

SUMMARY: The document below is an extract from the Acts of the Privy Council stating that on 20 April 1556, the Council instructed John Sulyard, Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk, and Osborn Mountford, to examine the circumstances under which the reapprehended highwayman, Thomas Rooke of Braintree, innkeeper, had been bailed by Sir Thomas Lovell and other sureties after his reapprehension at Thetford, allowing him to escape custody for a second time. The Sir Thomas Lovell who bailed Thomas Rooke after Rooke's arrest in Norfolk was likely a relative of Sir Thomas Lovell (c.1449-1524), a member of a family of minor Norfolk gentry and a former speaker of the House of Commons who died childless and left his wealth to the children of his brother, Sir Robert Lovell, and his cousin, Sir Gregory Lovell. He may have been the Sir Thomas Lovell, grandson of Sir Gregory Lovell, whose tomb is in the church of St. Peter and Paul in East Harling, Norfolk, thus inscribed:

Here lieth bvrried Sir Thomas Lovel Knyght and Dame Elizabeth his wyf which lived together in Godly marriage 29 years and hadde yssue 9 sonnes and 6 daughters. The sayd Sir Thomas decessed in the year of our Lord God 1567, the 23 of March and Dame Elizabeth decessed in the year of our Lord God 1591 the last of March. May God to joy ther soules together in heaven.

Nothing further is heard of the inquiry into Sir Thomas Lovell's actions or of the highwayman Thomas Rooke, innkeeper of Braintree, in the Acts of the Privy Council. The excerpt below is taken from Dasent, John Roche, ed., *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, New Series, 32 vols., (1890-1964) at vol. V, pp. 264-5. For other actions taken by the Privy Council in connection with the highwayman Thomas Rooke, innkeeper of Braintree, see Dasent, pp. 223, 232, 261 and 370.

The 16th Earl of Oxford had a yeoman servant named Thomas Robinson to whom he left annuities in both his will of 21 December 1552 and his will of 28 July 1562 (see BL MS Stowe Charter 633-4 and TNA PROB 11/46, ff. 174v-176). Since the highwayman Thomas Rooke, innkeeper of Braintree, used the alias 'Robinson' when he was in Norfolk in hiding from the authorities, certain commentators have stated that Thomas Rooke, innkeeper of Braintree, and Thomas Robinson, yeoman servant of the 16th Earl from 1552-1562 were one and the same person, a conclusion which is as bizarre as it is baseless.

LM: A notable highwayman

A letter to Mr Sulyard, Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk, and Osborn Mountford, to examine whether one Rooke, a notable thief and robber by the highway who was lately apprehended at Thetford, and after bailed by Sir Thomas Lovell, and is now escaped, were known what he was at or after the time of his apprehension before his escape, what moved his sureties to be bound for him, by whose procurement they did the same, what reward or meed they had for the same, upon what consideration Sir Thomas Lovell bailed

him, and finally all such other circumstances as may best tend to the discovering of the very truth of this matter, and to signify the same hither with convenient speed.