

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 5 June 1576, written from Middleburg by Robert Beale to Lord Burghley, describing Beale's attempt to recover goods taken from Oxford by pirates.

Oxford had left Paris on or about 10 April 1576 (see TNA SP 70/138, ff. 29-31). As his ship crossed the Channel, it was attacked by pirates from Flushing, who robbed Oxford of all that he had brought back from his continental tour, including the 'golden stuff' mentioned in the letter below, and threatened his life. This outrage and similar depredations on English shipping by the Flushingers angered the Queen and Privy Council, who sent Robert Beale (1541-1601), Clerk of the Privy Council, to Flanders to meet with Prince William of Orange (1533-1584). The embassy had little success. From the entry for Robert Beale in the *ODNB*:

Beale's clerkship, his involvement with the principal secretaryship, and his prior experience overseas made him an unusually good candidate for a variety of diplomatic activities. Between 16 April and 26 July 1576 he went to the Low Countries as special ambassador on £2 per day to protest at Dutch seizures of English shipping. He had an audience with William of Orange about 1 May and carried with him a scarcely veiled warning: if Dutch piracies did not cease, Elizabeth would consider joining Philip II in suppressing the rebellion there. The queen emphasized her displeasure by sending Sir William Winter to join with Beale, the former arriving with new threats and demands that the Dutch repay outstanding English loans. The failure of the two men to gain Dutch co-operation led for a time to something not far removed from war between England and the Low Countries.

For a letter dated 21 April 1576 written to King Henri III (1551-1589) by the French ambassador in England, Michel de Castelnau (c.1520-1592), Sieur de Mauvissiere, mentioning the attack on Oxford by pirates from Flushing, see TNA PRO 31/3/27, ff. 75-8. See also TNA SP 70/138, ff. 42-3 and TNA SP 70/138, f. 46.

For another transcript, see Lettenhove, Kervyn de, *Relations Politiques des Pays-Bas et de l'Angleterre*, (Brussels: F. Hayes, 1889), Vol. VIII, p. 576 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=1QZCAAAYAAJ&pg=PA397&lpg=PA397&dq=%221576%22+%22Gertrudensberg%22&source=bl&ots=C0OL7-ki-w&sig=xAYkDl6LqWuC0RwXu8dn6rO7GZA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CB4Q6AEwAGoVChMInv-zkpyfyAIVx0uICh1IPA8G#v=onepage&q=%221576%22%20%22Gertrudensberg%22&f=false>

For the letter, see also:

http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS040-001102785&indx=1&recIds=IAMS040-001102785&recIdxs=0&elementId=0&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frb

rVersion=&dscnt=0&v1%281UI0%29=exact&v1%28drStartMonth3%29=00&v1%281UI2%29=contains&tab=local&dstmp=1440805634261&srt=rank&v1%28boolOperator0%29=AND&mode=Advanced&&v1%284961882UI2%29=any&v1%2847200252UI4%29=all_items&v1%28freeText0%29=Roca&v1%282604854UI1%29=any&vid=IAMS_VU2&v1%28freeText2%29=&v1%28boolOperator2%29=AND&v1%28drEndMonth3%29=00&v1%28drStartYear3%29=Year&v1%281UI1%29=exact&frbg=&v1%28boolOperator1%29=AND&dum=true&v1%28drEndDay3%29=00&v1%28drEndYear3%29=Year&Submit=Search&v1%28drStartDay3%29=00&v1%282126785UI0%29=any&v1%28freeText1%29=Vitelli

78. *Rob. Beale, to Ld. Burleigh? reporting some negociations relating to Ld. Oxford; intelligence, &c. (Orig.) Middleb. June 5, 1576. 252.*

For Zierikzee, see:

https://www.google.ca/?gws_rd=ssl#q=%22Zierikzee%22

The letter has been damaged by fire on one side, and is closely bound, with the result that some words are lost to fire damage or have been partly obscured in binding. These words have been conjecturally supplied, and are indicated by question marks in the line-by-line transcript below.

[At top of page in another hand: 5 January [sic] 1576 M{aster} Beale's Negotiation]

[f. 252r] My duty most humbly remembered to your honourable(?) good Lordship, besides the general letter which I have written to all their Lordships of my doings with the Prince here, I know not what to advertise your Lordship particularly of. In the matter of my Lord of Oxford I have dealt as earnestly as I could, and the rather for that by a letter of your Lordship's which it pleased Mr Secretary Walsingham to show unto me before my departure I perceived the great care your Lordship had thereof, as(?) indeed the case deserved. And if so much has not been done therein as reason were and as your Lordship doth desire, I shall most humbly beseech your Lordship to attribute the same rather to the unreasonableness of these persons with whom I have to do than to my default (as God is my witness), for notwithstanding the Prince's letters to both your Lordships and(?) his fair promises to me that justice shall be done(?) and that the parties be in prison, upon inquiry I cannot learn but that only one hath been(?)

apprehended, whose name is Lambellon, who now(?) is but kept in a townsman's house of Flushing and hath liberty to walk abroad, and upon hearing(?) that my Lord of Oxford will be appeased with a letter which I understand he sent unto his Lordship when I was in Holland, he trusteth to escape, and when I regard the small consideration they have of her Majesty & your Lordships' letters (more than in fair words), I do(?) partly believe it. And therefore in my simple opinion both your Lordships are to deal earnestly in your next letters for justice, for considering the carelessness & impunity of such offences in these places, all will be little enough. And where they demand more particular information, I have declared unto them the manner of the outrage committed to his person as [f. 252v] I understood it from his Lordship in Rochester, and for the particularity of the goods, although I demanded to have them restored, yet my chiefest desire was, seeing *iam constat de facto* by the confession of the said Lambellion and things taken here, to have justice done for the reparation of the injury and dishonour. And as upon my information they found the dags which were sent by Mr Herbert, so might they find more of his stuff if they listed, but I hear some of his golden stuff hath come to some of the chief officers' hands, which now bear out the matter. I have been fed in this matter, as in the rest, with delays, and if her Majesty send not a pleasing answer to the Prince's writing, they seem to be so desperate that I think no justice nor ought else will be had of all my demands.

Touching the news, it is said that on the other side of the island of Suricksea [=Zierikzee?] towards Bomene(?) a boat of theirs is entered into the town, on which side they mind to make a new attempt, keeping still a great fleet of hoys before the head on this side to entertain the enemy. God send them good success, for if they prevail not, I fear or ever it be long all will go to wrack. And the news out of Holland are that the Prince, having withdrawn his principal forces hither for this purpose, and only left some small garnisons of the countrymen in the towns, at one instant three places, viz., Gerndonsberg [=Geertruidenberg?], Goude & Krempen were like to have been betrayed if the captains, having some understanding thereof, had not sent to the Estates(?)

for other companies of soldiers, which were not so soon entered at one gate as the enemy was approaching to the other.

His chiefest forces be of Englishmen to the number of 1100 or thereabout, and 2000 Scots. The rest [f. 253r] be Walloons, Flemings, and a band or two of(?) Frenchmen. And if her Majesty should of herself and by her credit with the Regent revoke them(?), and restrain victuals from London out of Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, they would be in hard case, and then know what benefit they receive out of England. It is incredible what quantities are carried by report into Flanders & these parts of bacon, beeves, corn & wood, which is sold here secretly, insomuch that some merchants inquiring thereafter have been threatened by the Flushingers to be slain if that victualling trade were discovered. I hear of one Davison(?) dwelling (as it is said) about 6 mile besides Harwich which sith my coming hither brought over 60 live hogs. Your Lordship is to take such order therein as shall seem most convenient to your honourable wisdom.

They of Flushing prepare a fleet shortly to be sent out of 10 or 12 barks well appointed to meet with (as I am given to understand) the Spanish fleet coming out of the Indies.

This day a report is given out of some Dutchmen that yesterday arrived in Flushing that the ships in the West Country are not like to be released, and that their ordinance & artillery is taken away, & that one of them is gone to the sea with Englishmen, which if it be true (as I trust it is not), impaireth the credit of the offer for their release which I made unto the Prince in(?) your Lordships' names.

I am afraid they will have money upon these goods before they be released, for by that which I hear of some of his council, the Prince [f. 253v] thinketh he may lawfully do so upon bonds of the Estates for their repayment, as her Majesty stayed(?) for her uses money coming out of Spain, and although I have replied that it is no good con-

sequence, by reason of the diversity of their estates(?), that if her Majesty did it, *ergo* the Prince of Orange may do it in this case when the merchants came under safe conduct & assurance under hand & seal(?), and further that her Highness paid 12 in the 100 interest when he offereth nothing, and besides her Majesty gave good assurance of repayment, which I do not see he & the Estates, being so indebted, can presently make or would perform, considering how upon like bands smaller debts are not answered at their times, and thereby the merchants' traffic & goods would be in hazard to be broken & confiscated at Antwerp, where they be bound neither directly nor indirectly to give them any succour or aid, and last of all a great number of poor merchants & mariners undone, I can get no other answer but *necessitas non habet legem*. And as I find the Prince hard, so his officers & the Estates here far worse, which are mere(?) strangers to the country (whereat there is no small grudging), and grow wealthy by wars, and in time of peace must seek another home, and therefore(?) for their own lucre further these indirect actions, which God cannot long bless. And so with offer of my poor service to be at your Lordship's commandment, I humbly take my leave. From Middleburg the 5th of June.

Your Lordship's most humbly at commandment,

Robe[r]t Beale