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Is a Powerful Authorship Smoking Gun Buried Within Westminster Abbey?

By Dr. Paul Altroccchi

My name be buried
where my body is.
- Sonnet 72

Discovery of the original copies of Shakespeare's plays, missing for 400 years, should be welcomed with unbridled enthusiasm by all Shakespeare scholars. This would, however, doom the Stratfordian authorship theory. Edward de Vere's handwriting being well known, the manuscripts would authenticate his authorship, asmoking gun so powerful that the long-awaited Oxfordian Paradigm Shift should occur immediately.

Unbridled enthusiasm? Perhaps not. In 200 AD, Tertullian issued a

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• INSIDE •

Report of the White Plains Shakespeare Authorship Conference

By Richard Joyrich

The White Plains Shakespeare Authorship Conference, jointly sponsored by the Shakespeare Oxford Society and Shakespeare Fellowship, convened at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in White Plains, NY from October 9-12, 2008. It was well attended and the sixty-plus attendees were treated to a variety of topics during 22 presentations, several discussion sessions, and two evening DVD showings.

The thing that has begun to stand out during the annual conferences is the continuing trend towards real intricately researched scholarship which, freed from the blinders of the Stratfordian story, is beginning to reveal many new things about Shakespeare and the world in which he lived. The conference has begun to shy away from attempts to prove the Oxfordian thesis and move on to what can we now learn given Oxford as the author.

Daniel Wright gave the conference a great start on Thursday afternoon with a well-reasoned discussion on the theme of bastardy and royal succession in the Shakespeare plays. It seems that Shakespeare is very interested in what makes a person fit to rule, not necessarily who is in the legitimate succession, Dr. Wright says that the plays convey this political message. Wright focused on the play *King John*, but his argument holds for many other works as well.

Helen Gordon presented some new ways of looking at the sonnets in the light of events in the life of Edward deVere, particularly his relationship with his wives and children.

Albert Burgstahler and Betsy Clark provided lucid accounts of complicated cryptographic and numerologic analysis of several dedications and title pages of works important in the Shakespeare Authorship Question. Burgstahler expanded upon the work of David Roper, now available in a new book, while Clark presented her own numerologic analyses. There seems to be much more of interest along these lines.to be discovered.

On Friday, after the annual meeting of the SOS, Frank Davis presented his researches into the famous Henslowe Diary. He has uncovered (or at least revealed) many things which have either escaped the notice of Stratfordians or have been suppressed. These include how actor-playwrights could all sign their names well, and some indications of the Shakespeare works having been written earlier than the established dates.

Michael Egan then spoke about intellectual integrity, citing many examples of unfair criticism of his recent work establishing Shakespearean authorship of the play *Richard II, Part 1* (formerly known as *Thomas of Woodstock*). He then went on to explain more about how he will function as the new editor of *The Oxfordian*.

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President's Page

By Matthew Cossolotto

Dear Society Members and Friends:

Readers of my most recent President's Page column will no doubt be surprised to see this new one. I thought I had written my last column as president of the Shakespeare Oxford Society. But it now appears, paraphrasing Mark Twain, that rumors of my demise as president have been greatly exaggerated. An explanation is in order.

I'm writing this column in late November 2008 as your newly reelected president a little over a month following the Society's annual meeting, held in White Plains on October 10, 2008. Many members will recall that two amendments to the Society's by-laws were on the ballot, both originally proposed to the Board of Trustees by first vice president John Hamill. Both amendments were overwhelmingly adopted by the membership, including those present at the meeting and those who mailed in their ballots prior to the meeting.

One amendment eliminated the Executive Committee – which had not been used by the Board of Trustees for several years. As I mentioned during the annual meeting, this was a "pro-democracy" amendment in the sense that it would eliminate the possibility that a small minority of Trustees could make decisions on behalf of the entire Board. Even though this power had not been used by the Board for several years, the possibility of rule by Executive Committee continued to exist in theory. The Board felt it would be better to eliminate the Executive Committee entirely. The membership, in its wisdom, agreed wholeheartedly. So now we can all say good riddance to the Executive Committee.

The second amendment recommended by the Board and approved by the membership was what I referred to as a "good governance" amendment during the discussion at the annual meeting. This amendment allows the Board, by unanimous vote, to extend the term of any officer for a period of up to one year.

This amendment was necessary because the by-laws impose a three-year term limit on officers serving in any given position, including Treasurer, Secretary, Membership Secretary, and President. Since all Board members and officers serve in a voluntary capacity, it is sometimes difficult for the Board to find new recruit new members and to find qualified people to serve as officers.

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Greetings

Here is your new newsletter. We are still running behind but working to catch up. You writers out there — submit! As you know, 2009 is the 400th anniversary of the publication of the sonnets. You will read here of the SOS declaration of 2009 as The Year of the Sonnet. The Newsletter is a good place for you to respond through your research and writing.

The 2008 Joint Conference has resulted in glowing reports. I regret that I had to miss it this year. What a line up! We have a report submitted by Richard Joyrich. I hope some presenters will consider submitting their work for publication.

All of the authorship publications are excellent evangelical tools for our cause. For example, as a teacher of Shakespeare, I use **your** material often in my presentations (full and correct attribution, of course). Each presentation, oral or printed, adds another voice to the international and on going discussion.

Lew Tate, Ed.
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(cont'd from p. 1)

mountain-top warning about the usual response of humans to a New Truth which conflicts with basic beliefs:

> "*Cum odio sui coepit veritas,*
> *Simil atque apparuit, inimica est.*"
> "The first reaction to truth is hatred. The moment it appears, it is treated as an enemy." (1)

Given the Stratfordian track record of chicanery for centuries, including destruction of vital documents, alteration of portraits, persistent deception and mendacity, those manuscripts would have to be guarded carefully by impartial historians to preserve their very existence.

As an example of Stratfordian "honesty above reproach," Oxfordian Charlton Ogburn, Jr. became entranced by the thought of finding the play manuscripts. He speculated that they might be hidden within the Shaksper monument in Stratford's Trinity Parish Church (2, 3, 4), failing to consider that the large bulk of 36 or more manuscripts could not possibly fit within that small space.

Shakespeare Birthplace Trust officials refused Ogburn's request to open the monument. Then they secretly arranged a nocturnal invasion of the church by "unknown criminals" who chiseled a four inch excavation in the monument's base. No interior cavity was found by the tidy intruders, who even swept up the debris! The mysterious vandals were neither sought nor caught by cooperative police and local authorities (4, 5).

If The Shakespeare Trust had found the manuscripts, would they have publicly announced their discovery? If so, why the nighttime attack on the monument rather than the requested daytime search in full view of the public? Was their real intent to find and then destroy such a premiere smoking gun which would certainly demolish their man, Shaksper, as the great playwright and thus instantly terminate millions of pounds of annual tourist revenue? Can one hope for impeccable honesty in humans whose basic tenets and/or jobs and income are threatened by a new discovery?

Early locations of the play manuscripts

Edward de Vere retired from his "job" as a fulltime courtier in Queen Elizabeth's Court in 1588, at the age of 38, after the Battle of the Armada, to work full time on rewriting his plays, turning them into great literature in their own right as well as for stage presentation. During his sixteen play-revision years, first in Stoke-Newington from 1588 to 1596, then at King's Place, Hackney until he died in 1604, it is logical to assume that all play manuscripts stayed in his possession. On the front page of the 1604 publication of *Hamlet*, for example, we are told, "Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much again as it was, *according to the true and perfect copies.*"

After de Vere's death in 1604, presumably the manuscripts remained with his family although we don't know with whom. The First Folio of 1623 states that the 36 Shakespeare plays were "published according to the True and Originall Copies," but this is very unlikely because of the large number of mistakes in wording, suggesting that memorized versions of actors — the illegal Quartos — may have been used for at least some of the folio plays.

As all Oxfordians know, the three folio producers all had a direct or indirect relationship to Edward de Vere:

1. Susan de Vere, youngest daughter of Edward de Vere.
2. Her husband, Philip Herbert, First Earl of Montgomery, who, with his brother, William, were the "Incomparable Paire of Brethren" to whom the First Folio was dedicated and who financed as well as produced the folio.
3. William Herbert, Third Earl of Pembroke, who for years kept his relatively minor job as Lord Chamberlain to the Stuart Kings, spurning the much more prestigious job of Lord High Treasurer of England several times so he could keep power over publications in anticipation of saving de Vere's great plays for posterity. He finally agreed to relinquish the job but only if his brother Philip became Lord Chamberlain.

What might have happened to the play manuscripts?

Oxfordians must realize that 36 to 40 plays written on thick parchment would fill a trunk. Could such a bulky collection have been overlooked in a dusty attic or muniment room all this time? Unlikely. Since few Elizabethan Era play manuscripts have survived time's vicissitudes, and considering the special political survival hazards of de Vere's plays, it seems unlikely that the play manuscripts still exist. What might have happened to them?

1. Destruction by the Cecils. Considered possible but unlikely because the term "grand possessors" was used in 1609 when *Troilus and Cressida* was registered for the second time, suggesting that the manuscripts were still intact and that the Herbert brothers knew their location. Also, the term "true and originall copies" was used in the 1623 publication of the First Folio, after both William Cecil, in 1598, and Robert Cecil, in 1612, had died.

2. Destruction in Ben Jonson's house fire. In Oct. or Nov., 1623, "there was a fire in Jonson's lodgings, and many books and manuscripts were destroyed" (6). The First Folio producers hired Ben Jonson to compile and edit the Folio. Whether he personally ever had possession of the original copies is not known. If they were in

his possession temporarily, could he have staged a fake fire to hoodwink the authorities before giving back the originals to the relatives?

3. Accidental destruction in other fires. Since the grand possessors were Herberts, could the manuscripts have been incinerated in the severe 1647 fire at Wilton House, the Herbert family home southwest of London, which is thought to have destroyed important muniments (7)? William and Susan Herbert were already dead by 1647, but Susan's husband Philip was alive. The manuscripts are not at Wilton House today or at County Hall, Trowbridge where most Wilton House muniments are stored (8).

If the manuscripts were in Baynards Castle on the Thames, the London home of the Herberts, or in the London home of a Vere-Cecil descendent, they probably would not have survived the catastrophic fire of 1666 which obliterated most of Elizabethan London (8). This fire, incidentally, did not reach Westminster Abbey.

4. Buried under the slab cryptically marked "Stone Coffin Underneath" near the monument of Francis Vere in the Abbey's Chapel of St. John the Evangelist. Although a favorite theory of Oxfordians, this was ruled out by archeological analysis in 1913 (9).

5. Destruction by Stratfordians. If the manuscripts did withstand the above threats unscathed, could such conclusive smoking guns have endured the past 300 years of Stratfordian hegemony? Quite doubtful considering Stratfordian prowess in getting rid of any documents which cast doubt upon their authorship theory.

Report me and my cause aright to the unsatisfied

In the final revision of his masterpiece, *Hamlet*, accomplished shortly before he died in 1604, Edward de Vere wrote powerful lines, urging his cousin, Horatio, to tell the world that he, de Vere, is the playwright, William Shakespeare, who was forced by Cecilian power to use a pseudonym and disappear from history.

As with other striking authorship clues in the plays, the reader should note well that these words have *no* relevance whatsoever to Hamlet, Prince of Denmark or to the play itself. The Prince did not have a wounded name, nor was there any untold story within the play which was withheld from the world. Yet the lines are included in the final scene in which Hamlet is dying from a poisoned rapier-thrust inflicted by his duel-adversary, Laertes (10):

Hamlet:
Horatio, I am dead,
Thou liv'st. Report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied. . .

O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!

If thou didst ever hold me in they heart,
Absent thee from felicity a while,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story.

Oxfordians firmly believe that the play, *Hamlet*, is autobiographical and that the character, Horatio, represents Horatio Vere, one of Edward de Vere's two favorite first cousins. The word "unsatisfied" carries the meaning of those in doubt and uncertainty about the true author of the Shakespeare plays. The Oxfordian hypothesis adopted by this writer is that Edward de Vere urged Horatio to make sure that the play manuscripts survived to establish once and for all his true authorship. Horatio accepts this responsibility.

Charlton Ogburn, Jr. couldn't believe that any de Vere relative would destroy the manuscripts, "but to hide them so that they would never be found would be tantamount to destroying them. So what to do? Could they be hidden so that they would not be found until the existing authorities had passed from the scene?" (4)

How was Horatio to protect and preserve the manuscripts? The First Folio producers have just been forced to publish the world's greatest literature under a pen name while those in political authority continued to perpetrate the hoax that William Shaksper of Stratford, an illiterate, litigious grain dealer and real estate speculator with a similar name to Shakespeare, was the actual author.

Horatio had the original play manuscripts in his hands and was unable, in an authoritarian era, to broadcast to the world the truth that Edward de Vere was William Shakespeare. What options were available to preserve the premiere authorship smoking gun for future generations? Would Horatio have considered burying the manuscripts in a coffin in Westminster Abbey, in a space reserved for Veres, to await a more propitious historical time to reveal their secrets?

Let's examine Westminster Abbey, its history and its rules, and what technical problems might be encountered if it were chosen as a temporary burial site for the manuscripts, including opportunities for later retrieval.

Westminster Abbey and its burials

Construction of the Abbey began in the 11th century in the reign of Edward the Confessor, with the initial version completed in time for the coronation of William the Conqueror in 1066. All monarchs since, except Edward V and Edward VIII, have been crowned there. In the mid-1200s, Henry III began building a more majestic church. The modern Abbey is the result of additional building in the 13th through 16th centuries (11).

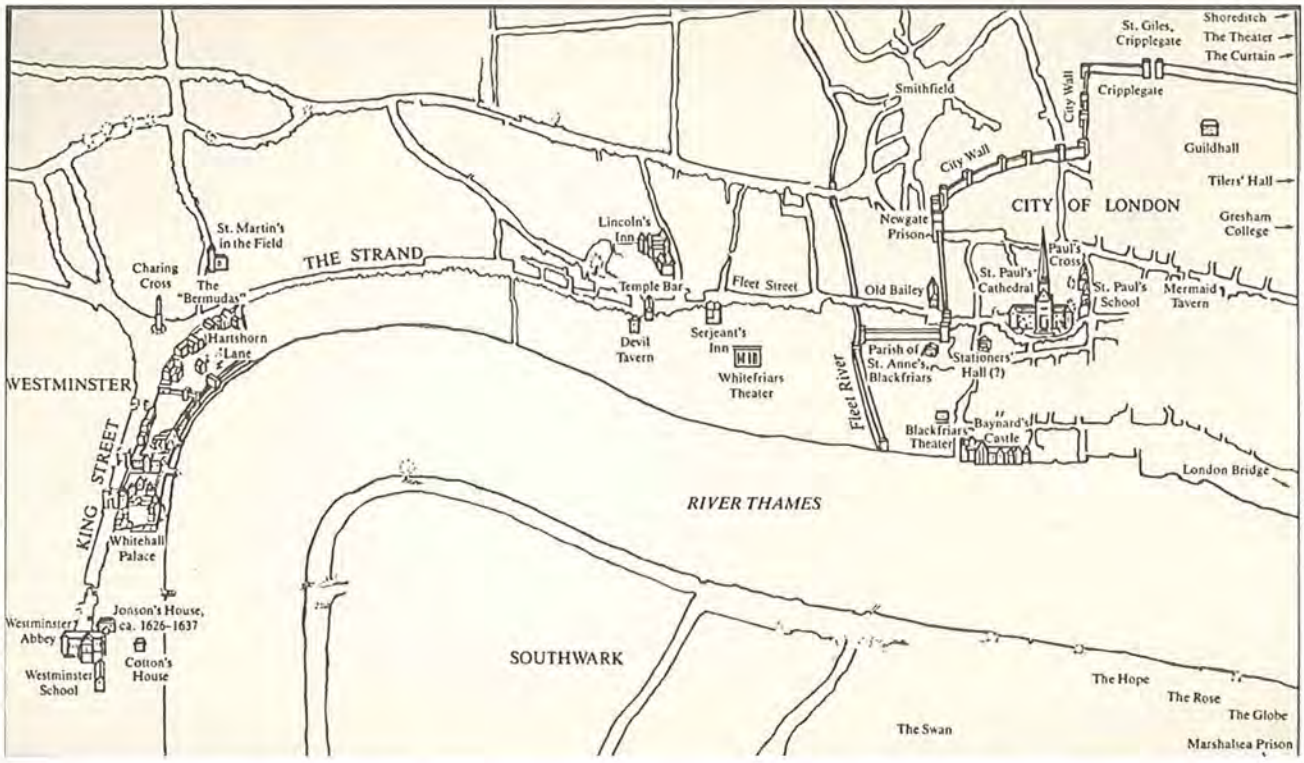

Figure 1. *Map of Westminster and adjacent London. Westminster Abbey is in the lower left, around the curve of the Thames.*

For the first few hundred years, burials in Westminster Abbey were a mixture of the great, usually buried in the chapels, the not-so-great, and the

obscure (12). Many undistinguished commoners, including Abbey monks, were buried there in early centuries, usually in the cloisters, a cloister being a courtyard surrounded by four corridors. Since the 1500s, traditionally only royalty, nobles, and commoners of note (e.g., Chaucer, Spenser, and Beaumont in Poets' Corner) have been honored with burial in the Abbey.

By the late 1700s, royal vaults at Westminster Abbey were nearly full. Since 1810, a shelved royal crypt beneath Wolsey Chapel at Windsor Castle has been the final resting place of monarchs and their relatives.

Accurate Abbey burial records were not kept until 1607. Many were buried without record, and many were listed, even memorialized on marble slabs, who were not buried in the Abbey (13). Many burials went unrecorded in the 17th century even after better record-keeping had been established. Joseph Chester compiled a list and description of all persons documented as being buried in the Abbey who were not recorded, but he died before the project was completed and his notes have vanished (11).

The Abbey does not keep a vault-by-vault record of burials. The only way to ascertain burials in a particular vault is to work one's way through the Abbey's official register (12). The most accurate and complete external source is Joseph Lemuel Chester's 1876 compendium, *The Marriage, Baptismal, and Burial Registers of the Collegiate Church or Abbey of St. Peter, Westminster* (13). **Each English citizen is only allowed one registration of burial. Therefore, if someone is buried elsewhere and then transferred to the Abbey, the reburial in the Abbey is *not* recorded in Abbey records.**

Since relevant literature contains many errors and misconceptions about Vere family burials in Westminster Abbey, they will now be summarized by chapel of burial for the first time, as derived from the records of Joseph Chester (13) and confirmed independently by a very competent and cooperative Abbey Curator, Historian, and Librarian, Tony Trowles (12).

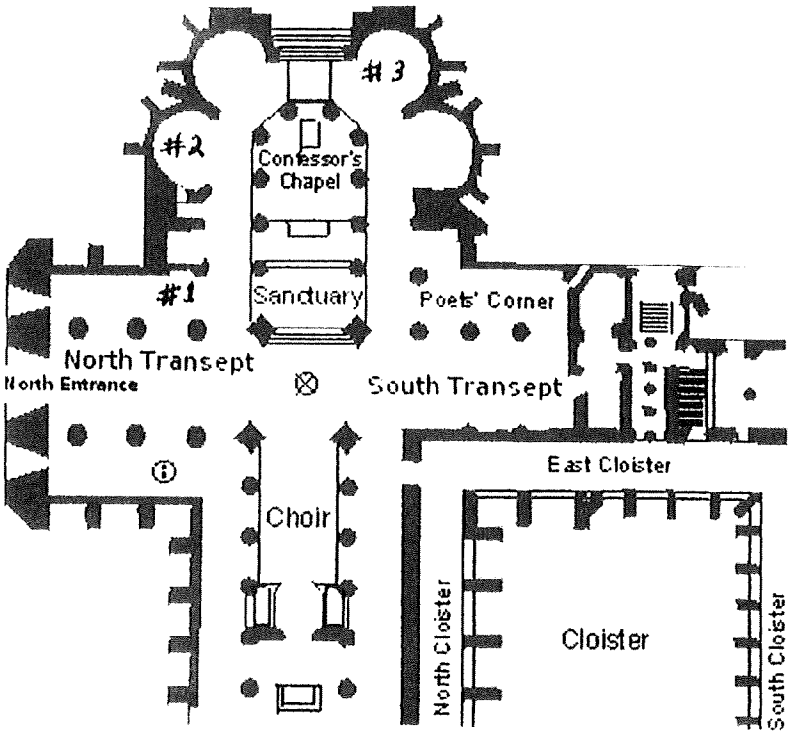

Figure 2. *Westminster Abbey's interior layout. The Chapel of St. John the Evangelist (#1) is located in the North Transept. The Chapel of St. John the Baptist (#2) and The Chapel of St. Nicholas (#3) are located in the area of the Sanctuary.*

A. Chapel of St. Nicholas

1. **Anne Cecil de Vere**, Edward de Vere's first wife, was buried here on June 25, **1588** at the age of 31.

2. **Elizabeth de Vere Stanley**, Edward de Vere's oldest daughter, was buried here on March 10, **1627** at the age of 50. Evidence suggests that Edward de Vere was not her biological father (14).

3. **Susan de Vere Herbert**, Edward's youngest daughter, died of smallpox and was buried here on February 1, **1629** at the age of 42. She had ten children, with six sons and one daughter surviving into adulthood.

B. Chapel of St. John the Evangelist

1. **Francis Vere** was buried here on August 29, **1609** at the age of 49. Francis and his brother, Horatio (Horace) Vere, were Edward de Vere's favorite first cousins who spent their entire careers as the preeminent generals in the war against the Spanish in The Netherlands (15). All three were grandsons of John de Vere, 15th Earl of Oxford. Francis and Horatio were sons of Geoffrey, while Edward was the son of John, 16th Earl of Oxford.

Francis' wife, Elizabeth Dent, aged 17, gave birth to one child in their 22 months of marriage but the child died before the father. Francis is described as "a gentleman of singular character, both for arms and letters . . . who brought . . . glory to the name of Vere. . ." (16) His wife had a black marble monument built showing Francis lying below a table containing his battle armor, held on the shoulders of four kneeling men. The monument was copied from the tomb of Engelbert in the church at Breda, The Netherlands (17, 18). Elizabeth Dent Vere was buried elsewhere.

The size of the Francis Vere vault underneath the floor is unknown since such details of Abbey vaults were not recorded in the Abbey's official registry (19). As Warwick Rodwell, England's leading church archaeologist, said in 2006, "It is very rare for documents to record the dimensions of burial chambers, or the number of coffins they were designed to hold" (20). He also speculated, "My guess is that Francis Vere is in a timber or lead coffin in a brick-lined chamber, perhaps vaulted over." (20) Prof. Rodwell thought that the vault would be large enough to hold six coffins.

The Abbey Burial Register records the burial of Francis Vere as follows: "Sir Francis Vere was buried in St. John Evang: Chappole. Aug. 29, 1609."

For ease of access and to prevent collapse from overlying weight, burials were usually alongside, not directly beneath, any monument. Vaults are not interconnected and there is no access to vaults from below. The only entry is by direct removal of overlying stones on the Abbey floor. The exact entrance to the Francis Vere vault is not recorded (12). Rodwell states that "if it were intended that other members of the Vere family would be added later, then there would be an access pit in the floor of the aisle, immediately to the west of the Vere monument." (20)

The burial of Francis is the eighth entry on the official Abbey burial register which replaced the haphazard old system on January 1, 1607. Why is this the first Vere burial in Westminster Abbey when the family was so distinguished for 500 years? Because the Vere tradition was to be buried in the family chapel at Earl's Colne, Essex, or in the church in Castle Hedingham, or close to other Vere homes.

2. **Horatio Vere** was buried next to his brother on May 8, **1635** at the age of 70 (21). The record states: "Sir Horatio Vere was buried by Sir Fran: Vere his brother. May 8, 1635." The word "by" means that Horatio's coffin was laid adjacent to the coffin of Francis, presumably within a vaulted chamber. No other burial is recorded in this specific location except the two brothers. Horatio was second in command to Francis in the Spanish war. Horatio's wife and five daughters were not buried in the Abbey.

Figure 3. *Francis Vere's ornate monument in the Chapel of St. John the Evangelist in Westminster Abbey.*

3. **Lord Aubrey de Vere,** 20th and last Earl of Oxford, was buried on March 22, **1703**, age 76, in a grave to the north of the Vere brothers (21).

4. **Diana de Vere**, second wife of Aubrey, was buried here on April 16, **1719**. She most likely was buried alongside her husband.

5. **Henrietta Vere**, unmarried daughter of Aubrey and Diana, was buried here on Oct. 2, **1730**, commemorated by a small memorial stone near the Francis Vere monument.

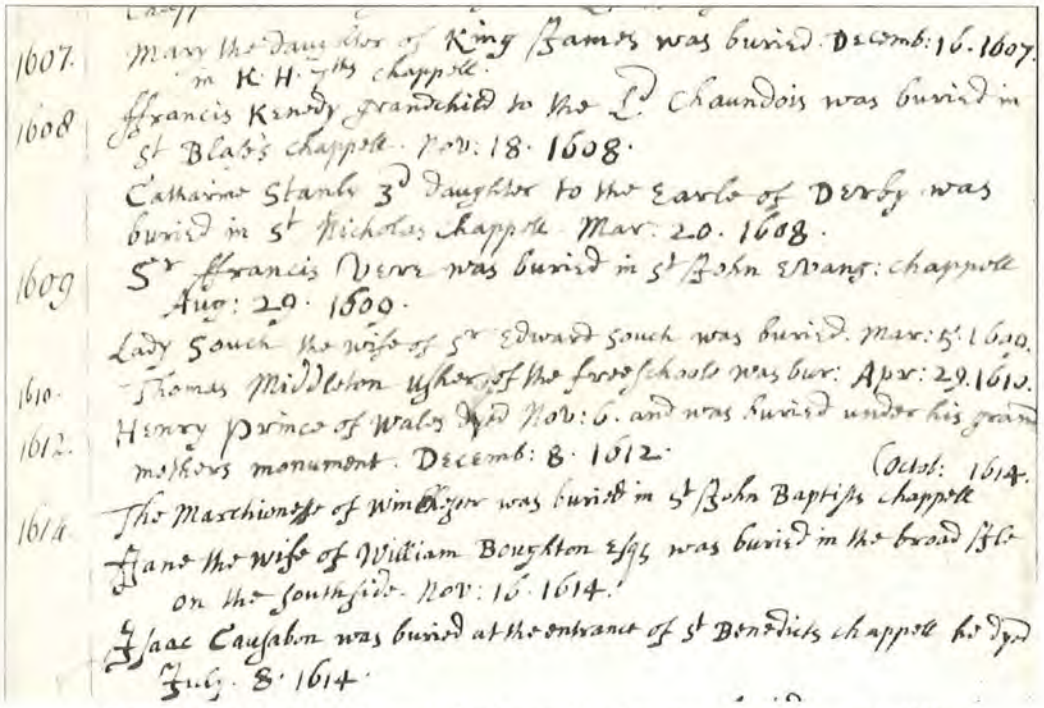
1607. Mary the daughter of King James was buried Decemb: 16. 1607. in K. H. 7ths chappell.
1608 ffrancis Kenvy grandchild to the L^d Chaundois was buried in St Blas's chappell. Nov: 18. 1608.
Catharine Stanly 3^d daughter to the Earle of Derby was buried in S^t Nicholas chappell Mar: 20. 1608.
1609 S^r ffrancis Vere was buried in S^t John Evang: chappell Aug: 29. 1609.
Lady Souch the wife of S^r Edward Souch was buried. Mar: 5^t 1610.
1610. Thomas Middleton Usher of the free schole was bur: Apr: 29. 1610.
1612. Henry Prince of Wales died Nov: 6. and was buried under his grandmothers monument. Decemb: 8. 1612.
1614 The Marchioness of Winchester was buried in S^t John Baptists chappell Octob: 1614.
Jane the wife of William Boughton Esq^r was buried in the broad Isle on the southside. Nov: 15. 1614.
Isaac Casaubon was buried at the entrance of S^t Benedicts chappell by Syd July. 8. 1614.

Figure 4. *The Abbey burial record of Sir Francis Vere. It is the only Abbey burial in 1609. Courtesy of Westminster Abbey and Librarian Tony Trowles.*

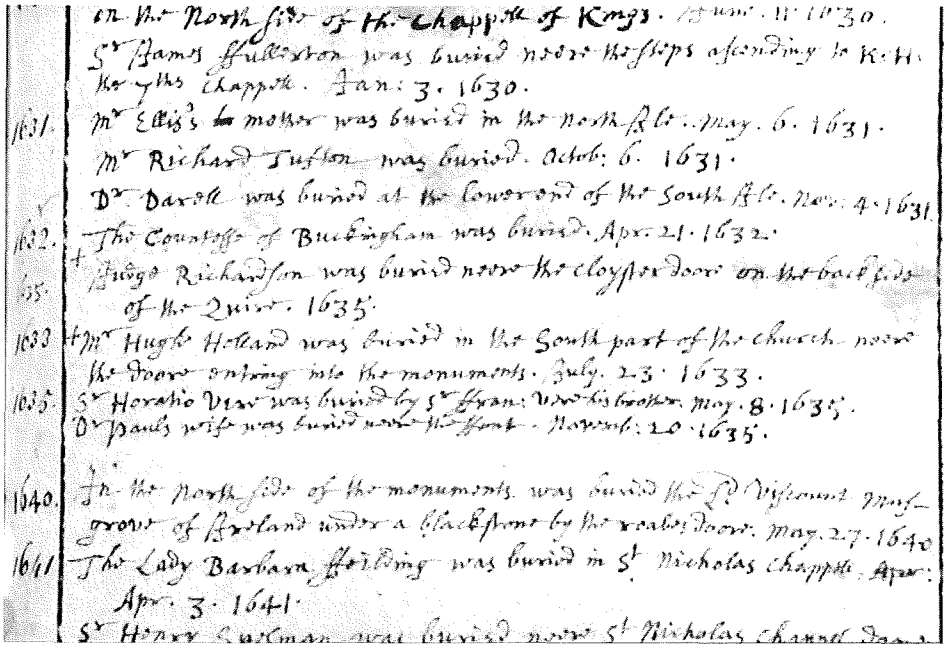

Figure 5. *The Abbey records Horatio's burial as the only burial of 1635, fifth entry from the top. Courtesy of Westminster Abbey and Librarian Tony Trowles.*

C. Chapel of St. John the Baptist

1. **Henry de Vere**, 18th Earl of Oxford, the son of Edward de Vere and his second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, was buried in the Chapel of St. John the Baptist on July 15, **1625**, at age 32. He was a regimental commander under Horatio Vere when he was wounded in the arm during a siege of Breda, dying a few months later, in June, 1625, of wound infection. The Abbey register states: "Henry Vere, Earl of Oxford, Lord High Chamberlaine of England was buried in St. John Bapt. Chapol. July 15, 1625."

A slab of marble placed by Dean Arthur Stanley of the Abbey in the 19th Century records Henry's burial in the chapel of St. John the Baptist. In January, 1624, Henry married Diane Cecil, a great-granddaughter of William Cecil and his first wife, Mary Cheke, and granddaughter of Thomas Cecil. Henry may have been forced to marry her to achieve release from prison. They were childless in their seventeen months of marriage. Whether Henry was buried in the Earl of Exeter vault of Thomas Cecil, who died in February, 1623, or separately, is not clear from the record or the slab.

A myth perpetuated by Oxfordians for three-quarters of a century is that Henry de Vere was buried in the Chapel of St. John the Evangelist in the vault of Sir Francis Vere. This myth appears to have originated with Colonel B. R. Ward in 1923 who stated: "The tomb of Sir Francis Vere is in the Chapel of St. John the Evangelist, at the southeast corner of the north transept. Henry, the 18th Earl of Oxford . . . was buried here in 1625" (22). This myth, as often happens when primary sources are not checked, was then carried on by several respected Oxfordians (23, 24, 25).

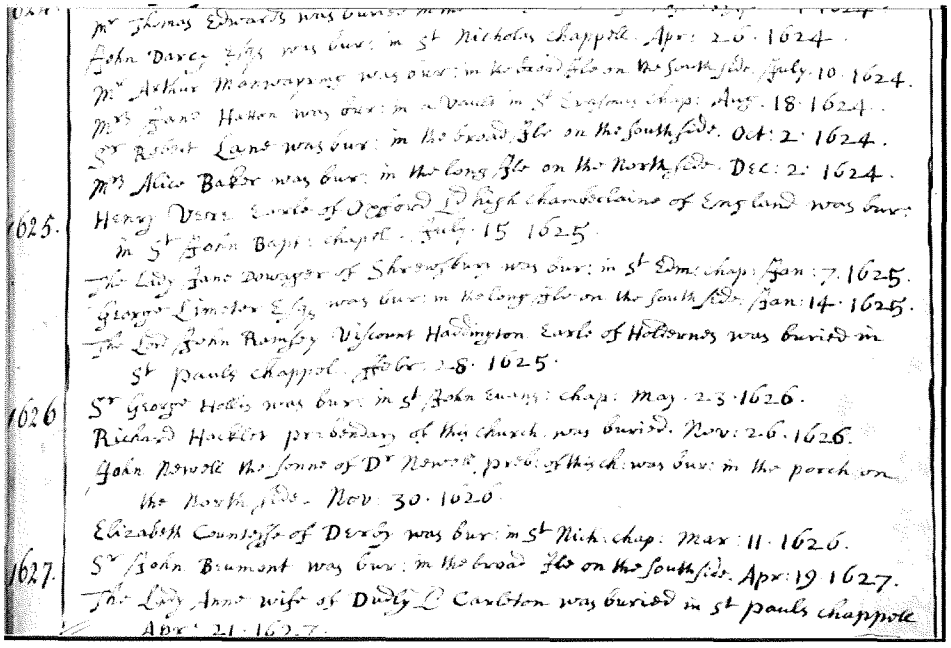

Figure 6. *Burial record of Henry de Vere in 1625, confirming his coffin's location in St. John the Baptist Chapel. Courtesy of Westminster Abbey and Librarian Tony Trowles.*

2. **Ann Bayning de Vere**, first wife of Aubrey, the 20th Earl of Oxford, was buried in this chapel in **1659**, memorialized on the same strip of marble in front of the Popham monument as Henry de Vere.

D. St. Andrews Chapel

Maria Vere, unmarried third daughter of Aubrey and Diana, was buried here on August 8, **1725** in St. John's *alias* Norris's Chapel -- record WAM 5982 B states "St. Andrew's Chapel," a component of Norris's Chapel (12).

Summary of relevant Vere burials in Westminster Abbey

These eleven burials are the only Vere burials in official Westminster Abbey records (13). The three Vere burials relevant to the major component of this research are:

1. Francis Vere, 1609, buried in a new vault in the Chapel of St. John the Evangelist, specifically constructed for him and his family. The number of available coffin spaces in this Vere vault is unknown, but England's leading Church Archeologist estimates six.

2. Henry de Vere, buried in the Cecil area of the Chapel of St. John the Baptist in 1625.

3. Horatio Vere, buried next to his brother, Francis, in 1635 in the Chapel of St. John the Evangelist.

A hypothetical Oxfordian scenario

Speculation is a legitimate strategy in research which always includes tentative hypotheses. The following is a speculative, but not impossible, scenario for the present location of the missing play manuscripts. As stated, it is doubtful that the original manuscripts still exist, but if they do, this sequence is offered as a hypothetical basis for future investigation:

1. In the play, *Hamlet*, and in private, Edward de Vere urges Horatio to make sure that the play manuscripts survive to establish with certainty his authorship of the Shakespeare plays. Horatio agrees.

2. Edward de Vere dies on June 24, 1604 and is buried inside St. Augustine Church, Hackney on July 6, 1604 (26).

3. On August 29, 1609, Francis Vere is buried in a new underground chamber in the chapel of St. John the Evangelist in Westminster Abbey. The space is, as postulated by Warwick Rodwell, a vaulted, brick-lined chamber with space for six coffins, to the side of the Francis Vere monument.

4. Horatio Vere has become increasingly concerned about Robert Cecil's determination to destroy all records of de Vere's life. Horatio decides to protect the play manuscripts, so he packs them into a labeled lead coffin and places it in the Francis Vere vault at the same time Francis is buried in 1609.

Although Francis has no living children, Horatio is just starting a large family, Henry de Vere is alive and well, and there is every expectation of later Vere burials in the Francis Vere vault. Thus there would be future opportunities to retrieve the manuscripts at a time free from malignant Cecilian political authority.

5. Elizabeth Trentham dies in 1612 and, following her wishes, is buried alongside her husband inside a specially-constructed simple tomb of gray marble with money provided by her will. The coffins are placed one on top of the other because of the tomb's narrowness. Vere and Trentham heraldic crests are affixed side by side on the outside of the monument (27).

6. Some time before King James dies on March 27, 1625, and with his permission, Horatio arranges to have the remains of Edward de Vere and his wife, Elizabeth removed from their simple tomb in Hackney and reburied in Wesminster Abbey. The vault would thus contain four coffins -- Francis Vere, the manuscripts, Edward and Elizabeth de Vere -- with space for two more.

7. In January, 1624, Henry de Vere marries Diane Cecil. Henry dies of war wounds seventeen months later and is buried in the Chapel of St. John the Baptist on July 15, 1625 near to, but not within, the tomb of Thomas Cecil.

Comments on this scenario

English Oxfordian Giant Percy Allen discovered the unpublished Vere family history document, Harleian Manuscript 4189, written by Persivall Goulding (modern spelling Percival Golding), first cousin of Edward de Vere, entitled "The Armes, Honours, Matches, and Issues of the auncient and Illustrious Family of Veer. Described in the honourable progeny of the Earles of Oxenford & other branches thereof from the first Original to the present time." This private document contained, on page 24b, the following paragraph well-known to Oxfordians (24, 25, 28, 29, 30):

> "Edward de Vere, only sonne of John, borne the twelfth day of Aprill A (Anno) 1550 Earle of Oxenford, high Chamberlayne, Lord Bolebec, Sanford and Badlesmere, Stuard of the Forest in Essex, and of the Privy Counsell to the kinge Matie that now is. Of whom I will only speake what all men's voyces confirm: he was a man in mind and body absolutely accomplished with honourable endowments. **He died at his house at Hackney, in the month of June** A (Anno) 1604 and lyeth buryed at Westminster."

The authenticity of this statement, by a first cousin of Edward de Vere, that "he lyeth buried at Westminster," has not been contested and is believed to be true by many, if not most, Oxfordians. A falsehood by Percival Golding in his never-published personal history of the Vere family would have served no useful purpose to anyone.

Abbey Historian Tony Trowles confirms that a reburial within the Abbey would *not* have been recorded in the Abbey's burial register because the first burial had been cataloged elsewhere and no one in England was allowed two records of burial (12).

Even though the 3rd Earl of Southampton was dead, he had living sons who represented a threat to the legality of

the Stuart Monarchy. This will be explained fully in later chapters. Although both William Cecil and Robert Cecil were dead by 1625, the families of Robert and Thomas Cecil had considerable political power and the time was not ripe to announce to the world Edward de Vere's pen name, William Shakespeare.

This scenario does not explain why the play manuscripts were not removed from the Francis Vere vault by Horatio in 1625 at the time of the reburial of Edward de Vere and his wife, or by some other Vere after Horatio's interment in the Francis Vere vault in 1635. It was the wrong decision because during the next 373 years there were no further burials in the Francis Vere vault and thus no further opportunity to retrieve the play manuscripts.

Circumstantial evidence in favor of this hypothesis

1. The burial record in Hackney confirms that Edward de Vere died on June 24, 1604 and was buried in St. Augustine Church, Hackney on July 6 (26). The Oxfordian myth that de Vere died of "ye plague" was exploded once and for all in 2002 (26) The cause of his death is not known.

2. King James I of England died on March 27, 1625. The fact that the document of Percival Golding says that de Vere was on the Privy Council of the King's Majesty "that now is," means that King James was still King when Golding wrote the Vere family history -- therefore it was written before March 27, 1625 and therefore de Vere's body had been transferred to the Abbey before that date.

3. Elizabeth Trentham, Edward de Vere's second wife, wrote her will on November 25, 1612, including her burial request:

> I . . . desiring to be buried in the Church of Hackney, within the County of Middlesex, as near unto the body of my said late and noble Lord and husband as may be, and that to be done as privately and with as little pomp and ceremony as possible may be. Only I will that there be in the said Church erected for us a tomb fitting our degree, and of such charge as shall seem good to mine executors (30).

4. On January 9, 1613, a Mr. Chamberlain wrote Sir Ralph Winwood: "The Countess of Oxford is dead . . . and left her Son her Land and all her Jewells and Stuff, on Condition he pay her Legacies, which rise to £2000, and bestow funds for a Tomb for his Father and her." (30, 31)

5. We know, therefore, that de Vere's remains were in St. Augustine's Church as of January, 1613 and, according to Percival Golding, they were not there on March 27, 1625. Thus Edward de Vere's body was moved from the church in Hackney to the Abbey in Westminster sometime in the twelve years between January, 1613 and March, 1625.

6. William Kittle (30) points out that "In 1633, Anthony Munday, who for very many years had been a servant to Edward de Vere, made with one H. D. a survey of the tombs in the St. Augustine Church: they named and described those of Christopher Urswick (d. 1522), Henry Thorsbey, Edward Saunders (d. 1599), Lady Lucy Latimer, and others, but they made no mention of the Earl of Oxford." Since Munday had been a close colleague and friend of de Vere, this suggests that the de Vere tomb was empty in 1633.

7. In 1720, ecclesiastical historian John Strype published a survey of 67 tombs and inscriptions in St. Augustine Church. He described an empty surface tomb in this survey which had some special significance to him because he placed his own initials of "J.S." in the margin of this paragraph:

> J.S. On the north side of the chancel first an ancient table monument with a fair grey marble stone without inscription. There were coats of arms on the sides, but torn off. This monument is concealed by the schoolmaster's pew (29).

8. Except for the bell tower, St. Augustine Church in Hackney was pulled down in 1798 to build a new and larger church which was renamed the Church of St. John-at-Hackney (30).

9. In the Hackney Library up to the present day is a drawing of a tomb with two circles on the side which presumably held the heraldic emblems of de Vere and Trentham, as noted above by John Strype in 1720. The tomb is described further on the drawing itself:

> "Scale, one inch to a foot, T. Fisher. An old tomb found in pulling down Hackney Church."

As Kittle wrote, "T. Fisher or some one must have had an unusual interest in this old Tomb just as John Strype did 71 years before. T. Fisher's Scale of one inch to a foot shows that the Tomb, according to the drawing, was 2 ft. 9 inches wide and 5 ft. 7 inches long, and that the two circles on one side of the drawing were each several inches in diameter. . . The length of the Tomb, 5 ft. 7 inches, agrees with the Earl of Oxford's stature." (30)

Whether this tomb was in fact Edward de Vere's tomb is not known with certainty, but circumstantial evidence is in favor of this conclusion. The narrow width of the tomb means that the two coffins of Edward and Elizabeth de Vere were placed on top of each other within the marble tomb.

Where in the Abbey might de Vere be buried?

In 1937 English Oxfordian Giants Captain B. M. Ward and Percy Allen expressed the opinion that Edward de Vere's body had indeed been transferred from St. Augustine Church to Westminster Abbey, but they didn't hazard a guess as to its exact location (28, 32). In 1938, Percy's twin brother Ernest Allen, published a now hard-to-locate pamphlet entitled "When Shakespeare Died" which came to the same conclusion.

Phyllis Carrington, an English researcher, summarized the evidence in 1943 in an article entitled, "Was Lord Oxford Buried in Westminster Abbey?" (25) In 1955, Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn, Sr. stated confidently that de Vere had been transferred to the Abbey tomb of Francis Vere (33):

> "The noble Earl was buried in the church at Hackney; but later his remains were quietly removed to Westminster Abbey and placed in the tomb of the Veres."

There are only three places in the Abbey to consider for reburial sites:

1. In the same tomb with his son, Henry, in the Chapel of St. John the Baptist. This is impossible because Percival Golding stated that Edward de Vere's body had been transferred while King James the First was still alive. King James died on March 27, 1625 and Henry de Vere wasn't buried until July 15, 1625, three and a half months later.

2. In Poets' Corner. In the 1623 First Folio, Ben Jonson refers to a poem by William Basse, which, in the title, refers to Shaksper's death in 1616. Here is the first stanza of Basse's poem (25):

ON MR. WM. SHAKESPEARE.
HE DYED IN APRILL 1616.

Renowned Spenser lye a thought more nigh
To learned Chaucer and rare Beaumont lie
A little nearer Spenser to make room
For Shakespeare in your threefold, fourfold tomb.

Ben Jonson's 1623 poem included these lines:

My Shakespeare, rise; I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lye
A little further, to make thee a roome:
Thou art a Moniment, without a tombe,
And art alive still, while thy Book doth live,
And we have wits to read, and praise to give.

Most authorship investigators, whether Oxfordian or Stratfordian, have misinterpreted what Jonson said, changing the word "Moniment" to "Monument," which casts an entirely different light on Jonson's meaning. Jonson is saying that Shakespeare, whom he well knew was Edward de Vere, lay in an unmarked tomb and therefore has to be represented by his body of work — his Moniment — without an acknowledged monument or tomb. He must live anonymously through his art, his "Book," his written record — his great plays and sonnets.

Whether Jonson knew, at the time of the First Folio publication in 1623, that de Vere already had been transferred to Westminster Abbey or merely that there was a plan afoot to do so, is not clear. But Jonson seems to be saying that he is not lying, or will not be lying, in Poets' Corner with Chaucer, Spenser and Beaumont. Being a member of the longest-duration and most distinguished noble line in England, it is very unlikely that de Vere's relatives would place him in a communal grave site with a group of non-nobles. Also, evidence suggests that both de Vere and his wife were removed from St. Augustine Church for reburial at the same time, and wives were not allowed in Poets' Corner. So it is very unlikely that de Vere lies there.

3. By far the likeliest location for de Vere's remains is in the Vere family tomb of Francis Vere, where Francis was buried in 1609 in a space which Warwick Rodwell believes would hold six coffins. Between 1613 and whenever Edward de Vere was transferred before March 27, 1625, Francis was the only human occupant.

King James was an enthusiastic admirer of Shakespeare-de Vere, arranging for eight Shakespeare plays to be staged for the Royal Court after de Vere's death in 1604 and fourteen Shakespeare plays after Elizabeth Trentham de Vere's death in 1612-1613 (33). Surely King James would have granted permission for the transfer of Edward de Vere's body to Westminster Abbey, especially since de Vere's mortal enemy, Robert Cecil, who was primarily responsible for de Vere's coerced pseudonymity, had died on May 24, 1612, before Elizabeth Trentham's death.

The only two registered coffins in the tomb of Francis are the coffin of Francis, buried in 1609, and that of Horatio, buried in 1635.

Probing Francis Vere's tomb

How can an underground tomb be probed without direct digging? Modern high-tech radar can penetrate stone. In 2005, England's leading Church Archaeologist, Warwick Rodwell (34), using the latest radar techniques, by accident precisely located inside Westminster Abbey the tomb of

Edward the Confessor, who was King of England from 1042 to 1066 and who initiated construction of the Abbey itself. Professor Rodwell described the find:

> Our archaeological team had been examining the construction of the Cosmati pavement, which dates from 1268, using a very-high-frequency radar to a depth of about 20 inches. The power of the radar was intensified to examine deeper sections of the pavement.
>
> Little did we expect that, by using a lower frequency radar, we would find chambers, vaults and foundations of such fascinating historical interest, dating back to the very founding of the abbey a millennium ago. (35)

Some relevant details about the Abbey stone floor have been provided by personal communication from Dr. Rodwell (20):

1. The major slabs of marble are five to six inches thick and up to eight inches thick under monuments. Small paving slabs are two to four inches thick.

2. Professor Rodwell states that "The large slabs are likely to be the 'lids' of brick-lined shafts which lead directly into the vaults, which can be of single or double width and three to six feet deep. They may contain from one to six coffins. Generally, the shafts were not backfilled with soil, and there was a void beneath the floor slab." However, I imagine that many, if not most, were infilled with soil or rubble during the Victorian era and later works to the floors. Unfilled shafts containing damp and decaying coffins and corpses tend to emit an unpleasant smell — hence they were often later filled." Much of this backfilling was done in the Victorian era from 1837 to 1901, more than 200 years after the burial of Horatio, so backfilling should not have been necessary and is considered unlikely within the Francis Vere tomb. Therefore, the area around those coffins is more likely air than soil.

Since Francis Vere was from such an illustrious noble family of England, and since he was so highly regarded by Queen Elizabeth as her very successful general-in-chief in the long war against Spain, Dr. Rodwell believes it highly likely that Francis was granted an Abbey vault not only for himself but for family members, i.e., a vault large enough to contain six coffins adjacent to, and west of, his large monument.

Dr. Rodwell states that in the right circumstances, ground-penetrating radar might provide information as to the number of coffins — e.g., if the burials were directly under the floor slabs without too much intervening brick, and especially if the coffins were surrounded by air rather than dirt, or were made of lead. Radar detects differences in the density of materials, so that interfaces between metal, stone, and air all register as changes. Skilled interpretation is required since it is not an exact science. It would be highly unlikely that radar could identify the actual contents of coffins (20).

According to the speculative scenario described above, and if the conditions described by Warwick Rodwell did, in fact, exist, then ground-penetrating radar examination of the Francis Vere vault could yield evidence of two to five coffins, postulated as containing the following contents:

1. Evidence of two coffins — Francis and Horatio Vere.
2. Evidence of three coffins — Francis, Horatio and Edward de Vere.
3. Evidence of four coffins — Francis, Horatio, Edward de Vere and Elizabeth Trentham de Vere.
4. Evidence of five coffins — Francis, Horatio, Edward de Vere, Elizabeth Trentham de Vere, and the play manuscripts.

Final Remarks

If the original play manuscripts still survive, the most logical hypothesized location is in the Francis Vere vault. Would the Abbey allow examination of this vault? Absolutely not for removing floor stones and searching the vault, and very unlikely for an investigation by radar, despite its noninvasiveness. As a high-ranking member of the Abbey administration has said, "Ultrasound and similar techniques have not been used here for speculative investigation" (12).

Sanctioned examinations of Abbey vaults by digging have been rare in the past 300 years, the last being the search for James I's coffin in 1869, which was found in Henry VII's chapel. The Abbey's conservative philosophy is understandable - it is the most sacred church in England, intimately intertwined with English history and the English monarchy.

Now, however, there is a precedent for ground-penetrating radar investigation through the Abbey's floor stones to evaluate structures and coffins underneath, as exemplified by Warwick Rodwell's recent identification of Edward the Confessor's tomb dating back to 1066. The reasons for the technological probe must be completely acceptable to the authorities which, in the case of Edward de Vere as Shakespeare, will remain premature until the paradigm shift occurs and Stratfordians and their lobby groups are neutralized.

Oxfordians should be aware that such research can backfire. In the 1950's, authorship devotees of Christopher Marlowe obtained permission to open the tomb of Thomas Walsingham at Chiselhurst, Kent where they thought Marlowe might lie buried. When nothing but sand was found, not even a skeleton, "considerable hilarity at

the expense of anti-Stratfordians" resulted, yielding BBC commentary and front page stories and ridicule throughout Great Britain (36).

Once de Vere is recognized as Shakespeare, cogent reasons can be presented for a search for his remains in the Francis Vere vault. As Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, Dean of Westminster Abbey, wrote in 1876: "It is obvious that the interest of a great national cemetery like Westminster Abbey depends, in great measure, on the knowledge of the exact spots where the illustrious dead repose" (37).

Edward de Vere as Shakespeare meets that criterion.

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The Oxfordian's new Editor is up for the Challenge

Professor Michael Egan maintains that an objective eye at the helm of the SOS journal my strengthen its case.

Interview by Gerit Quealy

The Oxfordian, the annual scholarly journal published by the Shakespeare Oxford Society, just appointed a new editor. For 10 years, the journal has been helmed by Stephanie Hopkins Hughes, who shepherded it from its debut to the standing it now holds. To begin the next decade, Michael Egan has stepped into the editorship. Egan holds a BA from Johannesburg's Witwatersrand University and a PhD from Cambridge University, where he edited the *Cambridge Review* and was the first Contributing Literary Editor of the *Times Higher Education Supplement.* He is also a prolific writer, with scores of articles and ten books to his credit. Most pertinently for Shakespeareans, he has authored *The Tragedy of Richard II Part One: A Newly Authenticated Play by William Shakespeare. Edited with an Introduction and Variorum Notes* (Mellen Press), which won the 2006 Adele Mellen Prize for Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship.

As he is an acknowledged agnostic on the question of authorship, the *DVS newsletter* explores the reasoning behind Egan's acceptance of this position.

Professor Egan, when did you first become aware of the authorship question?

I was a professor of English at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Roger Stritmatter was a graduate student there. Our paths crossed, and Roger is of course very passionate about the subject. He intrigued me enough to look into it, which I did, educating myself and reading everything I could lay my hands on. At the time, I became pretty convinced that the Oxford argument was correct. But then I began to feel that the evidence was ambiguous in some places and so I ended up where I am now, which is agnostic.

When you were initially looking into the question, did you discuss it with other colleagues?

Sure, and the reaction I got was another reason I became interested in the issue and the Oxford movement. I was immediately struck by the hostility that people display, toward even raising the question. I'm temperamentally such that, as soon as people tell me I can't do something, of course that's immediately what I want to do. Whether the Oxford hypothesis is correct or not, it's a perfectly legitimate question to ask, because there is enough circumstantial evidence to raise the question. Which is why I'm a signatory of the Declaration of Reasonable Doubt.

How did you come to be offered editorship of *The Oxfordian?*

Well, as you know, my claim to Shakespearean fame is my book on the 'discovery' of this previously unrecognized Shakespeare play, *Richard II Part One* [see below]. Because of my connection with Roger, I was invited in 2006 to give a paper at the [SF/SOS] joint conference in Ann Arbor, Michigan and I guess people there liked my presentation enough ... the SOS conferred on me an honorary membership, which I was very pleased to have since I had already signed up for the Fellowship. So when Stephanie Hughes was retiring as editor, the people at the Oxford Society [sic] contacted me and asked if I would be willing. And because I'm interested in the authorship question, and I'm a nerd [laughs] and like this sort of thing, I agreed. But it led to one unholy sort of row.

Were you surprised by that?

Totally. And I was very distressed by it. It led to all kinds of attacks on my knowledge and scholarship and competence — and the fact that I wasn't a true believer. Because this was not what I signed up for, I resigned. And they said don't run away, please accept. And I finally said 'OK' because I thought that was the most interesting choice.

Regarding choices, your books cut across a wide swathe of subject matter, from Henry James and Huck Finn to comic books about proper parenting. How do you account for that?

What it comes down to is supplementing an academic's income. I had a management consulting firm for a while and some of the material came out of that, such as the child rearing material, which took the form of what I call graphic textbooks. It's always been my feeling that there's no reason why serious ideas should not be entertainingly presented. I'm not above making the odd bad joke. I think readers need to be rewarded for the labor of responding to having been invited into your mind. Even my hefty *Richard II* book, I think is pretty readable.

Now your Richard II book is *Thomas of Woodstock?*

[The play] does conventionally go by *Thomas of Woodstock.* In fact, the manuscript is untitled, so you can call it anything you like, you can call it Swiss cheese, but I like to call it *Richard II Part One* — that's what it's about. In fact, the early original

editions were titled *Richard II Part One.* But the whole debate about whether it is or is not by Shakespeare is in part the argument over what to call it. You have to make the case through the accumulation of detail. The evidence has got to nail down every little detail and that's what I do in the book. But it is huge, four solid volumes, so I understand the hesitation [to read it].

How does this feed into your editorship of *The Oxfordian?*

I realized that there was a lot of very good scholarship coming out of the Oxford side, and if nothing else, the scholarship has forced the establishment / Stratfordian critics to reexamine their assumptions. Posing the question about the authorship is no longer quite as sort of loony. [acknowledges pun] as has previously been perceived, people are beginning to recognize that it is, or could be, a question.

You don't think there's still a degree of hostility about the raising the question?

Oh I'm not denying that. I've received the [hostility] even by virtue of being sympathetic. For example, I was until recently scholar-in-residence at Brigham Young University in Hawaii and had done very well there. I'm not a Mormon, but they had created this position to accommodate me so that I could be there without actually being a Latter Day Saint, or indeed any other kind of saint. As soon as I accepted the editorship of *The Oxfordian*, the atmosphere became pretty cool in the English department, very rapidly, so I recently decided to retire from the position. Nobody ever said anything overt, it was just a cooling off—in a place where I'd been pretty hot.

So you've experience what most Oxfordians deal with on a regular basis?

Oh yes. Hardy Cook who publishes a listserv discussion group about Shakespeare on the Internet, of which I've been a contributor for many years, for over a year simply refused to publish anything from me. Just would not publish my letters. Even though he knew that I'm simply a fellow traveler as opposed to a card-carrying member.

What do you bring to the table as the editor of *The Oxfordian*?

I think I bring objectivity. I bring scholarship, intellectual integrity. I think one of the reasons I was appointed is that they thought the whole movement was perhaps becoming too internal looking, a bit cult-like. I had an exchange with William Niederkorn of *The New York Times*, and he said he thought I was almost unique as a Stratfordian scholar who was willing to be calm and objective about what the Oxfordians and other candidates for the authorship mantle had to say. I think my appointment has given the SOS a good boost in credibility because they're willing to be objective. What they're saying is, 'Egan's not an Oxfordian but we believe that on a level playing field the Oxfordian argument will prevails.'

In conclusion, Professor Egan expressed a cohesive overview: 'I think we all have a sort of vague feeling that we're in this together.' If he 'turns out to be right,' that *Thomas of Woodcock* is in fact *Richard II Part One*, it certainly supports an Oxfordian thesis; for one thing, Lady de Vere appears in the play. 'What's she doing there?' he says, whereas Robert de Vere is conspicuously absent. Although Egan was introduced to the manuscript at Cambridge, he credits Roger Stritmatter with suggesting a variorum edition of the material, which is how he arrived at the conclusion that it is indeed a precursor to the Shakespeare history play. And at the SOS conference in Westchester, NY on October 10th, Egan emphatically stated: 'The authorship question is the most exciting field in Shakespeare studies today.'

But apart from the controversy, Egan distills what it is that quickens the pulse for many of us in exploring this writer, or any great thinker: 'I've always felt that excepting sex only, reading is the most intimate activity we can indulge in. For a while, you allow somebody's mind to take over your mind. You're reading their thoughts, you're reading their ideas. It's a very intimate experience. I think that's why we enjoy reading, this intimate contact with another mind. It's a tremendously exuberant feeling with some writers, this sense of intellectual power. And that really brings us back to Shakespeare. Part of the joy we have in reading him, and in viewing him, is the sense of contact with this extraordinary intellect, and that's a very exciting thing because it is and is not like ourselves. We can recognize ourselves in it, while at the same time realizing that we could never do it. It's sort of like being a tennis player and watching Pete Sampras or Roger Federer—you can see what they're doing and you can appreciate it, but you could never do it.

Note: Professor Egan says that any member of the DVS who has a well researched article to contribute is most welcome to submit it to him. He also has a list of possible avenues that he feels need exploration and documentation. For topic suggestions or submissions, you can contact him at: drmichaelegan@comcast.net G.Q.

Editor's Note: This interview was conducted by Gerit Quealy. It appeared in the October issue of the deVere Society Newsletter, *printed here by permission.*

(Conference continued from page 1)

His remarks seemed to satisfy those in the audience who had some doubts as to how it would be done, and many people came away with a new appreciation of what Egan could bring to the publication and the future of our movement.

Paul Altrocchi

Stephanie Hughes gave an overview of the "big picture" as she calls it and how the formation of the commercial public theater was the beginning of "functional democracy." She described how private entrepreneurs were certainly involved in this project, but that there still had to be the financial and political backing of those in the upper echelons of society. She showed evidence for a group of people including Oxford and his close associates being at the very center of this enterprise.

Ron Hess spoke about how the manuscript of *Beowulf* was owned by Oxford's tutor Lawrence Nowell, and how there is evidence that Oxford could read and write Old English and may very well have been involved in the the most important literary-legal project of the Elizabethan age, the buttressing of the legal basis for the religious settlement of Elizabeth. He detailed a "curious gap" in Oxford's biography, giving a potential explanation of what Oxford was doing at the time.

Elliot Stone and Stephanie Hopkins-Hughes

Paul Altrocchi then spoke about the question of what happened to those Shakespeare manuscripts. Although believing that they have been most likely destroyed by now, Altrocchi offered some possible explanations of where they might still be found, specifically in the crypt of Francis Vere in Westminster Abbey. The thesis also helps explain the remark of Percival Golding that Oxford is buried at Westminster.

John Hudson, author of a forthcoming book on the theory that the Shakespeare plays were written by Amelia Bassano Lanier, talked about some of the interesting allusions in the plays of Hebrew and Judaic thought (such as Talmud and Kaballah), showing that the author must have been familiar with these. Hudson then went on to explain his recent production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as an allegory on the Roman-Jewish War of 66-73 CE. Those who were not too tired were able to view this production on DVD later in the evening.

Although there was disappointment in the absence of Oxfordian Jeopardy this year, Alex McNeil redeemed himself by moderating a spirited discussion on some outstanding questions in the Oxfordian theory and how to best move forward in spreading the word about the authorship question.

Friday evening brought movie-night with two DVDs on offer first, an extremely amusing episode of the *Twilight Zone* where a hack television writer conjures up William Shakespeare to help him out, only to find Shakespeare leaving at the end in disgust when his work is mangled by the sponsors of the TV show who want it to be more modern. This brings to my mind the idea of a "hack" actor/shareholder acting as front man for Edward DeVere, with meaningless topical allusions added to the plays when they were "repackaged" for the public theater (thereby giving "proof" that the plays were written after such and such a date). The second DVD was the above-mentioned allegorical production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by John Hudson's Dark Lady Players.

Saturday morning began with a rousing spiritual type presentation by Paul Streitz. Paul has teamed up with Russell DesCognets to provide financial backing for his project of distributing a free copy of Paul's book on Oxford to anyone who wants it. He says he is hoping it will become the new Oxfordian Bible. (Will we start to see it under our pillows in our hotel rooms?) Some attendees were turned off by the dogmatic nature of this approach while others applauded the effort.

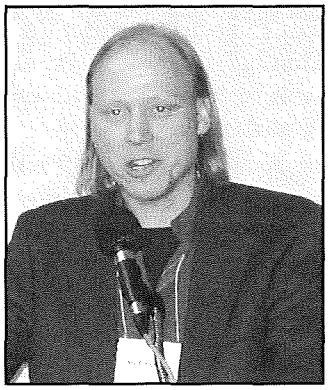
We then heard from Ron Destro. Ron has put together a wonderful introductory lecture on the Oxford theory that he has given several times to appreciative audiences. He gave us a run-through of this presentation, explaining how he covers the basic arguments and what kind of responses (almost all positive) he has been getting when he does his talks.

Bonner Cutting then gave a talk on the will of Shaksper of Stratford. Bonner has done some amazing research here, examining countless wills of the period. You won't find the kinds of things she has uncovered in any conventional biography of Shakespeare, that's for sure! In addition to the lack of books and literary materials in the will, Bonner has also discovered that, unlike most people of the time, Shaksper had not left anything,or virtually nothing, for the education of his children or for the Stratford Grammar School or for the town itself. Also, the "greatest writer of all time"used boilerplate text in the preamble of the will instead of composing his own (as even uneducated people

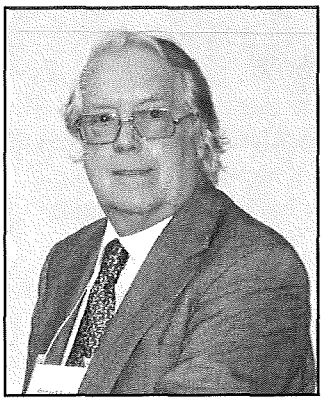
did). These are only a few of the things Bonner has found that indicate that this is a will of a stingy businessman who didn't have a literary bone in his body.

In his talk (which was more of a discussion period), Matthew Cossolotto again brought up that next year will be the 400th anniversary of the publication of *Shake-Speare's Sonnets* and that we should capitalize on this in our outreach programs. In particular, we should try to make the point that the publication was posthumous.

We broke for a nice buffet lunch and then were treated to a great keynote address by Mark Anderson. He says that instead of Oxfordians going on the defensive whenever a Stratfordian brings up Oxford's death in 1604 as a weakness in the case (plays written after that, etc.), we should be on the offensive. We should ask the questions "What did Shakespeare read?" and "What did Shakespeare report on?" It turns out that (with no real exceptions) all the sources for the plays were written before 1604 and that topical allusions in the plays are all to events that happened before 1604. Mark did mention the two to three plays that Stratfordians will bring up (particularly *The Tempest*) and explained how NONE of these apparent problems stand up to scrutiny. In all cases there are earlier sources or events which better fit the plays. The case for *The Tempest* has been dealt with by Roger Stritmatter and Lynne Kositsky. As another example, *Macbeth* is always said to refer to the Gunpowder Plot (1605) because it mentions "equivocation", which was one of the defenses put forward by the conspirators. However, there were previous high-profile trials that also used this defense.



Mark Anderson



Derran Charlton

Dan Wright and Earl Showerman

We then heard from Derran Charlton who tried to show that an anonymous Elizabethan portrait probably represents Edward DeVere dressed as King Henry IV in an acting role. This kind of thing, if true, would perhaps partially explain the famous remark of John Davies about Shakespeare: "Had'st thou not plaid some Kingly parts in sport/Thou had'st bin a companion for a King"

Robert Brazil talked about Angel Daye's *The English Secretary* (which was dedicated to Oxford), making a good case that Oxford had a major hand in the writing of this work (particularly the amusing and complex "sample letters" it contains)

Cheryl Egan-Donovan talked about the progress of her documentary, *Nothing is Truer than Truth,* based on Mark Anderson's book. She showed some excerpts from this work-in-progress. We hope to see this on PBS in the near future.

Earl Showerman then continued his amazing series of talks on Greek sources for the Shakespeare plays (something Stratfordians prefer to dismiss since they have a hard time showing how Will of Stratford could have read original Greek sources). This time the play under consideration was *Timon of Athens*, which Earl says is straight out of the Sophoclean tradition. Many character names, plot elements, and themes are to be found in original Greek sources.

After a dinner break the hardy ones came back for another movie night. We first watched an adaptation of Mark Twain's *Is Shakespeare Dead* by Canadian Keir Cutler. Although no Hal Holbrook (he didn't even try to be) Mr. Cutler did a good job of presenting Twain's very humorous skewering of the Stratfordian case and a little of the case for Bacon. Cutler also added in a little of the cases for Oxford, and Marlowe (which of course were not mentioned by Mark Twain).

We then watched the BBC adaptation of *Timon of Athens*, a very dark and brooding production which left us all despondent at the end of it. (Maybe we should have seen it BEFORE the Twain presentation so we could have gone to bed happy.)

Sunday morning began with the annual meeting of the Shakespeare Fellowship. Following this the presentations began with Robin Fox, continuing on from the talk he gave two years ago in Ann Arbor on the Stratford Grammar School Education. The basic idea is that Oxfordians should not disparage the Stratford Grammar school as grammar schools provided a very good basic education.

Of course, there is still specialized knowledge evident in the plays that would require more education. Countering Stratfordian arguments that the plays contain some references to things only someone who attended a grammar school would know, Robin pointed out that the education of the nobility was pretty much the same as the grammar school (with some additions) so a nobleman would be familiar with the same Latin and grammar textbooks.

Bill Boyle then gave a talk which was a kind of summary of multiple talks he has given in the past about the importance of the Succession Crisis of the 1590s, especially the part played by the Earls of Essex and Southampton. He touched quite a bit on the puzzling work *Willobie, His Avisa*, presenting a theory that Avisa represents Queen Elizabeth and her suitors represent "real" suitors of Elizabeth.

It was now time for the final banquet and awards Presentation. Thomas Regnier gave a very informative talk with finally explained (to almost everyone's satisfaction) exactly what was the Salic Law which seems to be important in the play Henry V, and why this law was important in understanding some of the legalities involved in the question of the succession after Elizabeth.

During the banquet, the annual Oxfordian of the Year award was presented to Daniel Wright for his multiple efforts for our movement, particularly getting the Concordia Authorship Research Centre off the ground –the center will open next fall-. A new award, the Shakespeare Authorship Award, was presented (in absentia) to John Shahan and the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition as commemoration of the great success of the Declaration of Reasonable Doubt.

All in all, this was a very successful and enjoyable conference. It demonstrated what kinds of new things or new ways of looking at things can be developed when the true author of the plays of Shakespeare is identified.

The 2009 joint conference is currently scheduled for November 5-8, 2009 in Houston, TX. Watch for further details.

For Immediate Release

SAC contact person: John Shahan at (909) 896-2006.

Claremont, California, November 17, 2008 — The Shakespeare Authorship Coalition (SAC) is pleased to announce that SAC Secretary Virginia J. Renner, former head of the Reader Services Department at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, has succeeded in recruiting ten of her former colleagues to sign her copy of the Declaration of Reasonable Doubt about the Identity of William Shakespeare. By recruiting ten signatories based on a single theme, she has set an example that we hope others will follow. The SAC has produced a limited edition of 400 of the museum-quality posters of the Declaration, each with lines at the bottom for ten signatures.

Virginia J. Renner, former head of Reader Services at the Huntington Library, proudly displays her personal copy of the Declaration, signed by ten of her former colleagues.

Virginia J. Renner, M.L.S., worked for over thirty-two years at the world-renowned Huntington Library — home of many rare editions of the works in the Shakespeare Canon, including the First Folio. As head of the Reader Services Department from 1974 until her retirement in 1999, her responsibilities included screening applicants and introducing researchers to the Library's resources.

Ms. Renner's doubts about the author's true identity (doubts shared by her late husband) date from the early 1980s when she began reading the authorship claimant literature, much of it from the Huntington's own holdings. She first encountered Shakespeare authorship doubters on the Huntington's professional staff when she began working there in 1967.

Shakespeare scholars from all over the world come to the Huntington to do research, and the fact that so many well-educated people who have worked there doubt Shakespeare's identity is startling. It certainly contradicts the orthodox stereotypes of authorship doubters. Many Shakespeare scholars will no doubt find it disconcerting that so many highly professional staff people at the Huntington, who served them so well, thought that they were researching the wrong man.

Nearly 1,400 people have now signed the Declaration, including 300 during the last year. These include 244 (18%) current or former college/university faculty members, 196 (14%) with doctoral degrees, and 299 (22%) with master's degrees. English literature graduates held their substantial lead among academic disciplines with 232, followed by those in the arts (142), theatre arts (95), education (87), social sciences (74), math, engineering & computers (71), history (69), natural sciences (65), other humanities (62), law (59), medicine and health care (58), management (45), and psychology (42).

Notable signatories include Shakespearean actors Sir Derek Jacobi, Mark Rylance, Jeremy Irons and Michael York.

The Declaration was launched during a signing ceremony at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles, California, in April 2007, and in the U.K. at the Chichester Festival Theatre in September 2007. For more info, go to: http:/www.DoubtAboutWill.org.

(President's Page continued from page 2)

We recently experienced a problem finding a replacement for our previous Treasurer, Virginia Hyde. Virginia had served admirably for three years as Treasurer. Because of the strict term limits provision, last year we had to find a suitable replacement. But the search wasn't easy. We eventually found our new Treasurer, Sue Width (who happens to be a Certified Public Accountant and is doing a fantastic job) but Sue didn't join the Board until several months after Virginia had to step down as Treasurer. The transition was awkward, and it was made much more difficult because of the rigid three-year term limit provision.

As John Hamill argued to the Board and at the annual meeting, this amendment is intended to give the Board needed flexibility by allowing the Board, by unanimous vote, to extend the term of an officer for one more year in a given position. The Board felt strongly that requiring a unanimous vote of the Board for such an extension offered the membership substantial protection against abuse. The unanimous-vote requirement sends a strong signal to the membership that an officer whose term is extended pursuant to this amendment has wide support from the Board and must be deemed to be doing an excellent job in that position.

Which brings me to where I started – why I'm writing this column as your newly reelected president. The Board of Trustees voted unanimously this month to continue as your president for one more year, thereby extending my term in this office beyond three years. I want to thank all Board members for their support and confidence, but I have made it clear to the Board – and I make a pledge to the entire membership now – that this will be my final year as president.

2009: The Year of The Sonnets

One reason I accepted this one-year extension relates to a project I mentioned in my previous column and at the recent annual conference. I hope we can call attention in 2009 to the 400th anniversary of the publication of the Sonnets. I will be proposing to the Board that we designate 2009 as "The Year of the Sonnets" and that we do a much as we can to take advantage of the PR opportunity of this important literary milestone by underscoring the authorship clues contained in the Sonnets. In particular, I believe we should focus our efforts on assembling as much evidence as we can in support of the proposition that the Sonnets were published posthumously in 1609.

In my presentation at the annual conference in October, I developed this argument at some length. I called upon the entire Oxfordian community to mount a concerted research and outreach effort next year to not only commemorate the Sonnets but to use this anniversary to highlight both the authorship issue generally and the case for Oxford's authorship in particular. I am in the process of forming a **Year of the Sonnets** committee to help plan and execute a year-long campaign to focus on the theme that the Sonnets were published posthumously. If we succeed in making the best case we can on that point, if we can plant that seed in the minds of the media and other key audiences, I think we could put the authorship question front and center in the public discourse about Shakespeare next year. One thing we need to make a real impact next year: a well-researched, carefully documented report that lays out the best possible case we can muster in support of the posthumous publication thesis.

Please let me know if you would like to participate in the planning committee for the **Year of the Sonnets**. I'd like to see us develop a wide-ranging program of publications, conferences, lectures and other events next year. I should mention here that the annual conference at Concordia in April will commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Sonnets. That's an important event on the calendar in 2009. But I hope we will be able to sponsor additional activities in 2009 to take advantage of this important anniversary in Shakespeare studies.

New Board Members and Officers

Finally, I want to let members know about the new line-up of Board members and Officers for the coming year. Welcome and congratulations to newly elected Board members Stephen Downs and Toni Downs. Congratulations to newly reelected Board members Sue Width (Treasurer), James (Jaz) Sherwood, and Richard Smiley ... as well as to the following newly elected officers: John Hamill (First Vice President); Virginia Hyde (Secretary); and Richard Joyrich (Membership Secretary). We also have several committees and task forces (including the Publications Committee chaired by John Hamill and the Youth Outreach Task Force chaired by Brian Bechtold) in case members want to volunteer their time and expertise.

Remember, this is your Board of Trustees and your Society. Please share your ideas and suggestions. If you send an email to sosoffice@optonline.net, our office manager will forward your email to me or to the appropriate Board member. Thank you for your ongoing support as we endeavor to fulfill our mission of researching and honoring the true Bard.

Sincerely,

Matthew Cossolotto, November 2008

Editor's Note: Year of the Sonnet Declaration by the SOS Board of Trustees – In recognition of the four hundredth anniversary of the publication of Shake-speare's Sonnets *the Shakespeare Oxford Society hereby designates 2009 The Year of the Sonnets and declares its intention to highlight the proposition that the Sonnets were published posthumously in 1609.*

Letters to the Editor

A joint letter to both the SOS and SF

by Stuart J. Green

I would like to preface this joint letter by saying that I hold all its members in the highest regard for the work they have done in their respective fields to the continuing expansion of the Oxfordian cause. I do not pretend to be telling you anything that you do not already know or have considered yourselves. That being said, I feel that we sometimes allow our respective interpretations of the history and, indeed, the mystery surrounding the most celebrated writer of the English language to cloud or overshadow the central issue which is the validity of Edward DeVere as Shakespeare. I do not pretend to be as knowledgeable as my fellow SOS and SF members in terms of the finer points of Oxfordianism, yet I feel that my position as a relatively new member gives me a fresh outlook on what I see to be some problems facing both organizations.

While I have only been a member of the Oxfordian movement for a few years, I, like many others, have had to face some of the same skepticism and sometimes hostility that comes with the discussing of the Authorship question and the validity of deVere as a prime candidate, I have come to believe that there are a number of ways in which we need to re-evaluate our approach. I do not prescribe wholly to any of the numerous sub-groups that exist in either of our organizations. Whether or not one believes in the Prince Tudor theories(s) or that the sonnets were, in fact, the expressions of the bi/homosexual relationship between deVere and the young Earl of Southampton, we can all agree that the one unifying belief is that Edward deVere was the true author of the Shakespeare canon. To quote a fellow SF member, "It is about the Earl."

So why is it that after all these years of tireless efforts by so many intelligent and rational people, that we find ourselves still so far away from gaining acceptance by the world at large? Why do we find our organizations not growing but rather stagnating? One possibility is the perception that we are merely a conspiracy group. Well, how can we overcome this hurdle? A possible way of debunking this perception by the traditionalist is to work towards developing a clear, concise, and non-threatening way of communicating the facts supporting Oxford, coupled with the facts against the traditional figure of the man from Stratford. Now what was I meaning by the statement that we must use a non-threatening approach? All too often, we are asked by those first hearing about the authorship question, "What does it matter?" or even, "Why can't you just appreciate the works as they are without having to find something wrong with them?" This is certainly something I have had to respond to (even from members of my own family). I have to reassure these people, that to question the validity of the authorship is not an attack on the works themselves. We are not trying to make mountains out of molehills but rather attempting to cultivate new interpretations of these literary masterpieces by gaining a further understanding of the man who wrote them.

Another question that is often asked of me by skeptics is the reasoning behind keeping the identity of the author a secret even after his death. Here is the make-it or break-it point as I see it. For if you become too detailed with names, dates and the like or if you list only one Oxfordian interpretation, you run the risk of that person either being bogged down with too much information or they find your interpretation a little hard to swallow. While it is my belief that rational people can put aside the myth of the Virgin Queen, they might still find it hard to believe that the Elizabeth was able to conceal multiple pregnancies, let alone one. This is not to say that those who support the Prince Tudor theories don't have some valid points in their arguments. I personally find the idea plausible, as I also do with the homo/bi sexual interpretation. But when we are dealing with those who have had little or no knowledge of either Shakespeare or of the authorship candidates, we must be very subtle in our approach. We should communicate the simple points of Oxford's biography and how it corresponds with the Shakespeare canon, not bash them over the head with it but rather give them something to think about. Give them some literature or point them towards sources that won't overburden them with the more minute details that are covered in our conferences and in some of our publications.

Another way we could make ourselves more accessible to those who do not yet ascribe to our view of the Shakespeare authorship issue is to open ourselves and more particularly our publications to non-Oxfordian contributors. I am speaking, of course, to the recent divisiveness over the appointment of Dr. Michael Egan as the new editor of *The Oxfordian*. While I was at first surprised and unsure about what it would mean to have an editor who was not a confirmed Oxfordian, after thinking the issue over and listening to Dr. Egan's responses to membership's questions and concerns,

I have come to the belief that it will ultimately help us in the long run to have a person of Dr. Egan's standing working for us. While I certainly believe that *The Oxfordian* should remain primarily Oxfordian in its content, it is my opinion that as long as we allow only the Oxfordian perspective to be represented, we will only succeed in producing a journal that preaches to the choir and which can, therefore, be written off by our critics as being biased. We should not look at it as a step towards abandoning our ideals but rather as a way to help us sharpen our arguments against the opposition.

The final point that I would like to mention as being a possible deterrent to gaining new converts to our cause is the continued split between our two organizations. As those of you who have met me at previous conferences might recall, I have been an avid supporter of the efforts at reunification. While I was never privy to the causes that led to the original schism, I would contend that whatever issue or issues led to the split, they have either been resolved or are no longer of consequence. Would it not serve both organizations to pool our collective resources to form a single and much stronger organization? What message are we sending to those on the outside when we are unable or unwilling to work together? Let us not forget that we all have a common goal, and while we may disagree on some of the finer points, we should all be willing to agree on the most important thing . . . "it is about the Earl."

I must now end this letter and, once more, ask that you please forgive my presumptiveness in addressing you on these matters. I mean not to dictate or preach, but merely to voice some of the concerns I have come to have over the last three years. I want to thank all those who have befriended me and given me the encouragement to take a more active role in this, our cause.

Yours sincerely,
Stuart J. Green

Dear Editor,

I fully agree with the article by Donald Frederick Nelson, "Schurink's Discovery of a Century," about the importance of the reference by Rev. Thomas Vicars in the third edition of a work by him on rhetoric which, translated, strongly suggests that he was well aware that "Shakespeare" was a pseudonym. What he has omitted to point out, however, is that Vicars was the son-in-law of Sir Henry Neville, having married his daughter Anne in 1622. Vicars was also the step-son-in-law of Bishop George Carleton, who has married Neville's widow and, as Bishop of Llandaff, employed Vicars as his chaplain and gave him ecclesiastical preferment. Sir Henry Neville is, of course, the candidate as the actual author of Shakespeare's works proposed by Brenda James in the work which I co-authored, *The Truth Will Out* (2005). We did not know of the Vicars reference until it was published by Fred Schurink in *Notes & Queries* in 2006 and then given publicity by Roger Strittmatter. Evidently, at some stage after his marriage Vicars (1589-1638) was initiated into the family secret. I might also add that I know of no association of any kind between Vicars and the Earl of Oxford or his family.

Sincerely,
(Professor)
William D. Rubinstein,
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THIS IS YOUR NEWSLETTER

The Shakespeare Oxford Society welcomes articles, essays, commentary, book reviews, letters, and news items of relevance to Shakespeare, Edward de Vere and the Authorship Discussion. *It is the policy of the Shakespeare Oxford Society to require assignment of copyright on any article submitted to the Newsletter.* Please contact the editor with any questions.

Submit text in digital form to:
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The 13th Annual Shakespeare Authorship Studies Conference

Concordia University
April 16 - 19, 2009

If you will be attending the Awards Banquet at which we will honour

Robin Williams - author of
Sweet Swan of Avon: Did a Woman Write Shakespeare?
and
William Boyle - librarian, editor and Shakespeare Authorship database creator

please choose one of the following entrees:

____ Filet mignon ____ Smoked Salmon ____ Vegetarian dish

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To assure yourself of a place at these events, send in this registration form for receipt by 30 March 2009 with your cheque or money order for $275, payable to The Shakespeare Authorship Studies Conference. Mail your registration to Prof Daniel Wright, SASC Conference Director, Concordia University, 2811 NE Holman, Portland, OR 97211. If you will *not* be attending the banquet, include a cheque or money order for $195 for the four-day conference only

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Shakespeare as Brand Name

By Carleton W. Sterling

What's in a name? That's a key Shakespearean question.

Is "Shakespeare" just the accepted spelling of the family name of William of Stratford or is it a brand name for a literary canon?

Stratford Willie neglected to spell Shakespeare with the full complement of vowels we know, and Oxfordians note his failure to spell his family name consistently for his signatures on his last will and testament. Stratfordians reply that Elizabethans mostly didn't care about consistent spelling. This is all the more reason to see the significance of when the name was consistently spelled.

The Elizabethan printers who set in type the name William Shakespeare on title pages of published works starting in the 1590s nailed down the Shakespeare spelling for all time while simultaneously spelling Shakespeare's royal Henries both Henry and Henrie on the same page. The Stratford clan did not embrace the published spelling of Shakespeare. After William's death in 1616, his daughter Judith bore a son whose given name was registered as Shaksper.

Why did printers raid their letter boxes for extra vowels when setting the author's name if it served no purpose? It wasted time and effort inconsistent with the Stratfordian claim that the Bard was a "good businessman."

The businesslike answer is that Shakespeare was a brand name so spelled to identify the product. Kellogg named the cereal Rice Krispies not because spell-check hadn't been invented but because the capital K was key to the brand name signifying crispy rice from Kellogg.

The most famous brand name in American literature is Mark Twain, which sounds like a homespun American name, but it was the "safe water" call that riverboat pilot Samuel Clemens heard from deckhands sounding the depth. The pen name is informative.

So let's try to decode Shakespeare, the biggest brand name in English literature. The final letter e was surely meant to be silent, serving only to make the name look longer.

Spear(e) clarifies the pronunciation of the suffix. The pronunciation of the Stratford name might suggest a horseman if it rhymed with Hotspur and a sailor if it rhymed with ship's spar. The author of the Shakespeare canon may have been both horseman and sailor, but the ea gives the vowel sound in spear. Pronouncing Shake is a no-brainer, but no e after k in Shaksper muddies the pronunciation of the prefix, which could be Shack or Shax. So the early printers told us how to pronounce the name; the Stratford folk did not.

The one variation in the published spelling was whether or not the printer placed a hyphen between Shake and speare. Shake-speare appeared on title pages in the 1590s, the 1603 edition of Hamlet, the 1609 Sonnets, and in some of the dedicatory passages of the 1623 First Folio.

Later generations mostly shunned the hyphen because it didn't square with the Stratford name. No one believed that a Mr. Shake and a Miss Speare married and acquired a hyphenated name. Stratfordians dismiss the intrusion of the hyphen as a trifle signifying nothing, yet they accept that Robert Greene's 1592 published jibe about "Shake-scene" referred to the Bard.

Oxfordians infer that the hyphen invites the reading of words not just sounds. The punctuation helps deliver the message. While letters are the building blocks of words, punctuation helps with phrases. The hyphen links two words while revealing the compound's components. So the printers crafted the name as the phrase "Shake spear(e)."

This suggests pertinent images. An image from English heraldry that long intrigued Oxfordians was the lion rampant grasping a broken spear whose hanging piece resembles a pen poised to write. Oxfordians have backed away from the claim that Edward de Vere may have used this coat-of-arms image on a seal for manuscripts. Still the image befits a blueblooded wordsmith, and the British aristocrats would have been familiar with it because coats of arms were devised to distinguish friend from foe on the battlefield.

The spectacular outpouring of English literature written by educated Elizabethans was accompanied by their reading the Greek and Roman classics. So such readers would know The Spear Shaker, attribute name of Athena. Association with the Greek goddess of wisdom would make a clever brand name for a line of great literature.

The Spear Shaker invokes Athena's warrior attribute. In the virtual arts, the goddess is most often presented with helmet, shield and spear. But another subject of interest is similarly represented. During their rule of Britain, the Romans recognized their island territory with a coin showing Britannia holding a trident as her spear. Later Brits adopted variations on this icon to personify their nation. Athena recast as Britannia is an apt association for a brand that lifted the English language to the peak of the literary world.

Britannia no longer rules the waves, but the sun never sets on the Shakespeare brand.

Noted Shakespearean Egan Takes over The Oxfordian

Submitted to the Newsletter by Matthew Cossolotto

http://www.playshakespeare.com/shakespeare-news/3692-noted-shakespearean-egan-takes-over-the-oxfordian

Wednesday, 29 October 2008 06:02

Recently, Dr. Michael Egan, noted Shakespearean and author of *The Tragedy of Richard II, Part One: A Newly Authenticated Play by William Shakespeare* has taken the helm as the new editor of *The Oxfordian*, the annual journal focused on "proving" Edward de Vere is the true author of Shakespeare's plays. This is an unusual move for the Shakespeare Oxford Society, which hopes that Egan, a self-described agnostic on the authorship question, will "follow the evidence where it leads." PlayShakespeare.com took a moment to chat with Dr. Egan about his newly appointed position and what he hopes to accomplish for the future.

PLAYSHAKESPEARE: Dr. Egan, how did this new position come about?
DR. EGAN: In 2006, I presented a paper about *Richard II, Part One*, to the Shakespeare Oxford Society/Shakespeare Fellowship convention in Ann Arbor, MI. I liked them and they liked me. Also, I think delegates were surprised at my open-mindeness on the so-called Authorship Question. Some months later the editorship of *The Oxfordian* became vacant, and they invited me to take the job. After thinking about it, I accepted.

PLAYSHAKESPEARE: Why did you agree? What attracted you the most?
DR. EGAN: I think there's a real question about the authorship of Shakespeare's plays-the disjunct between what we think we know about him and the mind and personality reflected in the Collected Works. Ascribing their astonishing range, wisdom and knowledge to genius is simply to invoke magic. One may be born with superior abilities but education must still be acquired. There's deep learning and experience in the plays and poems, together with remarkably detailed information of all kinds of esoterica. I'd like to know how they got there.

PLAYSHAKESPEARE: What do you feel only you can bring to the table?
DR. EGAN: What I bring to the table is scholarly detachment, a willingness to go wherever the evidence may lead. If this sounds elementary, I can only say that in the current world of Shakespeare attribution studies, scholarly objectivity is in cruelly short supply. The issues are debated with the acrimony, bitterness and dishonesty characteristic of religious or political sects. There's more jeering and silencing than discussion. Temperamentally, however, I'm not a joiner – I keep changing my mind when presented with new data. A nerd, in short, but in the present climate, that's an advantage.

PLAYSHAKESPEARE: If you're not an Oxfordian, why did you sign the Declaration of Reasonable Doubt?
DR. EGAN: Because you don't have to be an Oxfordian to be reasonably doubtful about the authorship of Shakespeare's plays.

PLAYSHAKESPEARE: What is your vision for the upcoming year?
DR. EGAN: I plan to run *The Oxfordian* as a research journal of the highest intellectual integrity. Its emphasis will continue to be on the Authorship Question. All views and theories-Stratfordian, Marlovian and whoever might be the latest candidate in a very full field-will be given a platform, so long as the quality of argumentation survives a rigorous peer-review process. That's where my scholarly detachment comes in. Everyone will be offered an equitable shake. I should add that it is the judgment of the Shakespeare Oxford Society that in a fair fight, as it were, Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, will emerge as the incontestable true author.

Let me slip in here an invitation to anyone who would like to submit an article to *TOX* in the broad area of Shakespeare attribution/authorship studies. Contact drmichaelegan@aol.com This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it.