



The Oxford Household

The birth order of the 12th Earl of Oxford's male heirs

By David Silverthorne

There is little evidence to suggest the birth order of the heirs of Sir John de Vere (12th Earl of Oxford) from his marriage to Elizabeth Howard. We do know that Aubrey de Vere was the oldest son as it is well documented that he was arrested as the elder son alongside his father and executed six days before the Earl. The second born son was John de Vere, who was under house arrest in Hedingham Castle until pardoned by Edward IV on 28 May 1462 although it would not be until 1463 that he would be recognised next in line to the Earldom and named as the 13th Earl of Oxford.

The order of births of Sir Thomas, Sir George and Sir Richard are a little less documented. Richard is recorded as being born around 1448, while George and Thomas are simply listed as being born *before* 1461. Some genealogies list Thomas as being the fourth brother, the youngest brother or simply overlooked completely! The book, "*The de Veres of Hedingham Castle*" by Verily Anderson¹ clearly suggests that Sir Thomas was the youngest of the brothers, but make no references as to why Sir Richard is curiously absent until the siege of St Michael Mount in 1473. Surely, if he was an older brother than Thomas he would be more, or at least as, prominent as his brother who is listed as having had a very senior role in 1471 when he was placed in charge of the defence of East Anglia. Additionally, considering that Thomas was a knight in 1471, this would suggest that he was at least 21 at that time (the age of majority). Therefore the latest year Sir Thomas could have been born was 1450.

The case for Sir George's birth order is a little less ambiguous than those of Richard and Thomas. The introduction of the translated will of Sir John by Nina Green² suggests that Sir George is the third born son, which is made more apparent in that in the second will of Sir John dated 1 September 1500, it states that the heir would be the son of his brother Sir George de Vere. Surely, this would mean that George would indeed be the third born and his son would be in the natural line of succession. However, this is not as clear cut as it sounds as neither Sir Thomas nor Sir Richard had children so could have just been passed over in favour of a brother who had a readily available male heir.

Therefore, considering these issues, and decided on the fact that Sir Richard is not mentioned before the siege of St Michael Mount, where as Thomas is documented before this time, I suggest that the birth order of the sons of Sir John de Vere, the 12th Earl of Oxford should be: Sir Aubrey de Vere, Sir John de Vere, Sir George de Vere, Sir Thomas de Vere and finally, Sir Richard de Vere.

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¹ <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Veres-Castle-Hedingham-Verily-Anderson/dp/0861380622>

² http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/new_files_jan_07/PROB%2011-17,%20ff.%2082-90.pdf