

SUMMARY: The document below is the exemplification, dated 30 January 1571, of the coat of arms granted by Queen Elizabeth to the Italian master of fence, Rocco Bonetti (d.1587), on Leicester's recommendation, at Kenilworth by letters patent on 14 August 1568 as Rocho, son of Alvise d' Bonettis of Baresi beyond the Goggia in Valle Brembana in the lordship of Bergamo under the rule of the Republic of Venice. See Siddons, Michael Powell, *The Heraldry of Foreigners in England 1400-1700*, (London: Harleian Society, 2010), New Series, Vol. 19, pp. 38-40. Bonetti is alluded to in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* ('the very butcher of a silk button').

For a record, apparently taken from a contemporary document in the city of Bergamo, of a 1578 grant by Queen Elizabeth augmenting Bonetti's coat of arms, see Calvi, Donato, *Effemeride Sagro-Profana di Quanto di Memorabile Sia Successo in Bergamo*, (Milan: Francesco Vigone, 1676), p. 575 at:

https://books.google.ca/books?id=08han0d9K_cC&pg=PA575&lpg=PA575&dq=%22Rocco+Bonetti%22+%22Bergamo%22&source=bl&ots=xIA4igfQeu&sig=eZrurbWFzWTIH4LY6SQL2ts5G4Y&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CDUQ6AEwA2oVChMIkK6DzLjFwxIVxy2ICh08RAJr#v=onepage&q=%22Rocco%20Bonetti%22%20%22Bergamo%22&f=false

As noted in the grant of arms, Bonetti was from Baresi. For Baresi, near Roncobello, see:

<https://www.google.ca/maps/@45.952682,9.7307083,14z>.

Bonetti is described in a 1572 grant of denization as 'Bergamask'. From the OED:

Bergamask

2. *A native or inhabitant of Bergamo.*

1602 *J. Marston Hist. Antonio & Mellida Induct. sig. A3^v, A wealthie mountbanking Burgomasco's heire of Venice.*

The date of Bonetti's arrival in England is unknown. Baptista di Trento (likely a pseudonym), mentioning Bonetti in connection with a conspiracy by Leicester against the Queen, indicates that he came to England at Leicester's behest. See *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Honourable the Marquis of Salisbury, Part II*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1888), pp. 165-70 at p. 169:

https://archive.org/stream/calendarofmanusc02grea_1#page/168/mode/2up.

Tutti li congiurati hanno fatto venire li suoi amici propinqui a lori, et il conte di Lesiter, fece venire il suo Rocho Buonetti, italiano, d'Italia. Il quale confida molto per essere huomo di guerra, et se lo ha obligato con molti beneficii, et haver lui buona provisione . .

[=All the conspirators have gathered their friends round them, and the Earl of Leicester has caused his [man?], Rocco Bonetti, an Italian, to come from Italy, in whom he places

much confidence as a man of war, and whom he has obligated to himself by many benefits, and has given him good provision]

The grant of arms at Kenilworth on Leicester's recommendation also suggests that at the beginning of his career in England Bonetti was in Leicester's service. He is also proposed as one of Leicester's servants in the underworld in the anonymous *News From Heaven And Hell* (1588):

First, Tamworth was appointed at his descent out of the boat to welcome him with an Italian oration, Don Julio was ordained his physician for the body, Don Adam Squire made great haste after him to be his chaplain for the soul, Herle had his place for his harbinger, Rocco was his champion, Tarleton his Ruffin, and room was left for Topcliffe against he should come at his own request to be his groom of his stool. Likewise there was Johnson appointed to be his chamberlain. Thus was he attended upon by Pluto's commandment, and lodged in a fiery palace provided for him by his harbinger, Master Herle, where, I warrant you, no lack of fire throughly to heat him, nor of stilled water of sulphur to comfort his cold stomach if he should happen to faint.

Aylward states that Bonetti came to England 'as an emissary of Catherine dei' Medici, sent over to report upon the attitude of the English public towards her project of arranging a marriage between the Queen and the Duc d'Anjou, afterwards Henri III.' See Aylward, J.D., *The English Master of Arms From the Twelfth to the Twentieth Century*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956), p. 40. Aylward cites no source for this statement, and Bonetti was in England before marriage negotiations began in 1570. However there was a connection between Bonetti and the French court. The peace of Cateau-Cambresis, signed on 3 April 1559, ended a 65-year war between Spain and France for control of Italy. Under the peace agreement Henry II restored Piedmont and Savoy to Philip II's ally, Emanuel Philibert (d. 30 August 1580), Duke of Savoy. See:

<http://www.britannica.com/event/Peace-of-Cateau-Cambresis>

On 9 July 1559, Henri II's sister, Margaret (d.1574), wed the Duke of Savoy, and on 13 June 1564, Henri II's widow, Catherine de Medici (d. 15 January 1589), awarded the Duke 'an honorary captaincy of a French company' (see Frieda, Leonie, *Catherine de Medici: Renaissance Queen of France*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), pp. 6, 185). On 29 June 1569, the Duke appointed Bonetti his captain in ordinary. See British Library, MS Add. 15215 at:

http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/dlDisplay.do?docId=IAMS032-002086918&vid=IAMS_VU2&indx=1&dym=false&dscnt=1&onCampus=false&group=ALL&institution=BL&ct=search&vl%28freeText0%29=032-002086918.

Copy of Letters of Emanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy, appointing Rocco Bonetto di Barrisy his Captain in ordinary, dated 29 June, 1569, Italian.

<http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/>

Bonetti was later in King James' service for a time in Scotland, recommended by the Duke of Brabant, a title granted in February 1582 to Catherine de Medici's youngest son, Henri (d. 10 June 1584), Duke of Alencon, who in 1579-1581 had been a suitor for the hand of Queen Elizabeth. On 12 February 1583 King James wrote a personal letter to Queen Elizabeth on Bonetti's behalf (see TNA SP 52/31, f. 34). While in Scotland, Bonetti appears to have engaged in espionage activities (see BL MS Cotton Caligula C vi). On 26 April 1583 the French ambassador in England, Michel de Castelnau (c.1520-1592), Sieur de Mauvissiere, wrote to Sir Francis Walsingham (c.1532-1590) on behalf of Bonetti (d.1587), stating that since Bonetti's return from Scotland he had been 'threatened by the people of the Earl of Oxford' (see TNA SP 78/9, f. 90).

Through his patrons, Bonetti had influence with the Privy Council. On 6 June and 1 November 1575 the Council ordered an inquiry on his behalf into his late wife's goods (see TNA PC 2/10, f. 358), and on 29 September 1578 the Council requested the Mayor and Aldermen of London to grant Bonetti the freedom of the city (see TNA PC 2/12, ff. 261-2). On 9 July 1579 the Council directed the mayor and aldermen to inquire into violence against Bonetti and his wife by English fencers (see TNA PC 2/12, ff. 529, 532-3).

For the entry on the Patent Rolls of the grant of denization on 6 June 1572 to Bonetti see TNA C 66/1089, mm. 3-4; and Page, William, ed., *Letters of Denization and Acts of Naturalization for Aliens in England, 1509-1603*, Publications of the Huguenot Society of London, Vol. VIII, 1893, p. 26 at:

https://books.google.ca/books?id=HJZAAQAAMAAJ&pg=PR2&lpg=PR2&dq=%22Letters+of+Denization%22&source=bl&ots=w9nhMV892-&sig=Ax-cEFBOufD04LOm1ycdnXj33Qs&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CFUQ6AEwDWoVChMIhKrkg_DFxwIVSSyICh0bowW8#v=onepage&q=%22Letters%20of%20Denization%22&f=false.

Bonetti married Eleanor Burbage (d.1574), as her fourth husband, at St Bartholomew the Less on 10 July 1567. For the marriage, see Evans, Charles F.H., 'The Family of St John of Lambeth', *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, 1966, Vol. 63, pp. 151-6 at p. 153, available online.

For Eleanor Burbage, see also the will of her brother, Robert Burbage (d.1575), who sold his manor of Theobalds to Oxford's father-in-law, Lord Burghley, TNA PROB 11/57/448, and the will of her third husband, Oliver St John (buried 19 April 1571), TNA PROB 11/53/192.

Harkness lists Bonetti as among 'projectors' with military backgrounds who had 'long entrepreneurial careers', citing Kirk, R.E.G. and Ernest F. Kirk, eds., *Returns of Aliens Dwelling in the City and Suburbs of London from the Reign of Henry VIII to That of James I*, (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1900-1907), Vol. 2, pp. 222, 252, 404, and Guildhall Library MS 4508/1. See Harkness, Deborah H., *The Jewel House:*

Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 163, 286 at:

https://books.google.ca/books?id=y5nkqCbxtjEC&pg=PT148&lpg=PT148&dq=%22Bonetto%22+%22Harkness%22&source=bl&ots=5F0V8HCl2M&sig=FOA7byTel_S0dwOTiZALrVtjknE&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CCsQ6AEwBGoVChMIIdumoueGyAIVjzKlCh1aLwfH#v=onepage&q=%22Bonetto%22%20%22Harkness%22&f=false.

However although BL MS Cotton Galba C, v, f. 97 records that Bonetti knew a secret method for tempering steel, the pages cited by Harkness in Kirk do not refer to a 'long entrepreneurial career'. The entry on p. 222 (from Lansdowne MS. 33, No. 59, ff. 140-144), under the heading 'Names of Strangers that goe not to church, 24 Junij, [1581]', reads:

St Martyns att Ludgate
Rocco Bonetto, estr'

The entry on p. 252 (from Lay Subsidies, Additional, 251/16), under the heading 'Indentures, 1 August, 24 Eliz. (1582), of the second payment of the Subsidy granted 16 January, 23 Eliz. (1581)', reads:

St Martens Parishe within Ludgate
Straungers
**Rocko Bonetto vj li xij s [Per affid' in margin]*

The entry on p. 404 (from Lay Subsidies, London, 146/276), under the heading 'Certificate, 14 July, 29 Eliz. 1587, similar to the preceding, for the Ward of Farringdon *Infra*', reads:

Blackfryers
Straungers
Rocko Bonetto vj li xij s dead in Thospitall

The entries in Kirk thus provide evidence that on 24 June 1581 Bonetti was resident in the parish of St Martin's at Ludgate, and was noted as not attending church; that on 1 August 1582 he was assessed in the same parish for the subsidy, by affidavit, at £6 12s; and that on 14 July 1587 he was assessed in the Blackfriars at £6 12s, but was recorded as having died in the Hospital.

The grant below is taken from Siddons, *supra*, pp. 38-9.

Anno 10 Elizab:

Elizabetha Dei gracia Angliae Franciae et Hiberniae regina fidei defensor &c universis et singulis regibus principibus, ducibus, Marchionibus Comitibus Baronibus, equitibus, nobilibusque caeteris quibuscunque ad quos presentes littere nostre pervenerint, salutem.

Cum saepius nobiscum cogitaverimus, regiae dignitatis culmen nulla magis Causa, ad tantam apicem erectum, quam ut florentibus in omni accione viris sua premia plena lance referret:

Admoniti precipue sumus, eo plus debere regiam maiestatem his, qui non modo progenitorum suorum stemmatum terminus se continent, sed propria virtute, proprijs gestis, suorum stemmata ornare et decorare nitantur. Et quoniam virtus laudata maiori laudis studio ardet, et incenditur. Hinc est quod nobiscum perpendentes generosi ac dilecti nostri Rochi, filii Alvisii d' Bonettis de Baresis ultra Laguchiam de valle Brembanii in dominio Bergamensi sub reipub: Venetiae ditone, laudabilia, merita, et egregios animi dotes, summamque erga nos fidem [p. 29] et sinceritatem, nostrae in eum affectionis monumentum, eiusque virtutis testimonium aliquod exhibere voluimus, illumque nobis, per predilectum nostrum Robertum Comitem Lecestriae baronem Denbigh &c dignis preconijs Commendatum, apprimè dignum iudicavimus, quem nos nostra benevolentia et amore prosequamur. Illus igitur Armorum et insignium iure, veluti in honoris premium decoravimus, et decoramus in hunc qui sequitur modum, ut hic inferius Gallicè declaratur.

Il port sable, un lyon rampant arg: tenant en ses 2 pates un baston nowee du seconde; sur son helme overt, issuant d' un Coronelle d' or, un patte de lyon arache partie per fess d' arg: et sable tenant un espee nude, garnie d' or, mantlee d' sable dublee d' arg: ut latius in scuto hic depicto apparet.

Et de uberiori gracia Concedimus, ut tam ipse Rochus quam ipsius pater caeterique eius gentiles, et eius quoque liberi et heredes de corpore suo legitime exeuntes, huiusmodi arma et insignia, in signum verae nobilitatis habeant et deserant, ubique locorum et terrarum in omnibus et singulis honestis dicentibus, actibus, et expeditionibus nobilium militarium, armigerorum more, tam ioco quam serio in turnamentis, hastiludijs, bellis, duellis, singulari certamine, et quibuscunque pugnis, vexillis, signis, tentorijs, castris, annulis, sigillis, picturis, sculpturis, lapidis peristromatibus, sepulcris, monumentis edeficijs, fenestris, elenodijs et universa supellectili, et denique in rebus et locis omnibus, pro eorum voluntatis arbitrio, et ad omnes actus et dignitates nobiles qualescunque sive spirituales sive seculares sint de iure vel consuetudine, admittatur. Ab omnibus insuper regibus principibus, ducibus, Comitibus baronibus, Equitibus nobilibusque cuiuscunque status sint, nostro dominio aut imperio non subiectis, gratiose requirentes, illis autem qui nobis, regnisque nostris subditi sunt stricte precipientes, quatenus dictum Rochum, eiusque patrem, et gentiles, liberos et heredes, huiusmodi armorum et insignium iure, sic ut permittitur uti et frui sinant.

Mandates insuper regibus et officarijs nostrs Armorum, huiusmodi predicti Rochi insignia, in eorum libris, ad perpetuam eorum memoriam inscribere. In quorum omnium

et singulorum robur et testimonium, has litteras nostras pattentes fieri fecimus, et sigilli nostri maioris appensione iussimus Communiri.

Dat' apud Kenilworth Castrum Comitis Lecestriae decimo quarto die Augusti regni nostro decimo.

Et quoniam suprascriptae Concessionis regiae littere pattentes magno sigillo Angliae Communitatis penes infra nominatum Dominum Rochum filium Alvisii d' Bonettis d' Baresis &c adservantur: Idem Dominus Rochus nos Gilbertum Dethick militem alias Garter, Robertum Cooke ar., alias Clarenciaulx, et Willelmum Flower ar. alias Norrey reges armorum obnixe rogavit, ut dictarum litterarum pattentium transcriptionem veram et fidelem ei significarem. Nos quidem viro, virtute claro, deque principe et patria nostra benèmerita gratificare cupientes: non modo dictarum litterarum pattentium tenorem, sed clipii in illis memorati notas ac signa, una cum galiae apice, quod vulgo cristam vocant, ac caetera ornamenta eidem annexa adiungere libuit: Ac pro pleniori notitia, in forma que videtur, depingi curavimus. Et ut certa indubiaeque fides huic transcripto adhibeatur, nos reges armorum regni Angliae predicti his presentibus subscripsimus, et sigilla nostra ad arma apposuimus. 30 die Januarii Anno Domini 1570.