

Sent from the Queen's Hand



Records of the birth, baptism, university choice and being sent to France by the Queen's hand are all suggestive of Francis Bacon being the Queen's son.

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In September 1576 Francis Bacon, aged fifteen, was sent to France “from her Majesty's royal Hand”, which meant that he went with the Queen's direct authority and blessing and by her command. For someone still so young, this was not only a privilege but also an extraordinarily unique thing for the Queen to have done. This in itself indicates that the teenage Francis was someone who was considered of extra-special importance to the Queen, as well as now being completely included in and dedicated to her service, as indeed one would expect of a first-born son and potential heir to the throne. Before this occurred, there are some possible indications that this was so.

Birth of Francis Bacon

The opening sentence by William Rawley in his *Life*¹ of Francis Bacon makes the enigmatic statement that Francis Bacon was born either in York House or York Place on 22 January 1560 (1561 New Style):

FRANCIS BACON, the glory of his age and nation, the adorer and ornament of learning, was born in York House, or York Place, in the Strand, on the 22th day of January, in the year of our Lord 1560.

York House was the London home and official residence of Sir Nicholas Bacon as Lord Keeper of the Great Seal. York Place, on the other hand, was the Queen's royal palace in Westminster, which was more usually known as Whitehall Palace.

It seems inconceivable that William Rawley, Francis Bacon's private chaplain, secretary, friend and confidante, would not know which of those two homes Francis Bacon had been born in, which leaves the credulous reader with the impression that Rawley is in fact suggesting or pointing a finger at a royal secret.

Lady Anne Bacon, who had been a good friend of the Queen for many years as well as one of her ladies-in-waiting when Elizabeth was still a princess, was at that time, as wife of the Queen's Lord Keeper, a head lady-in-waiting to the Queen.

Bar an unexpectedly sudden premature birth in the palace, Lady Anne would almost certainly have given birth to her own children in her own home, York House, which provided her with a spacious and comfortable residence close to the palace, together with her own servants.

Baptismal Record

Three days after his birth, Francis was baptized in the church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, which was located close to York House and Charing Cross. The baptism is recorded in the church register, on the first page: “1560, 25 Januarie Baptizatus fuit Mr. Franciscus Bacon.” (Transl. “1560, 25 January Mr Francis Bacon was baptised.”) To this has been added, in different

handwriting and using paler ink: “filius Dm Nicho: Bacon Magni Anglie Sigilli Custodis.” (Transl. “son of Lord Nicholas Bacon Keeper of the Great Seal of England.”)

The insertion of the title “Mr.” before the name “Franciscus Bacon” in the church register is unusual, as also the added statement that he was the Lord Keeper’s son. The fact that these additions were deemed necessary naturally begs the question, Why?

Trinity College, Cambridge University

On April 6th, 1573, Anthony Bacon (aged 14) and Francis Bacon (aged 12), together with Edward Tyrell, a ward of Sir Nicholas and Lady Anne Bacon, matriculated as Fellow Commoners at Trinity College, Cambridge. With them went a servant, named Griffith. The College chosen was not St. Bennet’s College where Sir Nicholas Bacon had been educated, which one might have expected, but Trinity College which had been founded by the Queen’s father, Henry VIII, and visited by Elizabeth and Leicester in 1564. The three students were placed in the charge of Dr. John Whitgift, the Master of the College and one of the Queen’s private chaplains, being a person whom the Queen admired and who was a favourite at Court.

Sent to France from the Queen’s hand

In September 1576 Francis Bacon, aged fifteen, was sent abroad to further his education. He was put in the care of and appointed as an attaché to Sir Amyas Paulet, his French tutor, who had been knighted and commissioned by Queen Elizabeth as the new English Ambassador to the French Court. Moreover, Francis was sent to France ‘from her Majesty’s royal Hand’, which meant that he went with the Queen’s direct authority and blessing and by her command.

This was something very special and unique not just for a fifteen-year-old boy but also because young gentlemen and noblemen who were going abroad were normally older, never sent from the Queen’s hand, nor sent as part of the official entourage of the Queen’s ambassador and thereby given ambassadorial entrée to the French Court. This did not happen for Anthony Bacon, as one might have expected since Anthony was the elder brother. Indeed, Anthony had to wait until December 1579, after the death of his father and when he had reached the age of 21 and inherited his estate, before he was able to travel abroad. Moreover, Anthony was sent abroad by his uncle Lord Burghley, the Queen’s Lord Treasurer, to gather intelligence for Burghley and the Queen, rather than being sent direct from the Queen’s hand.

Sir Amyas Paulet and his embassy, including Francis Bacon, set out for France in grand style on 25 September 1576, sailing on the battleship *Dreadnought*, one of the four new galleons designed by John Hawkins that revolutionised naval battle and which was specially commissioned for the occasion. The party landed at Calais later that day, from whence they travelled on to Paris and the court of Henri III.

That being sent “from her Majesty’s royal Hand” was of particular importance to Francis Bacon is made clear in a letter to the Earl of Essex written nearly two decades later, wherein Francis explains to the earl why he is so melancholic and hoping for the Queen’s pardon, having incurred her wrath for opposing, as a Member of Parliament (in the Parliament of January-March 1593), an attempt by the Queen and House of Lords to diminish the House of

Commons' prerogative of raising taxes and discussing such matters in private. The Queen and House of Lords had demanded that a huge additional taxation should be made to offset the costs of defending the country against the Armada. Francis proposed that this should be moderated somewhat, as it would be too burdensome for people to bear. The House of Commons, inspired by Francis, prevailed and the taxation was suitably moderated. The Queen was furious and denied Francis any further access to her presence, which since his return from France in 1579 he had enjoyed in a privileged way, and told him "that he must nevermore look to her for favour or promotion". In the letter to the Earl of Essex, Francis says: -

"I am very sorry, her *Majesty* should take my Motion to travail, in offence. But surely, under her *Majesties* Royal Correction, it is such an Offence, as it should be, an offence to the Sun, when a Man, to avoid the scorching heat thereof, flyeth into the shade. And your *Lordship* may easily think, that having now these twenty years, (for so long it is, and more, since I went, with Sir *Amyas Paulet*, into *France*, from her *Majesties* royal Hand,) I made Her *Majesties* Service, the Scope of my life: I shall never finde a greater grief than this, *Relinquere Amorem Primum*. But since, *principia Actionem, sunt tantum, in nostra a potestate*; I hope, her *Majesty*, of her Clemency, yea and Justice, will pardon me, and not force me, to pine here, with Melancholy."²

In a letter to Robert Cecil, also concerning the offense given to the Queen, Francis again mentions his being sent to France from the Queen's hand: -

"May it please your Honour therefore to deliver to her Majesty, first, that it is an exceeding grief to me that any, not motion (for there was not now a motion), but mention that should come from me should offend her Majesty, whom for these one-and-twenty years (for so long it is that I kissed Her Majesty's hands upon my journey into France) I have used the best of my wits to please."³

The two letters are undated, but must fall into the period of Francis Bacon's disgrace.⁴

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Endnotes

¹ William Rawley, *Life of the Honourable Author*, first published in 1657 as part of *Resuscitatio, Or, Bringing into Publick Light severall Pieces of the Works, hitherto sleeping, Of the Right Honourable Francis Bacon*.

² Dr William Rawley, *Resuscitatio, Or, Bringing into Publick Light severall pieces of the Works, Civil, Historical, Philosophical, & Theological, hitherto sleeping; Of the Right Honourable Francis Bacon, Baron of Verulam, Viscount Saint Alban* (1657): 'Several Letters written by this Honourable Author to Queen Elizabeth, King James, divers Lords, and Others': 'Other Letters... Written in the Dayes of Queen Elizabeth', p.88.

³ James Spedding, *The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon*, Vol 1, Ch. X (1861).

⁴ References within the letters help to give estimates of their dates, namely sometime in 1594, although this would appear to conflict with Francis' estimate of the time lapse since being sent into France from the Queen's hand, as he departed for France in September 1576.