

SUMMARY: The document below consists of an extract from the Acts of the Privy Council stating that on 29 September 1578 the Council requested the mayor and aldermen of London to grant the freedom of the city to the fence-master, Rocco Bonetti (d.1587), and ordered an inquiry into his complaints of violence towards him by English fencers in London. Bonetti's skill as a fencer is alluded to in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, where he is described as 'the very butcher of a silk button'.

For Rocco Bonetti, see the will of his brother-in-law, Robert Burbage (d.1575), TNA PROB 11/57/448, the allusion to him in the anonymous *News From Heaven And Hell*, and direct references to him or discussion of him in the following documents on this website:

Folger MS L.b.37; Folger MS L.b.352; Folger MS L.b.356; Folger MS L.b.357; Folger MS L.b.446; Loseley MS No. 1396; BL Cotton Caligula C/VI; BL Cotton Galba C/V, f. 37; BL Cotton Galba C/V, f. 39; BL Cotton Titus B/VII, f. 225; BL Lansdowne 830, f. 249; TNA PC 2/10, f. 358; TNA PC 2/10, ff. 395-6; TNA PC 2/12, ff. 261-2; TNA PC 2/12, ff. 261-2; TNA SP 12/175, f. 104; TNA SP 46/125, f. 130; TNA SP 52/31, f. 34; TNA SP 78/9, f. 90; SHC LM/COR/3/372; SHC LM/COR/3/382; SHC LM/COR/3/383; SHC LM/COR/3/384; SHC LM/COR/3/386; SHC LM/COR/3/387; SHC LM/COR/3/388; TNA PROB 11/62/182; and TNA PROB 11/98/226.

Although a number of variant spellings of both Bonetti's Christian name and surname are found in contemporary documents. Bonetti himself usually spelled his Christian name 'Rocho', the spelling also used in the document below, and his surname 'Bonetti'.

Richmond xxix Septembris 1578

The Earl of Warwick  
Earl of Leicester  
Mr Treasurer  
Mr Comptroller  
Mr Vice-chamberlain  
Mr Secretary Wilson

A letter to the mayor & aldermen of the city of London, that where the bearer hereof, Rocho Bonetti, having remained many years as a subject of this realm, and hath always lived in good order and fame, their Lordships, desirous to do him good, have therefore at his humble suit thought good to write their letters unto them in his behalf, that they will the rather at their instance to grant him the freedom of their city, which if they shall grant unto him, their Lordships will not forget to requite it when occasion shall be offered.

And where the said Rocho complaineth that he is daily vexed by the common fencers of that city because he professeth the use of weapons, they are therefore required to call

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such of them before them as the said Rocho shall name unto them to have offered him violence, and thereupon as they shall find them culpable to see them effectually punished, and bands to be taken of them for their good behaviour hereafter towards him, that he be no further molested by them, but that without impediment he may teach the use of weapons within his house to such gentlemen as shall like to resort unto him.