

SUMMARY: The document below is an extract from the Acts of the Privy Council stating that on 13 January 1555 [=1556] a letter was written by the Privy Council to Edward Waldegrave and Serjeant Browne requiring them to determine the truth of the information which had come to them that a confessed highwayman, an innkeeper of Braintree named 'Rooke', and allegedly a retainer of the 16th Earl of Oxford, was still in the Earl's service. It is difficult to envisage how an innkeeper of Braintree could have been simultaneously in the 16th Earl's household and waiting on his table, and it would appear that the information which had reached the Privy Council in that regard was erroneous, particularly since nothing further is heard of the innkeeper 'Rooke of Braintree' being in the 16th Earl's service. Thomas Rooke of Braintree escaped from custody shortly thereafter, as indicated in a letter from the Privy Council on 30 January 1556 (see Dasent, p. 232). The excerpt below is taken from Dasent, John Roche, ed., *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, New Series, 32 vols., (1890-1964) at vol. V, p. 223. For other actions taken by the Privy Council in connection with the highwayman Thomas Rooke of Braintree, see Dasent, pp. 261, 264 and 370.

The 16th Earl of Oxford had a yeoman servant named Thomas Robinson to whom he left annuities in both his will of 21 December 1552 and his will of 28 July 1562 (see BL MS Stowe Charter 633-4 and TNA PROB 11/46, ff. 174v-176). Since the highwayman Thomas Rooke, innkeeper of Braintree, used the alias 'Robinson' when he was in Norfolk in hiding from the authorities, certain commentators have stated that Thomas Rooke, innkeeper of Braintree, and Thomas Robinson, yeoman servant of the 16th Earl from 1552-1562 were one and the same person, a conclusion which is as bizarre as it is baseless.

RM: A notorious highwayman

Another letter to Sir Edward Waldegrave and Serjeant Browne to examine the truth of one Rooke's case, an innkeeper of Braintree, being a retainer to th' Earl of Oxford, of whom the Lords are informed that, notwithstanding a notorious and manifest felony by the said Rooke of late committed by the highway, and being pursued and taken did afterwards confess the same, he should, nevertheless, continue in household with the said Earl of Oxford and wait upon his table, whether this be true or no, and to certify their knowledge.