

SUMMARY: The document below is the copy on the patent rolls of the licence, dated 2 March 1584, authorizing Roger Townshend (c.1544-1590) to alienate the manor of Bretts to Oxford. The sale was effected by indentures between Oxford and Townshend dated 7 March 1584 (see HL/PO/PB/1/1609/7J1n33). For the fine in the Court of Common Pleas dated 20 January 1584 by which Sir Thomas Heneage (b. in or before 1532, d. 1595) and his wife, Anne (c.1530-1593), had transferred clear title to the manor of Bretts to Townshend, see TNA CP 25/2/132/1692/26ELIZIHIL, Item 35. For the licence dated 2 March 1584 authorizing Townshend (c.1544-1590) to alienate the manor of Bretts to Oxford, see TNA C 66/1248, m. 27.

The manor of Bretts 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.

By 1588 Oxford had transferred title to the manor of Bretts to the Queen. The way in which this transfer was effected is unclear. By a fine in the Court of Common Pleas dated 6 May 1588, Oxford transferred title to Colne Priory to the Queen (see TNA CP 25/2/261), and there is a brief mention of 'Brettes' in that fine. However Emmison states that this was the manor of Brettes in White Colne, and distinguishes it from the manor of Bretts in West Ham (see Emmison, F.G., *Feet of Fines for Essex, Vol. VI 1581-1603*, (Oxford: Leopard's Head Press, 1993), pp. 60, 197).

A month after Oxford's transfer of title to Colne Priory to the Queen, by letters patent dated 8 June 1588, the Queen regranted both Colne Priory and the manor of Bretts to Oxford (see ERO T/B 177/3). As a result of the Queen's regrant, Oxford held Colne Priory and Bretts by knight service to himself and the heirs of his body lawfully begotten (at the time, these were his three daughters by his first wife, Anne Cecil, who had died on 5 June 1588), and failing such issue, to the heirs of the body of John de Vere (1482-1540), 15th Earl of Oxford.

In a letter to Lord Burghley dated 18 May 1591 Oxford put forward a proposal to purchase the demesnes of Denbigh, in return promising to deliver the manor of Bretts and other properties in Essex to Lord Burghley for the support of his three daughters by his first wife, Anne Cecil (see BL Lansdowne 68/6, ff. 12-13):

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.

According to a private Act of Parliament of 1609/10, the manor of Bretts was extended against in Oxford's lifetime for a period of 80 years (see HL/PO/PB/1/1609/7J1n33). See also TNA C 66/1385, mm. 9-10 which records the Queen's grant by letters patent dated 8 June 1592 to John Drawater (d.1597) and John Holmes of a 100-year lease of properties of Oxford's which had been seised into the Queen's hands for Oxford's debt to the Court of Wards. Included in the grant are Colne Priory and Castle Hedingham, the manors of Barwick Hall, Inglesthorpe, Grayes, Prayors, Parkes, Earls Colne, Abbot Hayes, Lamarsh, Crepping Hall, Downham, Sheriffs, Little Yeldham, Great Yeldham, Wivenhoe, Great Bentley, Battleswick, Bretts, Bumpstead Helions and Hinxton, along with rectories and other lands:

Which all & singular the premises now are or lately were parcel of the lands & possessions of our beloved cousin, Edward, now Earl of Oxford, and are now in our hands, having been seised for the debts of the said Earl.

A few days before his death, by a deed dated 18 June 1604, Oxford sold his interest in both the manor of Bretts and the farm of Plaistow in Halstead to his brother-in-law, Francis Trentham (d.1626), for a term of 60 years, with a proviso indicating that the transaction was for the benefit of the Countess (see Oxford's inquisition post mortem, TNA C 142/286/165).

The private Act of Parliament of 1609/10 states that after Oxford's death on 24 June 1604 the Countess held a life estate in Bretts, with the reversion after her death to Oxford's son and heir, Henry de Vere. At the time of the Act, Henry was still a minor, and a ward of King James. The Act states that the Countess had already sold £400 worth of her own lands and borrowed money at interest towards the repurchase of Castle Hedingham, and permission was therefore granted by the Act for the sale of the manor of Bretts, the farm of Plaistow in Halstead and certain tithes to assist with the financing of the repurchase.

As noted above, the manor of Bretts was sold to Henry Wollaston shortly after the passage of the Act.

LM: Grant(?) of licence to alienate for Roger Townshend, esquire

The Queen to all to whom etc., greeting. Know ye that we, of our especial grace and for eight pounds paid to our farmer, by virtue of our letters patent have granted & given licence, and for us, our heirs & successors, by how much is in us by these presents do grant & give licence to our beloved Roger Townshend, esquire, that he might be able to give & grant, alienate or acknowledge by fine or by recovery in our court before our Justices of the Common Pleas or by any other manner whatsoever at the pleasure of the same Roger to our most dear cousin, Edward, Earl of Oxford, all that his manor of Bretts with the appurtenances lately purchased by the foresaid Roger from Thomas Heneage, knight, & Anne, his wife, with all its rights, members & appurtenances in our county of Essex, and all & singular messuages, houses, edifices, buildings, barns, stables, orchards, gardens, lands, tenements, mills, meadows, grazing lands, pastures, commons, woods, underwoods, furze, heaths, moors, marshes, waters, fishings, rents, reversions, services, courts, leets, perquisites of courts & leets, waifs, strays, goods & chattels of felons & fugitives, knights' fees, wards, marriages, escheats, fines, reliefs, heriots, advowsons, presentations & other rights, jurisdictions, liberties, privileges, profits, commodities, advantages, emoluments & hereditaments whatsoever to the foresaid manor belonging or appertaining, and all other messuages, lands, tenements & hereditaments of the same Roger whatsoever situate, lying & being in the towns, parishes or hamlets of West Ham & Fratwikes [sic?] in the said county of Essex which are held of us in chief, as it is said, to have & to hold to the same Earl and to his heirs & assigns forever of us, our heirs & successors, by the services owed therefore, & of right customary ;

And by the tenor of these presents we have similarly given, and for us, our heirs & successors aforesaid, we do give special licence to the same Earl that he might be able to receive from the forenamed Roger, & hold forever to him and his heirs & assigns of us, our heirs & successors, the foresaid manor, messuages, lands, tenements & hereditaments and other all & singular the premises above expressed & specified with the appurtenances by the foresaid services, as is aforesaid;

Not willing that the foresaid Roger or his heirs, or the forenamed Earl or his heirs by reason of the premises might be troubled therefore, molested, interfered with, vexed in anything, or oppressed by us, our heirs or successors, or by our justices, escheators, sheriffs, bailiffs or other officers or ministers or [+those] of our said heirs or successors whatsoever, nor might be by any of them troubled, molested, interfered with, vexed in anything, or oppressed;

In [+testimony] of which thing etc. Witness the Queen at Westminster on the second day of March.

LM: D licencia alienando pro Roger Townshend Armigero

1 Regina Omnibus ad quos &c Salutem Sciatis quod nos de gracia nostra speciali ac pro octo libris solutis

2 ffirmario nostro virtute litterarum nostrarum patentium concessimus & licenciam dedimus ac pro nobis heredibus &

3 successoribus nostris quantum in nobis est per presentes concedimus & licenciam damus Dilecto nobis Rogero

4 Towneshend Armigero quod ipse totum illud Manerium suum de Brettes cum pertinentijs nuper perquisitum per

5 predictum Rogerum de Thoma Henneage Milite & Anna vxore eius cum omnibus suis iuribus membris

6 & pertinentijs in Comitatu nostro Essex Ac omnia & singula mesuagia domos edificia structuram horrea

7 stabula pomaria gardina terras tenementa molendina prata pascuas pasturas communias boscos subboscos

8 iampna brueras moras mariscas aquas piscatorias redditus reuerciones seruicia Curia leta perquisita Curiarum &

9 letarum Waiuata extrahuras bona & catalla felonum & fugitiuorum feoda Militum Warda maritagia

10 escaetas fines releuia herietta aduocaciones patronatus & alia iura iurisdicciones libertates priuilegia

11 proficua comoditates aduantagia emolumenta & hereditamenta quecumque predicto Manerio spectantia seu

12 pertinentia Ac omnia alia mesuagia terras tenementa & hereditamenta ipsius Rogeri quecumque scituata iacentia &

13 existentia in villis parochijs seu hamelettis de Westham & ffratwikes in dicto Comitatu Essex Que

14 de nobis tenentur in capite vt dicitur dare possit & concedere alienare aut cognoscere per

15 finem vel per recuperacionem in Curia nostra coram Iusticiarijs nostris de Banco seu aliquo alio modo

16 quocumque ad libitum ipsius Rogeri Charissimo Consanguineo nostro Edwardo Comiti Oxonie

17 habendum & tenendum eidem Comiti ac heredibus & assignatis suis imperpetuum de nobis heredibus & successoribus nostris per

18 seruicia inde debita & de iure consueta Et eidem Comiti quod ipse predicta Manerium Mesuagia

19 terras tenementa & hereditamenta ac cetera omnia & singula premissa superius expressa & specificata cum

20 pertinentijs a prefato Rogeri recipere possit & tenere sibi ac heredibus & assignatis suis de nobis heredibus &

21 successoribus nostris per seruicia predicta sicut predictum est imperpetuum tenore presencium similiter licenciam

22 dedimus ac pro nobis heredibus & successoribus nostris predictis damus specialem Nolentes quod predictus

23 Rogerus vel heredes sui aut prefatus Comes vel heredes sui ratione premissorum per nos heredes vel

24 successores nostros aut per Iusticiarios Escaetores vicecomites Balliuos aut alios Officiarios seu Ministros

25 nostros aut dictorum heredum vel successorum nostrorum quoscumque inde occasionentur molestentur impetantur

26 vexentur in aliquo seu grauentur nec eorum aliquis occasionetur molestetur impetatur vexetur in

27 aliquo seu grauetur In cuius rei &c Teste Regine apud Westmonasterium secundo die Marcij