

SUMMARY: The document below, according to Halliwell-Phillips, is a copy dating from about 1631 of a petition of November 1596 to the Privy Council from residents of the Blackfriars objecting to James Burbage's plans to erect an indoor playhouse there. The original petition is no longer extant; however its date, according to Halliwell-Phillips, is fixed by an order dated 21 January 1619 which refers to it (see below).

The Lord Chamberlain mentioned in the petition was William Brooke (1527-1597), 10th Baron Cobham, who was appointed Lord Chamberlain of the Household on 8 August 1596. The Lord Hunsdon mentioned in the petition was George Carey (1548-1603), 2nd Lord Hunsdon, whose father, Henry Carey (1526-1596), 1st Lord Hunsdon, the Queen's cousin, had died on 23 July 1596. George Carey was appointed Lord Chamberlain on 14 April 1597, and according to the *ODNB*:

His father's company of players, which had reverted to being Lord Hunsdon's Men when Henry Carey died, now became the Lord Chamberlain's Men once more, as they remained until 1603, when they were promoted to being the King's Men shortly after the accession of James I.

The Lady Russell who signed the petition was Elizabeth (nee Cooke) Russell (1528–1609) the sister of Mildred (nee Cooke) Cecil (1526–1589), Lady Burghley. She married firstly, on 27 June 1558, Sir Thomas Hoby (1530 – 13 July 1566), translator into English of Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*, and secondly, on 23 December 1574, John Russell (d. 24 July 1584), heir to Francis Russell, 2nd Earl of Bedford.

Richard Field (bap. 1561, d. 1624), another signatory to the petition, was the printer of *Venus and Adonis* in 1593.

According to Halliwell-Phillips:

This manuscript is not the original petition, but an undated copy of it made in or about the year 1631, as ascertained by a comparison of the handwriting with that in transcripts of other documents in the State Papers. The date of the original is shown by the Order of 1619 given hereafter.

Halliwell Phillips provides a copy of the latter order of 21 January 1619 on p. 311. It begins:

Item, this day was exhibited to this Court a petition by the constables and other officers and inhabitants within the precinct of Blackfriars, London, therein declaring that in November 1596 divers honourable persons and others then inhabiting in the said precinct made known to the Lords and others of the Privy Council what inconveniences were likely to fall upon them by a common playhouse then preparing to be erected there, and that their Honours then forbade the use of the said house for plays, and in June 1600 made certain orders by which for many weighty reasons therein expressed it is limited there should be only two houses tolerated, whereof the one to be on the Bankside and the

other in or near Golding Lane, exempting thereby the Blackfriars, and that a letter was then directed from their Lordships to the Lord Mayor and Justices strictly requiring of them to see those orders put in execution and so to be continued. . . .

See Halliwell-Phillipps, J.O., in *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, 7th ed., Vol. I, (London: Longmans Green, 1887, pp. 304, 311 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=kG84AAAAIAAJ&pg=PA304&lpg=PA304&dq=%22ascanio+de+renialmire%22&source=bl&ots=Fh3Ke7rvaA&sig=XI7eraBG5D7-JcaXRugKugFIXq4&hl=en&sa=X&ei=pqhZU-aOAtKpyASJqYHIBQ&ved=0CCsQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=%22ascanio%20de%20renialmire%22&f=false>

For a facsimile in the National Archives image collection, catalogues as SP 12/260 (176), see:

<https://images.nationalarchives.gov.uk/assetbank-nationalarchives/action/viewAsset?id=45505&index=0&total=1&view=viewSearchItem>.

To the right honourable the Lords and others of her Majesty's most honourable Privy Council

Humbly showing and beseeching your Honours, the inhabitants of the precinct of the Blackfriars, London;

That whereas one Burbage hath lately bought certain rooms in the same precinct near adjoining unto the dwelling-houses of the right honourable the Lord Chamberlain and the Lord of Hunsdon, which rooms the said Burbage is now altering and meaneth very shortly to convert and turn the same into a common playhouse which will grow to be a very great annoyance and trouble not only to all the noblemen and gentlemen thereabout inhabiting but also a general inconvenience to all the inhabitants of the same precinct, both by reason of the great resort and gathering together of all manner of vagrant and lewd persons that under colour of resorting to the plays will come thither and work all manner of mischief, and also to the great pestering and filling up of the same precinct if it should please God to send any visitation of sickness as heretofore hath been for that the same precinct is already grown very populous, and besides that the same playhouse is so near the church that the noise of the drums and trumpets will greatly disturb and hinder both the ministers and parishioners in time of divine service and sermons;

In tender consideration whereof, as also for that there hath not at any time heretofore been used any common playhouse within the same precinct, but that now all players being banished by the Lord Mayor from playing within the City by reason of the great inconveniences and ill rule that followeth them, they now think to plant themselves in liberties, that therefore it would please your Honours to take order that the same rooms may be converted to some other use, and that no playhouse may be used or kept there;

And your suppliants as most bounden shall and will daily pray for your Lordships in all honour and happiness long to live.

Elizabeth Russell, Dowager
G. Hunsdon
Henry Bowes
Thomas Browne
John Crooke
William Meredith
Stephen Egerton
Richard Lee
(blank) Smith
William Paddy
William de Lavine
Francis Hinson
John Edwards
Andrew Lyons
Thomas Nayle
Owen Lochard
John Robinson
Thomas Homes
Richard Field
William Watts
Henry Boice
Edward Ley
John Clarke
William Bispham
Robert Baheire
Ezechiell Major
Harman Buckholt
John Le Mere
John Dollin
Ascanio de Renialmire
John Wharton