, his daughter Judith married Thomas Quyny, Adrian's brother.⁵

Once more we see Shakespeare's life, after he had retired, woven into the fabric of the lives of the gentry south of the Avon. His links with, and acquaintance with, the Bushell family are undoubted. These, and his Combe and Bonner connections take us to Broadway where, at the Great Farm, Anne Daston dispensed her generous hospitality till her death in 1619. Thence our imagination may lead us to Dumbleton where, a neighbour of another branch of the Daston family, Sir Charles Percy, a probable acquaintance of Shakespeare's in London, lived with his wife Dorothy; and thence, only five miles away to Sudeley, that great house of hospitality, where Lord Chandos, King of Cotswold, reigned in patrician glory, the Essex Rising in which these three so different men had played their rebellious parts a thing of the Elizabethan past, and the Gunpowder Plot, in which many of their friends and kinsmen lost their lives and fortunes, a sad but fading memory.

¹ Parish Registers of Stratford-on-Avon. E. I. Fripp, *Shakespeare Man and Artist*, pp. 787-8.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ E. I. Fripp, *Richard Quyny*, pp. 137-8

⁵ Parish Registers of Stratford-on-Avon.