

Letters to Thomas, 4th Lord Paget¹

The originals of these letters are amongst the Paget Papers at Keele University Special Collections; copies are at Staffordshire Record Office, hence the dual references

Paget Papers Keele GB172 PAG VI/34; Staffordshire RO DK603/K/1/6/34

Jhesu

My good lord I am much bound unto your Lordship for your favorable Remembrance. I am heartily sorry that I may not once every week have one hour's leave to wait upon your Lordship / and I wold as gladly for your recreation every fair evening your Lordship were partaker of our Sports at this present. There is a Bruyte² that men of no small account are come as challengers into these partes *videlicet* Master Bronkert, Master Sadeler and my good cousin William Agard; the which if prove true their entertainment is provided though they offer themselves at our evil Season. Upon Monday next it is thought the encounter will be and what shall be thende³ of the conflict God willing your Lordship shall be advertised. The weather is according to the time march manye forwards and so it may prove in some cases with your Lordship of more Importance. By these your Lordship may see how seriously the time is spent with us

Left margin:

And if I had better to recommend unto you my leisure well served may it please your Lordship that I may be most heartily remembered to Master Trentham, Master Twynhoe⁴ and Master Bird your evening guests;⁵ as for Master Roger Manners and others of his sort your Lordship hath been so well fed and they so well chastened as there will be no haste on either side of your good meetings.

And so with my most humble duty I take my leave from Deddington the 11th of March 1580/81 your Lordships ever to command.

Raffe Sheldon

Verso :

To the Right honorable my especiall good Lord the Lord Pagett give these⁶

¹ Paget and Sheldon might have met through Sir Thomas Cornwallis. Paget had employed Edmund Plowden, Ralph's brother in law, on legal business (Parmiter, *Edmund Plowden*, p.123). They shared similar views on religion; by 1577 Paget was 'not known to come to church' (CRS 22, 88). By the time of these letters Paget, once a useful government ally in local administration, having served as JP and sheriff, had lost the trust of the privy council because of his religious affinity (*ODNB*).

² Rumour.

³ The end.

⁴ Sheldon spelt the name as Twyneawe identified by Christopher Harrison, 'William Byrd and the Pagets of Beaudesert A Musical Connection', *Staffordshire Studies*, III (1990-91), 51-63 ' p.61, as Edmund Twynyho, one of Paget's estate officials.

⁵ Paget was the patron of the composer William Byrd (*ODNB*) who resided in Harlington, Middlesex.

⁶ The letters must all have been sent by friend or messenger; none has an address. Their content suggests they went to Paget at Drayton, Middlesex.

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PAG VI/34

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The earliest surviving, but not the first, letter from Ralph Sheldon to Thomas, 4th Lord Paget, March 1580/81.
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Paget Papers Keele GB172 PAG VII/15; Staffordshire RO D603/K/1/7/15⁷*Jhesu*

I have adventured these few words although I suppose the hot season hath driven your Lordship to Drayton.⁸ It seemeth to me very long since I attended your Lordship and therefore I would gladly know how the world fareth with you; and am the bolder to put your Lordship to some pains as mean to keep you occupied. If London be the place of your Lordship's abode, the absence of the court leaveth you clean without company, if Drayton, some refreshing Mr Bird relieveth you. I am sorry that I am not within 4 hours' travel to you. What with sheep-shearing and hay making were [*sic we are*] not unoccupied. That being done, I would either your Lordship were here or I by some means tied unto you. And so with all our humble duties, I take my leave. From Weston, this first of July 1581.

Your Lordship's for ever
Raffe Sheldon

Verso:

To the Right Honorable my especiall good Lord the Lord Paget give these

Paget Papers Keele GB172 PAG VII/21; Staffordshire RO D603/K/1/7/21*Jhesu*

Your Lordships letters and them enclosed I have received and am glad to hear that you win [credyt] by any means <...> that should ^serve^ the company your Lordship ^doth^ keep to be noble at the least / for they bowl fare and far of where you be holden for a sure stake . God send your Lordship [an] ende in your causes and yet (*Computatis Computandis*) I think you most happy to be occupied as you are and where you are. I am now entering into a hawking Journey as badly furnished with hawks and dogs as ever I was. It goeth hard with me when Love your old Servant is the best in my band. I would it might please you to <...> lend me a couple of good hunting dogs and to direct me when to receive them. I am glad that you have [...] punished the old Fool, a matter of no more weight than a meal at his ^house^ would easily draw me to make one <...> and to attend your Lordship.

This Bearer is my servant and hath occasion to <...> abide 4 or 5 days in

Left margin:

London. May it please your Lordship to bestow a few words [...] and so with my humble duty I take my leave from Weston this 27th of August 1581

Your Lordship's ever to command

⁷ This letter has been transcribed and published by Harrison, 'William Byrd and the Pagets', with other material mentioning Mr [William] Bird the composer.

⁸ Lord Paget's house in Middlesex.

Raff Sheldon

Verso:

To the Right honorable my especiall good Lord the Lord Pagett give these with speed

Paget Papers Keele GB172 PAG VII/68; Staffordshire RO D603/K/1/7/68

Jhesu

I know your Lordship will be jealous even when you shall understand what part I have in this bearer and how much he contenteth himself to bee <one> of our consort in all which he reserveth a part for your Lordship so as by violence and extortion you do not exact beyond your reasonable allowance. Master Twyneawe I claim wholly as he may do my Self and all my family. Of Master Bird you are not worthy and we take comfort in him as a lean-to by whom we are relieved upon every casual wreck. And now that your Lordship <maye> ^doth^ see what humour reigneth at this present I have only to wish your Lordship's presence but for a few days to see the preparation against the great day and especially to see the things prepared which I know will grieve you greatly and the rather because I <know> ^See^ your Lordship carrieth a revengeful mind of <a> some victory that I and my followers had even at your own home. And now somewhat to your Lordship's praise in truth I must confess that

Left margin:

you are greatly amended in the art of clocks for amongst many that you have marred your Lordship's chance hath been to amend one namely my nowne⁹ which yet holdeth a reasonable pace.

Your Lordship cannot but be weary of all this Babell.

And therefore with my most humble duty I leave your Lordship to the keeping of the Highest from Clopton this 20th of December 1581

Your Lordship's most bounden
Raff Sheldon

Verso:

To the Right honorable my especiall good Lord the Lord Paget give these

Paget Papers Keele GB172 PAG VIII/7; Staffordshire RO D 603/K/1/8/7

Jhesu

Page 1:

It maybe your Lordship hath heard that the meeting at Banbury did not hold because ^your Lordship^ is much subject to credit such as you favour. I have Required <...> this bearer my brother to shew <to> your Lordship the copies of certain letters that have passed, not that I

⁹ 'mine own'.

desire so much to satisfy your Lordship in anything as to lay before you the shame and reproof that worthily is fallen upon your country men and favourites wherein you are to reckon with yourself for the good choice you have made of so worthy wryghtes in whom your Lordship reposed so great confidence and besides wherein in your opinion there was none worthy to look upon your choice haggards byrds¹⁰ no doubt of the right feather. Well lest I should altogether/ bring your Lordship out of conceit with yourself I will reserve the rest until I may myself attend you by which time I doubt not

Page 2:

you will have digested this. When all our hawking is at end and Tuttyll by the good Season become in good Time I purpose God willing to be professed of the friars¹¹ and there to wait upon your Lordship with bow and bowls. All the news I can remember unto your Lordship ^from hence^ is that your brother he hath a most excellent haggard and thinketh his penny good silver even amongst the best of us.

And ^so^ wishing your Lordship were present with us at our next meeting though far unworthy to be a Judge I humbly take my leave / From Deddington this 20th of January 1581/82

Your Lordship's for ever and ever
Raff Sheldon

Verso:

To the Right honorable my especial good Lord the Lord Paget give these

[In another hand Master Raffe Sheldon 1581]

Paget Papers Keele GB172 PAG IX/25; Staffordshire Record Office D603/K/1/9/25

Jhesu

My very good Lord a servant of mine one Robert Lee by the favour of your Lordship's officers (as I am given to understand) is become your Lordship's tenant of Haywood Parke or part thereof. There is adjoining thereunto as he informeth me a little pasture called Swallows Mead now in the tenure of George Smythe whose interest determineth within these three years and as some think your Lordship meaneth not that he shall continue any longer your tenant thereof if then it might stand with your Lordship's pleasure that my said servant may for such considerations as I shall soon make to you to have the occupation thereof I doubt not your Lordship shall find him dutiful in paying his Rents and doing all other services which shall become him to do. Only his desire is to become your Lordship's tenant without any prejudice to Your Lordship's profit and to continue in that state no longer than your pleasure shall be to dispose of the said provender and also well to allow of his dutiful behaviour. And so referring this my humble suite to your Lordship's good consideration I humbly take my leave from Weston this 13th of June 1583

¹⁰ Wild hawks.

¹¹ Sheldon is expressing his intention of coming up to his London house in the White Friars.

Your Lordship's to command
Raffe Sheldon

Verso:

To the Right Honorable my very good Lord the Lord Paget give these

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