

LADY MARY SCUDAMORE (c.1550-1603), COURTIER¹

by Warren Skidmore

It might be argued that Lady Mary was the most interesting woman in the late 1590s (after the queen herself) in all of England. She became the only lady of Elizabeth's privy chamber to have left more than a few bits of correspondence, due largely to the survival of the great collection of Scudamore letters and papers in what is now known as the Duchess of Norfolk Deeds deposited at the Public Record Office.²

Lady Mary's paternal grandfather, Sir John Shelton (c.1476-1529), had married Anne Boleyn's aunt Anne, and was governor of Hatfield when it was the princess Elizabeth's nursery from 1534-6.³ Her mother Margaret's brother, Sir Henry Parker (ca. 1514-1552), was later Elizabeth's chamberlain in 1550-2.

Very little is known of Mary Shelton before her appointment (perhaps still in her teens) on

¹I have adopted the title of the new short life of Lady Mary Scudamore which was added in April 2007 to the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. I have referred to Mary throughout these notes as a Scudamore, the name used by most of the later family in Herefordshire. However, as many of the direct quotations will show, she and her husband (and his children) were known by their friends more often as Skidmores.

²Frances Fitzroy-Scudamore (1750-1820) inherited the Holme Lacy estates. She married on 2 April 1771 (as his second wife) Charles Howard, later the eleventh duke of Norfolk (1746-1815). He was known as the "drunken Duke" prone to debauchery, and averse to soap and water and fresh clothes. She is said to have had a fit of hysterics on the church steps immediately after the ceremony and soon succumbed to a progressive mental illness. George III repeatedly refused the duke's request for an annulment, and the marriage was also clearly of small comfort to the duchess. They had no children, and after the duke's death a complex series of chancery cases began for the inheritance of the Holme Lacy estate estimated to be worth £30,000 pounds a year. At the duchess's death on 22 October 1820 the direct descendants of the first viscount Scudamore became extinct and the legal proceedings intensified. The vaults of Holme Lacy church were dug up in a vain search for evidence, and the legal ramifications were not settled until May 1829 with an order that the estate should be divided among the descendants of the first viscount's eldest sisters. The heirs did not immediately file for the return of almost 9000 items that had been sent up by a fleet of wagons to Westminster in 1817 for adjudication, and they are now in the custody of the Public Record Office at Kew. They were given a separate class number C115, and are the principal source of this extended note on Lady Mary. A number of other papers once at Holme Lacy became separated from the principal collection and are now at the British Library [Add. MSS. 11, 041-11,059].

³Queen Elizabeth and Mary Shelton were both great-granddaughters of Sir William Boleyn of Blickling, Norfolk which made them second cousins.

18 November 1568 as a gentlewoman of the queen's privy chamber.⁴ She was remembered in her father's will made on 12 February 1558 along with her mother Margaret, her brother Ralph, and a sister Godsolve.⁵ She and her sister doubtless had the education tendered to young gentlewomen of their day, and Mary wrote a highly practiced "secretary hand" but reserved a neat italic for her signature.⁶ The queen was acutely conscious of family connections and liked to give her relatives positions in her household. For those who had no such claim the competition for the remaining places was fierce. Mary was promoted to a Chamberer of the queen's bed chamber on 1 January 1571 for which she now was paid a wage of £20 by the year. The chamberers prepared the chamber in the morning and the midday meal, but had only a few other responsibilities. The office is said to have consisted of intensive activity followed by long periods when there was nothing to do except perhaps to sew or gossip.

There were in addition to the four paid chamberers several unpaid ladies of the privy chamber who gained status but had no annual salary. They were called upon less, and were reserved until the queen needed them to impress a visiting foreign ambassador or a parliamentary delegation. They have been compared to a chorus line in a big-budget musical with the queen appearing out front as the star of the show. On more informal occasions their superiors, the six maids of honor, formed the Queen's train accompanying her on morning walks or to church. The ladies also entertained the queen, and frequently did "daily trip to measure in the council chamber" dancing before their mistress.

The servants in her household were exempt from most of the expense of living at court. They received food, clothing and lodging at the queen's expense. They got specified amounts of red wine, beer, fuel, and candles, as well as stabling for their horses. They were also allowed to take away leftover food from state banquets to share with their families. All of these privileges were known as "bouge of court," and the upper gentry that came to the household could live very well on this with the compensation paid to them.

Mary Shelton became the second wife of John Scudamore (1542-1623) probably in January 1574. He was the heir of one of the principal old families in Herefordshire and already had a general livery of first his father's lands on 18 May 1563, and then that of his aged grandfather on 19 May 1572. The wardship of the young John Scudamore had been granted to Sir James Croft (c.1518-1590) of Croft Castle in Herefordshire, a local magnate who was well-connected at court and in the Welsh marches.⁷ Croft had promptly arranged the marriage of his young ward before 1561 to his daughter Eleanor. The groom's grandfather, the elder Sir John Scudamore (1486-1571), had driven a hard bargain for her Eleanor's jointure and Croft frequently missed the payments due.⁸ Eleanor bore

⁴Public Record Office, E351/1795. She was now granted an improved annuity of £33 6s. 8d.

⁵Sir John Shelton died a few months later on 15th November. His inquisition *post mortem* shows that his heir was his son Ralph, aged 22 and more at the time of his father's death. Godsolve Shelton was no doubt named for the local determined Catholic family with this surname.

⁶Jonathan Goldberg, *Desiring Women Writing, English Renaissance Examples* (Stanford University Press, 1997) 145.

⁷Croft had been earlier a gentleman of the privy chamber to Edward VI, and was well-known as a protestant. Presumably he overlooked his son-in-law's religious preference for the old Catholic faith.

⁸PRO, C115/M15/7342.

John Scudamore five children in fast succession, and then was buried on 9 December 1569 at Holme Lacy. Her husband had just applied in November 1569 for admission to the Inner Temple and he went off shortly before her death to find a room in the inns of court at London to learn something about the law.⁹

He and Mary Shelton had come to court about the same time and their marriage seems to have come out of a genuine affection. Some six months before this marriage was celebrated it was Sir James Croft, his former father-in-law, who opened negotiations about the Shelton alliance. Croft wrote to Scudamore on 8 June 1573 from the court at Greenwich that he had talked to Sir Nicholas Bacon, the lord keeper of the great seal, about the marriage “and doe fynd by hym that your motyon will goe slowy for he intendeth not to breke the matter unto the quens maiesty tyll he hath spoken to you.”¹⁰ Clearly both Bacon and Croft seemed to foresee already a problem with getting the queen’s consent.

Bacon did open a financial discussion with Scudamore about Mary’s jointure, and wrote to her on June 22nd that “I have verey good lykyng of the gentyelman [Scudamore] for hym sylff alweyz and by that I see & am informyd of by others there ys good cause why I shuld so have.” Bacon reported to her that he asked for 200 marks in land for her jointure and Scudamore told him that while his lands were encumbered by his previous marriage, he would still agree to this if the land were to descend to any sons they might have between them. However he was reluctant to leave their possible daughters any land, but would agree to “advance” them with money. Bacon then asked for a certain fixed sum for each daughter, but “Thys semyd to hym to be verey mooche and so uppon that poynt we ded agre to forbere to deterrmyne until our next metyng.” Bacon suggested to Mary that she think about it, and assured her that she would have the advantage of his counsel when he returned to court in about 20 days.¹¹

Her husband had been clearly identified as “John Scudamor of homlacy” when his name appeared on a damaging list headed *Catholics in Inglonde 1574*. The three sons of his first marriage to Eleanor Croft were also educated at Holme Lacy by Thomas Holford, a tutor who later became a Catholic priest. No record of the place where his marriage to Mary Shelton was celebrated has been

⁹His new knowledge of the law led to an appointment as a justice of the peace for Herefordshire, and to employment as the steward and the keeper of courts for the manors of Ashperton, Stretton and Yarkhill by 1571 and of Kidwelly (where he succeeded his uncle Richard Scudamore) on 23 January 1586/7. Bolstered by his friendship with Gilbert Talbot, the seventh earl of Shewsbury, he later had the stewardship of Archenfield and Goodrich Castle by 1591.

¹⁰PRO, C115/M15/7338.

¹¹PRO, C115/M15/7611. These two letters have been fully transcribed by W. J. Tighe in “Two documents illustrating the marriage of Sir John Scudamore of Holme Lacy and Mary Shelton” in *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalist’s Field Club*, vol. 44 (1984), 427. The terms of the final settlement has not been found in the Holme Lacy papers, but since they were childless the difference over the daughters proved to be unimportant. See also W. J. Tighe’s *Country into court, court into country, John Scudamore of Holme Lacy (c.1542-1623) and his circles*, included in a collection of essays edited by Dale Hoak, *Tudor political culture* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) 157-178. I am indebted to Dr. Tighe for most of what I have to say about the young John Scudamore at court and his political career.

found, but it may have taken place secretly away from the court and performed by a priest.¹² Her husband remained true to the old Catholic faith well into the following century, but the couple certainly lived quietly thereafter in the relaxed acceptance of religion as it was practiced at the protestant court of Queen Elizabeth.¹³

Poor Mary Shelton became one of the best-known victims of the queen's bad temper when their marriage was discovered. The notorious "scandal letter" written in 1584 by Mary, queen of Scots, accused Elizabeth of breaking one of Mary Skidmore's fingers and trying to conceal the incident as an accident caused by the falling of a candlestick. This colorful account given by the Scottish queen came in fact come from the victim's close friend Lady Mary Talbot (1557-1632), the wife of the future seventh earl of Shrewsbury. The story had been told to the imprisoned queen by Talbot's mother, the celebrated Bess of Hardwick.¹⁴ There was also an independent confirmation from Eleanor Brydges, another of the maids of honor, that Elizabeth in her fury abused poor Mary and "telt liberall bothe with bloes and yevell words."¹⁵ The queen was remorseful and quickly assented to the marriage, but all those persons at court agreed that "No one ever bought a husband more dearly" than Mary Shelton.¹⁶

Ideally the queen would have liked it if both genders at her court gave up matrimony for her sake. And then as a Boleyn descendant Elizabeth considered Mary to be a member of her extended royal family and had expected her to seek prior approval of her marriage. But by October of 1574 Mary's offense had been forgotten, and she was promoted once again to become a lady of the privy chamber.

When Sir James Croft was made controller of the household in 1570 he used his influence promptly to turn the young John Scudamore into a courtier as well. On 4 July 1570 Croft wrote to his son-in-law that if he could get his elderly grandfather's permission then "I woold you were heare against the progresse, for the queene asked for you sins your departure, and therefore it is thought that she will looke for your attendaunce about that tyme."¹⁷ A month later on 10 August 1570 Croft wrote again from the court while on progress at Chenies in Berkshire to call him back to court: "As my lord of leycester writethe to you of her maiesties speeche towardses you wherof hys lordshyp heretofore informed, so was hyt her hyghnes pleasure to use the lyke speeche to me ... with better wordes than I thynke your yonge yeres can yett deserve, and therefore hys lordshyp and I thought more than tyme to advyse you to come to court which wylbe at rycott aboutes the xxvth of this

¹²However John Scory, the bishop of Hereford, much later regarded Mistress Mary Scudamore as a patron of the new religion in that backward part of the realm which was, according to him, a stronghold of romanism. (PRO, C115/M/7545.)

¹³Families did not usually broadcast their devotion to the old Catholic faith. John Scudamore was dominated by his elderly grandfather who at his death in 1571 was from his will clearly still a devout Catholic.

¹⁴Bess of Hardwick, the wife of the sixth earl of Shrewsbury, was both the stepmother *and* mother-in-law of the seventh earl of Shrewsbury.

¹⁵BL, Add. MSS. 11049, folio 2.

¹⁶From a letter by Eleanor Brydges of the privy chamber, dated only as "January," to Edward Manners (1549-1587), the third earl of Rutland. (Historic Manuscript Commission, Twelfth Report, *The manuscripts of his grace the duke of Rutland*, app. pt. IV, I, 106-7.)

¹⁷BL, Add. MS. 11049, folio 4.

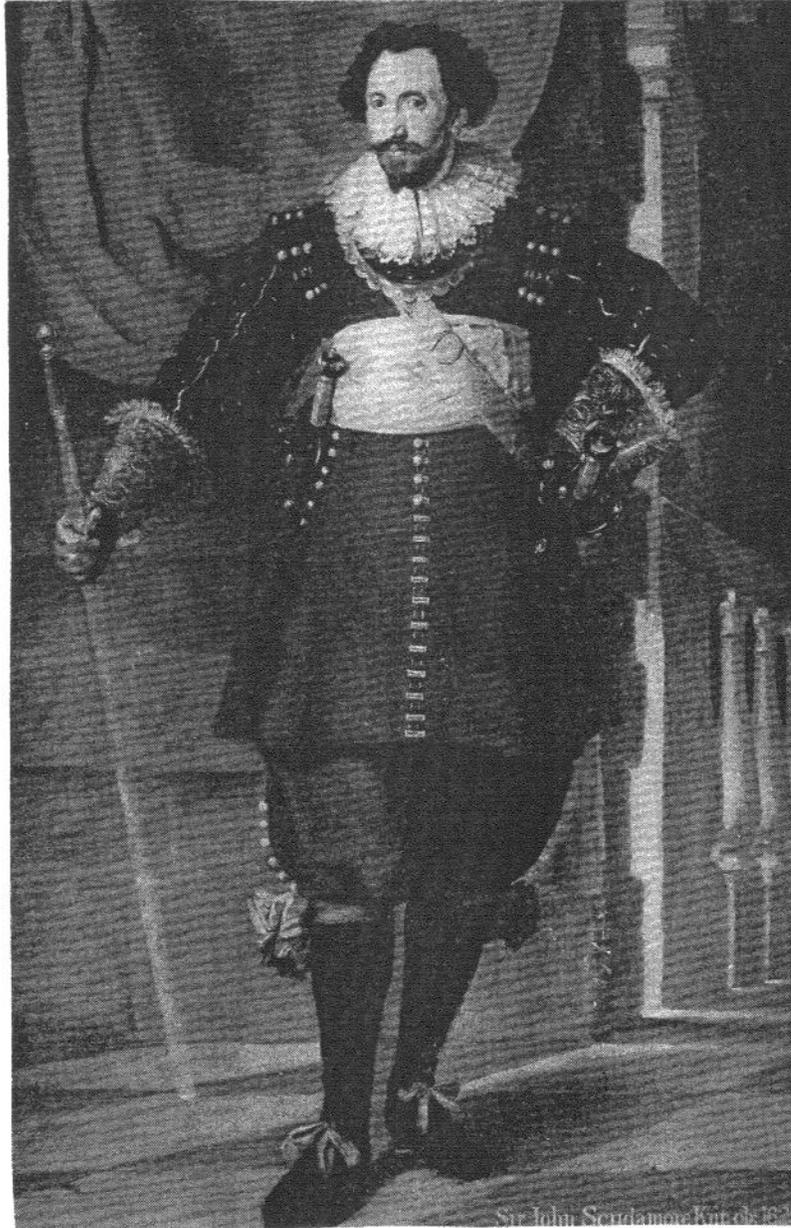
monthe.” Croft then added a note about the pleasure they took in hunting together: “You must bryng some good spanyels with you for I have a hawke or two but I have no dogges.”¹⁸

John Scudamore was named a Gentleman Pensioner by the queen on 25 March 1572, an appointment that could frequently lead to greater things.¹⁹ The gentleman pensioners consisted of 50 well-born young men including a captain, a lieutenant, and a standard bearer as officers. They were mostly ornamental and enjoyed “bouge of court” and lodging, but only when ten or 12 of their number were on actual duty. There is a portrait of John Scudamore (now at Kentchurch Court) in a uniform said to be that of the gentleman pensioners. However J. L. Nevinson in his study of the costume of the pensioners prints a list of the almost 50 of them on service at Michaelmas 1600. He says that these men, some of noble birth, wore their own dress at court. They were all called up only on major occasions when pomp and ceremony were required, so they were not a major expense for her.²⁰ The pensioners seem to have been one of the rare instances of economy within the queen’s household.

¹⁸PRO, C115/M15/7341.

¹⁹He was promoted to standard bearer of the pensioners, the third in command, on 19 June 1599, one of the few officers who was not of noble descent. He held this office until after the funeral of the queen in May 1603.

²⁰J. L. Nevinson, *Portraits of Gentlemen Pensioners before 1625* (Walpole Society, XXXIV, 1958) 1-13. W. J. Tighe, noticed earlier as the authority on both Sir John and the period, thinks that this portrait may very well have been done posthumously and painted perhaps in the 1630s or later. It should be noticed that the face found in this painting is an exact copy of that found in the formal portrait painted in 1601, noticed later.



Sir John Scudamore (1542-1623)
Gentleman Pensioner

Her husband's office at court had improved his prestige, but his second marriage to Mary Shelton proved to be far more useful. Mary increasingly had the queen's ear, and could control the people who had access to her. To her enemies Mary was later described as "a barborous, brazen-faced woman" but to her friends she became with Blanche Parry (1508-1590) and Jane Russell (1549-1604), the countess of Warwick, as one of a "Trinity of Ladies able to worke miracles" for a petitioner looking for a royal favor.²¹ Rowland Vaughan, a kinsman of Blanche Parry, later remarked how "in little lay matters [the ladies] would steal opportunity to serve some friends turns." The ladies had practically no influence when it came to decisions on matters of state, but frequently they could help on smaller matters and presented petitions and letters asking for wardships, pensions, lands, military appointments, as well as requests for university and ecclesiastical preferments to the queen. That Mary's influence was particularly effective and in great demand is witnessed by the several surviving letters of those who received her help.

While Mary enjoyed a rather more deserving status than most of the ladies, she was by no means alone in having to endure cramped and uncomfortable quarters at court. At Windsor the apartments of the maids of honor were so primitive they were obliged to ask "to have their chambers ceiled and the partition that is of boards there to be made higher, for that the servants look over." Life was even worse when the court went on a royal progress each summer, a custom originated by the queen. She liked to be seen and to maintain contact with the common people of her realm. It also got the court out of London during the plague season. When the queen went on progress she was not content to be accompanied by a mere handful of courtiers and ladies in waiting. She took along a great multitude of the household in a large train with their luggage, as well as with her own bed and a personal altar, food, and other real or presumed necessities. To maintain the level of magnificent which her subjects expected both of her courtiers and herself, the entire household had to live and behave as if they were still resident at one of the royal palaces. Transporting what amounted to a royal village for ten weeks was a logistical nightmare that took 400 or 500 wagons. A pace of ten miles a day for the caravan was the usual expectation and this limited the progress to the southern, midland, or home counties.²²

The standard of Tudor sanitation was intolerable and a royal progress did give time to air out and "sweeten" the royal palaces. The accommodations at the stately houses during the summer

²¹Blanche Parry had been a nurse to the infant Elizabeth, "whose cradell I saw rockte" (as a monument in the church at Bacton, Herefordshire states), and was made a lady-in-waiting to the princess when she was only three. She became the chief gentlewoman of the privy chamber in 1565, and became "beneficial to her kinsfolke and countrymen" at court. Jane Russell may have been a member of Elizabeth's household before her accession, and had married Ambrose Dudley (c.1530-1590), the earl of Warwick, at the age of 16. Both parties to this happy marriage came out of great protestant families and they had the queen's enthusiastic permission. In contrast to the Scudamore marriage, it was celebrated with great opulence in the chapel at Whitehall Palace on 11 November 1565. Like Mary Scudamore, the countess of Warrick died soon after the queen on 9 February 1604 after serving until the very end of the reign.

²²An account of a royal progress can be found in a fine children's book, *The Queen's Progress*, by Celeste Davidson Mann (New York, Viking, 2003). A particular delight are the 26 large lettered color plates by Bagram Ibatoulline with his drawings of the queen's ladies and also of her amusing dwarf Mrs. Tomason.

months, other than those for the queen, were of a makeshift nature. They were filled in the warm weather with disagreeable odors when there were so many mouths to feed, so many bodies to accommodate, and at least 2400 horses to stable. The house of Sir William Cecil (1521-1598), the lord treasurer, at Theobalds at Cheshunt, Hertfordshire was particularly dreaded by the gentlewomen of the privy chamber.²³ They were obliged there to sleep with a number of Lord Burghley's servants in two rooms in a garret where there was only a single fireplace if the night turned chilly.

Mary soon became one of Elizabeth's favorite sleeping companions. While she was the undoubted mistress of Holme Lacy, she was seldom there for the queen's leave for her ladies to be gone from the court was hard to obtain.²⁴ On 9 October 1576 she was away with her husband, but was hastily summoned back to court when Lady Dorothy Stafford (1526-1604), another of the senior ladies, broke her leg in a riding accident. The earl of Sussex wrote to Mary at Holme Lacy from court "for I fear untill you come her Majestie shall not in the night have the most part so good rest as she wyll take after your comyng."²⁵

Now, as one of the most influential ladies at court, Mary had a royal grant for Cranbourne Park in Dorset on 7 June 1577 "in consideration of her good, nice and faithful and acceptable services as a gentlewoman of the Queen's private chambers." Later, on 3 October 1584, she had an annuity from the queen of £100 (to be paid in reversion after the death of William Worthington), another £400 in April 1591, and still another "free gift" of £300 in May 1594.²⁶

Among Lady Mary's papers once preserved at Holme Lacy was one of the very rare internal records of the privy chamber called the "book of the stuffe of the quenes majestie's wardrobe."²⁷ The queen took enormous pains with her appearance, and had hundreds of dresses and a fine collection of jewelry. To guard against an unfavorable comparison the queen required her maids of honor wear only dresses of white and silver, insipid colors that were designed to make her own bejewelled ensembles appear to best effect. Set down in the daybook kept by Mary were the items of Elizabeth's clothing and jewelry stored in the privy chamber. Since it begins in 1561 (and ran to 1585) Mary presumably inherited the book, and the keeping of it, from one of her predecessors. The manuscript edited by Janet Arnold, the great authority on Tudor dress, was published in 1980.²⁸

²³There were 13 progresses to Theobalds during Burghley's life, the last in 1597, where he entertained the queen in a princely fashion that cost him £3000. He set the very high standard for what Elizabeth's expectation became for a stay at other country houses.

²⁴Holme Lacy was rebuilt in the 1540s in brick with picturesque gables and stone mullions by her husband's grandfather, and the chapel of completed house was consecrated on 11 June 1546. The house that Lady Mary and her husband knew was set "sweetly on a hill" and was taxed on 48 hearths in 1665. John, second viscount Scudamore (1649-1697), did a second rebuilding in the style of a French or Flemish chateau in 1674. Most of the earlier house was lost, but the chapel was saved and the house passed by inheritance after the death of the duchess of Norfolk in 1820 to Sir Edwyn Francis Stanhope (who took the additional surname Scudamore in 1827). It was sold by his grandson out of the family in 1909 and is now run as a resort hotel.

²⁵PRO, C115/M19/7543. Letter from Thomas Radcliffe (died 1583), third earl of Sussex, addressed to Mary Skydmore then at Holme Lacy.

²⁶PRO, SO.3, folios 290 and 470.

²⁷PRO, C115/L2/6697.

²⁸Janet Arnold, *Lost From Her Majesties Back* (The Costume Society, Extra Series, VII, 1980.)

While she was seldom in Herefordshire, she clearly still had a hand in the raising of her five stepchildren. Henry (Harry), the eldest and his father's heir apparent, had been born about 1561.²⁹ He was admitted to the Middle Temple to study the law on 16 April 1583 as the son of John Scudamore of Herefordshire. His father had stood adroitly apart from the bitter fight for power between the Crofts and Sir Thomas Coningsby in Hereford, but Henry got involved in this factional fight probably at the instigation of his cousin Herbert Croft when Robert Devereux (1567-1601), the earl of Essex, became involved and went over to Coningsby's side.³⁰ Henry was arrested on 4 November 1590 (with five other unnamed companions, friends of his father) on order of the Privy Council after Essex complained that Henry had caused a riot at Ross-on-Wye.³¹ Mary Scudamore wrote from court to her husband at Holme Lacy defending Harry: "I am galad to here that harre Scudam^o is wythe you hopinge he will be more carefull to plesse you hereafter an indeavor to your comfort alwayes."³² Henry died about 1591 before his father, perhaps abroad since he was not buried in the church at Holme Lacy.³³

Her husband's second son John was baptized 3 August 1567 at Holme Lacy. He matriculated 28 November 1581 at Hart Hall, Oxford at the age of 15. By August 1586 he was a confidential secretary to Sir Francis Walsingham, founder of Queen Elizabeth's secret service.³⁴ Walsingham sent him to watch Anthony Babington (1561-1586) who headed a Catholic conspiracy to assassinate the queen and then to free Mary Stewart, queen of Scots, from her imprisonment. Babington, already a nervous conspirator, invited Scudamore and Christopher Thornwood to dinner at a tavern called The Grape thinking that they were inclined to the plot. Scudamore said that he had nothing to eat since morning, and Babington ordered a generous meal for the party. While they were eating a note arrived for Scudamore. Babington managed to get a surreptitious look at it and saw enough to see that it was an order for Scudamore to arrest him. Babington strolled leisurely to the bar presumably "to pay the reckoning" leaving his cape and sword on the back of his chair. Once he was out of the sight of Scudamore he took to his heels and fled.

All of the plotters were arrested soon after, confessed, and were promptly hung in September 1586. Mary, the queen of Scots, who clearly knew about the plot and had condoned it, was beheaded.³⁵ Scudamore managed to survive his incompetence in bungling Babington's arrest, and

It is said to have taken her ladies two hours in the morning to dress the queen, and another two hours at night to get her ready for bed.

²⁹His christening is not found since the Holme Lacy register does not begin until 1562.

³⁰Essex, the well-known favorite of the queen, dominated Herefordshire politics until his execution in 1601.

³¹Historical Mss. Commission, *Hatfield House*, V (1894), 445-7. Henry and his associates were accused of assaulting Anthony Pembridge, a former undersheriff, and a solicitor for the earl of Essex.

³²PRO, C115/M16/7368.

³³Harry was remembered as a child in his grandfather's will in 1571 but was dead by 1592 when his younger brother John was identified as the heir of their father.

³⁴Stephen Budiansky, *Her majesty's spymaster: Elizabeth I, Sir Francis Walsingham, and the birth of modern espionage* (Viking, 2005), 156-165.

³⁵The young Babington had served as a page in the household of the George Talbot, the sixth earl of Shrewsbury, who had the custody of Mary Steward. She was imprisoned at his castle at

was at Barn Elms, Walsingham's home near Richmond, on October 19th to meet with the dramatist Christopher Marlowe who was also enrolled as one of Walsingham's secretaries.³⁶

He left for Italy where he was admitted to the English College at Rome on 10 January 1591, aged 28, and where he was ordained a priest on 7 May 1592. He returned immediately to England after his ordination and distributed large quantities of devotional articles which he said had been blessed by Pope Clement VIII.

On 17 January 1592/3 he was arrested, accused by an Irishman, Hugh Cahill, of being a party to a popish plot to assassinate the queen. He was freed soon after presumably having proved his innocence. It is difficult to tell what his true sentiment was in this period, but it appears that he was certainly not trusted completely by the English Catholics. However in September 1593 he took two daughters of the Wiseman family of Braddocks, Essex to Louvain to become nuns, and then went back to Rome.³⁷

In March 1594 a careful description had been set down of him. "Skidmor is a tall man aged 30, long-visaged, his nose long and thick, his beard stubbed, round cut and somewhate long, of a dark colour. He holdeth his head a little down; his cloak and breeches were near a peach colour; his stocking orange tawny."

Two months later on 2 May Skidmore was "lying sicke" at Gravelines, now a seaport in northern France, but then the fortified western border town of the Spanish territories in Flanders. Henry Thirkell gave a deposition saying that Skidmore had earlier used one of his devious talents to forge the signature of Sir Thomas Baskerville to counterfeit a false passport for him.³⁸

He was at Florence on 7 July 1595 when he wrote a letter for John Dowland recommending him for his "exquistenes upon the lute and his carriage in musick." Dowland, fearful later that his acquaintance with the belligerent Skidmore might be misunderstood, wrote a letter on 10 November 1595 from Nuremberg, Germany, stating that Skidmore (who had presented himself as the son of and heir of Sir John Skidmore of the Court) told him that the queen had nothing to fear from the English Catholics. It was the Jesuits of the Spanish faction who wished her harm "and we [the English Catholics] have many *jars* [disagreements] with them & withall [he] wished to God the Queen were a Catholic, said he, to defend my Country against the Spaniards I would come to England and bear a pike on my shoulders."³⁹

After Lady Mary's death he supposedly became an apostate and had a special pardon on 4 August 1606. On the 5th of October John Chamberlain wrote to Dudley Carleton that "Sir John Skidmore's eldest sonne that was a priest is likewise converted and reveals many things of great moment."⁴⁰ He was taken into the household of the archbishop of Canterbury for a time, but then

Sheffield where his countess, Bess of Hardwick, became the intimate friend of the Scottish queen.

³⁶Hugh Ross Williamson, *Kind Kit, an informal biography of Christopher Marlowe* (St. Martin's, 1973), 100-3, 124-5.

³⁷*Records of the English Province of Jesus*, ed. H. Foley (1880), VI, 185, and *The Letters and Disptches of Richard Vestegan*, ed. A. G. Petti (1959), 101-2.

³⁸Sir Thomas Baskerville (died 1597) was the first husband of the Mary Throckmorton who made a disastrous second marriage to his brother Sir James Scudamore.

³⁹Diana Poulton, *John Dowland* (2nd edition, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982) 36-40, 426.

⁴⁰*Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure (American Philosophical Society,

went back to Florence. An extract from another letter by Sir Dudley Carleton (now newly knighted and the English ambassador to Venice) written to William Trumbull on 2 August 1611 gives some further news of him: “At Florence, at a supper of our countrymen, one Cartwright was slain in a sudden quarrel at the *board* [table] Sir John Hamlden, a bankrupt knight, for having an old quarrel with him, is condemned to the galleys; Skidmore, a swaggering captain, for giving the blow, to the gallows.”⁴¹

Skidmore managed to escape this sentence in Italy and returned to England. He had clearly alienated many of his friends and been a cruel disappointment to his father who did not mention him in his will.⁴² However the jurors who witnessed the inquest *post mortem* of Sir John taken in 1623 could not by law ignore a father’s displeasure with his legal heir, and they set down in their inquest the existence of John as then living and aged 56.⁴³

He was at Oxford on 26 March 1624, probably desperately poor, when he surrendered his interest in his father’s estate and confirmed to his nephew Sir John Scudamore, *baronet*, his former home at Holme Lacy as well as all the other lands and leaseholds that had belonged to his father.⁴⁴ In return his nephew (the young Sir John) allowed him a quarterly annuity of £15.⁴⁵ Two years later John Scudamore, *Esquire*, the uncle, entered into an agreement on 28 November 1626 to pay £3 10sh out of his quarterly annuity to James Whittney of Oxford University to reduce the debts that he owed both to Richard Davenant and John Nurse, a mercer of London.

At some unknown date he went to Brittany where now, once again a Catholic, he is said to have become a Benedictine monk. On 1 December 1633 Sir Francis Windebank, the secretary of state, gave him leave to return to England after the intercession of the archbishop of Canterbury. Leave was granted to him as “Mr. B. Leander, *olim* [formerly] John Skidmore *alias* Jones, formerly a fellow of St. John’s College, Oxford.” He was apparently living in London on 3 July 1635 when there is another letter to him (as Father Leander) concerning agents in Brittany and elsewhere.⁴⁶ Nothing more is known of him after 1635.⁴⁷

Lady Mary’s third (and youngest) stepson was Sir James Scudamore of Holme Lacy who had been baptized there on 10 June 1568. At the age of 18 he bore the armorial pennant at the funeral of Sir Philip Sidney on 16 February 1587. He was called a Catholic recusant in 1592, and was admitted

1939) 233. The Chamberlain-Carleton correspondence extended over a period of 30 years.

⁴¹Sir John Hamlden, of Sussex, had been knighted by James I at the Tower on 14 March 1604, and was later called a pensioner of the king. In 1613 he was caught on a pirate ship (possibly the galley to which he had been sentenced) and offered the feeble defense that he was only a passenger.

⁴²PRO, PROB 11/142, recorded 7 May 1623.

⁴³PRO, C142/404/114.

⁴⁴The young Sir John was made a baronet in 1620, and a viscount in 1628. See Ian Atherton, *Ambition and failure in Stuart England, the career of John, first Viscount Scudamore* (Manchester University Press, 1999).

⁴⁵PRO, C115/B2/532.

⁴⁶The covering address was to “A Mons. Monsieur Scudamore, Londres.” The signature of his correspondent in France is illegible. See the *Calendar of the Clarendon State Papers Preserved in the Bodeian Library*, I, 41 (no. 328); 66 (no. 505).

⁴⁷He was not the John Skidmore buried at Blackfriars in London as has been said. His burial has not been found in the surviving parish registers at Oxford or elsewhere.

to Gray's Inn on 13 March 1594/5. James Scudamore accompanied the earl of Essex to Cadiz where he was knighted by Essex on 22 June 1596.

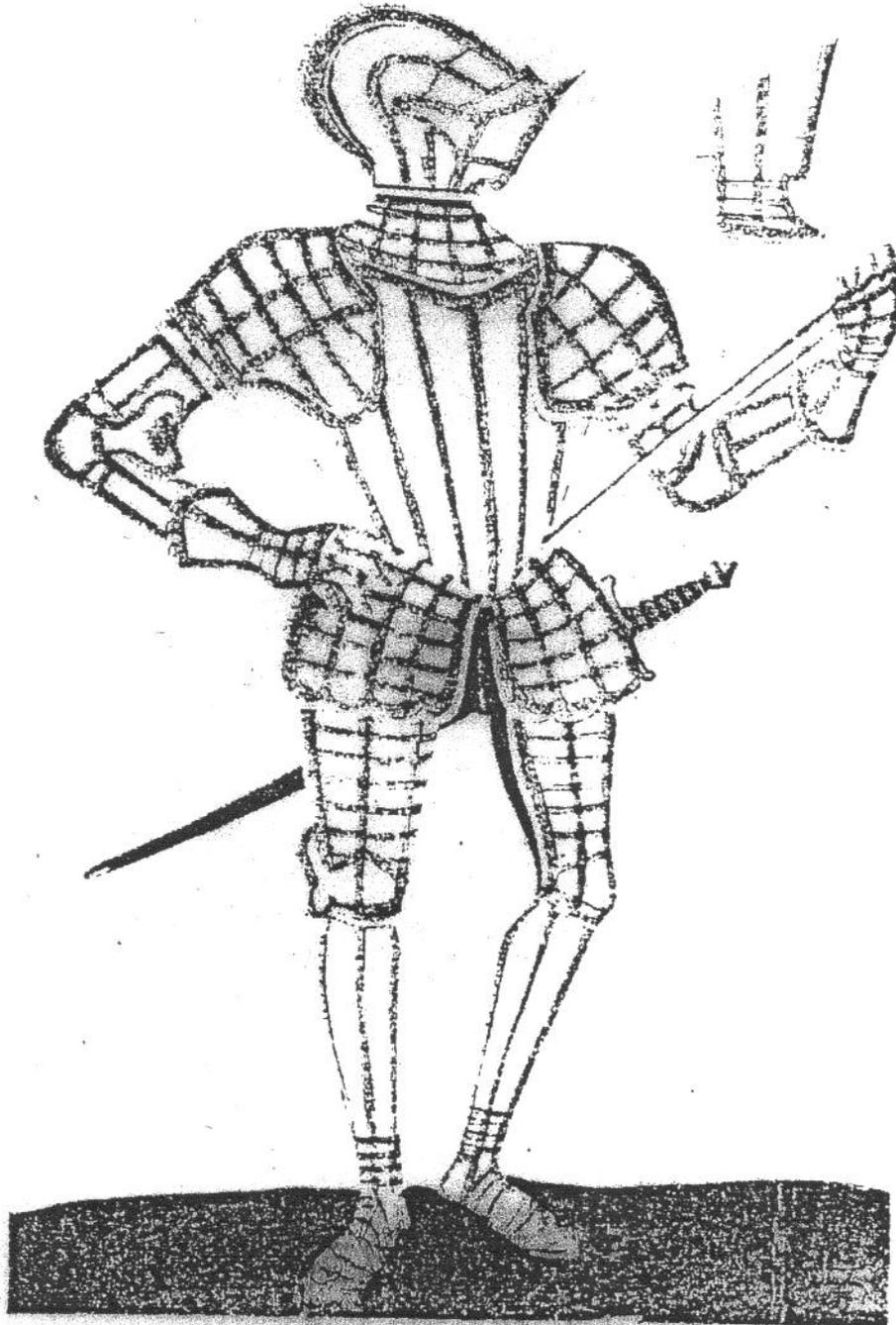
This was a happier time for Lady Mary and her husband, for he now had a dutiful son and heir apparent who had made an advantageous marriage on 21 March 1597 to Mary Houghton. Mary was the daughter and co-heiress of Peter Houghton, a wealthy alderman of London and brought him a fortune of £12,000. She died soon after in childbirth and was buried on 16 August 1598 at Holme Lacy.

He became one of the foremost tilters at Greenwich Palace in 1595, appearing before the queen in the annual Accession Day tilts which celebrated the day, November 17th, when she came to the throne.⁴⁸ Henry VIII had built the most prestigious armour works and banqueting hall in all of Europe at Greenwich, and impressed both his subjects and visiting dignitaries by staging enormous pageants at the palace. They were accompanied by jousts and tournaments at a tiltyard overlooked by two huge towers to which the king invited the most important persons of his day as spectators. The two suits of Scudamore armour, one made for him and the other perhaps for his father, are now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.⁴⁹ Sir James' portrait, clad in his elegant armour, hangs in the dining room at Kentchurch Court.⁵⁰ The museum acquired them before the furnishings at Holme Lacy were sold in 1910. It may be that the plainer suit (shown here in an early drawing from the South Kensington Museum) was made for his father who in 1623 bequeathed his armour to his grandson John.

⁴⁸Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth, Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London, Pimlico, 1999) 156-9. See also Appendix I, where Strong finds his name on every list of tilters at Whitehall from 1595 through 1600.

⁴⁹*Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. 8, no. 6 (June, 1913) 118-23.

⁵⁰Strong reduces the portrait which shows Sir James in his marvelous suit, lance in hand, bases of velvet thick and fringed with silver, with an orange scarf (perhaps his lady's favour) fluttering from his shoulder. The background is not at the tiltyard at Whitehall, but rather a romantic sylvan setting in the shade of a greenwood tree.



**Mr. Skidmuer's armor from a drawing
in the South Kensington Museum**



Sir James Scudamore (1568-1619)

The pasteboard *impresa* on the shield of Sir James read “L’escu d’amour.”⁵¹ It was presented by his page to the queen at his turn at the tilt. This was a pun on his surname, and probably gave rise at the tilt in 1595 to the bit of “gratulatory” doggerel verse set down by the poet and playwright George Peele:

L’escu d’amour, the arms of loyalty
Lodg’d Skydmore in his heart; and on he came,
And well and worthily demeaned himself
In that day’s service: short and plain to be,
No Lord nor knight more foreard than was he.

The *impresas* were afterwards collected and hung in a waterside gallery at Whitehall where they were later shown to every visitor to the palace.

Sir John had acquired a house near the tiltyard undoubtedly both for his use and that of his son.⁵² All of this armour and display was expensive, and Sir James is said to have spent the larger part of the £12,000 pounds that he had from his first wife on tilting. But he had become something of a young favorite of the queen, and Edmund Spenser held Sir James up as a pattern of chivalry as “the gentle Scudamour” in the fourth book of his *Faerie Queen* published later in 1596.

Sir James was made the deputy lieutenant of Herefordshire (succeeding his father) on 25 August 1600, became the sheriff in 1601, and a member of Parliament for the county in 1603 and for several years thereafter. He had been bred a Catholic but later renounced the old faith with his father and a part of his family soon after the turn of the century, after they had concealed their true sentiments for many years. Sir James himself had a remarkable reversion of religious sentiment. On Wednesday evening, 19 June 1605 (having given up the old faith) he and three other justices of the county (with the blessing of both the bishop of Hereford and the bishop of Llandaff) made a thirty-mile sweep along the border between Herefordshire and Monmouthshire to flush out Catholics. The justices, accompanied by an armed band of men, descended first on The Darren where mass was known to be said. Then they made a house by house and village by village search that lasted all night and into the next day. They found “altars, images, books of superstition, relics of idolatry” but no Catholics since they had fled west and south into Wales.

He was appointed to the council of the Welsh Marches on 12 November 1617 and subscribed £30 to the Virginia Company. His father surrendered the office of *custos rotulorum* to him in 1616, but then took it back after Sir James died in 1619. Sir John kept it for three years and then granted it to his grandson John as soon as he turned 21 in 1622.⁵³

⁵¹William Camden (1551-1623), the herald and antiquary, defined the use of the *impresa*: “An *impress* (as the Italians call it) is a device in Picture with his Motto or Word, borne by Noble and Learned Personages, to notify some particular conceit of their own, as Emblems...” For the use of these jousting mottoes see Lisa Hopkins, *Queen Elizabeth I And Her Court* (St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 191-3.

⁵²BL, Add. MS. 11,053, folio 40.

⁵³Atherton, 140. The keeper of the rolls was the highest civil officer in the county. It was usually held by a local person of rank who was appointed by the crown. The elder Sir John held it first by

Sir James made what became a disastrous second marriage on 11 April 1599 at St. James Clerkenwell, to Mary Thockmorton. She was a daughter of Sir Thomas Throckmorton of Coss Court, Tortworth, Gloucestershire and was previously the widow of Sir Thomas Baskerville (died 1597) of Sunningwell, Berkshire. Lady Mary (née Shelton), his stepmother, did not live to see the marital troubles that developed between them. Sir James and his wife separated in the summer of 1607, but then briefly reconciled. She had been taken in at the birth of her second son Barnabas by her sister Margaret and her brother-in-law Sir Barnabas Sambourne at Timsbury, Somerset. On 18 September 1609 she complained to Lord Salisbury that she had been turned out of Holme Lacy by her father-in-law Sir John, maltreated by her husband, and refused justice by the bishop of London.⁵⁴ Sir James, writing to his father on 13 February 1607, says that his wife “by her own tongue has brought her into greater miseries than any enemy could have imposed upon her and is condemned by all parties.”

She later alienated her son, now viscount Scudamore, as his correspondence with bishop William Laud shows, but he gave his mother a pension to maintain her ladies and her household at Sunningwell. A codicil to her will of this unhappy lady in her own hand still survives, and it is clear from it that her mind was seriously confused. She was buried at Sunningwell on 17 October 1632. A portrait, done on the occasion of her son’s marriage to Elizabeth Porter on 12 March 1614/5, no doubt intended as a wedding gift, and formerly thought to be that of Mary Thockmorton, is now at Montacute House in Somerset.⁵⁵ Sir James died before his father on 13 April 1619 and was buried at Holme Lacy on the following day.

Lady Mary also had two stepdaughters. Ursula (baptized 14 December 1568) and Alice (baptized 20 September 1569) were left annual legacies in 1571 of £5 each in the will of their grandfather, but only for the term of ten years.⁵⁶ Ursula married Alexander Walwyn (1561-1617) of Old Court, Lugwardine, Herefordshire. Alice was complained of in a letter dated only “Januarie the 13” by her uncle George Scudamore (1552-1633) written to his elder brother John after a Christmas holiday he had spent at Holme Lacy:

Sir: I was so carried awaie with Christmas though[t]s that I altogether forgote to speake of what I intended towchinge my cosine *Eles* [Alice]. Your daughter, who have more neede of a good mistress than a new fashioned gowne. I knowe wher she nowe leaveth, that her rome is better well come than her companie, for she never inquereth when hit is daie before tenne of the clocke, that she maybe reddie for dinner by *xi* [11 o’clock]. This can not prove well; Mrs. Pie or my Lady Aubrie (gentlewoman of great sobrietie fit to tame so unrulie a young gentelwoman as she is if report may be beleaved) are to be inquired and that speadellie. So wishinge that

1561 and it later became practically hereditary with his descendants.

⁵⁴PRO, SP 14/43/40. Sir John had a long and frequently unpopular career in local politics. Her bitter accusation about her father-in-law is however, still the only unkind record found set down about his character.

⁵⁵It has lately been identified as a portrait of the viscount’s mother-in-law, Lady Anne Porter of Llanton, Gloucestershire and not his mother.

⁵⁶Alice (as an infant not yet two) seems to have been the daughter called *Anne* in 1571 by her grandfather in his will.

some spedie course may be taken for reformation and that homlacie (thoughe to your trouble) may holde her for a time. I end and bid you fare well restinge yours to command:
George Scudamore.⁵⁷

In addition to her other responsibilities Mary's chores had also expanded to looking on occasion after the minor complaints of the queen. There is a very curious apothecary's bill submitted to the treasurer in 1588 for "*Thragea regal' cum rhabarbaro incisso, ex mandate Regina pro Domina Scudamore, xvi d.*"⁵⁸ Rhubarb was frequently prescribed at that time as both a general tonic and as a cathartic.

A list of the customary annual New Year's gifts to the queen survives for 1 January 1588/9. On the list it appears that "Mrs. *Skideamore*, [gave] parte of a loose gowne of black taffety with a border, ymbrodered with a chayne of Venis gold and tufts of white silke." Elsewhere on the same list, but further down under the list of gentleman, Mr. *Skideamore* is credited with making the same gift.⁵⁹

It was always difficult for Mary Scudamore to get time away from court, but the gentlemen pensioners who were never on continuous duty could usually arrange for a substitute among their colleagues.⁶⁰ When the court was at Oatlands Palace they were able to get away to stay with Dr. John Dee at Mortlake, Surrey on 7 June 1590. They were old friends and Mrs. Skydmore had earlier been one of the sponsors at the christening of the Dee's daughter Katherine on 10 June 1581.⁶¹ Dee notes in his diary the visit by Mr. and Mrs. Skydmore, and that they came with *his* unnamed daughter.⁶² They were also accompanied by the queens's dwarf, Mrs. Tomasin.⁶³ The party spent the

⁵⁷PRO, C115/M18/7489. She is presumably the Alice Scudmore buried on 5 Novemer 1580 at Leominster, Herefordshire at the presumptive age of 11. The complainant was her uncle George (1552-1633), ancestor of the family of Treworgan House in Llangarron. [This family suffered greatly for remaining true to both the old Catholic faith, after the Holme Lacy family had recanted, and also for adhering to the royalist cause.]

⁵⁸*Gentleman's Magazine*, 1814 (vol. 84, ii, 3).

⁵⁹Many of the gifts are noticed as having been delivered to Mrs. Skidmore. Of the ladies already met: "By the Countess of Warwick, a chayne, containing 22 aggetts slytely garnessed with gold, and 22 bawles of jheat slyterly garnessed over with seed pearles," and "By Mrs. Blaunch Aparry, one long cushion of tawny cloth of gold, backed with taffety." The earl of Shrewsbury gave £20 in gold, while Mrs. Tomason, the queen's dwarf, at the other extreme, gave the queen "one handkercher of cambrick wroughte with silke."

⁶⁰However after Sir John became the standard bearer of the pensioners he was probably on more or less constant duty at court..

⁶¹The other two godparents to Dee's daughter were Lady Katherine Blount (c.1565-1629), the second wife of Sir James Croft, and John Pakington (1549-1625) "of the court," a kinsman of John Skydmore. Handsome portraits of Sir John Pakington and his wife (with whom he also later had marital difficulties), once at Holme Lacy, are now at Kentchurch Court.

⁶²It is significant that Dr. Dee calls her "*his* daughter" as his wife Mary Scudamore had no children. The daughter appears (by elimination) to have been Ursula Scudamore, perhaps already the wife of Walwyn.

⁶³Mistress Tomason (the spelling varies), the queen's dwarf, was one of the court jesters. She is

night and next day Dee's wife, Jane Fromond (1555-1605), went back with Mistress Skydmore to join the queen and the court at Oatlands.⁶⁴

In the 1580s a small industry turned up that supplied portraits of Elizabeth to adorn the walls of country houses of the courtiers. All of them have exactly the same face of the queen, but with different dresses.⁶⁵ Strong attributed the six of these pictures known to him in 1969 to John Bettes the Younger (died 1616).⁶⁶ Bettes was an active "picturemaker" by 1582 but as such he was, according to Strong, one of a very humble kind. He never had the advantage of a sitting by the queen but he was able to manufacture rather wooden likenesses to meet a rising demand from materials that he kept in his workshop. Sir John and his wife appear to have commissioned still another picture by Bettes, not known to Strong, that was at Holme Lacy until it was sold at the auction of 1910.

The queen was always stingy when it came to honors. Sir John was finally knighted probably on or about 14 September 1592 when the queen and court were on a western progress. She was at Sudeley Castle in Gloucestershire visiting Giles Brydges (1548-1594), third baron Chandos, who had entertained her three times. In 1592 to amuse the queen he staged a spectacular feast to celebrate the anniversary of the defeat of the Spanish Armada. Lady Mary wrote to the earl and countess of Shrewsbury a month later on 12 October 1592 from Hampton Court thanking them for their congratulations, adding that "For that Mrs. Skidmors sake who was ever bound to you, I do offer myself, Ladiship & all, to be at your service."

The new Lady Skidmore also added that she had presented their invitational letter to the queen who gratefully accepted it, and she was now happy to report that the queen had expressed her intention to visit them on her progress in 1593. Then Lady Mary continued that "as for my husband S^r John my Ladiship never saw him since the Q. did him that favor. I doubt me, he has playd me a Walsh trick, for except he be with you, I know not what is become of him."⁶⁷ This letter is one of

said to have been an Italian named *Tomasina*, well-spoken, with an elegant bearing and a wardrobe of altered clothes from the queen's own closet. She was also a masterful storyteller and comedienne who often said in jest what others in the court only dared to think. For an imaginative drawing of her see the letter "J" in the child's book on the progress by Mrs. Mannis noticed earlier.

⁶⁴*The Private Diary of Dr. John Dee*, edited by J. O. Halliwell (1842) 7. Dee was a fine scholar in mathematics and astronomy, but he also dabbled in the pseudo-sciences of alchemy, astrology, spiritualism, and prognostication. However he is still one of the most charming and interesting of Elizabethans. He acquired one of the largest private libraries in England, and is also credited with helping to save the books and manuscripts dispersed after the suppression of the monasteries by Henry VIII.

⁶⁵It has been suggested that some of the ladies at court may have posed in the queen's dresses for the portraits, or perhaps put them out for Bettes to copy.

⁶⁶Roy Strong, *Gloriana, the portraits of Elizabeth I* (Plimico, 2003), 117-9. This portrait was sold on 3 February 1910 with the contents of Holme Lacy mansion at an auction held by the direction of the earl of Chesterfield. There is an extremely poor photograph of it in the sale catalogue where it was item 729 and described as by Zucchero (an error), but then more correctly as "a half-length portrait of Queen Elizabeth in state robes, holding a fan, in carved gilt frame on panel, 36 in by 27 in." Three of the portraits by Bettes that are illustrated in Strong's book (nos. 116, 117 and 119) show the queen holding a studio fan.

⁶⁷*A Calendar of the Shrewsbury and Talbot Papers in Lambeth Palace Library and College of*

several that show the close and affectionate friendship which existed for years between her husband and herself with the Talbots.⁶⁸

On 21 December 1593 one of the queen's presumed kinsmen George Boleyn, the dean of Lichfield, wrote to the earl of Shrewsbury to advise him on how to delay the confirmation of a lease which the chapter of Litchfield cathedral had made to one of Shrewsbury's enemies. The real difficulty that concerned Boleyn was his lack of access to the queen.⁶⁹ He writes,

I am afraid that your lordship is not like to heare in haste from my cousen Skidmore, who though she be my good friend and cousen who I love well, yet is she one that is wonte to delaye more than needes, and looseth many a tided for the takyng, though she must watch for her tyde if she will speede her business. But the question will be howe to gett either my letters or the Chapters delivered to her maiestie ffor my Lord Chamberlayne certaynlie will not deliver it: and as for my cousins Skidmore or Scudamore there is no full confidence in her. *Experto crede Roberto* is an old proverb. But as her speche is fayre & as smooth as a reede, so I do beseche your honor to take this as a wathe word spoken under *benedicite*, because I feare a writte called, *ne noceat*. Ffor women be waspische and will do a man more harme whan they ar angred than good whan they be quiet. And therefore the countesse I trust shall not knowe of this leaste one woman tell an other, as *Graeculus graeculo gaudet*.⁷⁰

Both the Cecil and Talbot correspondence show that she continued to be regarded in most quarters as a particularly effective intermediary with the queen. In March 1597 Lady Scudamore presented a letter to Elizabeth from Sir Robert Sidney soliciting his appointment as warden of the Cinque Ports. The queen's response was to read through it carefully, and then derisively, with no other comment except two or three nasty "pughs." She gave the place soon after to Lord Cobham. In 1599 Charles Cornwallis wrote to Mary about her virtues having advanced her "to that honourable place you are in & therin have continued you to the great good of the house [the Howards] from whence you are descended."⁷¹ However, elsewhere the financial exploitation of her influence has

Arms, London, (H.M.S.O., 1966), book H, folio 441.

⁶⁸Mary Talbot, the countess of Shrewsbury, was a daughter of Bess of Hardwick (who was the *dowager* countess of Shrewsbury). See Mary S. Lowell, *Bess of Hardwick, Empire Builder* (Norton, 2006), 462-3, 494-5, for the young earl of Shrewsbury and his wife Mary (née Cavendish, 1557-1632). The young countess died an obdurate Catholic in 1632 wearing a crucifix about her neck to celebrate her faith.

⁶⁹George Boleyn (died 1603) calls himself a cousin of Lady Mary. He was probably a son of the elder George Boleyn (viscount Rochford), a brother of the unfortunate Queen Anne, but his exact relationship to the family remains unknown. The Boleyns were another family, formerly *Bullens*, who restyled their name to *Boleyn* when it became fashionable in the time of the Tudors (who were obsessed with genealogy and pedigree) to have Norman ancestors.

⁷⁰Lambeth Palace Library, *Shrewsbury MS. 707*, folio 221-2.

⁷¹PRO, C115/M18/7511. Mary was a granddaughter of Lady Elizabeth Howard (died 1538), who was a daughter of Thomas Howard (1443-1524), 2nd duke of Norfolk, and wife of Thomas Boleyn.

been cited as evidence of increasing greed of the privy chamber in the 1590s.⁷²

As the queen grew older she was even more difficult to access. The small circle of women, who still were her most intimate friends and companions, now had their opportunities to trade with their positions greatly enhanced. Some of them earned in the process a reputation for avarice. Thus on 24 February 1594 Francis Markham wrote from Gray's Inn to the earl of Shrewsbury about his efforts to get an advancement to a lieutenancy, which might be done by "the brybing of some about hir maiestie, ladyes of the privy chamber or such lyke."⁷³ Later in the same year Sir William Cornwallis was enraged at the prospect that "a base merchants soone [son] of Norwich shall goe home and tell all that town in my own Cuntrey how he hath more powr by lending my lady Skidmore 500 pounds five yeer agone, or rather in deed, by putting some purse in to her poket."⁷⁴ Cornwallis had served the queen himself for 24 years, but he now described Lady Skidmore as "a barbarous brasen faced woman" in a letter to Lord Burghley.⁷⁵

There is a grand painting, called *Queen Elizabeth going in Procession to Blackfriars in 1600*.⁷⁶ It shows Elizabeth, not as Gloriana in her sunset, but rather as of legend, young, clad in white dress studded with jewels, pushed along on a wheeled "triumphal chair" with a canopy of cloth embroidered with flowers from a Tudor garden. The procession was on its way to celebrate the marriage of Anne Russell to Lord Herbert son of the earl of Worcester.⁷⁷ The queen is preceded by six Knights of the Garter, while 12 of the Gentlemen Pensioners are visible lining the street with their halberds erect. The ladies of the court follow in their farthingales and with the bejewelled headdresses popular in the closing years of the queen's reign. While five of the six knights are recognizable here from their portraits elsewhere, the painter did not do as careful a job with the lesser members of the court in attendance.⁷⁸ It may be taken as certain, even so, that both Sir John with his halberd and his lady were both there on 16 June 1600 (as the queen had ordered) among the figurative members of the procession.

⁷²This symptom of the times had become universal. Even the great Cecil, Lord Burghley, set down in a secret note just before his death in 1598 that he had in his capacity as master of the Court of Wards and Liveries accepted "sweeteners" of £3301 in the last 30 months of his life. This was at the time when Burley's annual salary was only £133.

⁷³Sheffield Central Library, *Bacon Frank MS*, 2/119.

⁷⁴Cornwallis died in 1611 at his home in Fincham, Norfolk.

⁷⁵Historical Manuscript Commission, *Hatfield House*, V, 30-31.

⁷⁶It survives at Sherborne Castle, and is seven feet long, and five feet high. How the picture got to the Digby family at Sherborne is unknown.

⁷⁷The bride was a niece of Jane Russell, the aging countess of Warwick, one of the "Trinity of Ladies" at court noticed earlier as able to work miracles.

⁷⁸Strong reproduces the painting in detail as the principal adornment of his book *The Cult of Elizabeth*. The only sword-bearer in the picture preceding the queen he identifies as Gilbert Talbot, the earl of Shrewsbury, now grown plump, who had been made a Knight of the Garter in 1592.



**Lady Mary Scudamore (ca. 1550-1603)
by Marcus Gheeraerts the younger, 1601**



**Sir John Scudamore (1542-1623)
by Marcus Gheeraerts the younger, 1601**

While we can not find them in the picture of 1600, the next year we do have two fine three-quarter length portraits of Lady Mary Scudamore (painted shortly before her death) together with a matching companion picture of her husband. Both are dated 1601 and were painted by Marcus Gheerhaerts the Younger on panels measuring 43 inches by 34 inches. In 1785 the portraits were listed as: “A man and woman in black, both unknown, he with a ruff, cloak, hand on his sword, and black bonnet; she with a row of pearls in her hand, and an anchor around her neck.” Both portraits were put up in the 1910 auction of the contents of Holme Lacy.⁷⁹ The portrait of Sir John is now at Kentchurch Court, but that of Lady Mary was later transferred by the earl of Chesterfield to Beningbrough Hall where it was finally sold in 1958, and then sold once again anonymously at Christie’s in 1969.

The queen became increasingly more melancholy. She no longer sat herself for painters, and in 1598 ordered that all the unseemly portraits of herself be destroyed. Throughout the late 1590s the prolonged strain of receiving incessant bad news from her commanders in Ireland made her particularly disagreeable. Her sharp criticisms of even the most minor shortcomings and her tedious preaching at her ladies frequently reduced them to “cry and bewail in piteous sort.” Her temper became really fierce in 1599 when her great favorite Essex did little except to create a wholesale lot of knights in Ireland and did little to settle the Irish question.⁸⁰ Protestantism had not brought about very many converts in Ireland, and at the end of her reign Ireland was still open to an invasion by the Spanish.

First Lord Burghley, and then one by one, all of the queen’s old friends and best advisers died. The queen followed at the age of 69 on 24 May 1603 at Richmond Palace on the banks of the Thames in Surrey. It had always been her favorite palace, and she went probably of pneumonia “mildly like a lamb, easily like a ripe apple from a tree” according to statement made by one of those who was at the deathbed. Lady Mary herself was seriously ill in 1602, but she was able to attend Elizabeth’s funeral at Westminster Abbey held on April 28th. The household was then dissolved in May and she and her husband were now unemployed. Like several other senior ladies of Elizabeth’s privy chamber Lady Mary did not survive the queen for very long, and she was buried at Holme Lacy just a few months later on 15 August 1603.

Her husband survived her for another twenty years. He had retired to what was a comfortable

⁷⁹They were offered as items 784 and 785 in the sale of 1910. Her portrait was described as “A three-quarter length portrait on panel of *Sybill [Vaughan]*, wife of Sir John Scudamore, *d. 1580*, in a black gown with jewelled collar, and necklace of pearls in carved gilt frame 43 in by 31 in.” Sir Roy Strong reproduces the original painting in his *The English icon, Elizabethan and Jacobean portraiture* (Paul Mellon Foundation, 1969) and calls her “probably *Eleanor Croft*.” There is a much more recent copy of this picture at Kentchurch Court (embellished with the Pakington arms and done for one of the Pakingtons (Lord Hampton) where the sitter is unfortunately wrongly identified as *Ursula Pakington*. Alas all these attributions are transparent errors for Ursula Pakington died in 1558, Sybil Vaughan in 1559, and Eleanor Croft in 1569, while the original portrait is clearly dated in the upper right hand corner and painted in 1601.

⁸⁰Sir John Scudamore had diplomatically made his peace with Essex before his disgrace and beheading. Sir James, his son, had gone with Essex on the attack against Cadiz in 1696, and on 2 March 1599 the earl had given the stewardship of his manor of Fownhope to Sir John. (PRO, CII5/H24/5376.)

life at Holme Lacy, where he helped to govern Herefordshire with the Conningsbys until his death. His papers show that Sir John was visited by a stream of learned visitors. Both he and his son Sir James were patrons of the Bodley Library, and its founder is said to have stayed at Holme Lacy.⁸¹ The mathematician Thomas Allen (1540-1632) of Trinity College was another visitor, and on one of his stays at Holme Lacy a maid who heard the ticking of his watch, a rare possession in the period, thought it a device of the devil and threw it out the window.⁸²

The earl of Shrewsbury, his longtime patron and probably best friend, had grown corpulent and suffered from gout.⁸³ He and the countess (who had always had an engaging habit of writing letters together to their family and friends) wrote a joint nostalgic letter to Sir John from the court of James I in 1610: "Oft doe we remember the former worlde in thus place, and the difference that is now betweene this and that, which is suche, as no man that lyves not in hit can conceave, but all wordly thynges are subject to change and alteration and therforer in the generall not to be wondered at."⁸⁴ Rowland Vaughan wrote in the same year (1610) that Sir John "hath alwayes beene to the comfort of the county: Nurse to to the infancie of many young Gentleman bred therein, and cherisher of the rest."⁸⁵

Sir John died at the age of 81 at 4 o'clock in morning of Easter Monday, 14 April 1623, and was buried at Holme Lacy on the following day. He had made his will nearly four years earlier on 20 July 1619. He seems to have outlived all of his children except his really difficult son John who significantly did not benefit from it. The heir to his entire Holme Lacy estate (worth probably at least £4000 by the year) was his grandson John, and he was named (with his great-uncle Rowland Scudamore) as the executors. His two younger grandsons (by his son Sir James) were also remembered, James with £200, and *Barnaby* (later Sir Barnabas), who already had the lease of Bridstow had it confirmed to him by the will. If he had any surviving granddaughters, for whom he might have provided a dowery, this may have been done earlier. He made some charitable bequests, and remembered only a single servant Katherine Eglesfield who had a small bequest of 20sh by the year for life.⁸⁶

His grandson John (later the first viscount) had the only two pieces of personalty singled out for mention. He was to have a gold chain that has been given to the testator by his grandfather. The young John Scudamore was to have his armour. That Sir John had armour of his own to bequeath in 1623 comes as a surprise and suggests that it may have been that slender suit called "Mr Skidmuer's" in the drawing that survives at the South Kensington Museum. The *Skidmuer* suit is not

⁸¹Sir John's gift of £40 in 1603 was used to purchase 114 books and a 12th century manuscript commentary on the Apocalypse, all for the use of the scholars at Oxford University.

⁸²John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, edited by Andrew Clark (Oxford, 1898) I, 27-8. Allen was also an astrologer, and one of a circle of friends that included Dr. John Dee (who left him a large concave mirror) and Sir Thomas Bodley.

⁸³See also G. R. Batho, *Gilbert Talbot, seventh earl of Shrewsbury (1553-1616); the great and glorious earl*, Derbyshire Archaeological Journal, vol. XCIII (1973), 23-32

⁸⁴PRO, C115/N2/8519.

⁸⁵Roland Vaughan, *Water-works*, sig. G3v; Society of Antiquaries, London, MS. 790/7.

⁸⁶PRO, PROB 11/142. The will was proved on 7 May 1623 by the executors. Sir John Pakington, his cousin (whose portrait is at Kentchurch Court), and Walter Pye, a neighbor who had a reputation as an extremely crafty lawyer, were named as supervisors of the will.

the much more elegant one worn by his son Sir James and found in his full-length portrait now at Kentchurch Court.