

SUMMARY: In this letter written on 18 May 1591, Oxford thanks Lord Burghley for punishing Thomas Hampton for his part in the fraud of Thomas Skinner (d.1596).

Oxford also broaches a proposal to purchase the demesnes of Denbigh in Wales from the Queen for the same price at which the Queen has agreed to sell the lands to Richard Carmarden and Thomas Middleton. Richard Carmarden (d.1603) was Surveyor of Customs in London. Thomas Middleton (1549x56-1631), a member of the Grocers' Company and Collector of the Customs in London, was knighted by King James in 1603, and served as Lord Mayor of London in 1613. The pageant *The Triumphs of Truth* presented on his accession to office as Lord Mayor was written by the playwright Thomas Middleton (bap. 1580, d.1627). Sir Thomas Middleton was the eldest son of Richard Middleton (d. c.1578), esquire, Governor of Denbigh Castle during the reigns of Edward VI, Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth, and was the founder of the family of Middleton of Chirk Castle. See *Analytical Index to the Series of Records Known as the Remembrancia Preserved Among the Archives of the City of London A.D. 1579-1664*, (London: E.J. Francis, 1878), p. 3, and the entry for Sir Thomas Middleton in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, both available online. For Oxford's further mention of Carmarden and Middleton in connection with the tin monopoly, see TNA SP 12/252/57, ff. 108-9.

In return for Lord Burghley's assistance in obtaining the Queen's consent to his proposal to purchase Denbigh, Oxford pledges that he will deliver his lands in Essex to Burghley's use for the support of his three daughters by his first wife, Anne Cecil:

*The effect hereof is, I would be glad to have an equal care with your Lordship over my children, and if I may obtain this reasonable suit of her Majesty, granting me nothing but what she hath done to others, and mean persons, and nothing but that I shall pay for it, then those lands which are in Essex, as Hedingham, Bretts and the rest whatsoever, which will come to some 5 or £600 by year, upon your Lordship's friendly help towards my purchases in Denbigh shall be presently delivered in possession to you for their use. And so much I am sure to make of these demesnes for myself.*

The manor of Bretts which Oxford offered to turn over to Lord Burghley for the benefit of his daughters was centered on Plaistow in West Ham. See:

'West Ham: Manors and estates', *A History of the County of Essex*: Volume 6 (1973), pp. 68-74. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42753>

*In 1540 Bretts was granted for life to (Sir) Peter Meautis or Mewtas and Joan (or Jane) his wife, who had previously acquired a large estate in West Ham at the dissolution of Stratford Abbey. Lady Mewtas, who survived her husband, was still holding Bretts in 1567. In 1576 Elizabeth I granted the manor to (Sir) Thomas Heneage, who conveyed it in 1583 to Roger Townsend. Townsend conveyed it in the following year to Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, who died holding it in 1604.) In 1610 the earl's widow sold Bretts to Henry Wollaston.*

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For further information on the manor of Bretts, see also TNA C 66/1248, m. 27 and HL/PO/PB/1/1609/7J1n33.

My Lord, I do thank your Lordship for the punishment of Hampton, whose evil dealings towards me, being put in trust with my causes in law, I hope your Lordship will think them sufficient to deserve your disgrace, especially knowing his corruptions, which for the more assured knowledge of your Lordship I have sent unto the parties themselves from whom he hath drawn money to his own behoof, whose confirmations, so soon as they can be brought out of the country, they shall be delivered to your Lordship. In the mean season I shall most heartily pray your Lordship to persevere in your good favour towards me whereby I may procure redress against this which Amyce hath passed under the great seal by the practice of Hampton's fraudulent devise, as shall appear (if I may have leisure to manifest the same) every day more and more. The changing of the name of my servant without my privity, and putting in another in trust for himself (as bad, as I understand, as himself), if your Lordship will, may give your Lordship certain knowledge of the deceit. The cozening of so many tenants of their money and the forfeiting of my lease of Skinner's land do witness enough his corruption. I know if your Lordship will stand mine honourable good Lord and friend herein by handling this Hampton roughly, and this Amyce so that he be but put in fear, that you may bring them to that order which is reason, that I may enjoy mine own lands, as from the beginning was meant by her Majesty. And as for this letter of Amyce's which I have returned to your Lordship, both concerning my messages to him and the dealing of my servant, as he reports is most false, wherefore I will refer all to your Lordship, who knows the intent of her Majesty's first meaning to me was far otherwise in the beginning when with this suit of mine she thought to recompense me in some sort for forbearing my suit for the forest, and can judge how unfaithfully I am dealt withal by these parties.

Which favour if your Lordship shall do for me, then would I gladly break unto your Lordship another matter which I would have done ere this had I not been intercepted by these unlooked for troubles. And this it is. Whereas I have heard her Majesty meant to sell unto one Middleton, a merchant, and one Carmarden the demesnes of Denbigh which, as I am informed, is £230 by yearly rent now as it is, I would be an humble suitor to her Majesty that I might have had this bargain, paying the £8000 as they should have done, accepting for £5000 thereof the pension which she hath given me in the Exchequer, and the other £3000 the next term, or upon such reasonable days as her Majesty would grant me by her favour. And, further, if her Majesty would not accept the pension for £5000, that then she would yet take unto it, to make it up that value, the title of the forest, which by all counsel of law and conscience is as good right unto me as any other land in England. And I think her Majesty makes no evil bargain, and I would be glad to be sure of something that were mine own and that I might possess. If her Majesty thinketh it should offend the tenants, and for that she hath granted them a lease, if they complain or be against it I will cease my suit, but if

I can get their goodwills, and that they shall let their lease fall which her Majesty hath granted (whereupon I dare presume to your Lordship), then that her Majesty will let me have it on those former conditions. This is a thing that I have been desirous to impart unto your Lordship, but that I have either found you troubled with other business or I myself have been encumbered with these treacheries of Hampton.

The effect hereof is, I would be glad to have an equal care with your Lordship over my children, and if I may obtain this reasonable suit of her Majesty, granting me nothing but what she hath done to others, and mean persons, and nothing but that I shall pay for it, then those lands which are in Essex, as Hedingham, Bretts and the rest whatsoever, which will come to some 5 or £600 by year, upon your Lordship's friendly help towards my purchases in Denbigh shall be presently delivered in possession to you for their use. And so much I am sure to make of these demesnes for myself.

So shall my children be provided for, myself at length settled in quiet and, I hope, your Lordship contented, remaining no cause for you to think me an evil father, nor any doubt in me but that I may enjoy that friendship from your Lordship that so near a match, and not fruitless, may lawfully expect. Good my Lord, think of this, and let me have both your furtherance and counsel in this cause for, to tell troth, I am weary of an unsettled life, which is the very pestilence that happens unto courtiers that propound to themselves no end of their time therein bestowed. Thus committing your Lordship to Almighty God, with my most hearty thanks and commendations, I take my leave. This 18th of May.

Your Lordship's ever to command,  
Edward Oxford

Addressed: To the right honourable & his very good Lord, the Lord Treasurer of England, give these.

Endorsed: 18 of May 1591. The Earl of Oxford. Hampton, Amyce, Denbigh.