

SUMMARY: The document below is the licence, dated 6 February 1584, authorizing Adrian Gilbert (c.1541-1628) of Sandridge, Devonshire, brother of Sir Humphrey Gilbert (1537-1583), to search for the Northwest Passage, and incorporating Gilbert and his associates as the Colleagues of the Fellowship for the Discovery of the Northwest Passage. Oxford's name heads the list of associates annexed to the licence.

LM: D con sibi & heredibus pro Adriano Gilbert

Elizabeth by the grace of God Queen of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith etc., to all to whom these presents shall come, greeting.

Forasmuch as our trusty and well-beloved subject, Adrian Gilbert of Sandridge in the county of Devon, gentleman, to his great costs and charges hath greatly and earnestly travailed and sought and yet doth travail and seek and by divers means endeavoureth and laboureth that the passage unto China and the Isles of the Mollucas by the north-westward, north-eastward or northward, unto which part or parts of the world none of our loyal subjects have hitherto had any traffic or trade, may be discovered, known and frequented by the subjects of this our realm;

Know ye therefore that for the considerations aforesaid and for divers other good considerations us thereunto especially moving, we of our grace especial, certain knowledge and mere motion have given and granted and by these presents for us, our heirs and successors, do give and grant free liberty, power and full authority to the said Adrian Gilbert and to any other person by him or his heirs to be assigned, and to those his associates and assistants whose names are written in a schedule hereunto annexed, and to their heirs, and to one assign of each of them and each of their heirs, at all times and at any time or times after the date of these presents under our banners and ensigns freely without let, interruption or restraint of us, our heirs or successors, any law, statute, proclamation, patent, charter(?) or proviso to the contrary notwithstanding, to sail, make voyage and by any manner of means to pass and to depart out of this our realm of England or any our realms, dominions or territories unto all or any isles, countries, regions, provinces, territories, seas, rivers, ports, bays, creeks, arms of the seas and havens and all manner of other places whatsoever that by the said north-westward, north-eastward or northward is to be by him, his associates or assigns discovered;

And for and in the said sailing voyage and passage to have and use so many ships, barks, pinnaces or other vessels of any quantity or burden, with all the furniture of men, victuals and all manner of necessary provision, armour, weapons, ordinance, tackle and appurtenances whatsoever as to such a voyage shall or may be requisite, convenient or commodious, any law, statute, ordinance or proviso to the contrary thereof notwithstanding;

And also we do give and grant to the said Adrian Gilbert and his said associates, and to such assignee of him and his heirs, and to the heirs and one assignee of every of his said associates, forever full power and absolute authority to trade and make their residence in any of the said isles, countries, regions, provinces, territories, seas, rivers, ports, bays and havens and all manner of other places whatsoever, with all commodities, profits and emoluments in the said place or any of them growing and arising, with all manner of privileges, prerogatives, jurisdictions and royalties both by sea and land whatsoever;

Yielding and paying therefore unto us, our heirs and successors, the tenth part of all such gold and silver ore, pearls, jewels and precious stones or the value thereof as the said Adrian Gilbert and his said associates, their heirs and assigns, servants, factors or workmen and every or any of them shall find;

The said tenth to be delivered only to our Customer or other officers by us, our heirs or successors, thereunto assigned in the ports of London, Dartmouth or Plymouth, at which three places only the said Adrian Gilbert and his said associates, their said heirs and assigns, shall lade, charge, arrive and discharge all manner of wares, goods and merchandises whatsoever to the said voyage and new trade belonging or appertaining;

And moreover we have given, granted and authorized and by these presents for us, our heirs and successors, of our grace especial, certain knowledge and mere motion do give, grant and authorize the said Adrian Gilbert and his said associates forever, their heirs and their said assignees and every of them, that if the said isles, countries, regions, provinces, territories, seas, rivers, ports, bays or havens or any other of the premises by the said Adrian Gilbert or his associates, their heirs and their said assigns or any of them to be found by them, discovered and trafficked unto by any trade as aforesaid shall be by any other our subjects visited, frequented, haunted, traded unto or inhabited by the ways aforesaid without the special licence in writing of the said Adrian Gilbert and his said associates and their heirs and assigns forever, or by the most part of them, so that the said Adrian Gilbert, his heirs or assigns, be one of them, that then as well their ship or ships in any such voyage or voyages used, as all and singular their goods, wares and merchandises or any other thing whatsoever from or to any of the places aforesaid transported that so shall presume to visit, frequent, haunt, trade unto or inhabit shall be forfeited and confiscated (ipso facto), the one half of the said good[s], merchandises or other things whatsoever or the value thereof to be to the use of us, our heirs and successors, and the other moiety thereof to be to the use of the said Adrian Gilbert and his said associates, their heirs, and to their said assigns forever;

And unto the said Adrian Gilbert and his said associates, their heirs and assigns, we impose, give, assign, create and confirm this name peculiar to be named by, to serve and to be served by, that is to wit, by the name of the Colleagues of the Fellowship for the Discovery of the Northwest Passage, and them for us, our heirs and successors, by that name do incorporate and do erect and create as one body corporate to have continuance forever;

Moreover unto the said Adrian Gilbert and his said associates and unto their heirs and their said assigns forever by name of the Colleagues of the Fellowship for the Discovery of the Northwest Passage we have given, granted and confirmed, and by these presents do give, grant and confirm full power and authority from time to time and at all times hereafter to make, order, decree and enact, constitute, ordain and appoint all such ordinances, orders, decrees, laws and acts as the said new corporation or body politic Colleagues of the Fellowship for the Discovery of the Northwest Passage shall think meet, necessary and convenient, so that they or any of them be not contrary to the laws of this our realm and of this our present grant;

And we by our royal prerogative and fullness of our authority of our grace especial, certain knowledge and mere motion do establish, confirm and ratify all such ordinances, orders, decrees, laws and acts to be in so great full power and authority as we, our heirs or successors, may or can in any such case grant, confirm or ratify;

And further for the better encouragement of our loving subjects in this discovery, we by our royal prerogative and fullness of authority for us, our heirs and successors, do give, grant, establish, confirm, ordain, ratify and allow by these present[s] to the said Adrian Gilbert and to his associates and to the heirs and assigns of them and every of them forever, and to all other person or persons of our loving subjects whatsoever that shall hereafter travel, sail, discover or make voyage as aforesaid to any the isles, mainlands, countries or territories whatsoever by virtue of this our grant to be discovered, that the heirs and issues of them and every of them being born within any the isles, mainlands and countries or territories whatsoever before-mentioned shall have and enjoy all the privileges of free denizens as persons native born within this our realm of England or within our allegiance forever in such like ample manner and form as if they were or had been born and personally resiant within our said realm, any law, statute, proclamation, custom or usage to the contrary hereof in any wise notwithstanding;

Moreover for the considerations aforesaid by virtue hereof we give and grant unto the said Adrian Gilbert, his heirs and assigns, forever free liberty, licence and privilege that during the space of five years next and immediately ensuing the date hereof it shall not be lawful for any person or persons whatsoever to visit, haunt, frequent, trade or make voyage to any isles, mainlands, countries, regions, provinces, territories, seas, rivers, ports, bays and havens nor to any other places whatsoever hitherto not yet discovered by any of our subjects by virtue of this grant to be traded unto without the special consent and good liking of the said Adrian Gilbert, his heirs or assigns, first had in writing;

And if any person or persons of the associates of the said Adrian, his heirs or assigns, or any other person or persons whatsoever free of this discovery shall do any act or acts contrary to the tenor and true meaning hereof during the space of the said five years, that then the party and parties so offending, they and their heirs forever shall lose ipso facto the benefits and privileges of this our grant, and shall stand and remain to all intent[s] and purposes as persons exempted out of this grant;

And further by virtue hereof we give and grant for us, our heirs and successors, at all times during the space of five years next ensuing the date hereof free liberty and licence and full authority to the said Adrian Gilbert and his heirs and assigns that if it shall happen any one or more in any ship or ships sailing on their said voyage to become mutinous, seditious, disorderly or any way unruly to the prejudice or hindrance of the hope for success in the attempt or prosecuting of this discovery or trade intended, to use or execute upon him or them so offending such punishment, correction or execution as the cause shall be found in justice to require by the verdict of twelve in the company sworn thereunto in such a case appertaineth;

That express mention of the certainty of the premises or of other gifts or grants by us to the said Adrian Gilbert and his associates before this time made is not mentioned in these presents or any other law, act, statute, proviso, grant or proclamation heretofore made or hereafter to be made to the contrary hereof in any wise notwithstanding;

In witness whereof etc. Witness ourself at Westminster the 6 day of February.

Per breue de priuato sigillo [=By writ of privy seal]

A schedule of the names of the associates and assistants of Adrian Gilbert, gentleman, for the corporation granted unto him by the name of the Colleagues of the Fellowship for the Discovery of the Northwest Passage:

Edward, Earl of Oxford  
Francis, Earl of Bedford  
Robert, Earl of Leicester  
Sir Francis Walsingham, knight  
Sir Philip Sidney, knight  
Sir George Speke, knight  
Sir William Moone, knight  
Sir Francis Drake, knight  
Edward Osborne, Lord Mayor of London  
Sir Lionel Duckett, knight  
William Fleetwood, serjeant-at-law  
Walter Raleigh, esquire  
Edward Dyer, esquire  
John Hammond, Doctor of Civil Law  
Bernard Drake, esquire  
Carew Raleigh, esquire  
Gawen Champernowne, esquire  
George Barnes, alderman of London  
Richard Martyn, alderman of London  
John Harte, alderman of London  
Thomas Smyth, Customer of London  
Richard Younge, grocer  
Thomas Owyn, esquire

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John Chidleye, esquire  
Richard Drake, esquire,  
Lawrence Badford(?), esquire  
Tristram Gorges, esquire  
Francis Penkvill, esquire  
Philip Cole, esquire  
Richard Fowell, esquire  
John Hawkins, esquire  
Martin Frobisher, gentleman  
Peter Turnor, Doctor of Physic  
William Burroughe, gentleman  
Thomas Norton, gentleman  
Arthur Gilbert, gentleman  
John Davis, gentleman  
William Martyn, merchant  
John Peryam, merchant  
Lawrence Barkam, draper  
Walter Buggyns, merchant  
Nicholas Gudrydge, merchant  
William Easton  
Michael Lok, merchant