

Richard Hyckes (?)1524-1621 - a biography

Hyckes is first mentioned at Barcheston at the baptism of his second child, his daughter, Alice, in October 1567; neither he nor a family of that name can be found in the parish before then.¹ In 1570 William Sheldon's will gave him use of the family's manor house there, rent-free on condition that he organized the weaving of arras, tapestry and a selection of cloth fabrics. A seventeenth century antiquary, Anthony Wood (1632-95) of Oxford, who saw 'fine tapestries' woven by Hyckes, stated, without identifying his sources, that Hyckes had been sent by *Ralph* Sheldon to Holland to serve a tapestry weaver's apprenticeship and settled at Barcheston, Warwickshire on his return.² The tapestries mentioned are always assumed to be the tapestry maps, on which Hyckes' name appears; but since it appears both in the Elizabethan originals and in the seventeenth century copies, Wood's comment is scarcely helpful. Nevertheless, on the basis of these rather unclear, and otherwise unsubstantiated remarks, Hyckes has been regarded as English; since he was forty and more when he first came to Barcheston, this might suggest that he might have been an émigré Fleming. His wife's name is uncertain, recorded in the Visitation of 1634 as Ann Ingram; Barcheston parish registers say that Margaret, his wife, was buried in 1611,³ having given him four children.⁴ His own parentage was not noted.

Appointed queen's arrasmaker in 1569, and confirmed in 1575, he was relieved of the post in 1609.⁵ His duties consisted of repairing the royal collection of tapestries, rather than new weaving, at the Great Wardrobe, south west of St Paul's London. Although the accounts for the arras men's expenses suggest that he did not take up his duties in person until 1584, in fact he was paid for work for another department, the Stables, on six occasions before that date; he retired from active service in 1588, but continued to supply materials until 1606/07.⁶ Simultaneously he

¹ Warwickshire Record Office (WaCRO), DR 0005/1.

² Hilary L. Turner, 'Finding the Weavers; Richard Hyckes and the Sheldon Tapestry works', *Textile History*, 33, no. 2, November 2002, pp.137-161. See <https://barchestonhistory.info/pdfs/Finding-the-Weavers.pdf>. Weavers Wood's words are in a copy of the Worcestershire Visitation he owned, Bodleian Library Oxford, Ms Rawlinson D 807, f.15; "Richard Hyckes was bound prentice to a Dutch arras worker in Holland by *Ralph* Sheldon (who built the great house at Weston in Com. Warw. anno 1588) and being out of his time, settled at Barston, a manour that belongs to the Sheldons) and made and weaved those fair hangings that are in the dining room at Weston." William Sheldon's will (1570) shows that by naming Ralph, Wood's information is incorrect; moreover, Wood did not meet Ralph Sheldon 'the Great' (1623-84) until 1671 and does not cite him as the source. Nor does Wood state unambiguously that he saw the map tapestries. Even if he did, he was almost certainly looking at the C17 versions and, probably, the Worcestershire map. William Dugdale (1605-85), Warwickshire's seventeenth-century historian, acquainted with the family, made no mention of the project, *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, 1656.

³ WaCRO DR 0005/1; College of Arms, Ms C.30, fol. 109, repeated by W.C. Metcalfe, *Visitation of Worcestershire begun 1682-83*, privately printed, 1883, p.56, (but not in the original of that Visitation, Ms K.4, f.92) records Richard's wife's name as Ann Ingram; the Barcheston registers for 1611 note the burial of Margaret wife of Richard on 13 April. In the early nineteenth century the antiquary Sir Thomas Phillips noted alongside the name Margaret that of Ingram of Little Wolford; he gave no authority, Bodleian Library, Ms Phillips-Robinson b 80, p.51v. It is also possible that since by the time he arrived in Barcheston Hyckes was already married, the name should be Ingelhran and that he had married the Margaret Ingelhran recorded twice in the congregation of the Dutch church in London, R.E.G. and E.F. Kirk, eds., *Returns of Aliens* Huguenot Society of London, Quarto Series, vol 10, 1900-1908, i, 271, 286.

⁴ His daughter Alice, his second child, was baptized on 26 October 1567; a second son, William was baptized on 20 March 1569 and buried on 8 May 1571; Edward was baptized 7 August 1571, buried 22 February 1592/3.

⁵ *Cal Pat Rolls* 1566-69, no. 2573; CPR 1572-75, nos.3268, 3269; also TNA LC 5/49 f.317-19.

⁶ NA LC 9/65, f.21v-22; LC 9/67/f.29-30; LC 9/69, f.30v, 32v; LC 9/71, f.25-25v; LC 9/73, f.22v,23; L 9/75, f.12v, 13bis and did similar work in LC 9/77, f.17v, LC 9/79, f.26v,27,27v; he was in active employment LC 9/76-79, and re-imbursed for materials supplied from 1584 until 1607, LC 9/76-95.

directed Sheldon's venture at Barcheston, the success of which is uncertain.⁷ 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, see note 15.

Apart from his name in the tapestry *Maps* woven for the Sheldon family, Richard's achievements are unknown. It is a later suggestion that he executed a commission for the earl of Leicester, weaving the three armorial tapestries which still survive; the documentary references are ambiguous.⁸ Very little else is known about Hyckes as a tapestry weaver.

He went to law on his own account, once to obtain payment from a client, Sir George Calveley,⁹ the second time to claim payment of a debt due to him of which he had been defrauded.¹⁰ His other known court appearances were as Sheldon's 'servant', in connection with the right to the presentation to the rectory of Stretton on Fosse,¹¹ and, less clearly, in another case, where the plaintiff, claimed intimidation by Hyckes.¹² Miscellaneous other services were requested of both Richard and Francis (q.v.), his son, in the two years, 1586-88, covered by the personal account book of Ralph Sheldon, son of their benefactor, William.¹³ When Sir Thomas Cornwallis wished for a coach with good suspension enabling him to ride in comfort round his park, he wrote that amongst those in London who might be consulted on its design was 'master Sheldons Arras worker also can saie as much in it as eny man, who I heare is verry connyng in the devise of many thinges.'¹⁴

In 1621 Richard died, aged 97, and was buried at Barcheston where he may no longer have been resident; his will was witnessed by William Bulwer, vicar of Barcheston, and three Shipston men, William Diston, Thomas Dowler and Erasmus Banburie.¹⁵ His wearing apparel, the bed furniture, books and other implements in the study totalling £20.13s. 4d., together with the remainder of two leases valued at £161,¹⁶ went to Francis because 'his children had had portions of him', an odd comment since only Alice and Francis are known to have survived infancy. Alice married Cuthert Huckvale in 1588 and may have been living in Brailes; their son was briefly employed in the Great Wardrobe.¹⁷

⁷ Hilary L. Turner, 'Tapestries once at Chastleton House and their influence on the tapestries called Sheldon: a re-assessment', *Antiquaries Journal*, 88, 2008, 313-46.

⁸ J. Clark, 'A set of tapestries for Leicester House in The Strand: 1585', *The Burlington Magazine*, cxxv, 1983, pp. 283-4, now in V&A T.320-1977, Burrell Collection, Glasgow, accession 47.1, 2.

⁹ TNA REQ 2/118/16, REQ 2/215/37.

¹⁰ TNA REQ 2/146/15.

¹¹ TNA STAC 5/H31/35, STAC 5/H19/13, documents not known to Barnard, *Archaeologia op cit.*, 1928.

¹² TNA C2/Eliz/T10/3.

¹³ WaCRO CR2632, fols. 16, 25, 66, 68 and many others.

¹⁴ J. Scott-Warren, 'News, Sociability and Bookbuying in Early Modern England' The Letters of Sir Thomas Cornwallis', *The Library*, The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society, 7th series, 1, no.4, December 2000, p.398.

¹⁵ Three successive wills of the Jobson family, Sheldon's shepherds there, suggest they held it on a lease for three lives, WAAS, Jobson 1613/204i, 1640/125, 1647 TNA PROB 11/199/ 102. Richard's will is Worcestershire Archaeology and Archives Service (WAAS) wills, 1622/95. Neither William Diston nor Thomas Dowler were ever at the Wardrobe, as J. Humphreys, 'Elizabethan Sheldon Tapestries', *Archaeologia*, lxxiv, 1924, p.187. For his work in the Great Wardrobe Hilary L. Turner, 'Working arras and arras workers: Conservation in the Great Wardrobe under Elizabeth I'. *Textile History* 43(1), 2012, 43-60.

¹⁶ Lease of land in Shipston from the See of Worcester to Francis Hyckes in 1625, later held by his son William, was registered in T. Cave and R.A.Wilson, eds., *The Parliamentary Survey of 1649-50*, Worcester Historical Society, unnumbered volumes, 1924, 130.

¹⁷ WAAS, marriage licence, 1588/144a.

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