

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 28 March 1583 from Robert Bowes to Sir Francis Walsingham (c.1532-1590). It is headed 'Mr Bowes to Secretary Walsingham', lacks a signature, and does not appear to be in Bowes' hand, and thus may be a copy of the original.

In part the letter concerns the espionage activities of the fence-master, Rocco Bonetti (d.1587), who had connections to Oxford.

For Robert Bowes' (d.1597) ambassadorship to Scotland, see the *ODNB* article:

News that the French ambassador Bertrand de Salignac de la Motte-Fénélon was travelling to Scotland prompted Bowes to work hard for Lennox's departure before the envoy arrived in January 1583. Bowes's fear was that Motte-Fénélon would try to negotiate a French marriage for James and establish a French party to the prejudice of English interests. During his brief sojourn the envoy was able to achieve little, and English concerns over French influence in Scotland were further calmed when Lennox, having alienated the Scottish church's presbyterian leaders, was forced to flee the country in December 1582.

In June 1583 James, with the aid of James Stewart, earl of Arran, Robert Stewart, earl of March, and Patrick Adamson, archbishop of St Andrews, escaped from Ruthven Castle to St Andrews. Bowes conceded that he was taken completely unawares by the king's flight, in no small part because James had repeatedly assured the envoy of his devotion to England and the protestant cause up to the moment of his departure from Ruthven. Having received the information from Bowes on 31 July that the king's affection for Elizabeth was greatly abated, a panicked Walsingham travelled north to Berwick and proceeded with Bowes to Scotland, where they were coolly received and kept waiting until 9 September, when they were granted audience with James at Perth. The king heard their remonstrations, but was in no mood to change course, and Bowes was withdrawn from Scotland shortly after Walsingham's departure.

For William Davison's (d.1608) mission to Scotland in 1582, see the *ODNB* article:

In 1582 and 1584 Davison was employed in two special missions to Scotland, both dealing with the aftermath of the Ruthven raid of 20 August 1582, in which a group of protestant nobles had separated James VI from his favourite, Esmé Stewart, first duke of Lennox. Elizabeth's government was anxious to stabilize the new Scottish administration and prevent the French from trying to restore Lennox. The situation was made particularly awkward by the apparent Anglo-French co-operation in support of Anjou in the Netherlands. In November, Henri III sent the former ambassador to England, Bertrand de Salignac, sieur de la Mothe-Fénélon, first to London and then Edinburgh, with instructions to free James if he was a captive (as Mary, queen of Scots, claimed), negotiate a general reconciliation, and arrange for Lennox to retire to France. Although Elizabeth could not refuse him a passport, the English were suspicious that his purpose

was to revive French influence. Although these fears were exaggerated, in December, Davison was given the task of escorting him to Scotland.

This mission had its comic aspects. Initially Davison was to try to delay Fénelon until Lennox had left Scotland. As it turned out they encountered Lennox on his way south between Topcliffe and Northallerton, Yorkshire, on 27 December. The day was so stormy that Lennox and Fénelon spoke only briefly and Davison could not follow all they said. He also spent much time surreptitiously checking Fénelon's baggage for hidden money, as it was believed that he was bringing funds to bribe the Scots nobility. They entered Scotland in early January 1583, and Fénelon had his audience with James on the 18th. Robert Bowes was already in place in Scotland and Davison, considering himself superfluous, expected to return to London with Fénelon at the end of the month. However, under instructions now missing, he was ordered to remain with Bowes, thanks presumably to the arrival of a second French agent, François de Roncherolles, sieur de Maineville, who had sailed directly to Scotland. At the beginning of March, Davison pressed again for his revocation, as he considered that Bowes, even if he could not speak French, was able to handle Maineville on his own. His recall was finally granted on 14 March, and he left Scotland at the beginning of April.

For François de Roncherolles, sieur de Maineville, and his mission to Scotland, see Carroll, Stuart, *Noble Power During the French Wars of Religion*, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1998), p. 190 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=10IwSplTPIoC&pg=PA190&lpg=PA190&dq=%22Francois+de+Roncherolles%22+%22Scotland%22&source=bl&ots=-tkB5h-8bM&sig=1HP7CrUY8E3sUUDOiWfrJ3r524s&hl=en&sa=X&ei=QHgEVYabLJO2oQSdo4HQBQ&ved=0CDkQ6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=%22Francois%20de%20Roncherolles%22%20%22Scotland%22&f=false>

For Archibald Douglas (c.1555-1588), 8th Earl of Angus and 5th Earl of Morton, see the *ODNB* article:

*Morton's downfall signalled the start of a bewildering series of fluctuations in Angus's fortunes, the outcome of the complex religious struggle within Scotland in these years. The immediate consequence was a period of exile in England. By summer 1581 Angus had moved to London, where he relayed his version of events to Elizabeth and her ministers. He also, apparently, became sufficiently friendly with Sir Philip Sidney for the latter to show him a manuscript copy of his *Arcadia*. Then in August 1582 the ultra-protestant faction to which Angus was aligned, headed by William Ruthven, earl of Gowrie, seized James VI and ousted the Lennox–Arran administration. Although the Ruthven raiders survived in power for less than a year, during their short ascendancy Angus received a royal pardon and was reconciled with the young king. He also persuaded James to order the removal of Morton's head from the Edinburgh tolbooth so that it be 'laid in a fyne cloath, convayed honorabilie and layed in the kist where his bodie was buried' (Calderwood, 3.692).*

By summer 1583, following James VI's escape from the control of the Ruthven faction and a comeback by Arran and his supporters, Angus found himself in an awkward position. Once again ordered to take himself beyond the Spey he spent the winter of 1583–4 in Elgin.

For Thomas Stapleton (1535-1598), see the *ODNB* article.

For a letter dated 26 April 1583 from the French ambassador in England, Michel de Castelnau (c.1520-1592), Sieur de Mauvissiere, to Walsingham on behalf of Bonetti stating that since Bonetti's return from Scotland he has been 'threatened by the people of the Earl of Oxford', see TNA SP 78/9, f. 90 on this website, and:

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/foreign/vol17/pp268-281>.

Bonetti had been in Scotland in the King's service on the recommendation of the Duke of Brabant. The latter would appear to be Queen Elizabeth's suitor, Francois (d. 10 June 1584), Duke of Alencon, youngest son of Queen Catherine de Medici, who in February 1582 had been installed as Duke of Brabant, despite the fact that the title was at that time held by King Philip II of Spain. For a letter dated 12 February 1583 from King James to Queen Elizabeth on behalf of Bonetti, see TNA SP 52/31, f. 34. It may be that the 'threats' to Bonetti by Oxford's people were occasioned by opposition to the French marriage.

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 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.

For the letter below, see also *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library*, (London: 1802), p. 191 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=h2p8tEBZ9YYC&pg=PA121&lpg=PA121&dq=%22Roger+Almont%22+%22Scotland%22&source=bl&ots=0htQ7IiTS&sig=s4qOZMHMjXnRZWWUSIV7rgxvdoY&hl=en&sa=X&ei=QJAEVY2wGMr0oAT81YGgCA&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=%22Roger%20Almont%22%20%22Scotland%22&f=false>.

28 March 1583

Mr Bowes to Secretary Walsingham

Sir, upon suspicion conceived by Maineville against the people of this nation and in default of other trusty conveys he pycqued(?) out(?) Rocco Bonetti to carry his letters to Mauvissiere.

Rocco soon opened this secret to his companion Eustace, a Fleming, and well known to you, and who did likewise discover the matter to me, offering to bring Rocco to me & to deliver to my hands the letter to be sent or the copies thereof, or otherwise that the said letters should be delivered to you.

Albeit I was very loath and nice to deal with strangers and in a cause of this quality, yet I found th' occasion offered worthy to be embraced, and that the course to be taken in the same ought to proficl(?) [=profit?] the intelligence and nevertheless to be free from blow(?) howsoever the case should be disclosed.

Therefore I agreed to speak with Rocco, who so frankly declared his forwardness to do all good offices in his power as his goodwill deserveth thanks and reward, wherein although I have with some small portion for his present expenses & help relieved him, yet I have chosen to leave & commend him for his comfort & encouragement to your good consideration and favour, in which behalf I have accompanied him with my short letter to you to read the memory of his good deserts and to entreat you to do him the good that conveniently may be done in this part.

After some delay Maineville committed to Rocco's trust first one letter and after another to be carried by sea to Mauvissiere, and for that purpose Rocco was embarked at Leith, but the wind being contrary he hath tarried his journey to pass by land & in company with Mr Davison, whom I have made privy to these dealings.

Upon the receipt of these letters thus to Rocco, Eustace brought to me the true copies of the same agreeing word by word with the originals which are again well closed & cleanly sealed and in the hands of Rocco to be showed to Maineville in case he shall call for them during the abode of Rocco in this town, yet for the more surety Rocco hath put the letters in his chest sent by sea to th' intent Maineville shall find no fault with the seals, and that he may be the rather occasioned to write again by Rocco, which I think Mainville will do. Rocco, being found a holy Catholic, is entered into such credit as he shall be employed either into France with letters from Mauvissiere, or to be returned thither, and Eustace shall be shortly sent with letters to Mauvissiere in case Maineville make any long abode in this realm.

What shall further succeed herein you shall be further advertised hereafter. In the meantime I humbly pray you show your favour to Rocco, and upon the coming of Eustace he shall bring with him such farther commendation as his doings shall deserve.

Upon delivery of Roger Almont apprehended here, as before is made known to you, he had a great desire and offer to do some service amongst the English Jesuits & seminaries in France with whom he had familiar acquaintance and amongst whom he thought that easy(?) to do much good by the commodity of a letter come to his hands from Thomas Stapleton and to be delivered by him to Eowre(?), a seminary in France. This letter and his whole purpose he will show and make known to you, and for the same intent he hath addressed himself to repair by sea to you with the privities and advices of Mr Davison and myself, who seeing(?) in these matters his forwardness agreed both to make proof of the success that shall follow on his adventure and labour, and also to commend him to you that you might understand th' effects of this letter & his enterprise, and hereon to determine further as you shall find convenient. He is already sailed from Leith for London, and I think that he shall be with you before the receipt hereof or soon after. Therefore I leave him & his cause to your good handling.

By mine other with these I have certified that Mr Archibald Douglas shall be called for by Colonel(?) Stewart. I wish him beware to offer himself to trial for the murder of the King's father, which crime shall be only objected against him and he shall neither endure any torture nor yet be charged with any such matters as are recited in your last to me. If he will hazard his life upon this dangerous adventure, I shall find him some friends & do him all the good I can, but I dare not promise him any surety, and therefore I leave it to her Majesty's good pleasure and his own choice.

[Followed by a letter dated 28 March 1583 from Maineville to la Mothe]