

Francis Hyckes, (?)1566- 1631 – a biography

Son of Richard Hyckes, Francis' date of birth, 1566, is deduced from the date of his matriculation at St Mary Hall, Oxford, in 1579; the place is unknown, but the fact that he was given a name belonging in the Sheldon family suggests it was probably within the family's sphere of influence.¹ He took his degree in April 1583; at Michaelmas 1584 he entered service in the Great Wardrobe, a department of the royal household in London which repaired the sovereign's collection of tapestries, serving as its head from 1588, having been associated in survivorship with his father from 1575.² His name ceased to head the list of Great Wardrobe workers after 1603/04; like his father earlier, he appointed deputies. Absence of his name led to the suggestion that it was at this time that he returned to Barcheston to run the works there; the parish records suggest that he had never been long absent. However, it seems probable that the family's occupation of the manor house came to an end around 1596; the wills of the Jobson family, Sheldon's shepherds there, appear to have held it on a lease for three lives.³ His formal resignation from the royal post came in 1609.⁴ It is possible that his name was woven into the Elizabethan tapestry *Map* of Oxfordshire, since it appears in the second, later weaving. There is no evidence for other tapestry commissions.

His wife, identified in the Worcestershire Visitation of 1634 as Elizabeth Mundy of Bagshot, Surrey, was buried at Barcheston in 1617.⁵ Three children were baptised there, Richard in 1594, Margaret in 1595, William in 1596, the youngest, Thomas, in Shipston in 1599.⁶ Francis was, however, unable to name his own father!

¹ J. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*, 1500-1714, (1891), Hyckes; Tredington parish registers, originals at Warwick County Record Office (WaCRO), DR 0079, now on Ancestry, do not substantiate Barnard's statement that Francis was born there, E.A.B. Barnard and A.J.B.Wace, 'The Sheldon tapestry weavers and their work', *Archaeologia*, lxxviii, 1928, 275. P. Bliss, ed. s.v. Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, Oxford, 1892, ii, p. 490. *ODNB* ignores Francis' position in the Great Wardrobe amongst the arras men, and is drawn almost exclusively from sources which can be shown to be incorrect; Hilary L. Turner, 'Finding the Sheldon Weavers; Richard Hyckes and the Sheldon Tapestry works', *Textile History*, 33, no. 2, November 2002, 137-161, and idem, 'Tapestries once at Chastleton House and their influence on the tapestries called Sheldon: a re-assessment', *Antiquaries Journal*, 88, 2008, 313-46.

² *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1572-75, no. 3268, also TNA LC 5/49 f.317-19; TNA LC 9/76-93 and AO 3/1115. See also Hilary L. Turner, 'Working Arras and Arras Workers: Conservation in the Great Wardrobe under Elizabeth I', *Textile History*, 43 (1), May 2012, pp. 43-60.

³ WAAS, Jobson 1613/204i, 1640/125, 1647 TNA PROB 11/199/ 102.

⁴ *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1572-75, no. 3269; *Archaeologia* 1928, 308, based only on LC 9 lists.

⁵ WaCRO DR 0005/1, now on Ancestry. Little of the information recorded in the genealogy of the family presented to the Heralds' *Visitations of Worcestershire in 1634* and 1682-83, or that in Anthony Wood's account, can be substantiated. Both printed Visitations, A.T. Butler, *The Visitation of Worcestershire 1634*, Harleian Society, 90, 1938, p. 44 and W.C. Metcalfe, *Visitation of Worcestershire begun 1682-83*, privately printed 1883, p. 56, have considerably augmented the information given in the originals, College of Arms, Ms C.30, fol.109, and K.4, fol. 92; the sources are not identified.

⁶ WaCRO parish registers Barcheston DR 005/1 and Shipston DR 0446/1, both now on Ancestry;

Margaret also baptised her children in Barcheston, and had married William Crofte of Sutton under Brailes.⁷ Francis himself is said to have died in 1630 at the home of a kinsman and to have been buried at Sutton under Brailes.⁸ No will survives.

Details of his later life are scant and sit awkwardly with his position in the Great Wardrobe. Described many years later by Anthony Wood (1632-95) as ‘enjoying a country retirement’, he seems to have employed his time writing and translating. Lucian’s *Dialogues* for use in schools was printed and two other texts were given to Christchurch Oxford by his son, Thomas.⁹ Francis briefly held a lease of land at Chastleton, almost certainly as a favour to the Sheldons.¹⁰ However, it seems probable that the family’s occupation of the manor house came to an end around 1596; the wills of the Jobson family, Sheldon’s shepherds there, appear to have held it on a lease for three lives.¹¹ Francis seems to have moved to Shipston on Stour where he was twice taxed; first in 1600 when he was assessed on the basis of having £1 in goods, on which he paid 8s. and again in 1610 when he was assessed on the basis of goods worth £5.¹² He served on a jury in a local dispute at Moreton in Marsh in 1607, and stood bail for a neighbour’s appearance in court in 1611.¹³ He made a gift to the organ fund of Worcester cathedral in 1613, as did most local notables.¹⁴ According to the prosecution of another case in 1616, he had become involved in an affray at Shipston; he also witnessed a deed concerning the uses of land belonging to the parish church there in 1619.¹⁵ His sister Alice had married Cuthbert Huckvale in 1588 and may have been living in Brailes.

By the end of the seventeenth century the family, whatever their origins, were

Thomas’ birthplace has not previously been known. William was enrolled at Lincoln’s Inn, London, on 16 June 1618, *Admission Registers of Lincoln’s Inn, 1420-1799*, p. 179.

⁷ WaCRO DR 0005/1; available at <https://www.barchestonhistory.info/>

⁸ The parish registers are defective; the information comes from P. Bliss, *Athenae Oxonienses*, ii, 490-1.

⁹ Christ Church Oxford, manuscript translations of The History of the Peloponnesian War and The History of Herodian are Ms 156 and 157; his grammar was first printed in 1633.

¹⁰ Oxfordshire History Centre (former Record Office), Chastleton deeds E 24/1/1D/19, 21.

¹¹ WAAS, Jobson 1613/204i, 1640/125, 1647 TNA PROB 11/199/ 102.

¹² TNA E 179/201/239 and TNA E 179/201/273. Useful only as a rough guide, the figures do not suggest that Hyckes was especially wealthy. The figures are, therefore, an indirect comment on the success of the venture at Barcheston.

¹³ TNA STAC 8/55/13 (where his signature can be seen) and STAC 8/78/13; J.W. Willis Bund, *Worcester County Records, Quarter Sessions*, two volumes, Worcester Historical Association, 1899, i, 158.

¹⁴ M. Hodgetts, ‘Recusant Contributors to the Worcester Cathedral Organ, 1613’, *Midland Catholic History*, no.1, 1991, 28-33.

¹⁵ TNA STAC 8/ 311/6 Shipston affray; Shipston parish registers WaCRO DR 0446/1 fol 1^v.

well integrated into local society even though Francis' descendants' attempt to claim the right to the use of a coat of arms was unsuccessful. Except for his son's testimony, one might wonder whether the lives of this Francis and of another Francis Hyckes alias Hathway, living at nearby Broadway, had become entangled in later memory.¹⁶



©Hilary L Turner St Thomas à Becket church, Sutton under Brailes

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¹⁶ TNA C 66/1296 m.4, STAC 5/581/36.