

SUMMARY: The document below is an undated memorandum of the offices and rights claimed by Oxford in the Forest of Essex (also called Waltham Forest), and the evidence offered by him in support of his claim. It was likely prepared shortly before Oxford's offices and rights were reconfirmed to him on 18 July 1603 by King James. For the copy on the patent rolls of the writ of privy seal by which King James restored to Oxford his rights to the keepership and stewardship of the Forest and of the King's park and houses of Havering, see TNA C 66/1612, mm. 29-30.

For an earlier plea made on 17 August 1489 concerning the claim by John de Vere (1442-1513), 13th Earl of Oxford, to rights in the Forest, see TNA DL 39/2/25.

For a letter dated 8 December 1558 from Oxford's father, John de Vere (1516-1562), 16th Earl of Oxford, to Sir William Cecil, advising the latter of the current state of the 16th Earl's claim to the office of the Lieutenancy of Waltham Forest, see TNA SP 12/1/22, f. 53. For mention by the 16th Earl of his right to 'the Lieutenantship of the Forest of Waltham with the keeping of the house and park of Havering', in his indenture of 2 June 1562, see TNA C 54/626.

Oxford's efforts to reclaim his rights in the Forest of Essex during Queen Elizabeth's lifetime were unsuccessful, with Oxford stating that the Queen 'flatly said whether it were mine or hers she would bestow it at her pleasure'. For letters and memoranda in which Oxford mentions his legal claim to rights in the Forest, see BL Lansdowne 68/6, ff. 12-13; BL Lansdowne 68/11, ff. 23, 28; BL Lansdowne 68/11, f. 22; BL Harley 6996/22, ff. 42-3; Cecil Papers 35/84; Cecil Papers 172/81; Cecil Papers 99/161; and Cecil Papers 100/99. For a deposition by Oxford's former receiver-general, Edward Hubberd (d.1601/2), attributing to Oxford's servant, Israel Amyce, the suggestion that Leicester was behind the Queen's refusal to restore Oxford's rights in the Forest ('I pray God my Lord of Leicester have not gotten it and burned it because of my Lord's title to the stewardship of the Forest'), see TNA C 24/277/35.

For a letter written by Oxford to King James on 30 January 1604 complaining that Sir John Grey (d.1611) had killed deer in Havering park without the King's warrant, see ERO D/DMh C1.

Shortly before his death on 24 June 1604, Oxford transferred his rights in the Forest to his first cousin, Sir Francis Vere (1560/61-1609), and his son-in-law, Francis (1579-1622), Lord Norris (see Oxford's inquisition post mortem, TNA C 142/286/165).

A note of such offices and rights which the Earl of Oxford claimeth as inheritance to him and his heirs within the Forest of Waltham within the county of Essex

First, he claimeth himself to be guardian and steward of the same Forest, to him and his heirs, by virtue of which offices he claimeth to have the appointment:

Of the lieutenant of the Forest;
Of the ranger or riding forester;
Of the three foot foresters which were anciently all the keepers within the Forest, but in the time of King Henry 8 the King's pleasure was to have the Forest divided into ten walks and a several keeper in every walk, the placing of which keepers now pertaineth to the Earl as the ancient offices did.

The Earl as belonging to the said offices is also to have the keeping of the King's house at Havering and the park there, and to have the brushwood there cut, and the herbage of the same park what shall be above the feeding of the King's deer.

He is to have all waifs and strays within the Forest.

He is to have the amerçiements in all the swanimote courts and wood courts kept within the Forest for all offences done within the Forest saving only for hunting and cutting down great oaks, and he is to have the appointing of the stewards for keeping the same courts.

The Earl is to have the deer-falled wood or brushwood cut within the Forest.

Upon every sale of covert or hedgerows within the Forest, the Earl is to have one penny out of every shilling paid for the same.

Upon every sale of great trees within the Forest the Earl is to choose the second best oak, and to have one bow and broad arrow, and one penny out of every shilling paid for the same great wood.

In respect of which duties and profits we do not yet find that the Earls of Oxford had ever any fee in money from the King for exercising the said offices.

That these things do of right belong to the said Earl is proved:

By a suit in a quo warranto brought against John, Earl of Oxford, in the 4th year of King Edward 4th wherein the Earl by plea claimed these things above-named, and made his title thereto by descent as heir to Thomas de Clare. Issue was taken upon them for the King, and upon trial a verdict passed for the Earl, and thereupon judgment was given that the Earl should hold these offices and profits above claimed to him and his heirs. And this is the highest suit and trial in law for such matters of liberties.

Also King Henry 6 in the 30th year of his reign by letters patent under the Great Seal restored John, Earl of Oxford, to the keeping of the house and park at Havering, acknowledging therein that the same (time out of mind) did belong to the office of keeping the Forest of Waltham.

In the 24th year of Henry 7 another quo warranto was brought against John, then Earl of Oxford, who by plea made his claim as before, and we find no further proceedings thereupon.

In the 5th year of Henry 8, after the death of John, Earl of Oxford, it was found by office returned and now of record in the Chancery that he was seised of these offices of guardian and steward of the Forest, and by force of them was to have the profits aforesaid, and that he died seised thereof.

The Earl can show also grants made by his ancestors in the time of King Edward the 4th, Henry the 7th, and Henry 8 of the lieutenanship of the Forest, and deputations to keep the house and park of Havering.

Endorsed: The state of the Earl of Oxford's place.