

SUMMARY: The document below is a petition dated 10 July 1604 from Richard Worden to Oxford's daughter, Elizabeth de Vere (1575-1627), who on 26 January 1595 had married William Stanley (1561 – 29 September 1642), 6th Earl of Derby.

The Lord Chancellor mentioned in the petition was Thomas Egerton (23 January 1540 – 15 March 1617) who in October 1600 had married, as his third wife, Alice Spencer (4 May 1559 – January 1637), who was the widow of Ferdinando Stanley (1559?–1594), 5th Earl of Derby, and was thus Elizabeth de Vere's sister-in-law.

Ferdinando Stanley had died in 1594 without male heirs, leaving his unentailed lands to his widow, Alice, and his three daughters. Elizabeth de Vere's husband, the 6th Earl of Derby, succeeded to an earldom burdened with debt, and refused to transfer title to any of the Stanley lands to Alice and her daughters, a decision which gave rise to bitter legal battles which were not resolved until an Act of Parliament in 1609. It seems likely that the animosity of Alice (nee Spencer) and her second husband, the Lord Chancellor, toward Elizabeth de Vere's husband, the 6th Earl of Derby, may have played a part in Richard Worden's ouster from his office recounted in the petition below.

10 July 1604

To the right honourable the Countess of Derby

Humbly complaining showeth to your Ladyship Richard Worden, one of th' Attorneys of th' Exchequer at Chester, that I, your Ladyship's said suppliant, about 25 years since coming to serve John Bannester, gentleman, deceased, as his Clerk (being Deputy Clerk of the Peace in Cheshire after his death), was and have been continued in the exercise of that office as Deputy Clerk of the Peace by five several Masters of that office successively, one after another, by the space of 21 years and above without change or alteration, paying £20 yearly for the same;

And having married my said Master's daughter and by her having had eight sons and eight daughters (whereof six sons & five daughters are yet living), have by the means and countenance of the same place been enabled in some good measure to maintain them hitherunto;

Now so it is, right honourable and most virtuous Lady, that one Robert Whitbye, having long time been one of the Coroners of the county of Chester till about three weeks since that he procured himself to be thereof discharged, and being Clerk of the Pentice in the City of Chester (an office esteemed to be worth £100 by year), and being one of the Attorneys before the King's Majesty's Justices at Chester and an Attorney in th' Exchequer at Chester aforesaid, and having the keeping of many courts in the country, and a man of great wealth and ability;

And having continued for many years in show and outward appearance most entirely and affectionately kind and friendly towards me, and having ever had me at commandment in anything wherein he pleased to use me (being in very many things), and our familiarity most frequent, serving and meeting both together daily in the said Exchequer;

And your said suppliant having not long since travailed and labored very earnestly and effectually with divers of his best friends for the said Whitbye's admittance to the said office of Clerk of the Pentice, contrary to the advice of many of your said suppliant's friends, who persuaded me to have sought the same place for myself, assuring me that I might more easily obtain the same for myself than for the said Whitbye, which nevertheless I refused to yield unto in respect I thought it might breed an imputation of ingratitude in me to oppose myself against him, considering all men that did know us took notice how entirely we loved one another;

And the said Whitbye carrying a most dissembled and unfriendly heart towards me, and being full of covetousness (as it seemeth), and grown into great credit and acquaintance with one Mr Henry Jones, a gentleman attending upon the right honourable the Lord Chancellor of England, being Clerk of the Peace (under whom I lately exercised the same office as his Deputy), and with Sir John Egerton, knight, being Custos Rotulorum in Cheshire, who hath the gift of that office of Clerk of the Peace, did in the Whitsun week last acquaint me with his going to London, and undertaking for me to dispatch some business of importance with the said Mr Jones, did there without my privity compound for and procure the said office of Clerk of the Peace to himself, and hath put me from th' exercise thereof, and will needs use the same himself, notwithstanding his said many other offices and places of attendance, answering me that I must be contented because I have used the place long, and that now the time served for him to do himself good, without once seeming to respect or regard the said inward & kind offers of friendship that have passed between us, which said extreme ingratitude of his, albeit the same be generally condemned in him with admiration by all that did know us, will turn to my overthrow and utter undoing of my said wife and children, the said office having been my chief countenance and a great stay of my living;

The premises by your Ladyship in your most noble and heroical mind measured and considered, and forasmuch as the said Whitbye is(?) to be suitor to your most noble and honourable husband for continuance of his said Attorney's room in th' Exchequer, as myself & others must do for the continuance of ours, and for that it may be the respect of his Honour's favour to continue him in that place may work in him that remorse towards me which the respect of so long-continued a friendship between us cannot move, may it please your Ladyship even for my poor discomforted wife and children's sake to inform your noble husband thereof(?), and to procure for me his Honour's letters directed to the said Whitbye requiring him to recontinue and restore me to th' exercise of the said office as his Deputy;

Ad your said suppliant and his wife and children shall upon their knees with all humbleness of heart beseech God to bless your Ladyship and all yours with all temporal

and spiritual blessings to your wished contentment, which God grant for Christ's sake,
Amen.

Endorsed: Petition to my Lady of Derby