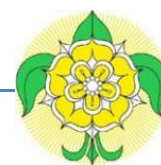


# The Shakespeare Circle

---



*The patrons, poets, writers and intelligencers who comprised the Shakespeare Circle led by Francis Bacon, their Apollo and Spear-shaker.*

Author: Peter Dawkins

[www.fbrt.org.uk/pages/peter\\_dawkins](http://www.fbrt.org.uk/pages/peter_dawkins)

The existence of a group of poets led by a chief or master poet and assisted by others, which comprise what might be called the Shakespeare Circle, is real and can be traced historically. The pseudonym 'Shakespeare' or 'William Shake-speare' can be applied equally to the whole group or just to its leader as author of the Shakespeare works. The fact that the Shakespeare works can be seen as a group work does not in any way detract from the true greatness and mastery of the chief poet, the chief author, and all evidence that exists points to this being Francis Bacon. The arrangement is akin to that of a Renaissance master artist and his studio of student artists, only in this case it is a literary studio and the pupils refer to themselves as disciples.

The first historical hint of who Shakespeare might be is given in an exchange of satirical writings by Joseph Hall (*Virgidemiarum*) and John Marston (*The Metamorphosis of Pygmalion's Image and Certain Satyres*) that were published during 1597-8. These exchanges unequivocally reveal that the Shakespeare poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, which had been first published in 1593-4 and then republished several times in the years following, were in fact written by Francis Bacon using the pseudonym of "William Shakespeare".<sup>1</sup>

In 1626, in a tribute to Francis Bacon published in the *Manes Verulamiani*, a collection of elegiac tributes in memory of Sir Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam of Verulam, Viscount St Alban, Bacon is likened to Apollo, the rarest glory (*i.e.* Phoebus)<sup>2</sup> of the Aonian band (the Muses)<sup>3</sup> and the leader of their choir and their disciples:-

Is it thus falls the rarest glory of the Aonian band?  
and do we decree to entrust  
seed to the Aonian fields?  
Break pens, tear up writings,  
if the dire goddesses may  
justly act so. Alas!  
what a tongue is mute!  
what eloquence ceases!  
Whither have departed  
the nectar and ambrosia  
of your genius?  
How is it happened to us,  
the disciples of the Muses,  
that Apollo, the leader  
of our choir, should die?

John Williams, Elegy 12, *Manes Verulamiani* (1626)

This acclamation was made by John Williams, Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, chaplain to James I and Bishop of Lincoln, who became Lord Keeper of the Great Seal in 1621, directly after Francis Bacon vacated that position (as Lord Chancellor), and who remained in that office until 1625. Later, in 1641, Williams became Archbishop of York. His testimony, therefore, is not to be treated lightly.

Elegies by other poets and writers in the *Manes Verulamiani* also describe Bacon as their Apollo, the brilliant Light-Bearer and Daystar of the Muses. They further liken him to Athena, the Tenth Muse and glory of the choir, "a Muse more rare than the other nine Muses". They also make clear that he was a concealed poet, who taught the Heliconian goddesses (the Muses) to flourish and the Pegasean arts to grow, and wrote such comedies

and tragedies that they renovated Philosophy. Both Apollo and Athena were known as the divine Spear-shakers or Shake-spears, and in these elegies and elsewhere it is subtly hinted that Bacon was the renowned ‘William Shakespeare’, the chief poet of the age and leader of other spear-shaking poets and artists.

Indeed, it is in fact well recorded that Francis Bacon both knew and worked with numerous poets and writers throughout most of his life, many of whom formed his literary studio of “good pens”, as he called them. The forming of such a group may have begun soon after he returned from France in March 1579; or from 1587, when he became a Reader at Gray’s Inn and had the Bacon Chambers extended. It certainly established itself in all earnest when Anthony Bacon returned to England in 1592 and set up in literary partnership with his brother Francis, quickly resulting in the launch of ‘Shakespeare’ into the public arena.

From the time of Francis Bacon’s return to England, several groups of poets started to form in London amongst the more educated classes, the most notable one being that of the ‘Areopagitae’ centred around Sir Philip Sidney, whilst another group formed around the Earl of Oxford. The Areopagitae, who came into existence during 1579, used Leicester House on the Strand as a meeting place. At that time Leicester House was the London home of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, where Edmund Spenser was also living (from spring 1579 to July 1580).<sup>4</sup> The Areopagitae included Sir Philip Sidney, Gabriel Harvey, Fulke Greville, Edward Dyer, Thomas Drant, Master Preston, Master Still and ‘Immerito’.<sup>5</sup> Francis Bacon also visited Leicester House during that time and there are indications that he, at least in part, was ‘Immerito’, whose poetic works were later published under the name of Edmund Spenser. Francis Bacon knew Philip Sidney and his sister Mary from childhood, and Gabriel Harvey had been his tutor in rhetoric and poetry at Cambridge University. His friendship with Philip and Mary (who had become the Countess of Pembroke in 1577), and also with Fulke Greville, blossomed from that time onwards.

Leicester, Philip and Mary Sidney’s uncle, was a notable patron of poets and promoter of the theatre, who encouraged his London house to be used for literary and poetic gatherings. He had become the stepfather of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, and Robert’s sisters Penelope and Dorothy in 1578. Like Philip and Mary Sidney, Francis Bacon had known Robert, Penelope and Dorothy from childhood. He was also friends with Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, who had been raised by the Cecil family at Burghley House as a ward of Bacon’s uncle, Lord Burghley. This group of friends later formed the ‘Shakespeare Circle’ (see below), meeting at Essex House or Wilton House, the Pembroke’s country home. Associated with them were the poets, writers and dramatists who were patronised by Essex, Southampton and the Pembrokes, amongst whom were Michael Drayton, Sir John Davies, Samuel Daniel, Ben Jonson, John Florio, George Wither, Edmund Spenser, Thomas Nashe and John Lyly. Together with Thomas Lodge, George Peele, Robert Greene, Thomas Watson, Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlowe, these poets (except for Drayton and Davies) are nowadays known as the ‘University Wits’ of the 1580s.

Some of these poets—notably Edmund Spenser, Thomas Watson, Samuel Daniel, Christopher Marlowe and Anthony Munday—acted periodically as agents in the intelligence service run by the Queen’s Secretary of State, Sir Francis Walsingham. Francis Bacon was actively involved in this, assisting with the compilation and assessment of political intelligence, and with cryptography and cryptanalysis together with Thomas Phelippes,

Walsingham's leading code-breaker. Others with whom he worked in the intelligence service were Thomas Phelippes and John Dee, and Walsingham's secretaries, Nicholas Faunt, Francis Milles, William Waad and Robert Beale. Francis' brother, Anthony Bacon, helped in supplying intelligence from abroad. All in all, Francis Bacon was at the heart of and privy to a huge web and data bank of intelligence on all kinds of matters, from politics, economics, law, trade, history, geography, science, literature, poetry, military strength and religious beliefs, right down to social customs, manners, costumes, personal behaviour, travel facilities, environmental details and individual experiences, at home and abroad, all of which he garnered for his own use as well as for that of the Queen and State.

At Gray's Inn, Francis Bacon became increasingly involved with other gentlemen of Gray's Inn, in devising and presenting masques and entertainments at Gray's Inn and the royal Court at Greenwich, and writing speeches and devices to be used in the Queen's Accession Day Tilts. His first real need of scribal as well as legal assistance probably would have begun in 1586 when he became a Bencher of Gray's Inn, and then a Reader (appointed November 1587), at a time when he had just completed his first juvenile philosophical work, *Temporis Partum Maximum* ('The Greatest Birth of Time') and was involved in developing it into what would become 'The Great Instauration', in which theatre plays a big part. Bacon writes in his later philosophical works that the work he had in mind needed and would need many hands, many helpers, and that truly great things could only be accomplished when different people have different roles to play in the whole, not all the same.

Francis Bacon's literary studio or scriptorium may have existed before Anthony Bacon returned to England in 1592, but it certainly existed after that, as many of the "good pens" employed by Francis Bacon were paid for their services, and Anthony was the one who had the resources and used them to make this and other things possible. Anthony, who was also a poet in his own right, set up a 'twin' secretariat at Essex House which, besides working on intelligence matters for Anthony (who now headed an intelligence network), also assisted Francis. Together the brothers formed a team of secretaries and writers to assist them, dealing with foreign and home intelligence of all kinds, cryptography, translations of correspondence and books in foreign languages and the classics, the compilation of histories (natural, human and divine), and the writing of poetry (masques, plays, devices, etc.).

Key assistants in the intelligence team included Thomas Phelippes, Anthony Standen, Henry Wotton and Nicholas Faunt, who between them had travelled in and gathered detailed information of all kinds and over many years from France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Transylvania, Poland and Turkey. Not only was this information shared but further useful intelligence was gathered from the many friends and agents at home and abroad who corresponded with Anthony Bacon, and from those who went on the 'Grand Tour' (France, Italy, etc.).

In the vacations, Francis Bacon usually retreated to Twickenham Lodge in Twickenham Park. It was there that he carried out many of his early experiments related to his Great Instauration project and, with the help of his team of "good pens", wrote poetry (masques and plays) and intelligence reports. The "good pens" appear to have consisted of his poet-lawyer friends from Gray's Inn and university students seeking to earn some money during the vacations. There were also others, some of whose names we know.

During the 1590s, Francis Bacon's literary and poetic endeavours were closely entwined not only with members of Gray's Inn and other Inns of Court but also with Essex and his circle of friends. This 'Essex group', which had been linked with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, Sir Francis Walsingham and Sir Philip Sidney until their deaths in the 1580's, and with the Areopagitae of English poets that used to meet at Leicester House (later Essex House), included: Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex; Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton; Ferdinando Stanley, Baron Strange, who became the 5th Earl of Derby on his father's death in 1593; William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby; Charles Blount, 8th Baron Mountjoy; Frances Walsingham, Countess of Essex, Essex's wife, daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham and widow of Sir Philip Sidney; Penelope Rich, Essex's sister, wife of Robert Rich, 3rd Baron Rich, and, after his death in 1586, Mountjoy's mistress; Elizabeth Vernon, Essex's cousin and Southampton's mistress (whom Southampton married in 1598); and Mary Sidney, the Countess of Pembroke, sister of Philip Sidney and mother of "the Two Noble Brethren", William and Philip, to whom the 1623 Shakespeare First Folio was dedicated; plus Fulke Greville, Francis Bacon and Anthony Bacon.

Associated with this group of aristocrats and friends were other poets, writers and dramatists already mentioned (see above), whom the group patronised.

In effect, this group of patrons and poets, plus the Bacon brothers' literary studio and scrivenery, formed what might be called 'The Shakespeare Circle', with direct access to acting companies. The earliest anonymous 'Shakespeare' plays—*The Taming of a Shrew*, *Titus Andronicus* and *3 Henry VI*—were in the repertoire of the Lord Pembroke's Men, as featured in their tour of 1592-4. Sussex's Men also performed *Titus Andronicus*. The Lord Strange's Men gave what might have been the first performance of *2 Henry VI* at The Rose playhouse in 1592, and *Titus Andronicus* was later performed by them after their name had been changed to Derby's Men. When Derby (i.e. Ferdinando Stanley, Baron Strange, 5th Earl of Derby) died in 1594, most of the members of Derby's Men joined the newly reconstituted Lord Chamberlain's Men under the patronage of Sir Henry Carey, 1st Baron Hunsdon, and the leadership of the Burbages. From then on, the Shakespeare plays were almost exclusively in the hands of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, who by then had been joined by William Shakspeare, actor, businessman and, from 1598 onwards, front for the now named 'Shakespeare' plays, which up till then had been anonymous.

Essex's trial and execution in 1601, followed by Anthony Bacon's death the same year, somewhat affected matters, but the crowning of the new sovereign, King James I of England, VI of Scotland, brought new opportunities. As Francis Bacon rose in the ranks of officialdom to become Solicitor General, Attorney General, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal and Lord Chancellor, he had increasingly ample means to fund his literary studio and "command the wits", as he put it. This "command of wits" was not simply because of Bacon's position and wealth, but principally because of the love, admiration and respect that others bore towards him, summed up beautifully by Tobie Matthew and Ben Jonson:-

Praise is not confined to the qualities of his intellect, but applies as well to those which are matters of the heart, the will and moral virtue; being a man both sweet in his ways and conversation, grave in his judgments, invariable in his fortunes, splendid in his expenses, a friend unalterable to his friends, an enemy to no man, a most indefatigable servant to the King, and a most earnest lover of

the Public, having all the thoughts of that large heart of his set upon adorning the age in which he lives, and benefiting, as far as possible, the whole human race...

It is not his greatness that I admire, but his virtue; it is not the favours I have received from him (infinite though they be) that have thus enthralled and enchained my heart, but his whole life and character; which are such that, if he were of an inferior condition I could not honour him the less, and if he were my enemy, I should not the less love and endeavour to serve him.

Sir Tobie Matthew, Dedicatory Letter to Cosimo (II) de' Medici, grand duke of Tuscany, prefacing *Saggi Morali del Signore Francesco Bacono*, the Italian translation of Bacon's *Essays and Wisdom of Ancients* (1617)

A man so rare in knowledge, of so many several kinds endued with the facility and felicity of expressing it in all so elegant, significant, so abundant, and yet so choice and ravishing a way of words, of metaphors and allusions as, perhaps, the world hath not seen, since it was a world.

Tobie Matthew, Preface to his *Collection of Letters* (published 1660)

[Bacon] is he who hath filled up all numbers, and performed that in our tongue which may be compared or preferred either to insolent Greece, or haughty Rome. In short, within his view, and about his times, were all the wits born that could honour a language, or help study. Now things daily fall: wits grow downward, and Eloquence grows backward. So that he may be named and stand as the mark and acme of our language.

Ben Jonson, 'Scriptorum catalogus,' *Timber, or Discoveries Made upon Men and Matter* (1641)

My conceit of his Person [Francis Bacon, Lord St Alban] was never increased toward him by his place or honours. But I have and do reverence him for the greatness that was only proper to himself, in that he seemed to me ever, by his work, one of the greatest men and most worthy of admiration that had been in many ages. In his adversity I ever prayed that God would give him strength: for greatness he could not want. Neither could I condole in a word or syllable for him, as knowing no accident could do harm to virtue, but rather help to make it manifest.

Ben Jonson, 'Lord St Alban,' *Timber, or Discoveries Made upon Men and Matter* (1641)

A good example of this love and respect that others had for Francis Bacon was in the production and performance of *The Masque of Flowers* to honour the marriage of the Earl of Somerset and Lady Essex in 1613. A proposal had been put forward that the four Inns of Court should join together in getting up a masque, but there were only three weeks in which to prepare one. When it was found that this could not be managed, Francis Bacon, who was then the Attorney General, offered on behalf of Gray's Inn, of whom he was Treasurer, to supply a masque as a gift, which would be organised and funded by him. The masque, performed by the Gray's Inn gentlemen-lawyers, was published shortly after its performance with a dedication to Bacon as "the principal and in effect the only person that doth encourage and warrant the gentlemen to show their good affection in a time of such magnificence;... wherein you have made a notable demonstration thereof in the lighter and

less serious kind, by this, that one Inn of Court by itself, in time of a vacation, and in the space of three weeks, could perform that which hath been performed; which could not have been done but that every man's exceeding love and respect to you gave him wings to overtake time, which is the swiftest of things."

The names of those who are known to have made up the 'Shakespeare Circle' and literary studio of "good pens" are listed below. There were also others, unknown or only surmised at present.

## The Shakespeare Circle

### Patrons

#### The Essex-Pembroke-Southampton circle (1590's)

- **Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex** (1565-1601), step-son of Earl of Leicester, married (1590) Frances Walsingham, daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham and widow of Sir Philip Sidney.
- **Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton** (1573-1624), married (1598) Elizabeth Vernon.
- **Ferdinando Stanley, Baron Strange, 5th Earl of Derby** (1559-1594), married Alice Spencer.
- **William Stanley, Baron Strange, 6th Earl of Derby** (1561-1642), married (1595) Elizabeth de Vere, daughter of the Earl of Oxford and Anne Cecil.
- **Charles Blount, 8th Baron Mountjoy** (1563-1606), married (1605) his mistress Penelope Devereux.
- **Frances Walsingham, Countess of Essex** (1567-1633), Essex's wife (1590), daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham and widow of Sir Philip Sidney.
- **Penelope Devereux, Baroness Rich**, Essex's sister, wife of Robert Rich, 3rd Baron Rich, and, after his death in 1586, Mountjoy's mistress.
- **Elizabeth Vernon, Countess of Southampton** (1572-1655), Essex's cousin and Southampton's mistress, whom Southampton married in 1598.
- **Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke** (1561-1621), sister of Philip Sidney, wife of Henry Herbert, 2nd Earl of Pembroke, and mother of "the Two Noble Brethren", William and Philip, to whom the 1623 Shakespeare First Folio was dedicated. Mary was a poet and writer of note, who turned Wilton into a "college" and "paradise for poets".

### Poets

- **Francis Bacon** (1561-1626) – the Apollo, Athena, Day-star and leader – the 'immortal' Shakespeare poet.<sup>6</sup>
- **Anthony Bacon** (1558-1601) – the 'Gemini twin' Shakespeare poet.<sup>7</sup>
- **Fulke Greville** (1554-1628), poet, soldier, sailor, intelligencer, lawyer (Middle Temple and Gray's Inn), judge (Recorder of Stratford and Warwick), courtier, statesman (Secretary to the Council of Wales, 1581, Treasurer of the Navy, 1598-1604, Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1614-1621); close friend of Sir Philip Sidney; lover of Sidney's sister, Mary, Countess of Pembroke; good friend of Francis Bacon, Anthony



Bacon and Essex; travelled all over Europe and recruited spies for Walsingham and Essex.

- **Samuel Daniel** (1562-1619), poet, philosopher, historian, tutor to Mary, Countess of Pembroke's son, William Herbert; master of the Queen's Revels from 1603.
- **John Lyly** (1553-1606), poet, writer, theatrical manager, politician; Oxford's secretary 1580-1590; thereafter one of Anthony Bacon's "good pens" at Essex House in the 1590s.
- **Ben Jonson** (1572-1637), poet; known to Francis Bacon as "my man John"; one of the translators of the final versions of Bacon's *Essays*, *Advancement of Learning* and other works into Latin. Ben Jonson also contributed to and probably helped oversee the production of the Shakespeare Folio.
- **John Davies of Hereford** (1565-1618), poet and writing-master.
- **Sir John Davies**, poet, politician, lawyer (Middle Temple, Attorney-General for Ireland).
- **John Florio** (1553-1625), linguist, lexicographer, philosopher, translator, writer; tutor and spy for Walsingham; lived some years with Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton; friend of William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke; royal language tutor to Prince Henry at the Court of James I; married the sister of Samuel Daniel.
- **George Herbert** (1593-1633), poet, orator, Anglican priest; one of the translators of the final versions of Bacon's *Essays*, *Advancement of Learning* and other works into Latin.
- **George Wither** (1588-1667), poet, satirist and emblem writer; is reputed to have written the anonymous satirical poem published in 1645, entitled *The Great Assizes holden in Parnassus by Apollo and his Assessours*, in which the mystery and aim of Francis Bacon and his society is alluded to and almost revealed.
- **Thomas Nashe** (1567-1601), poet, pamphleteer; co-wrote *The Isle of Dogs* with Ben Jonson—a play that is listed in the Northumberland Manuscript.<sup>8</sup>
- **Edmund Spenser** (1553-1599), poet, member of the Areopagus; went to Ireland in July 1580 as a secretary to the Lord Deputy, Arthur Grey, 14th Baron Grey de Wilton.

The other 'University Wits'—Thomas Lodge, George Peele, Robert Greene, Thomas Watson, Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlowe—were also connected at one time or another with this circle, as also was Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford.

**Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford** (1550-1604) was a well-noted court poet and author of comedies and interludes, who patronised John Lyly, adult and boy acting companies and a company of musicians. He also sponsored performances by tumblers, acrobats and performing animals. He was brought up as a ward of William Cecil (later Lord Burghley), married Burghley's daughter Ann, had his own players (Oxford's Men) and purchased a sublease of the Blackfriars premises used by the boy companies which he gave to Lyly. Shortly after Ann Cecil died, he sold his main estates. He made arrangements for his daughter Elizabeth to marry Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton; but in the end, when Southampton came of age in 1594, Southampton refused. Elizabeth de Vere married William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby, instead (in 1595).

Shakespeare scholarship over many years has enabled us to see, or surmise, who in one way or another appears to have collaborated on the Shakespeare plays. This would, of course, make each name part of the same team at some point in time—a team led by their spear-

shaking 'Apollo', Francis Bacon, in partnership with (until 1601) his brother Anthony. This list, if we include those who are closely associated, even if not as collaborators, comprises the following poets, who flourished in the periods given (dates in italics are uncertain):-

*Collaboration with:*

George Peele	(1558-1596)	Oxford	fl. 1581-1596
Robert Greene	(1560-1592)	Cambridge; Oxford	fl. 1586-1592
Christopher Marlowe	(1564-1593)	Cambridge	fl. 1587-1593
Thomas Heywood	(1574-1641)	Cambridge	fl. 1598-1619
Thomas Middleton	(1580-1627)	Oxford; Gray's Inn	fl. 1598-1627
John Day	(1574-1640)	Cambridge	fl. 1599-1608
George Wilkins	(????-????)	?	fl. 1604-1608
John Fletcher	(1579-1625)	Cambridge	fl. 1606-1625
Philip Massinger	(1583-1640)	Oxford	fl. 1616-1633

*Influences from:*

Sir Philip Sidney	(1554-1586)	Oxford	fl. 1578-1586
Edmund Spenser	(1552-1599)	Cambridge	fl. 1578-1599
John Lyly	(1554-1606)	Oxford	fl. 1578-1590
Thomas Lodge	(1558-1625)	Oxford; Lincoln's Inn	fl. 1581-1603
Thomas Watson	(1557-1592)	Oxford	fl. 1582-1590
Thomas Nashe	(1567-1601)	Cambridge	fl. 1589-1599
Thomas Kyd	(1558-1594)	Merchant Taylor's School	fl. 1589-1593
Samuel Daniel	(1562-1619)	Oxford	fl. 1592-1615
Francis Beaumont	(1584-1616)	Oxford; Inner Temple	fl. 1600-1613

*Association with:*

Thomas Sackville	(1536-1608)	Cambridge; Inner Temple	fl. 1560-1580
Gabriel Harvey	(1550-1630)	Cambridge	fl. 1574-1593
Edward Dyer	(1543-1607)	Oxford	fl. 1578-1607
Fulke Greville	(1554-1628)	Cambridge	fl. 1578-1628
Mary Sidney/Herbert	(1561-1621)		fl. 1578-1615
Nicholas Breton	(1545-1626)	Oxford	fl. 1580-1616
Edward de Vere	(1550-1604)	Cambridge; Gray's Inn	fl. 1580-1604
Sir John Davies	(1569-1626)	Oxford; Middle Temple	fl. 1590-1603
Henry Chettle	(1560-1607)		fl. 1592-1607
Thomas Dekker	(1572-1632)		fl. 1592-1612
Michael Drayton	(1563-1631)		fl. 1593-1612
George Chapman	(1559-1634)		fl. 1594-1624
Anthony Munday	(1560-1633)		fl. 1594-1618
Ben Jonson	(1572-1637)	Westminster School	fl. 1597-1631
John Davies of H'ford	(1565-1618)		fl. 1603-1618
John Ford	(1586-1640)	Oxford; Middle Temple	fl. 1613-1634
George Wither	(1588-1667)	Oxford; Lincoln's Inn	fl. 1613-1666
William Browne	(1591-1643)	Oxford; Inner Temple	fl. 1613-1643



## Intelligencers

- **Nicholas Faunt** (1572-1608), a good friend of Anthony Bacon's who had been secretary and foreign emissary to Sir Francis Walsingham when the latter was the Queen's Secretary of State.
- **Thomas Phelippes** (1556-1625), widely-travelled agent, chief cipher expert, cryptanalyst and codebreaker, forger; worked for Walsingham then Anthony Bacon/Essex.
- **Anthony Standen** (c.1548-c.1616), widely-travelled agent, cipher expert, who was first Walsingham's then Anthony Bacon's secret foreign agent. Standen's information was sent in letters to Anthony Bacon, in which he used numerals for letters.<sup>9</sup>
- **Henry Wotton** (1568-1639), intelligencer, secretary, author, diplomat, politician. Wotton went abroad in 1589 for six years, travelling via Vienna, Venice, Rome and Geneva, and sending intelligence home to Anthony Bacon and Essex. When he returned to England in 1594, he became a secretary to Essex, assisting Anthony Bacon in the handling of intelligence material connected with Transylvania, Poland, Italy and Germany.

## Others

- **Dr Lancelot Andrewes** (1555-1626), Master of Pembroke College, Cambridge, multi-linguist theologian and scholar, who became Dean of Westminster in 1601, then later Bishop of Chichester, Ely and Winchester respectively, who co-directed the translation of the Bible and who was not only a good friend of long-standing but also Francis Bacon's "inquisitor" during the writing of his *Advancement and Proficiency of Learning*.
- **Tobie Mathew** (1577-1655), scholar, priest, close friend of Francis Bacon, referred to by Bacon as "another myself", received Bacon's writings for comment, and translated Bacon's *Essays* into Italian and Latin.
- **Sir Thomas Meautys** (1592-1649), private secretary to and close friend of Francis Bacon (from 1616), clerk to His Majesty's Council (appointed 1619), married the granddaughter of Francis Bacon's half-brother Sir Nicholas Bacon.
- **Mr Young**, private secretary to Francis Bacon (from 1618).
- **Dr William Rawley** (1588-1667), Francis Bacon's private chaplain (from 1618), close friend, amanuensis and literary executor.
- **Dr William Harvey** (1578-1657), private physician and close friend of Francis Bacon, announced the discovery of the blood system to the world.
- **Peter Böener**, domestic apothecary and amanuensis to Francis Bacon (until 1623), later published a translation in Dutch of Bacon's *Essays, Wisdom of Ancients* and *Religious Meditations* (Leyden, 1646), grouped in one volume and prefixed with a 'Life of Bacon'.<sup>10</sup>
- **Thomas Hobbes** (1588-1679), philosopher, writer, author, amanuensis to Francis Bacon (from 1620). Hobbes was later to become famous as the author of the work of political theory, *Leviathan*.
- **Timothy Bright** (1551-1615), clergyman and physician, who published *Characterie* (1588), the first book on shorthand, and *A Treatise on Melancholy* (1586);
- **William Camden** (1551-1623), the Clarenceux King-of-Arms, who granted John Shakspeare a coat of arms;

- **Dr John Hacket** (1592-1670), chaplain to James I (1623), later Bishop of Lichfield (1661), one of the translators of the final versions of Bacon's *Essays, Advancement of Learning* and other works into Latin.
- **Thomas Bushell** (1593-1674), gentleman-usher (from 1608), seal-bearer (from 1618) and amanuensis of Francis Bacon. After Bacon's death Bushell became a mining engineer in Somerset and Cardigan. He acknowledged that his own knowledge was based on Francis Bacon's knowledge of minerals and mining, for Francis had taken especial care to make Bushell 'the heir to his knowledge in mineral philosophy' and a few other inventions as well.<sup>11</sup>

There were clearly many more, but who they might have been is not certain. Francis Bacon's reference to "Ye law at Twick'nam for merrie tales"<sup>12</sup> suggests that other lawyers from Gray's Inn and possibly other Inns of Court made up this writers' group, at least in the earlier days and maybe throughout the Shakespeare period. Letters show that Gray's Inn men were still assisting Francis in the last years of his life, when he was trying to complete the writings that he had planned for the Great Instauration.

In addition there were those others who were involved in or connected with the "Society of the Rosy Cross", nicknamed the "Knights of the Helmet" in the Gray's Inn Revels of 1594 when Bacon had become the 'imperator' or leader. Of these, **John Dee** (1527-1608/9) was certainly one, and much of what Dee was involved with was passed on to Francis Bacon, including Cabalistic and Freemasonic knowledge that underlies the sonnets and plays, and the design and working of theatres. The authors of the elegies in the *Manes Verulamiani* may or may not have been part of the 'circle' or 'society', but judging from what they appear to know about Bacon, it seems likely that many of them were.

After Bacon's fall from office (his 'disgrace') in 1621, those whom Bacon described as the "good pens who forsake me not" included Ben Jonson, George Herbert, Thomas Hobbes, Peter Böener, Dr William Rawley and Sir Thomas Meautys.

Copyright © Peter Dawkins, 2017

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See FBRT essay, 'Labeo is Shakespeare is Bacon':

[http://www.fbrt.org.uk/pages/essays/Labeo\\_is\\_Shakespeare\\_is\\_Bacon.pdf](http://www.fbrt.org.uk/pages/essays/Labeo_is_Shakespeare_is_Bacon.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> *Phoebus*, meaning 'glory', was a descriptive title of Apollo.

<sup>3</sup> 'Aonian band' refers to the Muses. The word is derived from Aonides, a name for the Muses, whose principal dwelling place, according to the Greeks, was on Mount Helicon in the land of Aones (Boeotia).

<sup>4</sup> Edmund Spenser resided at Leicester House from spring 1579 until July 1580 when Spenser took up a new post as private secretary to Arthur Grey, the new Lord Deputy of Ireland.

<sup>5</sup> There are various indications that the poet 'Immerito' might have been Francis Bacon rather than Edmund Spenser, to whom the first Immerito poem, *The Shepheardes Calender*, was later ascribed, together with the later epic, *The Faerie Queene*, and other poems. *The Shepheardes Calender* first

---

appeared on the public scene with its anonymous publication on 5 December 1579, dedicated to Philip Sidney.

<sup>6</sup> See FBRT essay, 'Life of Francis Bacon':-  
[http://www.fbrt.org.uk/pages/essays/Life\\_of\\_Sir\\_Francis\\_Bacon.pdf](http://www.fbrt.org.uk/pages/essays/Life_of_Sir_Francis_Bacon.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> See FBRT essay, 'Life of Anthony Bacon':-  
[http://www.fbrt.org.uk/pages/essays/Life\\_of\\_Anthony\\_Bacon.pdf](http://www.fbrt.org.uk/pages/essays/Life_of_Anthony_Bacon.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> See FBRT essay, 'The Northumberland Manuscript':  
[http://www.fbrt.org.uk/pages/essays/The\\_Northumberland\\_Manuscript.pdf](http://www.fbrt.org.uk/pages/essays/The_Northumberland_Manuscript.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Some of these are preserved at Lambeth Palace and were printed in *Memoirs of The Reign of Queen Elizabeth* by Thomas Birch, D.D., in two volumes printed in 1754.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Böener, 'Life of Bacon', *De Proef-Stucken van den Franciscus Bacon* (Leyden, 1646).

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Bushell, *Abridgement of the Lord Chancellor Bacon's Philosophical Theory in Mineral Prosecutions* (1659). See also A. de la Pryme, *Memoirs of Thomas Bushell*, ed. W. Harrison (1878).

<sup>12</sup> Francis Bacon, *Promus of Formularies and Elegancies*, Folio 109, Entry 1165 (c.1594-1595), ed. and publ. by Mrs Henry Pott (1883).