

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated December 1594 from Sir William Dethick to Lord Burghley, then one of the Commissioners representing the office of Earl Marshal, complaining about the conduct of Ralph Brooke, York Herald, and Richard Lee (d. 23 September 1597), Clarenceux King at Arms.

The letter is significant as a sample of Sir William Dethick's secretary hand, since it was Dethick who drew up the three draft grants of the arms of John Shakespeare. See the facsimiles at the Shakespeare Documented website:

<http://www.shakespearedocumented.org/exhibition/document/grant-arms-john-shakespeare-draft-1>

<http://www.shakespearedocumented.org/exhibition/document/grant-arms-john-shakespeare-draft-2>

<http://www.shakespearedocumented.org/exhibition/document/john-shakespeares-draft-exemplification-arms>.

For Dethick's petition circa 1590 complaining of the conduct of Robert Cooke, then Clarenceux King at Arms, see BL Lansdowne 108/96, ff. 179-90. For another petition by Dethick, see BL Lansdowne 108/97, ff. 181-2.

Right honourable and my very good Lord, I humbly beseech your Lordship to peruse these for proof of the slanderous reports, actions and suits published & divulged against me by the malice of York Herald, of whom I have truly informed your Lordship without envy or maleengein(?). And he hath so commenced his suits by my writings to your Lordship which are come, I know not how, into his hands.

Praying your Lordship to consider of my poor credit & services to the Queen's most excellent Majesty now 30 years, that never had suit nor means of rewards, and trust your Lordship will have some respect for my office, place & parents known to your Lordship, wherein this man hath done me great damage, and how he urgeth his bad suits in the Exchequer & Star Chamber against me under shadow & words from your Lordship, & therein spareth not time, means, place nor persons to discredit me. He saith also that the Book of the Register of the Order of the Garter whereby I prove the privileges of my office is a forged record. He disgraceth my credit in all matters of my office, and Clarenceux joineth with him in all his insolences. Thus desiring your Lordship to excuse my bold & rude writings, I pray the Almighty to pros[per] & preserve you in health & honour. The Office of Arms, London(?), this (blank) December 1594.

Your Lordship's most bounden,  
William Dethick, Garter,  
Principal King of Arms

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Clarenceux hath allowed & set out the arms & funerals of one Burche, a mercer of London & man of small parentage, with helmet, crest, coat of arms, pennon & a pall, & himself attendant in his rich coat, and disgraceth my office & saith he only is the King of Arms & hath power to give arms. Thus am I by them abused & discredited, & my office depraved, which I trust your Lordship will, according to the statutes and the manifold proofs which I can produce, to protect me.

Addressed:

To the right honourable and my good Lord, the Lord Burghley, Lord Treasurer of England, Knight of the Garter, and one of the Deputies for the Office of Earl Marshal of England

Endorsed:

23 December 1594

Mr Garter to my Lord

Articles exhibited by York against him in the Star Chamber