

To the Most Right Honorable Lord Burliegh,

'Twould appear that three score years ago was a remarkable time for Stafford for yet another soon to be influential family did arrive in Stafford: the Woodward's. Sir John Woodward and his wife, Anne, poured their entire savings into purchasing several large tracts of land surrounding Stafford from the local farmers during a season of drought. Money and food were scarce during the time and a great many of Stafford's residents needed some coin in their pouch rather than large tracts of land producing nothing. For several years, the Woodward's sat upon their worthless lands. Many of the people started calling Sir John "John Spendwrong" and "John Dirtfarmer," for the only crop the lands would give up was dirt. Ten years later, the gamble paid off. Rains flowed from the skies, bringing life back to the lands. The crops were so bountiful that Woodward had to hire several dozen farmhands to tend the lands he owned. As 'twould happen, Sir John happily hired those who mocked him to tend the lands that they once owned for a fraction of the profit they would have received had they not originally sold them. The Woodward's quickly grew to become the wealthiest landowners in the town of Stafford.

Through the works of the children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren of these families most of Stafford as we know it was built. Stafford remained quiet for several decades, a sleepy crossroads town where everybody knows your name. That quiet tranquility was thrown into chaos, though, when her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, first came to the town. For her Majesty's arrival, Stafford put on a Faire. The Staffordshire Faire was a time of eating, drinking, and merriment. The people even put together a gift for her Grace: a wagon filled with all those things which the people thought beautiful. 'twas a most horrendous site to behold, for in Stafford 'twould appear that though most people hold flowers and garlands to be things of beauty, others hold that a deer skull and fresh fish are beautiful. The combinations were atrocious, but her majesty took it as 'twas: a gift from the hearts of her people. Her Majesty

*was so ta'en by the people of Stafford's good will that she has made it a point to progress through this town every spring to enjoy time with her people.*

*The coming of the Queen and her court has brought more business to Stafford during the spring faire than any thought possible. One man had the knowledge, wealth, and foresight to take advantage of this fact: Master Richard Pate. Master Pate based his grand dream on the Exchange created by Sir John Grisham in London. The Stafford Exchange would be an enclosed area where all of the merchants of town would sell their wares. Master Pate realized his dream and the exchange brought him wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. Merchants from far and wide came to Stafford to sell their wares. Stafford became an economic power in the region. Unfortunately, where coins flow like water, there are thieves to drink them up. During this period of Stafford's prosperity, a master thief by the name of Jeniah Pupinjay, usually referred to simply as "Pup" infiltrated a troupe of the town's musicians. Using her cunning and street smarts, Pup converted most of the minstrels into daring thieves and catburglars. Stafford suddenly possessed gentry, a rich middle class, peasants, revelers, and even a criminal element. 'Twas growing faster than anyone could imagine.*

*At the peak of Stafford's prosperity, disaster struck. 'twas All Hallows Eve, deep into the evening hours, when an alarm was raised throughout the town. The voice of Master Edward Bellows rang clear through the night; "The Exchange is on fire." Flames blazed through the enclosed merchant stalls. Cottons and wool to be sold fed the fire. The vapors from ales, wines, and tannery supplies exploded like brilliant suns. The fire quickly spread, jumping as if by magic to the surrounding houses and businesses. E'en the crops were a light. Nobody knew how the fire began; though Bartholomew Woodward was seen racing away on horseback, chased by Garold Lott, knocking over men and women alike, kicking them with their horses. Eventually, the fire was put out, though not before most of the homes and stores were razed to the ground. Most of the*

*influential and rich merchants left the burnt husk of Stafford behind. Many residents abandoned Stafford to find new home elsewhere. The few people who remained have a spirit burning within them as hot as the fire. They would stay and rebuild Stafford. Proceeding in stages, Stafford is once again beginning to take shape for the spring festival. Several merchants have set up tents from which to sell their wares. The people are erecting a maypole to dance about and rumors abound that the heart of any village, the Pub, will be operational by the start of the faire. Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, the town of Stafford will be born again.*

*Thy eternal servant,*

*Mr. William Stanley, esq.*