

SUMMARY: The document below is a copy of Oxford's letter dated 21 May 1578 to the Commissioners for the voyage to Meta Incognita, offering to invest £1000 or more in Martin Frobisher's third voyage, to be secured by a bond due on 29 September 1578.

The Commissioners to whom Oxford's letter is addressed were:

-Sir William Pelham (d.1587), later Lord Chief Justice of Ireland, for whom see the *ODNB* entry, his will, proved 28 February 1588, TNA PROB 11/72/232, and McDermott, James, *Martin Frobisher; Elizabethan Privateer*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 165 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=YeMcPYIKNYUC&pg=PA165>

-Thomas Randolph (1525/6–1590), for whom see the *ODNB* entry, his will, proved 16 November 1590, TNA PROB 11/76/321, and Mayers, Kit, *The First English Explorer: The Life of Anthony Jenkinson (1529-1611)*, (Kibworth Beauchamp, Leicestershire: Matador, 2016), p. 278 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=m3RyDQAAQBAJ&pg=PA278>

-Richard Yonge, customer, assistant of the Muscovy Company in 1569, for whom see McDermott, *supra*, p. 165. See also:

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/royal-historical-society-camden-fifth-series/article/letters-of-lord-burghley-william-cecil-to-his-son-sir-robert-cecil-15931598/8E395739EDBA8B86D50FCD7F2E32AD0F/core-reader>

Richard Yonge or Young, Council servant and Middlesex JP, was used by the Cecils frequently in intelligence matters.

Richard Yonge is mentioned in the will, TNA PROB 11/60/296, of Sir Ambrose Nicholas (d.1578), Lord Mayor of London, who purchased Oxford's former mansion at London Stone, as well as in the will of his widow, Elizabeth (nee Shakerley) Elkyn Marler Nicholas (d.1583), TNA PROB 11/65/520.

-Michael Lok, for whom see the *ODNB* entry below.

-Edmund Hogan (d. 7 October 1609), mercer. For his will, proved 20 October 1609, see TNA PROB 11/114/398.

-Matthew Field (d.1581?), mercer, of St Lawrence, Old Jewry, for whom see *The New-England Historical and Genealogical Register 1894*, Vol. XLVIII, (Boston, 1894), p. 332 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=FccMAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA332>

For Matthew Field, see also Field, Osgood, *The Fields of Sowerby Near Halifax, England, and of Flushing, New York*, (London, 1895), p. 41 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=6xwwAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA41>

Administration of Matthew Field's estate was granted to Anthony Marler, another investor in the Frobisher voyages. For Anthony Marler, see the will of his brother, Walter Marler, TNA PROB 11/44/277.

In addition to his investment with the other adventurers, Oxford invested privately with Michael Lok, buying up about £2500 worth of Lok's investment in the three Frobisher voyages.

From the *ODNB* entry for Michael Lok (c.1532–1620x22):

Lok returned to England at the accession of Elizabeth I. In 1562 he was admitted to the Mercers' Company, and about this time married Joan (d. 1571), daughter of Sir William Wilkinson, sheriff of London; they had eight surviving children. He continued to practise his mercery trade in London, and from 1571 to 1576 he was London agent of the Russia Company (Willan, 26–7). In 1574 he was approached by Martin Frobisher, with whom he may have had a prior acquaintance through his brothers' involvement in the Guinea voyage of 1554, in which Frobisher had sailed as a young man. Together they prepared a proposal to the privy council, to discover a sea route to 'Cathay' via the north-west. They secured a licence to attempt this from the Russia Company, whose charter privileges they were technically infringing, and secured investors from the city and court. For want of sufficient funds to dispatch a voyage during 1576, Lok was obliged to provide loans of over £800 from his own pocket. Two further voyages to Baffin Island followed, in which the queen herself invested, but the enterprise degenerated into a search for gold, incurring large losses (most spectacularly for Lok himself). Frobisher turned violently against Lok, whom he blamed for his own misfortunes, and led moves to impeach him for alleged financial irregularities. Effectively bankrupted, with his name on transactions entered into on behalf of his fellow adventurers, Lok was cynically abandoned to fight a series of creditors' suits. He went to debtors' prison upon at least eight occasions, and claimed to have seen the inside of every London gaol save the Fleet—to which he was also committed subsequently.

For the Frobisher voyages generally, see:

Inuit and Englishmen; The Nunavut Voyages of Martin Frobisher at:

<https://www.museedelhistoire.ca/cmc/exhibitions/hist/frobisher/frint01e.html>

During the Frobisher voyages a geographical feature in the area of Baffin Island was named Mount Oxford after the Earl of Oxford. For mention of Mount Oxford in accounts of the 1578 Frobisher voyage, see Collinson, Richard, *The Three Voyages of Martin*

Frobisher in Search of a Passage to Cathaia and India by the North-West, A.D. 1576-8, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1867), p. 303 at:

<https://archive.org/details/threevoyagesofma00bestuoft/page/302>

The said [=2 August], at night, the Gabriel came into the Countess' Sound, and Master Hall in her to view whether the straits were clear of ice, and left the Thomas Allen in a sound near Oxford Mount until his return thither again.

See also Stefansson, Vilhjalmur, *The Three Voyages of Martin Frobisher*, (London: The Argonaut Press, 1938), Vol. II, p. 64 at:

<https://archive.org/details/threevoyagesofma02bestuoft/page/64>

See also the Routledge online edition (2016) of Collinson at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=AAgkDwAAQBAJ&pg=PT235>

The second of August the Gabriel arrived, who came from the Vice Admiral, and being distressed sore with ice, put into harbour near unto Mount Oxford. . . . And from that time, being about the seven and twentieth of July, could neither hear nor have sight of any of the fleet until the third of August when they descried a sail near to Mount Oxford, with whom, when they had spoken, they could understand no news of any of the fleet at all.

The location of the Mount Oxford of the Frobisher expeditions of 1576-8 has been lost. In a letter dated 5 March 1980, Alan Rayburn, Executive Secretary of the Secretariat, Geographical Names, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources Canada, agreed that 'the name would certainly seem to be linked with the Earl of Oxford, one of the "venturers", or financial backers, of this voyage', and suggested that it might correspond to one of three locations:

Sugarloaf Hill, the point recorded [by the Frobisher expeditions] as 1010', the high point on the Lower Savage Islands, or a summit on Edgell Island or Resolution Island.

For a map showing the Lower Savage Islands, Edgell Island and Resolution Island, see:

<https://www.google.ca/maps/place/Edgell+Island/@61.8250153,-65.2901547,10z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x4c31cdadb0181f1b:0xa6fc507e8f27deb0!8m2!3d61.8061845!4d-65.0610787>

For Alan Rayburn's letter, see Ogburn, Charlton, 'Locating Mount Oxford', *The Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter*, Winter 1980, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 5-10, available online.

The practice by members of the Frobisher expedition of naming geographical features after members of the Elizabethan nobility is recorded in the accounts of the voyage. See Collinson, *supra*, p. 129 at:

<https://archive.org/details/threevoyagesofma00bestuoft/page/128>

And leaving his boats here with sufficient guard, passed up into the country about two English miles and recovered the top of a high hill on the top whereof our men made a column or cross of stones heaped up of a good height together in good sort, and solemnly sounded a trumpet and said certain prayers, kneeling about the ancient, and honoured the place by the name of Mount Warwick in remembrance of the right honourable the Lord Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick, whose noble mind and good countenance in this, as in all other good actions, gave great encouragement and good furtherance.

See also Collinson, *supra*, p. 152 at:

<https://archive.org/details/threevoyagesofma00bestuoft/page/152>

Thursday the 22 of August we plucked down our tents and every man hasted homeward, and making bonfires upon the top of the highest mount of the island, we gave a volley of shot for a farewell in honour of the right honourable Lady Anne, Countess of Warwick, whose name it beareth, and so departed aboard.

For clarification, it should be noted that since 1935 there has been a different Mount Oxford on Ellesmere Island in the Canadian Arctic named in honour of Oxford University. See Harington, C.R., ed., *Canada's Missing Dimension: Science and History in the Canadian Arctic Islands*, Vol. II, p. 809 at:

<https://archive.org/details/canadasmissingdi02hari/page/808>

Ellesmere Island is extremely mountainous too: the northern part has summits exceeding 8,000 ft (2,440 m). . . . The first important summit climbed was named Mount Oxford by the Oxford University Ellesmere Land Expedition of 1935 – apparently the only group to visit the ice-cap before the 1950s (Moore 1936).

LM: Copy

To my very loving friends William Pelham & Thomas Randolph, esquires, Mr Yonge, Mr Lok, Mr Hogan, Mr Field, & others the Commissioners for the voyage to Meta Incognita

After my very hearty commendations. Understanding of the wise proceeding & orderly dealing for the continuing of the voyage for the discovery of Cathay by the

north-west which this bearer, my friend Mr Frobisher, hath already very honourably attempted, and is now eftsoons to be employed for the better achieving thereof;

And the rather induced, as well for the great liking her Majesty hath to have the same passage discovered, as also for the special good favour I bear to Mr Frobisher, to offer unto you to be an adventurer therein for the sum of one thousand pounds or more, if you like to admit thereof;

Which sum or sums, upon your certificate of admittance, I will enter into bond shall be paid for that use unto you upon Michaelmas day next coming;

Requesting your answers therein, I bid you heartily farewell from the court the 21 of May, 1578.

Your loving friend,
Edward Oxenford