

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 7 May 1603 from Oxford to Robert Cecil, who had been ennobled on 13 May 1603 as Baron Cecil of Essendon. Oxford asks that Cecil assist him, together with Charles Howard (1536-1624), 1st Earl of Nottingham, the Lord Admiral, in procuring a favourable end to his suit concerning Waltham Forest.

For the writ of privy seal dated 18 July 1603 by which King James restored to Oxford his rights to the keepership and stewardship of Waltham Forest see TNA C 66/1612, mm. 29-30.

My very good Lord, I understand by Mr Attorney that he hath reported the state of my title to the keepership of Waltham Forest and of the house and park of Havering, whereby it appears to his Majesty what right and equity is therein. Till the 12th of Henry the 8th mine ancestors have possessed the same, almost sithence the time of William Conqueror, and at that time, which was the 12th year of Henry the 8th, the King took it for term of his life from my grandfather, sithence which time, what by the alterations of princes and wardships I have been kept from my rightful possession. Yet from time to time (both my father and myself) we have, as opportunities fell out, not neglected our claim; twice in my time it had passage by law, and judgment was to have passed on my side, whereof her Majesty the late Queen being advertised, with assured promises and words of a prince to restore it herself unto me caused me to let fall the suit. But so it was she was not so ready to perform her word as I was too ready to believe it. Whereupon pressing my title farther, it was by her Majesty's pleasure put to arbitrament, and although it was an unequal course, yet not to contradict her will, the Lord Chancellor, Sir Christopher Hatton, was sole arbitrator, who after all the delays devised by Sir Thomas Heneage and the Queen's counsel in law then being, having heard the cause was ready to make his report for me, but her Majesty refused the same and by no means would hear it, so that by this and the former means I have been thus long dispossessed.

But I hope truth is subject to no prescription, for truth is truth though never so old, and time cannot make that false which was once true, and though this threescore years both my father and myself have been dispossessed thereof, yet hath there been claims made thereto many times within those threescore years, which I take sufficient by law to avoid prescription in this case.

Now therefore his Majesty having heard the report, I hope he will in his justice and favour do me that right which is to be expected from so gracious and virtuous a sovereign. But for that I know among so many matters of importance unless his Majesty be put in remembrance he may forget a private cause, therefore I shall most earnestly desire your friendship in this, that you will join with my Lord Admiral, my very good Lord and friend, to help me to his Majesty's resolution. My Lord Admiral is Lord Chief Justice of Oyer and Determiner, and to whose office, indeed, as I understand, it appertains to have heard my cause, but I know not why or with what advice it was referred to Mr Attorney and his Majesty's counsel in law. But now howsoever, his

Majesty hath the report made unto him, which if it be forgotten shall little prevail me, but I hope in his justice and in your two Lordships' friendships, which, the cause being so just and honourable, I do fully rely upon. His Majesty departeth with nothing but a keepership, and a keeper he must have, wherefore it is much more princely for him to restore it to me, his lawful keeper, than contrary to bestow it upon an intruder. Nothing adorns a King more than justice, nor in anything doth a King more resemble God than in justice, which is the head of all virtue, and he that is endued therewith hath all the rest. So long as it was in the custody of mine ancestors the woods were preserved, the game cherished, and the forest maintained in her full state, but sithence it was otherwise disposed all these things have impaired, as experience doth manifest.

Thus therefore most earnestly craving your Lordships' friendly and honourable furtherances, I most heartily recommend myself unto your good Lordships from Hackney this 7th of May.

Your Lordship's most assured friend and brother-in-law to command,

E. Oxenforde

Endorsed: To the right honourable my very good Lord, the Lord of Essendon, one of his Majesty's Privy Council

Endorsed: 7 May 1603, Earl of Oxford to my Lord