

Richard Hyckes alias Hicks (?)1524-1621 - a biography

Richard Hyckes (also Hicks, Heekes) was buried in Barcheston 'aged 97 or thereabouts' in November 1621. He was born therefore around 1524. He is first mentioned in 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 and for a limited term, on condition that he organized the weaving of arras, tapestry and certain particular cloth fabrics.

A seventeenth century antiquary, Anthony Wood (1632-95) of Oxford, saw Hyckes' name on 'fair hangings' in the Dining Room at Weston, Sheldon's house. He noted, without identifying his sources, that Hyckes had been sent by *Ralph* Sheldon to Holland to serve an apprenticeship and settled at Barcheston, Warwickshire on his return.² It is safe to assume that his comment was sparked by the seeing the tapestry maps, on one of which (Worcestershire) Hyckes' name appears; but since it is woven into both the Elizabethan original and in the seventeenth century version, Wood's comment is scarcely helpful. However, if Hyckes was born around 1524 or 1525 he would have entered on an apprenticeship around 1540, when Ralph was only three and be unlikely to change his trade thereafter.

¹ Parish Registers, Warwickshire County Record Office (WaCRO), DR 0005/1, now available on Ancestry. Date first noted by E.A.B.Barnard and A.J.B.Wace, 'The Sheldon tapestry weavers and their work', *Archaeologia* 78, 1928, 255-314, p.273. Transcribed registers at <http://www.barchestonhistory.info/>

² Hilary L. Turner, 'Finding the Sheldon Weavers; Richard Hyckes and the Sheldon Tapestry works', *Textile History*, 33, no. 2, November 2002, pp.137-161, now on-line at <<http://tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/FindingtheWeavers.pdf>>. Wood's words are in his notes from the Worcestershire Visitation, Bodleian Library Oxford, Ms Rawlinson D 807,f.15; "This Richard Hyckes here mentioned first 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." It was, however, Ralph's father's will (William Sheldon 11/53/79 1570) which set out plans for the venture; it is unlikely that Ralph had significant powers of action independent of his father until he reached his majority at 21. Wood did not begin to visit Weston until 1671 and does not cite its owner, Ralph 'the Great' Sheldon (1623-1684) as his source. William Dugdale (1605-85), Warwickshire's seventeenth century historian, acquainted with the Sheldon family, made no mention of the project, *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, 1656.

Wood's remark was printed correctly in 1891, but it was almost immediately twisted to read that William Sheldon sent Hyckes abroad.³ In 1928, E.A.B. Barnard discovered the entry for Hyckes' burial, but made little use of it. Instead, using information from Ralph's epitaph at Beoley that he had travelled 'in France' (itself incorrect), suggested that Hyckes had accompanied Ralph abroad.⁴ This *suggestion* is now regarded as a fact, appearing with total confidence on many web sites. In 1587 Hyckes said his acquaintance with Ralph had begun around 1557; by then Ralph had been enrolled in the Middle Temple.⁵

Nevertheless, on the basis of these rather unclear and otherwise unsubstantiated remarks, the 1920s researchers regarded Hyckes as English, but, unusually capable of weaving tapestry and cloth fabrics relatively unknown here. Because he was forty and more when he first came to Barcheston, it seems perfectly possible he was an émigré Fleming, one of the many skilled craftsmen who came, to London especially, in the 1560s. 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 1611,⁶ having given him four children.⁷ His own parentage was not noted.

³ W.G. Thomson, *A History of Tapestry*, London 1906, 260; A.F. Kendrick, *Victoria and Albert Museum Catalogue of Tapestries*, London 1914, 16; V & A *Portfolios* 1914; J. Humphreys, 'Some Recently Discovered Elizabethan Sheldon Tapestries', *Country Life*, October 9 1920, 463-4.

⁴ E. A. Barnard and A. J. B. Wace, 'The Sheldon tapestry weavers and their work', *Archaeologia*, vol. lxxviii, 1928, 255-318, p. 259.

⁵ Worcester, Hive RO, Deposition Books, vol III, f. 315, 794.052 BA 2102; *Middle Temple Admission Registers*, ed. H.A.C. Sturgess, 3 vols 1849, I, p.22.

⁶ 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.51^v. 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.

⁷ His daughter Alice, his second child, was baptised on 26 October 1567; a second son, William was baptised on 20 March 1569 and buried on 8 May 1571; Edward was baptised 7 August 1571, buried 22 February 1592/3, all noted in the parish registers but Alice was omitted by Barnard, *Archaeologia* 1928, 274. It is not known where the Edmund Hicks mentioned there lived; the marriage bond does not tell us.

In 1569 he was designated as the successor to the current holder of the post of queen's arrasmaker, an office in the queen's household, and confirmed in his duties in 1575; he was relieved of the post in 1609.⁸ His responsibilities consisted of repairing the existing royal collection, rather than weaving new tapestries, 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 1606/07.⁹

It was in the year following this appointment, 1570, that the arrangements with William Sheldon for his planned venture at Barcheston were finalized. Hyckes was therefore directing two enterprises, 2½ days riding apart. His success is hard to assess.¹⁰ Apart from his name in one of the tapestry *Maps* woven for the Sheldon family, his achievements are unknown. It is hotly debated whether or not he executed a commission for the earl of Leicester, weaving the three armorial tapestries which still survive; the documentary references are ambiguous.¹¹ Little else is known about Hyckes as a tapestry weaver.

⁸ *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1566-69*, no. 2573; *Cal Pat Rolls 1572-75*, nos.3268, 3269; also TNA LC 5/49 f.317-19, at

http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php?title=LC_5/49

⁹ TNA 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. See also

http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php?title=The_Work_of_the_Arrasmaker_1559-1640 and more generally for Hyckes' 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,

<http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/WorkingArras.pdf>

and the associated site

http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php?title=Arras_men

¹⁰ Recent examination, and many re-attributions, are to be found in Elizabeth Cleland and Lorraine Karafel, *Tapestries from the Burrell Collection*, London 2017; 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.

<http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP41Chastletonrevision.pdf>

¹¹ 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,

He went to law on his own account, once to obtain payment from a client, Sir George Calveley,¹² the second time to claim payment of a debt due to him of which he had been defrauded.¹³ 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 and similar problems at Barcheston,¹⁴ and, less clearly, in another case, where the plaintiff, claimed intimidation by Hyckes.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ 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 veye connyng in the devise of many thinges.'¹⁷

His will, written in October 1621, was witnessed by William Bulwer, vicar of Barcheston, and three Shipston men, William Diston, Thomas Dowler and Erasmus Banburie.¹⁸ 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

accession 47.1, 2. The evidence is much disputed, see Cleland and Karafel, *Tapestries from the Burrell Collection*, Catalogue 58.

¹² TNA Req 2/228/16, Req 2/215/37, now at http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php?title=REQ_2/228/16

¹³ TNA Req 2/146/15.

¹⁴ TNA STAC 5/H31/35, STAC 5/H19/13, documents not known to Barnard, *Archaeologia* op.cit. note 1, 1928. For Barcheston see REQ 2/121/32 and REQ 2/223/66 at http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php?title=REQ_2/121/32 and <http://www.barchestonhistory.info>

¹⁵ TNA C2/Eliz/T10/3.

¹⁶ WaCRO CR2632, fols. 16, 25, 66, 68 and many others in the Sheldon account book.

¹⁷ 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, 380-402, p.398.

¹⁸ Worcester Record Office, wills, 1622/95. Neither William Diston nor Thomas Dowler were ever at the Wardrobe, one of the many mistakes of J. Humphreys, 'Elizabethan Sheldon Tapestries', *Archaeologia*, lxxiv, 1924, p.187, see <http://tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/ElizabethanSheldonTapestriesreviewed.pdf>

£161,¹⁹ went to Francis alone 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.²⁰

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¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ Worcester Record Office, marriage licence, 1588/144a; in London see <http://www.tapestriescalledsheldon.info/pdfs/NEWPP39Emigre1GtWardrobe.pdf>