

SUMMARY: The document below is a petition, dating from shortly before 17 September 1604, in which George Harpur and Henry Humberston request King James to grant a warrant restoring Humberston to the keepership of Chappell Hainault walk in Waltham Forest until the right of Henry de Vere, 18<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, then the King's ward, to place keepers could be tried in the Court of Wards and Liveries. For the writ of privy seal dated 18 July 1603 by which King James had restored to Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, his rights to the keepership and stewardship of Waltham Forest see TNA C 66/1612, mm. 29-30.

It appears that Sir John Grey (d.1611) had taken advantage of the death on 24 June 1604 of Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, to authorize Anthony Witherings to forcibly displace Henry Humberston as keeper of Chappell Hainault walk in Waltham Forest, prompting the petition 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.

To the King's Most Excellent Majesty

The humble petition of George Harpur and Henry Humberston, keepers of the two walks of Hainault and Chappell Hainault in your Forest of Waltham

Whereas it pleased your Majesty to restore the Earl of Oxford to his right of inheritance to the custody of your Highness' Forest of Waltham, who finding divers and sundry abuses and spoils of your Majesty's game committed by one Anthony Witherings, then keeper of Chappel Hainault walk, did displace the said Witherings, and placed as keeper thereof the petitioner Humberston, an ancient servant to the late Queen's Majesty in Havering Park, and a man well approved and known to the nobility of this your Highness' kingdom to be honest, skilful, sufficient and never convicted of the least offence towards the game committed to his charge;

Yet so it is, if it may please your Majesty, that the said Anthony Witherings by the encouragement of Sir John Grey hath entered into the possession of the said walk and by force and violence put forth the said Humberston, and holdeth the same contrary to the advice and commandment of your Majesty's faithful counsellor the Earl of Nottingham, your Highness' Chief Justice in Eyre, and the Lord Viscount Cranborne, Master of your Highness' Court of Wards and Liveries, and contrary to the laws of this your realm;

May it therefore please your Majesty of your accustomed goodness and for the preservation of justice and right to grant your Highness' warrant to Sir Anthony Cooke

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and Sir Robert Wroth, knight, to remove the force of the said Witherings from the possession of the said walk and to place the petitioner Humberston therein until the right of the said Earl of Oxford to the placing and displacing of all officers in the said Forest may be tried in your Highness' Court of Wards and Liveries, and that the petitioners may receive the yearly wages of 12s apiece and the arrearages thereof from the Treasurer of your Highness' Chamber and the fee wood as in the time of your Highness' ancestors hath been accustomed to be allowed them in regard of their charge in the preservation of your Majesty's game, and they shall ever pray for your Majesty's long and most happy reign over us.

We most humbly beseech your Majesty's gracious answer to this petition.