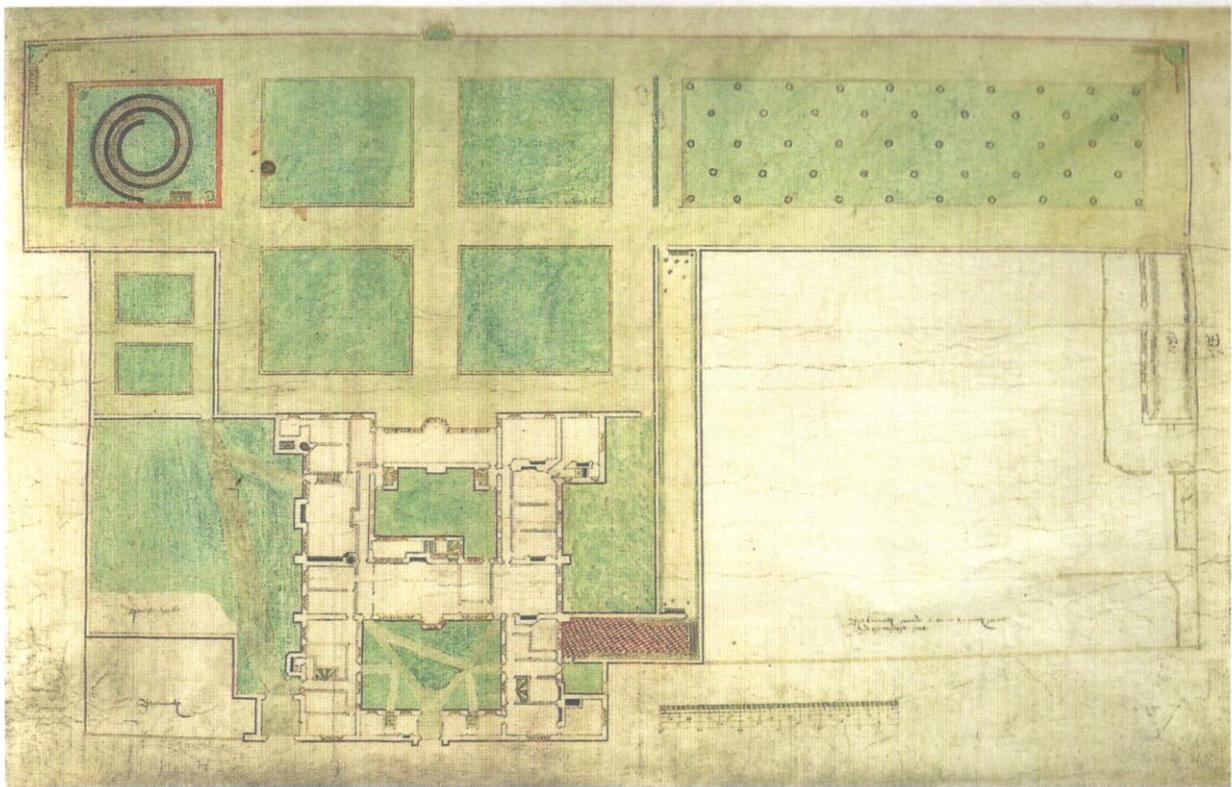


Life at Cecil House

the architectural plan of c.1565 and what it tells us

A Talk given by Jan Cole to the DVS at Oxford, April 2013



9 Plan of William Cecil's house in the Strand, executed between 1562-5 (Burghley House M 358). The Strand is at the bottom of the plan. To the left is a service court with a track for carts and a path leading to the kitchen and gardens. To the right of the house is the sports' complex with a tennis court and bowling alley. To the far right is Cecil's stable. At the top are the gardens with a spiral mount enclosed by a wall, a quadripartite central garden and an orchard planted in quincunxes. The garden buildings, which would be replaced in 1567, overlooked the open fields of 'Convent garden'. The parts of the plan that are left plain represent property that Cecil did not own. Burghley House

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When we mean to build,
 We first survey the plot, then draw the model;
 And when we see the figure of the house,
 Then we must rate the cost of the erection,
 Which if we find outweighs ability,
 What do we then but draw anew the model
 In fewer offices, or at least desist
 To build at all? Much more, in this great work –
 Which is almost to pluck a kingdom down
 And set another up – should we survey
 The plot of situation and the model,
 Consent upon a sure foundation,

Question surveyors, know our own estate
 How able such a work to undergo –
 To weigh against his opposite; or else
 We fortify in papers and in figures,
 Using the names of men instead of men;
 Like one that draws the model of a house
 Beyond his power to build it; who, half through,
 Gives o'er and leaves his part-created cost
 A naked subject to the weeping clouds
 And waste for churlish winter's tyranny.

Henry IV, Part 2, Act I, sc. 3, 646-667

Bardolph's detailed metaphor of planning and building a house, which occurs at the beginning of *Henry IV Part 2*, stands for the hopes of rebuilding England's kingdom and state during a period of conflict in the fifteenth century. It is one of over five hundred references to 'house' in the Shakespeare canon, many of which use the word in its dynastic sense of a continuing family line. This particular instance (the image of a drawn and redrawn architectural plan) makes a fitting epigraph for this essay about the house in which Edward de Vere spent his teenage years from 1562 to his marriage in December 1571. During these years, Cecil was also building and developing his two great country houses (Theobalds in Hertfordshire and Burghley House in Lincolnshire). Today the magnificent Burghley House remains, while both Theobalds and Cecil House have long since disappeared. Very little was known about Cecil House until the chance discovery of its architectural plan a decade or so ago.

In the summer of 1999, the newly appointed archivist at Burghley House found a large, crumpled, dust-covered document that had fallen down behind a storage chest in the Muniments Room. On one side was a coloured plan of a house and its gardens, and on the other the inscription, 'A plot of Exeter House', the name that Cecil House assumed in 1605 when Cecil's eldest son and heir, Thomas, became the Earl of Exeter. How long this document had been lying behind the storage chest is anyone's guess, but when annotations on it in William Cecil's own handwriting were recognised, it became clear that the plan had to have been executed before Cecil's death in 1598. Further research, involving comparisons with other legal documents referring to the house, with sketches by Cecil showing changes to the interior and to the gardens, and with details from Cecil's will, led to the plan being dated to between 1562 and 1567. In a later publication, one of the authors of a subsequent article set the date to 1565 at the latest. After three years the architectural historians, Jill Hesselby and Paula Henderson, wrote up their findings in a lengthy and very informative article with the fashionable title: *Location, Location, Location!: Cecil House in the Strand*.¹

Tucked away in an academic journal, this intriguing article appears to have escaped the notice of both Oxford's and all but one of Cecil's most recent biographers.² In fact, it provides a wealth of fascinating insights into the physical, social and educational environment into which Oxford was impelled as a ward

of court at the age of twelve in September 1562. He lived there at a time when the Tudor house had been renovated, its northern extent developed in the latest continental style, and its gardens improved and expanded. The plan is likely to have been in active use by Cecil during 1562 to 1567 and, as it may actually have been on display somewhere in the house³, it is probable that Oxford saw it. After his marriage to Anne Cecil and their move to Oxford House near London Stone, he continued to visit his father-in-law there and his own children would become familiar with the house. There is evidence in Cecil's will that Oxford's two younger daughters – the 14-year-old Bridget and 11-year-old Susan – were lodging in 'chambers, schoolhouses and nurseries' at Cecil House at the end of Cecil's life in 1598.⁴ As the house did not change substantially until the later seventeenth century, its appearance in the plan (though only the ground floor rooms are delineated) is what Oxford would have known throughout his life.

With the aid of the plan, together with the scholarly article written about it, as well as the wealth of knowledge available about life in a large Elizabethan household, it is possible to visualise Cecil House in considerable detail. In addition, we can visualise Oxford's movements and presence there: studying in the 'schoolhouse', reading in the library, being interviewed by his adoptive father in Cecil's 'great chamber', eating meals with the family in the hall or parlour, walking in the columned loggia on the north side of the house, playing tennis on the tennis-court and bowls in the bowling-alley, taking recreation in the gardens, and so on.

The house and its development by Cecil

Cecil House was a large house on the north side of the Strand, opposite the Savoy (today's Savoy Hotel remains on the site of the old Savoy). It eventually covered the two blocks between today's Exeter Street and Wellington Street. For visitors to London, today's Strand Palace Hotel and Lyceum Theatre mark the total extent of the site from west to east, though the streets of Covent Garden now cover what was its northern extent and gardens.

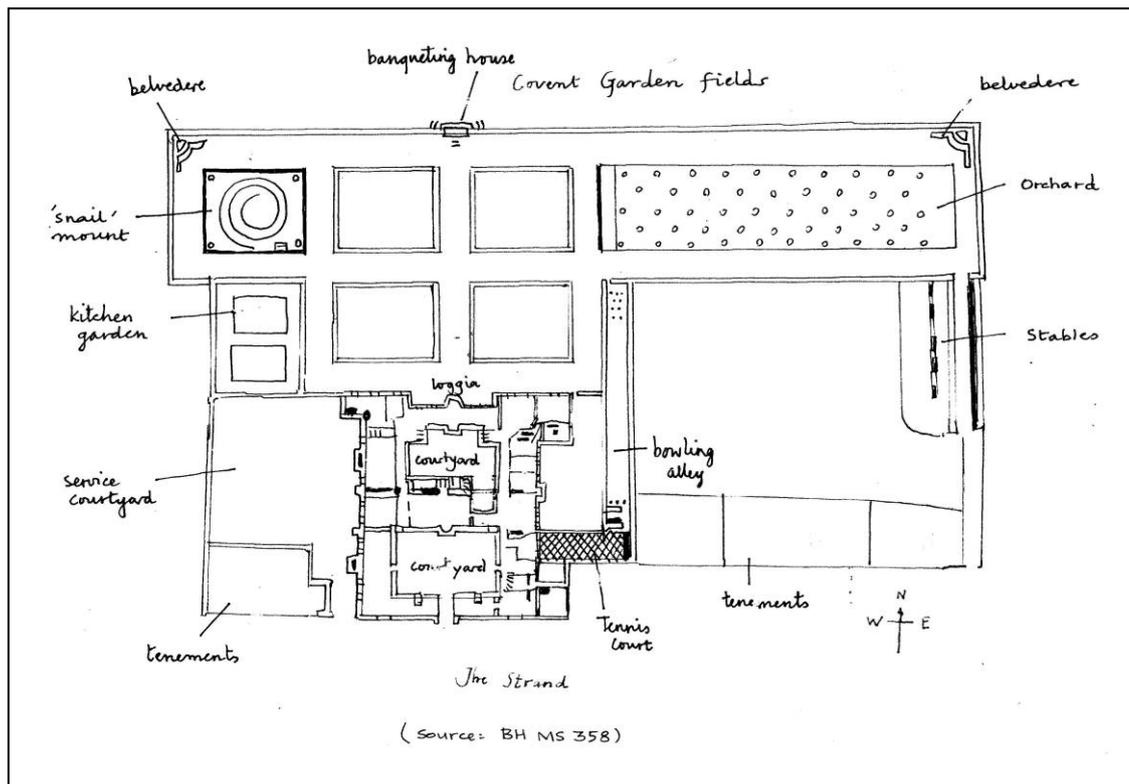
The first record of Cecil's interest in the house dates from 1559, when he obtained a lease for the house that had belonged to Sir Thomas Palmer, a major player in the downfall of Edward Seymour, Protector Somerset, and of John Dudley, and a supporter of the ill-fated Lady Jane Grey. Palmer was

executed at the same time as Dudley in August 1553. Palmer's house, thought to have dated from about 1551, was relatively new and reverted at his death to the Crown. The London historian, John Stow, suggested that Cecil extensively renewed the interior and 'increased' the house. The renovation was completed within a year or two, which suggests minimal additional building, but it is clear that he added a loggia on the north side, forming a double courtyard house as shown on the plan, and extensions to the northeast and south east, as well as the tennis-court, bowling-alley and stables.⁵

Before the Reformation, the land behind the house to the north had belonged to Westminster Abbey as part of a convent estate, from which 'Covent Garden' derives its name. This land was granted to John Russell, 1st Earl of Bedford in 1552. In the 1550s Cecil had inherited Burghley House in Lincolnshire from his father and had a town house in Canon Row, Westminster. In 1564 he bought the manor house at Theobalds, Hertfordshire, and began building a large house there.

became part of his Strand estate, probably accommodating his lower status household staff and servants in them. In 1560 he purchased 'a house and cottage' to the west and a further 'piece of ground'. In 1561 adjacent properties still in Crown ownership were granted to Cecil by the Queen, and before 1563 seven houses on the east of the site with a Strand frontage were purchased from Bedford.⁷ In January 1562 Cecil bought more land from the Earl of Bedford in order to extend the garden northwards into the fields that had been pasture for Bedford's horses and livestock. This new portion measured 78 feet in depth and extended the total width of this rear part of the garden to 481 feet, with a brick wall built all around it. In the centre of the wall, a raised banqueting house (with a bay window looking north into the fields) was constructed on the north-south axis of the house. In the same year, a large stable-block was built on the east side.

As Master of the Court of Wards from 1561, Cecil began to take in young peers as part of his household. He needed to enlarge the property and grounds so as to have a house grand enough to



entertain Queen Elizabeth, who visited him there in 1561 before the works were finished, and several times thereafter. It is on record that Cecil was not personally interested in physical recreation, and so it is possible that he built the tennis court and the bowling alley in 1561 in order to provide recreation for the wards.

He appears to have moved in to Cecil House in 1560.⁶ He then continued to purchase portions of land from Francis Russell, 2nd Earl of Bedford, who had inherited the 'Covent Garden' estate, including sheep pasture on the north and some tenement buildings on the Strand to the east and west of the house. Cecil gradually bought these tenements and they

The house seems to have been essentially completed by January 1562, but Cecil continued to purchase more land from Bedford in order to enlarge the garden. A diagram and notes of 1565 in Cecil's handwriting maps out an extra 15 feet north-south and 12 feet west-east, together with notes for his project of building 'certain rooms for the more ease and commodity of said garden

and orchard'. This suggests an extension or enlargement of the banqueting house. This work was completed by 1567 and documents survive to show that both Cecil and Bedford were taken to law for encroaching on the fields. As the new garden buildings are not shown on the plan, the latter can be dated to before 1567.⁸ Cecil was also fined in November 1564 for 'encroaching upon the highway'. This probably refers to the walled yard shown immediately to the south of the tennis court, and the extension to the south of that, which enlarged the Strand frontage to the east.

It is interesting to note, therefore, that Cecil was engaged in extending the property throughout the first five years that Oxford was living there.

The family and the household

The wards of court did not spend all their time at Cecil House, and the evidence of Cecil's accounts show that he remained responsible for their physical needs even when they were living elsewhere. The other wards would have spent Christmases and summers at their extended family's country houses, but the dwindling viability of Oxford's estates and the fact that he had an unmarried sister but no brothers (his sister, Mary, would marry Peregrine Bertie in 1577), implies that Edward spent the greater part of nine years as a close 'member' of the Cecil family.

As such, he grew up with William and Mildred Cecil as his surrogate parents (aged 42 and 39 respectively in 1562). His future wife, Anne, was six years old when Oxford arrived, and her brother Robert was born the next year in 1563. Two sons, both called William, had been born to the Cecils in 1559 and 1561, but neither lived more than a year. A second daughter, Elizabeth, was born in 1564 and would die in 1583. Thomas, Cecil's eldest son by his first wife, was twenty in 1562 and finishing his education in France and Germany. On his return in 1563, Thomas was made MP for Stamford and by 1569 was serving as a soldier against the northern rebels.

Cecil favoured Robert over Thomas, and it was Robert who became, in effect, as highly favoured as a first son, though Thomas did inherit Cecil House. One can see that the masculine family dynamic may have been an awkward one for Edward. He had lost his own father and had entered a household where, in some respects, he replaced the deceased sons and the absent Thomas, and would become a rival for Robert. He witnessed daily his future wife's growth from a girl

to a young woman, and Robert's growth from babyhood to boyhood.

The other wards were Edward Manners, 3rd Earl of Rutland, from 1563 at aged fourteen; James Butler, 2nd Baron Dunboyne, from c.1567 in his late teens, William Carr and Thomas Grey, both from Northumberland families, present in 1569; Edward, Lord Zouche, from 1570 aged fourteen; William Howard, son of Thomas, Duke of Norfolk, aged nine, from 1572 to 1577, who was then sent to St John's College, Cambridge. Peregrine Bertie, Lord Willoughby, was also in Cecil's care from 1568 aged thirteen, until his marriage. Peregrine may have lived mainly with relatives at Willoughby House near the Barbican, but he appears to have continued his education at Cecil House.⁹ Of these, Edward Manners spent at least six years there and, closest in age to Oxford, probably remained a friend. Oxford also remained close to Peregrine Bertie, who became his brother-in-law in 1577, and probably also Lord Zouche, who eventually became Oxford's neighbour in Hackney in the 1590s.

It is evident from Cecil's accounts that some of the tutors were also resident, at least some of the time. In addition, the house had a total staff of about eighty servants, of whom an early biographer of Cecil says that twenty waited at table. They were led by Thomas Bellott, who had been a servant to Cecil and was promoted to the office of steward about 1566 at the age of twenty-eight.

The architectural plan

The plan discovered in 1999 is finely executed in ink and coloured washes on a large sheet of paper measuring 29 ½ by 19 ½ inches (96 x 48 cms). The external walls of the brick-built house are shown in red. The stairs are shown in alternating shades of yellow and green, and clearly shown to be either straight stair-risers or winding (spiral) stairs. The windows are clearly marked as consisting of two or three lights, and their glazing coloured in green, with yellow for the sills. The hearths are shown in black, implying exactly where the flues and external chimneys were, giving clues as to which rooms on the upper floors had hearths. The courtyards are shown in washes of green, with a grey wash showing cart tracks or directions towards the entrances in the front court and service court. The garden plots are shown in green and the gravel pathways in cream-coloured wash.

The large 'sports complex' to the south east of the house comprised a paved tennis court (56 feet x 16 feet) running west-east, whose paving tiles are individually depicted in red and white, and a long bowling alley (148 feet x 10 feet) running north-south, in which several 'dots' on the plan at the north end may represent skittles or targets. It is likely the bowling alley was also used for archery, as three 'dots' on the plan at its south end suggest archery-butts.

The garden shows four large square plots, laid out in pairs either side of the north-south axis. These may have been laid to lawn, but it is more likely at this period that they contained elaborate ornamental parterres. To the northwest was a stepped and sunken mount garden with a spiral path to the top (known as a 'snail-mount'), the whole shown edged with a brick wall. Like the belvederes (raised stone structures) at the extreme west and east of the garden at the rear, the 'snail mount' was essentially a viewing platform, though walking its spiral ascent no doubt had emblematic and philosophical resonance. To the east was a large orchard running west-east, its fruit trees depicted on the plan as circles in the classical quincunx pattern. At the west end of the orchard is a band of dark green on the plan, representing a hedge. In the central rear wall of the garden, a three-sided (and raised) banqueting house is shown, jutting out like a bay into the ground beyond, with steps on its three sides. This may have had more than one storey.

On the east, at a considerable distance from the house, a large stable-block is shown, which appears to have had glazed windows. Blank spaces on the plan to the south of the western service court, and on the east between the bowling alley and the stables, represent areas (including tenements on the Strand frontage) that had not yet been bought and/or developed by Cecil at the time the plan was drawn.¹⁰

The plan is very detailed and bears close resemblance to the work of John Thorpe, who in the late 1580s produced plans for Theobalds, bought by Cecil in 1564 and developed during these years. But, as this John Thorpe was not born until c.1565, the plan was obviously not drawn by him, but may have been drawn by his father or other relative in a family of known surveyors. It is possible that it was drawn by Lawrence Bradshaw, a surveyor for the Royal Works, who ceased to be employed by the Crown in 1560 and thus became available for Cecil's use.

The plan represents the earliest extant design for a known Elizabethan garden. It also contributes an enormous amount of information to the possible

appearance of the other grand houses on the south side of the Strand, like Somerset House, for which little contemporary evidence survives. Russell House, the home of the Earl of Bedford, was opposite Cecil House on the Strand and slightly to the west.

A simplified depiction of Cecil House appears on Norden's 1593 map of Westminster, where it is shown as an isolated rectangular building with turrets at each corner. Though the depiction does not show storeys, the general opinion is that it had three storeys on each façade. Since turrets projected higher on the skyline, they would have had four storeys. Norden also shows what appears to be the banqueting house, rising in the centre of the rear wall and a gateway to the east of the house leading into the fields of Covent Garden. On the Strand side he depicts a plain-looking façade with its southeast corner jutting out into the street, forming a widening of the Strand at this point. Since all early maps of London show this point of widening in the Strand, it is certain that the plan discovered in 1999 is indeed that of Cecil House. Norden's map shows a further gatehouse and buildings to the east of Cecil House, which, compared to the 1560s plan, may represent apartments developed for Robert Cecil by 1593. In that year, Norden described Cecil House (known as 'Burghley House' after 1571) as follows:

...standing on the north side of the Strand, a very fair house raised with bricks, proportionable, adorned with four turrets placed at the four quarters of the house; within it is curiously beautiful with rare devices, and especially the oratory placed in an angle of the great chamber.¹¹

In its seventeenth century form as Exeter House, the house also appears on Hollar's 1658 'birds-eye view' map of London. It is shown there as a three-storied building with turrets on each corner, garden plots beyond, the orchard still in place but now extending most of the width of the garden, the raised central banqueting house rising behind it in the centre. By this time all of the fields to the north in Covent Garden had been developed (from about 1630) and overbuilt by the Earls of Bedford with houses and gardens to be leased out. The Bedford estates remained the largest and most profitable in London for many centuries.

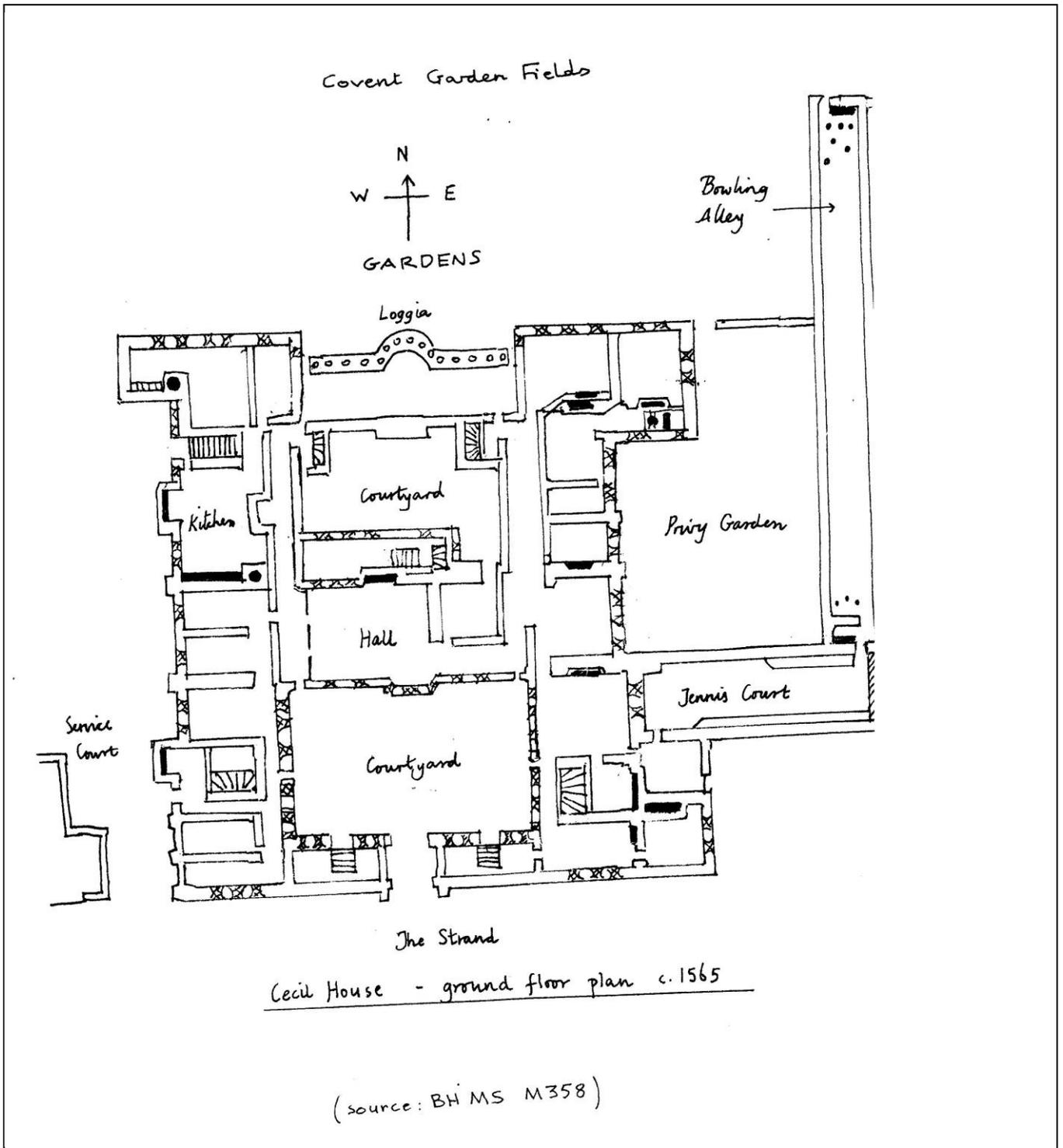
Included at the foot of the 1565 plan of Cecil House is a scale of 1 inch to 16 feet, which allows some specific dimensions to be calculated.

The Strand façade

The Strand was the major thoroughfare between the Court at Westminster and the City of London, and would have been constantly busy with travellers, merchants and passers-by of all social classes. At ground level from the Strand, Cecil House presented with a plain, Tudor brick-built, austere, almost fortress-like frontage. Its turrets at each end, west and east were terminated with little segmented ogee domes, similar to those still seen at Burghley House.

It had a central gateway and two three-light windows set wide apart on either side, west and east,

leaving the central section either side of the gateway without any windows on the ground-floor on the Strand side, but having windows on the inner side looking onto the courtyard. There may have been windows on the upper floors. The large central gateway leading into the courtyard may have been reminiscent of the typical entrances to Oxford and Cambridge colleges, but without their elaborate carvings. The rooms on this side would have been reserved for the porter and his staff, probably including the ostler, grooms-of-the-stable and other servants responsible for duties involving initial contact with visitors arriving



on horseback or on foot from the Strand. The plan shows that, either side of the gateway, two sets of straight stairs rose from the inside of the courtyard, giving these staff access to the rooms upstairs, probably their own offices and personal accommodation.

The concept of the front and back of a house was flexible. The Strand frontage was what we would now probably consider the 'back' of the house, and Cecil's development of a modern loggia on the north side formed a grander entrance where visitors of a higher status could approach from the fields. There is evidence that the Queen approached the house by this route at least once, and visitors arriving from the north would also have done so. Therefore, a gateway in the rear garden wall must have been built at some point, though there is no indication of such on the plan

The courtyards

There were three courtyards in all. Furthest to the west of the Strand façade, a gateway led to a service courtyard that gave direct access to the kitchen garden and also to the house via a doorway leading directly to the kitchen and domestic wing. The passage from this doorway had stairs that probably led down into the cellars. This courtyard would have been used entirely for the delivery of foodstuffs - meat, fish, milk, flour, eggs, vegetables, salt, spices, and any other produce not made in the house. Equipment for the kitchen garden - seeds, fruit-trees, plants, topsoil, etc. - would also be delivered here, as well as other household stuff - wood and coal for the fires, rushes for strewing, etc. Cecil's accounts mention the purchase of coals for the hearths in the wards' rooms. Though not marked on the plan, there must have been outhouses in this courtyard for storing wood and coal and gardening tools and equipment. It is possible that some sort of laundry-house was also situated in this courtyard, and possibly a brew-house. There was also a doorway from the service courtyard at the south end of the west wing, which probably led into rooms occupied by the Clerk Controller of the Kitchen who would supervise incoming deliveries.

The central gateway on the Strand gave access to the main courtyard. This courtyard had six entrances into the house: one on the northwest leading to the service passage, one on the north east leading to the parlour and hall, and one each in the middle of the west and east sides of the courtyard, as well as two passageways with stairs in the Strand frontage which

led to the upper storeys at the front of the house as mentioned above. The plan shows 'cart-tracks' on this courtyard, clearly marking the several access points, and showing that the plan is a working design for the running of a great household. The coaches of those visiting the Cecils from outside London would have entered here. It also seems likely that more precious household stuff (including items of apparel, swords, rapiers, and books for the wards) would be delivered here rather than in the service courtyard.

The north or second courtyard was accessed from the loggia on the north side, through open passageways to the west and east of the loggia, and thence through doorways that led immediately to two winding stairs west and east into the house. On the southeast side this courtyard was accessed from a doorway on the partitioned northeast side of the hall. The northern courtyard would have been a quieter place used for walking and recreation. It had no direct connection with the service wing or household business. Cecil created this second courtyard by building the loggia, a continental feature usually placed between garden and house, and which, through its open arcade of columns, fully connected the garden with the house spatially. The loggia at Cecil House was a highly innovative feature in the early 1560s.

The loggia

The loggia is of particular interest. Open on one side, with fifteen marble columns (appearing as black 'dots' on the plan) and a semi-circular bay in the centre, it was a feature found in contemporary French and Italian architecture. Through his friendship with Thomas Smith, Cecil is likely to have known the work of Jacques Androuet du Cerceau (1510-1584) who was working on Catherine de Medici's palaces, and who published his *De Architectura* in 1559. The elevations in this book contained loggias. This feature was also common in the palaces being built in the 1560s by the Italian architect, Andrea Palladio (1508-1580), when he was at the height of his fame.¹²

In the 1550s Palladio had built the Villa Barbaro for the brothers Daniello Barbaro (1514-70) and Marcantonio Barbaro (1518-95) and this had a magnificent loggia. Marcantonio was the Venetian ambassador to France from 1561 to 1564 and must have been known to Oxford's tutor, Sir Thomas Smith, who was English ambassador to France from 1562 to 1566. Daniello Barbaro was Venetian ambassador to the court of Queen Elizabeth. Both were not only patrons

of Palladio, but actively interested in architecture, Daniello making a translation of Vitruvius into Italian and probably assisting in architectural designs for the Villa Barbaro. Two things are striking about these connections. One is that, through his close friendship with Smith, Cecil would have been up-to-date with contemporary French and Italian architecture, keen interests of both men who had books on architecture in their libraries and, through the Court, Cecil must have met and conversed with Daniello. Secondly, when resident in Venice in 1575, Oxford would certainly have met Marcantonio and, as we know from Naomi Magri's studies, the details of Italian villas appear in Shakespeare's Italian-set plays.

It is also worth noting that in 1561 Palladio was asked to design a wooden theatre, for which he used a Roman semi-circular design based on the drawings he had produced for Barbaro's edition of Vitruvius (1556). It is therefore not impossible that ideas about a design for a semi-circular, purpose-built theatre were brought to the attention of the English court as early as 1561 by the Venetian ambassador, Daniello Barbaro – indeed, it seems probable.¹³ Four volumes of Vitruvius on architecture (in Latin and French) already existed in the library of Thomas Smith, and one (in Latin) in the library of Dr John Dee.

From the earliest biography of Cecil (written by one of his secretaries) we learn that it was his habit not to speak of affairs of state when at table; an anecdote states that, returning from Court, he would throw his cloak on a chair and say, 'Lie there, Lord Treasurer!' Casting off his official roles with his cloak, one can therefore assume that the table-talk at Cecil House, especially when ambassadors were present as guests, would have been about the educated interests of the day, i.e. information about other countries, navigation, exploration, trade, new discoveries, the sciences, classical and contemporary literature, art and architecture, history, new books, and so on. As a member of the family, young Oxford would have picked up an enormous amount of cultural information, old and new, at such times.

The house – west side, ground floor

The ground floor on the west side was the domestic wing, almost entirely taken up with food-related activities. As we have seen, the service courtyard gave direct access to the kitchen and kitchen garden. The kitchen is easily identified on the plan, as its huge fireplace is marked, extending the entire width of the

south side of the room, whose total dimensions were 32 feet by 24 feet. This huge Tudor fireplace would have been used for roasting whole sides of beef or venison on a spit turned by hand or with a treddle by the lower kitchen servants. The smaller fireplace on the west side of the kitchen would have been used for cooking all the smaller cuts of mutton, whole chickens, poultry and fowl (usually boiled in pots over the fire), as well as vegetables and sauces. Open doorways on the northeast corner of the kitchen connected it to the extreme northwest of the house and four partitioned rooms, one of which has a fireplace. These would have contained the pastry, the buttery, the pantry and the chandlery (all terms that occur in Cecil's household papers), but as they are not marked on the plan it is not certain exactly where each function was located. Beside the large fireplace in the kitchen and the small fireplace in the furthest northwest room, two dark circles on the plan represent privy chutes, descending from privies or 'stool-houses' (toilets) on the upper floor.

The water closet was not invented until the mid-1590s by Sir John Harington, and even then did not 'catch on' until the nineteenth century. The reason for this was that the amount of water and the plumbing required for it was not available in houses until then. One of Harington's practical realisations, in his highly original book *The Metamorphosis of Ajax* (1596), was that privy chutes were inadequate and that, far from acting as a ventilator, any 'unruly' wind might 'force the ill ayres *down* the chimneys' and into the lower rooms.¹⁴ It is notable that the privies on the plan are situated on the west and domestic side of the house. Any 'ill ayres' would therefore be under the noses of the servants, not the family.

However, both privy chutes were adjacent to fires in rooms used for food-storage or food-preparation on the ground floor, and close to hearths in the rooms above. This was immediately regarded as a problem. In 1560 Sir Nicholas Bacon wrote to Cecil, 'Yesternight my lady your wife and I were at your house, where all things go well forward'. However, he noted that a privy 'in the west end' was 'too near the lodging, too near an oven, and too near a little larder. I think you had been better to have offended your eye outwards than your nose inwards'. This statement concurs exactly with the plan, where 'the lodging' probably refers to a room directly above the ground-floor room that had an oven, and the 'little larder' refers to one of the partitioned areas at the extreme northwest end.¹⁵ There also appears from the plan to

have been a privy chute in a room at the northeast of the house, likely in one of Cecil's suite of rooms.

Some food items may have been made in the house rather than purchased in the markets, e.g. butter and cheese. We know from Cecil's household accounts that, besides the kitchen, the house had a pantry where foodstuffs were kept; a 'pastry' where pies were made; a chandlery where everyday candles were made from tallow (leftover kitchen grease) and the better beeswax candles stored; and a buttery where milk was churned into butter. There must also have also been a scullery where the plate, knives and spoons were washed after meals (forks were less common but used by wealthier households). In his will Cecil referred to a 'plate-house', where the majority of the dishes would be stored, and to the more precious gold plate that he kept in his own bedchamber and two closets (on the first floor). Some items of plate were usually displayed on a dresser in the hall in an Elizabethan house. The higher servants would have eaten from pewter plates and the lower servants from wooden trenchers. Many other items required careful storing, such as salt used for preserving meats, as well as at table, spices and flour. These would have been kept in a 'dry larder', and moister items like milk, butter and cheese in a 'wet larder'.

There would also have been a stillroom in which herbs and dried plants were kept for both culinary and everyday medical use. It is known that Mildred Cecil owned two editions of the complete works of Galen (one in Greek published in Basle in five volumes in 1538, and another in Latin published in Venice in five volumes in 1562-63), as well as Galen's *De sanitate tuenda* translated from Greek into Latin by Thomas Linacre and published in Lyons in 1559. The latter was a health regimen book, probably kept for handy consultation. She also owned a copy of Johannes Fernelius' *Medicina*, published in Paris in 1538. Were these books the source of Oxford's own interest in and patronage of medical authors? ¹⁶

Beer and wines would have been stored in the cellar. Wood may have been sent up from Cecil's country estates and coal purchased from one of the Thames-side markets. A knowledge of the several London markets allows us to trace the movements of Cecil's steward and staff on their regular journeys to order or purchase household stuff, e.g. meat from Smithfield, fish from Billingsgate, and other items from the Stocks and Leadenhall markets. Expensive items for the wards, such as their clothing, swords and rapiers were ordered from tailors and cutlers in the City. According to Cecil's accounts, books were purchased

from William Seres, a high quality printer whose workshop was situated outside Aldersgate, and who supplied Oxford's Plutarch and Plato, as well as paper, quills and ink. He was the publisher in 1561 of Castiglione's *The Courtier*, translated from the Italian by Thomas Hoby, who was married to Mildred Cecil's sister, Elizabeth.¹⁷

The house – west side, upper floors

Although the plan shows only the ground floor of the house, it is possible to deduce from the position of the fireplaces which of the rooms above would have had hearths. The flues from the ground floor would have served hearths on the upper floors, and it therefore seems probable that Mildred and Anne had rooms on the first floor in the northwest, where they also had the luxury of two toilets. Here, they were situated directly over the domestic range on the ground floor, and their rooms would have gained extra warmth from the rising heat of the kitchen below. From here Mildred had easy access to the kitchen, via staircases at the north and south ends of the west wing, if she ever needed to see what was going on, but all preparation and cooking would have been supervised by the steward, following her and Cecil's instructions.

Mildred and Anne's personal female staff are likely also to have had rooms nearby at the southwest end of the first floor, with the lesser maid-servants probably lodged on the second floor. The nursery would also have been on this floor, with nursemaids and servants accommodated nearby. Mildred would also have had easy access from here, via the two west-east galleries to her husband's apartments and library on the east side of the house.

The house – east side, ground floor

From the Strand courtyard, a doorway in the northeast corner led directly into the house. To the left was the hall (42 feet by 20 feet), to the right the smaller parlour and, ahead, the passageway leading to apartments on the right and to the rear of the house, the loggia and gardens. Traditionally, the hall of a great house had been used for meals, with long tables set up for the family and guests. It was also used for entertainment and dancing. The plan shows a fireplace in the centre of the north wall of the hall and a screen at the west end. The screen was a floor-to-ceiling, carved, wooden partition with two openings onto the service passage, sometimes known as the 'screens-passage', connecting

to the kitchen. Traditionally, this was the end of the hall that formed a 'stage' for the presentation of interludes and plays. The screen is clearly marked on the Cecil House plan at the west end of the hall. If Oxford and the other wards put on plays or recitations as part of their education, which is probable, this is where they would have been acted.

However, the plan shows a partition at the east end of the hall. It is thought that this may have been a place especially reserved for Cecil's petitioners during the law-term, forming a holding area or waiting room until each was called. If so, this suggests that the family no longer took meals in the hall. The alternative place for meals would have been the parlour, directly across the passage on the east side from the hall. This room would have been used for meals when only the family was present, and afterwards tables set up in the hall for the servants' meal. From his earliest biographer we learn that the Cecil family took their midday meal or 'dinner' at eleven o'clock before noon and their evening meal or supper at five o'clock in the afternoon, which times concur with Oxford's extant timetable.

The plan indicates that the hall and the parlour together formed an open-plan area. It is known that by the later sixteenth century, everyday household meals were more often taken in the parlour than in the hall. However, on occasions when there were a large number of guests, the hall or even an upper gallery would have been used. At Cecil House this may have been the gallery over the hall or, when the Queen was present, the gallery over the loggia, which gave a view into the garden below and the fields beyond. After the main meal, guests would walk through the gardens to the banqueting house, where traditionally a course of desserts and sweet confections were eaten. Documents are extant describing large-scale hospitality for the Queen and various ambassadorial entourages at Cecil House. On one occasion, the entire Privy Council met in session at Cecil House in the company of Queen Elizabeth.

To the north of the parlour is a suite of rooms that are thought to have been Cecil's public, day-time offices and reception rooms. The one immediately next to the parlour has a fireplace. Beyond this are two more, the furthest leading through a short diagonal passageway into another room at an angle at the extreme northeast corner of the house. Cecil's will refers more than once to 'my great chamber and the two closets', though it is not clear to which floor he is referring. Rooms at the south end of the east wing

seem likely to have been reserved for Cecil's secretaries and his steward, Thomas Bellott.

The house – east side, upper floors

Immediately above Cecil's ground floor rooms, and probably echoing their arrangement, were his first-floor rooms. This would include a 'great chamber' or private bedroom, used also (as in all Elizabethan great houses) as a room for private reception of guests. The room at an angle to this is perhaps the oratory that Norden mentioned. South of these, were rooms likely to have been used for private study and to house his many books and manuscripts. In his will, Cecil mentions 'the upper library above my great chamber' and this suggests a separate room on the first floor for perhaps his more precious volumes, in addition to a room for books on the ground floor. It has recently been stated that there were two libraries, 'one on the ground floor and a more private one on the upper floor at Cecil House'.¹⁸

By the mid-1560s Cecil may have already accumulated some 800 printed volumes as well as rare manuscripts. Amongst these he had a first edition of Hector Boece's *History of Scotland* (which contained the story of Macbeth) and a rare Italian atlas of the world, consisting of separate maps assembled by order into one book. This atlas was used by Lawrence Nowell when teaching cosmography to the wards. Nowell also produced a map of England and Ireland in 1564, which is now in The British Library, and a geography commonplace book for Cecil's use with route itineraries from city to city within England. In addition, a map of Sicily is sketched inside.¹⁹

It seems likely that the wards' private rooms were also on the first floor on the east side. Rooms for resident tutors were probably also here and at the south end the steward's bedchamber. It is clear from Cecil's accounts for the wards that they had at least one personal servant, who may have slept in their masters' rooms on a pallet bed, or may have had accommodation on the second floor above. The remainder of the lower class male servants were probably accommodated on the second floor.

The galleries

Cecil's building of the loggia created another courtyard and therefore another gallery on the first floor. The gallery was, in all Elizabethan great houses, a very large

space normally left clear of furniture and used for walking and recreation when bad weather prevented people from going outdoors. They were also a suitable place to display paintings and tapestries. The gallery over the hall at Cecil House was probably used in this way, but could be put into use for meals when large numbers of guests were present.

It seems possible that the newly created north gallery over the loggia functioned as what Cecil calls 'the schoolhouse', situated between Mildred's rooms in the west wing and Cecil's rooms and library on the east wing.²⁰ Here a long trestle table could be erected for the wards to sit at, with a chair for the tutor at its head. The tutors' rooms, together with closets for storing paper, quills and ink, may have been on the same floor in the northwest corner.

Summary

The discovery of the plan of Cecil House should be of enormous interest to Oxfordians. It makes it possible to visualise his days there in great detail and even sheds light on some events, such as the fencing accident that led to the death of the undercook, Thomas Brinknell, on a summer evening in July 1567. This, almost certainly, occurred in the service courtyard when the unfortunate man ran out to stop the 17-year-old Edward from practising fencing skills in what was evidently an inappropriate place. At Cecil House, too, Oxford would have learnt to play tennis, long before the famous 'tennis-court' quarrel with Philip Sidney. His famed dancing skills were also learnt here, taught to him by Richard Frith, identified as a master to the Children of the Chapel boy-players at Blackfriars.

Oxford spent nine crucial years at Cecil House, with access to some of the most forward-looking tutors of the day and to Cecil's and his wife's books, manuscripts and maps. The Cecils were innovative and forward-looking patrons of literature, art, architecture and garden design. Coming and going were many members of the peerage, courtiers, foreign ambassadors, scholars and lawyers, as well as tailors, merchants, tradesmen and servants. In 1564, for example, Charles Utenhove (1536-1600), a Flemish scholar and philologist, was in London and gave a lecture on Thucydides at which Mildred Cecil was the guest of honour. If the lecture took place at Cecil House, which seems likely, then it is probable that Oxford and the other wards attended it. Utenhove wrote to his friend Jean de Morel in Paris, copying Mildred's letters to him to show how well she used

Greek phrases. Morel, incidentally, was in contact with the French poets of the Pléiade (Ronsard, du Bellay, etc.) at the same time that Sir Thomas Smith was in France as English ambassador. Ronsard sent a copy of his *Bergerie* poems to Queen Elizabeth.²¹

This was a high status household, run by the most important statesman in England and his wife, who has been described as 'formidably learned and capable' and who is regarded today as having been fully engaged with the education of the wards, as well as her own children.²² In fact, *domus Cecilliae* (Cecil House) was likened by Timothy Bright - a physician, clergyman, and inventor of shorthand - to 'a University'.²³

Such is the material household reflected many times over in the comedies, histories and tragedies of Shakespeare. It is certainly *not* the household that William Shaxspere of Stratford-upon-Avon could ever have experienced as a boy, or even as a man.

Notes

1. Hussenby, Jill & Henderson, Paula: 'Location, Location, Location! Cecil House in the Strand', *Architectural History* (2002) vol. 45, pp.159-193. Copies can be obtained from The British Library online. See also Henderson, P. *The Tudor House and Garden: architecture and landscape in the 16th and 17th centuries*, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art/Yale, 2005. The latter book includes a coloured photograph of the plan (Figure 9).
2. An exception is Alford, S. *Burghley: a study in Elizabethan Statecraft*, Yale UP (2008), p.140-143. This author has used the article by Hussenby & Henderson.
3. Hussenby & Henderson, *op.cit.*, p.168.
4. *ibid.*, p.189, citing information from Cecil's will.
5. Stow, *Survey of London* (1598) cited by Hussenby & Henderson, *op.cit.*, p. 162. Stow said that Cecil 'far more beautifully increased' Palmer's original house. 'Increased' suggests that Cecil filled in the space at the top of the two verticals of Palmer's 'H'-shaped house by building the columned and bayed loggia on the north side. By doing so he created a double courtyard house, the northern courtyard being a quiet private and recreational space, as opposed to the noise and activity of the front and service courtyards.
6. Hussenby & Henderson, *op.cit.*, p.159.
7. Sheppard, F.H.W. (ed): *Survey of London*, vol.36 (1970), pp.21-22.

8. Hussenby & Henderson, *op.cit.*, pp.162-166 and note 24.
9. See Nina Green's 'Phaeton' website for Cecil's accounts for these wards, listing the clothing, equipment and books that were purchased for them. For Peregrine's guardianship by Cecil, see Bertie, G. *Five Generations of a Loyal Household: the lives of Richard Bertie and his son Peregrine, Lord Willoughby* (1845), p.60.
10. Hussenby & Henderson, *op.cit.*, pp.162-165.
11. Cited in Henderson, P., *The Tudor House and Garden* (2005), p.4.
12. Constant, C. *The Palladio Guide*, The Architectural Press, 1988. Hussenby & Henderson note the documented delivery of 16 marble columns from Antwerp to Cecil in 1561. Though Cecil was building a similar loggia at Burghley House at this time, Hussenby & Henderson consider them to be those destined for the Cecil House loggia, which has 15 columns marked on the plan (allowing for the breakage of one column) – Hussenby & Henderson, *op.cit.*, p.174. Cecil also built a loggia at Theobalds, the inner wall of which was personalised with paintings of his own elaborate Cecil genealogy.
13. Leapman, M. *Inigo: the life of Inigo Jones*, Headline Publishing (2003), p.47. There were, in fact, several theatres already built in Italy at Ferrara (1531), Rome (1545), Mantua (1549), Bologna (1550), and Siena (1561). Palladio designed another theatre in 1565 in Venice (see Lionello Venturi, *Le Compagnie della Calza*, 1909). These may have been known to interested parties in England.
14. On Elizabethan privies, see Schofield, J. *The London Surveys of Ralph Tresswell* (1987), London Topographical Society, pp. 22-24; Symonds, 'Of Jakes and Close-stools; their place in English social history' in *The Connoisseur* (1952), no.129, pp.86-91, both cited in Nicholl, C. *The Lodger: Shakespeare on Silver Street* (2007), pp.55-56, n.14.
15. Hussenby & Henderson, *op.cit.*, p.166
16. Bowden, C. *The Library of Mildred Cooke Cecil, Lady Burghley*, in 'The Library' (journal of The Bibliographical Society), 7th series, vol. 6, no.1 (2005), pp.3-29. Mildred's books are a very important factor for Oxfordians to consider in tracing 'Shakespeare's sources'. It has been shown that Shakespeare was thoroughly acquainted with Galenic theories, and also pointed out his fallacies – see Adams, J.C. *Shakespeare's Physic, Lore and Love*, J C Adams/Self-Publishing Assn. (1989)
17. Palmer, S. (d.1732): *The General History of Printing...* p.279, University of Michigan Library, Eighteenth Century Collections online, and 'Printing in England from Caxton to Barker' at University of Glasgow Special Collections online.
18. Lancashire, I.: 'William Cecil and the Rectification of English' in Percy, C. & Davidson, M.C. *The Languages of Nation, Multilingual Matters* (2012), p.41. This essay proposes that by virtue of his patronage of the tutors, Cecil himself should be regarded as an important figure in shaping the English language at this time.
19. Cecil's copy of Boece's 1527 *History of Scotland* is now in Edinburgh - see Royal Library of Scotland website for an image of the title page with Cecil's name on it. For the Italian book of maps see www.kunstpedia.com/articles/a-rare-Italian-atlas. For Cecil's commonplace book see Adam Matthew Publications at www.ampltd.co.uk under 'Renaissance Commonplace books'. See Eddi Jolly ('Shakespeare's Sources: Lord Burghley's Library' in *Great Oxford*, ed. R. Malim DVS/Parapress, 2004, pp. 26-30) for the approximate number of books Cecil had in the 1560s; this has been calculated from their dates of publication, although we cannot tell exactly when Cecil acquired them.
20. At the sale by auction of Cecil's library in 1687 there were 3,844 lots of printed books and 413 manuscripts in 43 lots - Fletcher, W.Y. *English Book Collectors* (1902) online. See also Jolly, E (cited in n.19). See also Bowden at note 16, and Croft, P. 'Mildred, Lady Burghley, the Matriarch' in Croft, P. (ed.), *Patronage, Culture and Power: the Early Cecils 1558-1612*, Paul Mellon Center for Studies in British Art /Yale Center for British Art (2002), pp.283-300.
21. Stevenson, J. *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender and Authority from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*, OUP (2005), p.51-74.
22. Bowden, C. *op.cit.* and Croft, C. *op.cit.*
23. Cited in Burke, V.E. & Gibson, J.: *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing*, Ashgate (2004), p.61.