

## **Sir Christopher Blount, Sir Henry Cuffe, Sir Charles Danvers and Sir Gelli Meyrick**

### **SIR CHRISTOPHER BLOUNT** (c. 1556 – 18 March 1601)

Despite being a Catholic, (Blount) was Gentleman of the Horse to the Earl of Leicester by 1584. He corresponded with Thomas Morgan in Paris, the exiled agent of Mary, Queen of Scots. Apparently Blount offered to "do [her] notable service". In his dealings with Morgan, Blount probably had the backing of Leicester and Francis Walsingham, Queen Elizabeth's spymaster. Leicester trusted Blount, calling him "Mr. Kytt" and caring for his well-being. Blount served in the Netherlands Campaign from 1585 till 1587, when Leicester was Governor-General there.

In the spring of 1589, about seven months after the Earl's death, Blount married the Earl's widow, Lettice Knollys, whom Queen Elizabeth reportedly hated for having married the Earl of Leicester. Accordingly, Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, Lettice's son and the new favourite of the Queen, termed this an "unhappy choice". Lettice seems to have been very happy with her choice, as is shown by her later correspondence. Lady Leicester (she continued to be styled thus) and Sir Christopher were busy repaying the Earl of Leicester's colossal debts and were engaged in numerous lawsuits because of this.

Blount was Member of Parliament for Staffordshire, where he lived, in the Parliaments of 1593 and 1597; he was elected at the insistence of the Earl of Essex, who was influential in the county. In 1596, Blount was a colonel in the Cádiz expedition, and in 1597 in that to the Azores. One of the main followers of the Earl of Essex, he became much involved in the latter's rebellion in 1601.

On Sunday, 8 February, he tried to raise London, riding side by side with his stepson, the Earl, and was badly wounded in the cheek. Following his arrest, he was carried on a litter to his trial, still weak from his injury. He was beheaded about four weeks after Essex on Tower Hill for high treason.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry\\_Cuffe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Cuffe)

### **SIR HENRY CUFFE** (c. 1563 – 13 March 1601)

After receiving his early education at the grammar school of Hinton St. George, Henry Cuffe was elected at the age of fifteen a scholar of Trinity College, Oxford (25 May 1578) by the interest of Lady Elizabeth Powlett of Hinton, who always showed a kindly regard for his welfare. At Oxford, Cuffe exhibited a conspicuous ability, and became a finished Greek scholar. He attracted the attention of Sir Henry Savile, who aided him in his studies, and about 1582 made the acquaintance of John Hotman, a learned French Protestant in the service of the Earl of Leicester ... On 20 Feb 1588/9 he graduated M.A., and after proving his capacity as a teacher of Greek by holding a lectureship at Queen's College, he was in 1590 elected Regius Professor of Greek in the university. This post he held for seven years. He addressed the queen in a Latin speech at Carfax when she visited Oxford in 1592, and was chosen junior proctor 15 April 1594. Very soon afterwards Cuffe abandoned Oxford for London, where he obtained the post of secretary to the Earl of Essex.

For a man of Essex's temperament he (Cuffe) was the worst possible counsellor. He urged him to seek at all hazards an interview with the queen, and argued that Elizabeth would be unable to withhold her favour from him after she had heard from his mouth the story of his grievances and of the animosity with which the Cecils, Raleigh, and others regarded him. He deprecated all compromise with those he regarded as the earl's enemies; taunted Essex with having already submitted voluntarily to many degradations; advised Essex's friends to form an alliance with all political malcontents to make themselves a party to be feared; laid his plans before Sir Henry Neville, who had just been recalled from the French embassy and had grievances against the government; and obtained Essex's consent to communicate with his old friend Sir Charles Danvers. Cuffe had no clear ideas as to the details of his policy, and did not take part in the secret meetings of Essex's friends, whom he had helped to bring together, at Drury House, in November and December 1600. Meanwhile, some of Essex's relatives perceived the evil effect on Essex of Cuffe's maladroit counsels, and they induced him in November to dismiss him from his service. Sir Gilly Merrick, Essex's steward, was ordered to remove him from Essex House. But Cuffe appealed to the good nature of his master's friend, the Earl of Southampton, who readily obtained from Essex a rescission of the order (see Wotton). Cuffe's work was, however, done. He opposed the appeal to force and took no part in the riot in the city of London on Sunday, 8 Feb 1600/1 (see Devereux, Robert, second Earl of Essex), but with Essex and all his allies was thrown into the Tower. When Essex, just before his execution, requested to be confronted with Cuffe in the Tower (21 Feb 1600/1) in the presence of witnesses, he used the words: 'You have been one of the chiefest instigators of me to all these my disloyal courses into which I have fallen.'

In Harl. MS. 1327, fol. 58, are to be found *Aphorismes Political, gathered out of the Life and End of that most noble Robert Devereux, Earle of Essex, not long before his death*, a work which is also ascribed to Cuffe. (So far, I haven't been able to find this text anywhere online.)

### **Sir CHARLES DANVERS** (c. 1568–1601)

According to the best authenticated report in the 'State Papers,' Sir Walter Long and his brother Henry, neighbours of the Danverses, had been committed to prison on a charge of theft by Sir John Danvers, Charles's father, who died in 1593. To avenge this insult the Longs killed one of the Danvers's servants, and liberally abused all the Danvers, and especially Sir Charles. Henry Long finally challenged Sir Charles Danvers, and in a subsequent encounter was killed by Sir Charles's brother Henry. Henry Wriothesley, third earl of Southampton, permitted both brothers to take temporary refuge in his house at Whitley Lodge, near Titchfield, Hampshire. Henceforth Charles was 'exceedingly devoted to the Earl of Southampton upon affection begun first upon the deserving of the same earl towards him when he was in trouble about the murder of one Long' (Bacon, *Declaration*). Charles and Henry were subsequently outlawed, and took refuge in France. Henry IV received them kindly, and interceded with Elizabeth in their behalf, but to little immediate purpose. Charles was also friendly with Sir Thomas Edmondes, the English ambassador at Paris, and constantly petitioned Sir Robert Cecil to procure the reversal of the order of banishment. The Earl of Shrewsbury met the exiled brothers at Rouen in October 1596, and applauded their soldierly bearing in a note to Cecil. On 30 June 1598 they were pardoned, and in August were again in England. In 1599 Charles Danvers was given a colonel's commission in

the army that accompanied Essex to Ireland. He was wounded in an early engagement (July) and had few opportunities of displaying military capacity, but his intimacy with Southampton was renewed at Dublin, and Essex treated him with consideration. He returned to London with Essex in September 1599, and was in frequent communication with the earl during his subsequent imprisonment. He was staying with Charles Blount, lord Mountjoy [q. v.], at Wanstead, in September 1599, and on 26 April 1600 he was with Southampton at Coventry. In October 1600 at the request of Henry Cuffe [q. v.], Essex's secretary, he took part in the conferences among Essex's friends regarding the best means of restoring the earl to the queen's favour.

Drury House, where Essex's partisans met regularly in the winter of 1600, belonged to the Earl of Southampton, and Danvers seems to have lodged there at the end of 1600 with a view to aiding the more effectively in the secret negotiations. His friend, Sir Christopher Blount, easily induced him to vote for a forcible insurrection, by which the queen and her palace should be placed at Essex's disposal. On Saturday, 7 Feb. 1600-1, when the details of the rising were finally determined, Danvers was entrusted with the part of seizing the presence-chamber and 'the halberds of the guard' at Whitehall. On the following day the attempt was made to raise the city in rebellion, and failed miserably. Danvers was carried prisoner to the Tower, made a full confession on 18 Feb. 1600-1, and signed a declaration setting forth all he knew of Essex's secret negotiations with Scotland (*Correspondence of James VI and Cecil*, Camd. Soc. p. 100). He was tried with Cuffe and others on 5 March, admitted his guilt, and was beheaded on Tower Hill together with Blount on 18 March. He was buried in the Tower church. It was generally admitted that Danvers's intimacy with Southampton had led him into the conspiracy. He confessed on the scaffold to a special hatred of Lord Grey, merely on the ground that Grey was 'ill-affected to Southampton.' Danvers's large property in Wiltshire was escheated, but in July 1603 his brother Henry was declared heir by James I (cf. *MS. State Papers, Dom.*, 1603, cclxxxvii. 41-3).

#### **SIR GELLI MEYRICK** (c. 1556 – 13 March 1601)

Also known as Gelly or Gilly, Meyrick was the eldest son of Rowland Meyrick, bishop of Bangor. At an early age, he became a soldier and became acquainted with Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, who owned property in Wales. He joined in the campaigns under Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester in the Low Countries and went with Essex on the expedition to Portugal in 1589. Two years later he fought in Normandy, and also participated in the Capture of Cádiz in 1596, after which he was knighted and presented with the manor and castle of Wigmore, Herefordshire, which he made his chief country residence.

When in January 1601 Essex had decided on raising an insurrection in the city, Meyrick armed many of his country friends with muskets and defended Essex House. The rebellion was ultimately unsuccessful and Meyrick was arrested and held in the Tower of London. He was sentenced to death on 5th March 1601. He declared himself willing to die, and explained that he merely acted under his master's orders. At Tyburn on 13 March, 1601 Meyrick was hanged, drawn and quartered for his part in the rebellion led by Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex. Meyrick attended Essex as Steward of his household and

Receiver-General of his rents and revenues. He was executed with Sir Henry Cuffe, author, politician and fellow rebel.

<https://www.tudorsociety.com/13-march-the-hangings-of-conspirators-henry-cuffe-and-sir-gelly-meyrick/>