

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 17 September 1604 from Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford, then 11 years of age and a royal ward, to Charles Howard (1536-1624), 1st Earl of Nottingham, advising that Anthony Witherings had ignored Nottingham's warrant, and that Sir John Grey (d.1611) had stated that he would take up the matter personally with King James. The letter, in an unknown adult hand, is signed by the young Earl, and addressed to Nottingham at his estate of Haling House, near Croydon.

It appears that Sir John Grey (d.1611) had taken advantage of the death on 24 June 1604 of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, to authorize Anthony Witherings to forcibly displace Henry Humberston as keeper of Chappell Hainault walk in Waltham Forest. George Harpur and Henry Humberston then petitioned King James to grant a warrant restoring Humberston to the keepership of Chappell Hainault walk until the right of Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford, then the King's ward, to place keepers could be tried in the Court of Wards and Liveries; see CP Petitions 1377. It appears that Nottingham, apparently on the King's authority, issued a warrant summoning Witherings to appear before him, with the result described in the letter below.

For the family of Sir John Grey (d.1611) see the will, dated 17 November 1564 and proved 29 January 1565, of his grandfather, John Grey (d.1564), Lord Grey of Pirgo, TNA PROB 11/48/27. For the nuncupative will, dated 20 July 1628 and proved 20 October 1628, of Anthony Witherings, gentleman, see TNA PROB 11/154/294.

My good Lord, the messenger, being one of the Grooms of the Chamber, by whom your Lordship was pleased to send your warrant for Witherings, having faithfully delivered your Lordship's letters unto the party himself, is yesterday returned, reporting the utter refusal of Witherings to appear before your Lordship, Sir John Grey undertaking in his behalf to answer the matter unto the King's Majesty, avowing that whatsoever hath been done was done by his only directions and commandment;

Thus much I thought good to signify unto your Lordship, both that you might take knowledge of their disobedience unto and neglect of your Lordship's authority as also to pray you that out of your honourable disposition to relieve the oppressed you would take some speedy course in justice both to chastise this their contempt and also to restore my servant [=Humberston] to his wife, children, house and goods. So shall they be justly occasioned to pray to God for the preservation of your Honour, and I shall take it as a greater kindness done unto myself, which in my riper years I shall not forget to acknowledge;

Thus ceasing your Lordship further trouble, I take my leave this 17th of September.

Your very loving friend,

Henry Oxenford

Endorsed: To the right honourable the Earl of Nottingham, Lord High Admiral of England, at Haling give these

Endorsed: 17 September 1604, Earl of Oxford to my Lord Admiral