

SUMMARY The document below is a letter dated 27 August 1576 from Sir Henry Neville (c.1520–1593) to Sir William More (1520-1600) of Loseley requesting that More grant a lease of premises in the Blackfriars to Neville's 'very friend', Richard Farrant (d. 30 November 1580).

For the indenture dated 20 December 1576 by which More subsequently leased 'six upper chambers' in the Blackfriars to Farrant for 21 years at an annual rent of £14, see Folger MS L.b.350, and Wallace, Charles William, *The Evolution of the English Drama up to Shakespeare*, (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1912), pp. 132-6.

Having obtained his lease, Farrant converted the premises into a playhouse for the Children of the Chapel, and also sublet part of the premises to two other persons, for which latter infraction More claimed Farrant had forfeited his lease. Before More could regain possession, however, Farrant died, leaving the lease in his will to his widow, Anne, the daughter of Richard Bower (d.1561), Master of the Choristers of the Chapel Royal. For the will of Richard Farrant, dated 30 November 1580 and proved 1 March 1581, see TNA PROB 11/63/120.

After her husband's death, and after intervention by Leicester with Sir William More on behalf of William Hunnis (d.1597), Master of the Children of the Chapel, Anne Farrant sublet the premises to Hunnis and John Newman on 20 December 1581, who later transferred their interest to Henry Evans. Evans sold his sublease to Oxford, who granted it to his servant, John Lyly (1554–1606). More brought suit against Evans, and was granted possession of the property in Easter term 1584, and the first Blackfriars theatre was closed. See Wallace, *supra*, pp. 130-77; and Smith, Irwin, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse* (New York University Press, 1964), pp. 135, 148-53, 467-8.

For Sir Henry Neville, see the *ODNB* entry:

*Sir Henry Neville (c.1520–1593) was the second son of Sir Edward Neville (d. 1538), alleged conspirator, of Addington Park in Kent, and his wife, Eleanor, daughter of Andrew Windsor, first Baron Windsor, and his wife, Elizabeth. He came from noble stock, and it can be said that his appointment to the privy chamber was not because of this, but rather despite it. His father was the brother of George Neville, third Baron Bergavenny, and had been at one time a favourite of the king. However, he was executed on 9 January 1539 as a consequence of the Courtenay conspiracy. His children, though, did not suffer. Henry Neville, the younger son, was the king's godson and an annuity of £20 was granted to him in October 1539, only nine months after his father's execution. It is possible that he had been destined for a diplomatic career, for in March 1542 he was with the French ambassador. However, by 1546 he was a groom of the privy chamber—a considerable prize for the son of an alleged traitor.*

The modern-spelling transcript below was made from the original-spelling transcript in Wallace, *supra*, p. 131.

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Sir William, after my hearty commendations unto you & to Mrs More, I am to request your good friendship unto my very friend, Mr Farrant, who understanding that your house which I had of you is to be let either presently or very shortly, that he may be your tenant thereof, giving unto you such rent as any others will. It may do him at this present great pleasure, & no man shall be readier to requite your friendship than he, I dare answer for him. If you think you may pleasure him without prejudice to yourself, I pray you certify your man that keeps your house of your pleasure, & accordingly he shall deal with you.

If I may know whether the Queen will come unto you or no, I then can say I will visit you. I hear she will come to Reading by Chenies, & so to Bisham, & so to Focynghill(?), but no certainty I do hear of a very uncertain progress, & so I will end till I see you. From Billingbere this 27<sup>th</sup> of August.

Yours to his power,

Henry Neville.

Addressed: To the right worshipful Sir William More, knight, at his house at Loseley, give these.