

STRIVING TO SUCCEED IN LATE MEDIEVAL
CANTERBURY – THE LIFE OF THOMAS FOKYS,
PUBLICAN, MAYOR AND ALDERMAN c.1460-1535

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Chaucer has left such a vibrant picture of the social fabric of his day that we can easily imagine his characters conversing amongst the medieval splendours of Canterbury. The real life stories of the city's inhabitants before the Dissolution of the monasteries are potentially just as colourful. A comprehensive study of the medieval town records has made it possible to reconstruct the life of one such citizen, Thomas Fokys, and of his second wife Margaret. Thomas rose to wealth and prestige on the eve of the Reformation, having in his childhood witnessed some of the dramatic events of the Wars of the Roses. Margaret outlived him, and thus witnessed the destruction of the shrine of St Thomas, an event which was cataclysmic for the city's commerce, which was sent into a decline from which it took sixty years to recover.

This story begins not in Canterbury itself, but a few miles away in Fordwich, one of the limbs of the Cinque Port of Sandwich. The earliest records of that town reveal the presence of a family bearing the surname of Fox.¹ As burghers of that place it occurred to them that since the freedom of the Cinque Ports conferred with it the right to trade freely throughout the realm, it would be possible to extend their mercantile activities into Canterbury without paying any dues or fines. This was a considerable advantage at a time when the liberties of towns were jealously guarded. In 1431 the family took up the rental of a shop in Northgate from the Almoner of the Cathedral Priory. Thus began a close association with Northgate which lasted until 1504.²

The move was so successful that for a hundred years the family can scarcely be detected in their home town.³ This is an appropriate point to explore how the freedom of a medieval town was attained. The rules governing admission varied from one town to the next, but the main qualifications were similar everywhere, namely patrimony, apprenticeship, or marriage to the daughter of a freeman. The hereditary freedom of Canterbury required two conditions to be met: the father

had to be a freeman, and the birth within the jurisdiction of the town. This excluded those who were born in one of the various town liberties, including properties owned by Eastbridge Hospital, St Augustine's Abbey or the Cathedral Priory. There was a level of absurdity to this, such that those born in one of the houses in Mercery Lane which belonged to the cathedral did not qualify. Some of the houses, however, had been extended into the street, and boys born in the front rooms, built on land not part of the Liberty of the Priory, could inherit the freedom.⁴ To inherit the freedom of Fordwich was much easier since the mere possession of a freehold tenement there, even *in absentia*, for a year and a day, conferred the freedom. Thus, a person who inherited such a tenement would have the freedom even if they were not born there.⁵ The Fox family continued to trade in the city for another generation without being freemen, and William Fox of Northgate who died in 1479 even had an apprentice, Thomas Fokys. The absence of this family from the roll of freemen means that their occupations went unrecorded, but from William's will (see below), in which he left to his servant Robert Henxhale 'all my dressing knives and moulds pertaining to the office of pastry-cook', it must be assumed that he was an innkeeper. Audaciously, he had other business interests, from 1475 renting the lime kiln in the parish of St Sepulchre (safely outside the city walls to the south) from the Cathedral Priory, for a staggering 66s. 8d. a year.⁶

Thomas Fokys first springs into view in 1477 when he pledged bail for his fellow servant William Utting, whom William Fox had taken to court for contempt of the Statute of Labourers (1351), an act which compelled servants to complete their contracts.⁷ It is likely that the action coincided with William Fox becoming severely ill, because that same year he gave two acres of land in Hackington to St John's Hospital, Northgate, for 99 years.⁸ He died in his prime, in 1479, having named his apprentice Thomas Fox as executor. He left three young children, and a fourth child still in the womb of his wife Margery.⁹

It is logical to suppose that Thomas was a kinsman of William, either a nephew or a cousin.¹⁰ The idiosyncratic spelling of his surname as Fokys may well have been adopted to avoid confusion with contemporary namesakes, but clerks frequently spelt it as they heard it, in the conventional fashion, as 'Fox'.¹¹ Two years after William's death Thomas became a freeman haberdasher by marriage to Eleanor, daughter of Thomas Wainfleet, who later became mayor.¹² The fact that Thomas later became a publican was more in keeping with his original training. As a haberdasher in Canterbury it is very likely that he would have sold pilgrim's badges to visitors, and in 1492 he found the perfect place to conduct this sort of trade, a shop attached to the pilgrim's inn, the *Chequer of Hope*, on the west side of Mercery Lane.¹³ At this inn the great and the good continued to stay: Sir Thomas Boleyn and the Lord Chamberlain,

for instance, lodged there *c.*1513.¹⁴ Fokys followed the long established family tradition of renting from Christ Church Priory, and it cost him 20s. a year until he relinquished it in 1517.

Thomas was an entrepreneur and a chancer: not content to sell only items of haberdashery such as hats, purses, pins and buckles, he also sold candles, which to a freeman haberdasher should not have been permitted. The accounts of his own church, St Andrews, reveal a payment to him of in 1496-7 of £28 for supplying wax, and the previous year he supplied torches and 'mortuaries'; whilst in 1498 the Cathedral Priory paid him 16s. 6*d.* for candles supplied to the hospital and 3s. for coloured candles.¹⁵ He was in fact fined for selling candles without the right on at least two occasions, in 1509 and 1510.¹⁶ Yet another venture was a cook shop in the Parish of St Mary Bredman, set up in 1501, this time in partnership with a master cook called John Sharp.¹⁷ Once again the property was let from the Cathedral Priory, for 12*d.* a year, until 1517. Thomas' final trade was that of a publican, and at the time of his death he owned two inns in the centre of Canterbury. He might have become a publican fairly soon after he became a freeman, there being an obvious incentive in that his brother Stephen was a brewer.

Stephen Fokes became a freeman of the city only at the end of his life, but he was able to trade unhindered before that time because he lived in the Archbishop's free borough of St Martin's. Despite being technically an outsider he still found himself called to appear before the Burghmote, for instance in 1488, when his horse and beer-cart were confiscated pending payment of a debt to Robert German; and then the following year he himself sought recompense in the court for an underpayment on a firkin of ale.¹⁸ Stephen was sufficiently upstanding to be appointed Constable of the Borough of St Martin by 1502, having previously served as deputy constable in 1498-9.¹⁹ The only clear advantage of the purchase of the freedom on his appointment was increased personal prestige, although as constable he may have sought to regularise a trade with the city which had questionable legality. Alternatively, he might have been encouraged to become a freeman by his superior, the steward of the liberty. He possessed three houses and gardens in the city in addition to his property in St Martin's. One was located in Stour Street in St Mildred's parish, while the other two were in St Mary Bredman's parish, probably in Jewry Lane, where his brother Thomas also had property. It is unlikely that Stephen bought all these properties in the few short years between becoming a freeman and his death, yet only freemen could own tenements in the city. There is a solution to this conundrum which would be in keeping with previous observations: the properties were an inheritance from an ancestor who had been free to purchase them because he was a freeman of the Cinque Ports.

The common link to St Mary Bredman, and the predilection for spelling

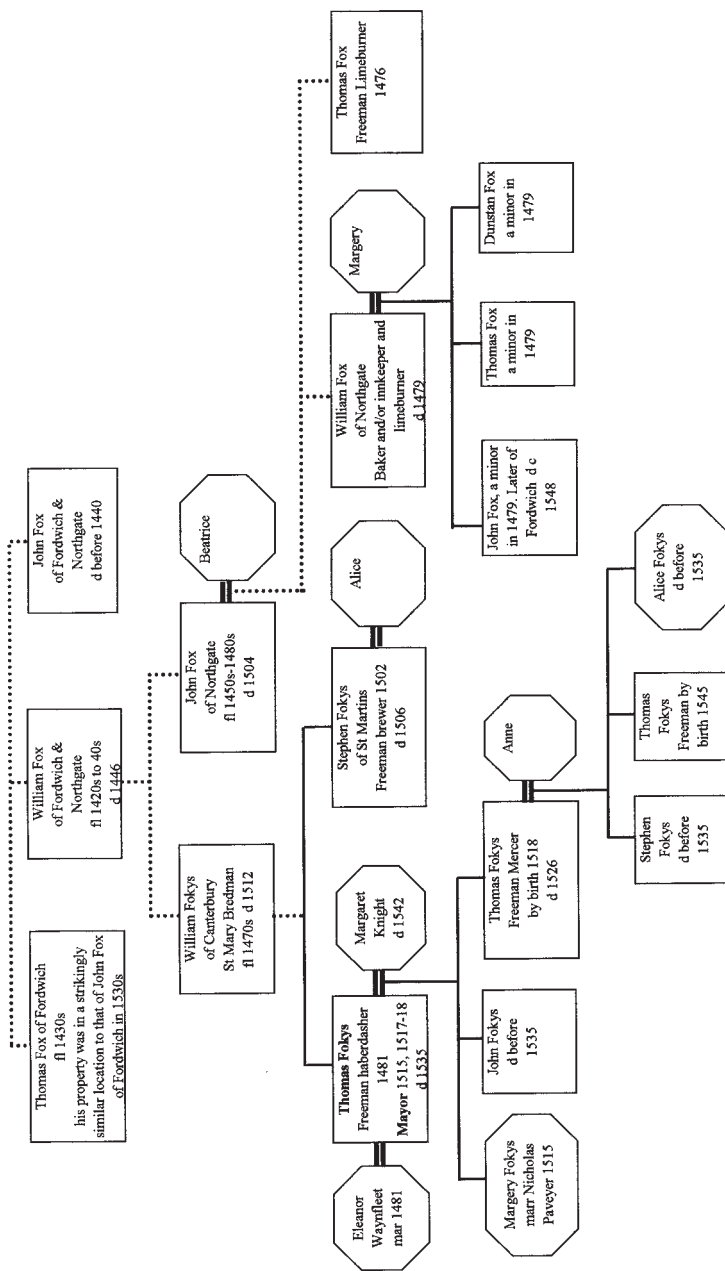


Fig. 1 Putative and established family relationships of Thomas Fokys of Canterbury.



Fig. 2 Memorial brass to Stephen Fokys in the central aisle of St Martin's Church, Canterbury.

their surname Fokys, connect Thomas and Stephen with William Fokys who rented a tenement from Christ Church Priory in that parish from at least 1474 until his presumed death in 1512.²⁰ William was probably their father, and possibly the brother of John Fox of Northgate who died in 1504 (see Fig. 1). Stephen and his wife died childless and the estate was divided between Thomas' two sons. The issues of a property in St Martin's were left to the parish church, enabling the donor and his wife to have a high status burial spot in the centre of the nave next to the magnificent font, with a brass plaque on the floor (Fig. 2).²¹ Local legend made this the font where King Aethelbert was baptised.

Thomas' principal tenement was an inn called the *Boar's Head*, in Mercery Lane, St Andrew's parish, and his second tavern was *The Plough* in the parish of Saint Alphege. A surviving rental of Eastbridge Hospital dates his ownership of the *Boar* from at least 1509. Eastbridge Hospital did not own the property, but had been granted an annuity of 3s. 6d. from it in 1257.²² The tenement previously belonged to John Lynde who served as last bailiff of Canterbury and in consequence became its first mayor in 1448. He relinquished the inn on becoming mayor, although an undated Eastbridge rental shows this 'new tavern' occupied by a widow Lynde, who it might be assumed was John's mother.²³ The relinquishing of the inn set a precedent, which resulted in a wonderfully parochial altercation in 1507 quite worthy of Lilliput: William Crompe, the recent ex mayor (1505-6) was brought before the Burghmote by the brewers for setting himself up in that trade.²⁴ They argued that no victualler, be they a brewer, a baker or an innkeeper, could be a judge, by statute of Richard II. The mayor being a judge during office, and also afterwards when he served as a JP, could not be a victualler. To back this up the precedent of three previous mayors was cited: Master Lynde, who never returned to being an innkeeper, but 'took on the occupation of making cloths, and henceforth lived like a gentleman'; Master Bolney (mayor 1493-95) who was both a brewer and a draper, but laid down the former trade when he

became mayor; and lastly Master Ingram (mayor 1488-9), a baker who on his election sold his business, hired his shop to another man, and lived ever after as a gentleman. To which Crompe replied that his predecessors had not returned to their previous occupations because they preferred to live at their ease! At this point the Chancellor's accounts end, this and the next twenty-two years having been torn out of the volume; but the brewers could not have completely won the day, because Thomas Fox remained an innkeeper after his term of office, although he did relinquish his haberdashery and bakery shops when he was elected. The case clarifies what has already been observed in that there was no effective restriction on the number of different trades that a freeman might pursue, at least not for a freeman who belonged to the ruling oligarchy.

The first record of the name of the *Boar's Head* connects it with a much darker chapter in the history of the city, when it's populace suffered greatly as a result of the renewed conflict which arose in 1470-71, when the Earl of Warwick put Henry VI temporarily back on the throne. A meeting of Nicholas Faunt the mayor and leading burgesses, including John Frenyngham and Hamo Bele, was convened at the inn early in 1471, doubtless to discuss the political situation over a cup of wine purchased at the town's expense.²⁵ By pure coincidence, Edward IV had fled England on the very day in 1470 that Faunt, a prominent Lancastrian, had taken up office. Perhaps Faunt took that as an omen; he was in now a position, and had the inclination, to play an active role in supporting Henry VI. Both contenders for the crown had been frequent visitors to Canterbury: the burgesses must have known each of them well, and there was no consensus within the borough over who should rule. The meeting may have been an attempt to rally support for the cause, and indeed both Frenyngham and Bele gave material assistance to Faunt, although they later successfully pleaded that this was given under duress.²⁶ Most citizens had the good sense to equivocate.

Faunt joined the armed retinue of the Lancastrian Falconbridge with a small number of citizens including the two town sergeants and four innkeepers, but was soon captured. When Edward IV arrived in Canterbury on 26th May 1471 to mop up resistance in Kent he had Faunt brought to him from the Tower, and on the 29th he was hanged, drawn and quartered at the Bull-stake, only a stone's throw from the *Boar's Head*.²⁷ Some of his associates undoubtedly met the same grisly end, and in the fearful atmosphere which ensued many were denounced for having conspired with Faunt, but in most cases the charges were easily refuted.

Thomas Fokys, despite having seen at a young age the potential down side of borough politics, began his own civic career as one of the twenty-four members of the common council of the Court of Burghmote, where we find him serving in 1498-9, alongside his father-in-law Thomas Wainfleet.²⁸ The other members of the court consisted of the mayor

and twelve aldermen. In 1500 he petitioned the council with two other freemen, complaining about the right of foreign merchants to sell their wares in the city.²⁹ Thomas was elected as a Justice of the Peace in 1511, for which he was well qualified, having appeared in court many times over the years, usually concerning debts owed to him. Only one serious altercation had induced him to seek legal redress, and that was 27 years earlier in 1484, when an armed Alan Propchaunt, 'gentleman', attacked him and put him in fear of his life.³⁰ Propchaunt was found guilty, and whatever the dispute was about it continued to simmer, until five years later Propchaunt tried to bring Stephen Fokys to court. Stephen on this occasion took advantage of belonging to a liberty and steadfastly declined to attend.³¹ The only other significant incident to afflict Thomas personally was a house breaking at his dwelling in St Andrews parish in September 1497, when eight pieces of cloth to the value of £5 and £10 in money were stolen.³²

Thomas became mayor unexpectedly in 1515 when his erstwhile father-in-law Thomas Wainfleet died in office.³³ He later made an emotional speech to the Burghmote asking them to honour Wainfleet's memory by granting his illegitimate son and namesake the honorary freedom of the city, to which the council acquiesced. The speech was made on 19th September, just after the new mayor, John Nayler, had been elected, and ten days before he was due to take office.³⁴ Thomas Fokys' first wife, Eleanor Wainfleet, was long dead by this time. She apparently bore him no children who survived, so Thomas married another well connected woman, Margaret Knight, who bore him three. Their daughter Margery married Nicholas Paveyer, grocer, in the year of the first mayoralty, thus enabling Nicholas to become a freeman. The main event of the 1515 mayoralty was the reception of Mary Tudor, Queen of France, on her return to England after the death of her husband Louis XII.³⁵ Thomas was more regularly elected mayor in 1517, a term of office which coincided with him giving up the tenancies on both of his shops, in accordance with established precedent.

In the apogee of his life as both mayor and Alderman one of his more satisfying annual duties would have been to participate in St Thomas' Marching Watch, the annual parade on July 7th to commemorate the translation of St Thomas Becket to his shrine. The year 1517 saw the reornamentation of Becket's Pageant, the tableau vivant of St Thomas' martyrdom which took pride of place in the festival.³⁶ The shrine of St Thomas gave to Canterbury a status which placed it at the centre of state ceremonial. There continued to be frequent visitations by Henry VIII and his Queen, who were there in both 1517 and 1518. Such great events provided opportunities for trade which kept the burgesses of Canterbury wealthy, as did the constant stream of pilgrims which did not end until 1538. There was no discernible fall off in donations to the shrine in the

hundred years before its destruction. In 1453, for instance, donations totalled £31, whilst Henry VIII's ecclesiastical survey of 1535 valued them at £36.³⁷ Erasmus, who visited the shrine c.1514, said that as a centre of pilgrimage Canterbury was second to none.³⁸

Thomas Fokys died in the summer of 1535, his two sons and two of his three grandchildren having predeceased him. He was one of the last to be buried in the graveyard of St Augustine's Abbey, which at that time served as the cemetery for the parishioners of St Andrew's. Within weeks of his death Bishop John Fisher and Sir Thomas Moore were executed, and within a year the city council began to be influenced by radical Protestants, who ended St Thomas' Pageant. His death may have helped to steer the balance of the town council from conservatives to radicals. John Levins the town clerk, elected c.1531, did not begin to express anti-clerical views until 1535. In June 1536 the religious conservatives in the Burghmote rallied under the leadership of Robert Nayler, and Levins was charged with denouncing the worship of the saints, while his associate John Toftes, deputy chamber clerk, was alleged to have denied the spiritual power of the Virgin Mary.³⁹ By 1538 the new men were again in the ascendant, and religious statuary began to be torn down in the churches.

Thomas' widow Margaret lived on through dark times, witnessing the removal of the treasures of St Thomas and the pulling down of St Augustine's Abbey church. Seven city monasteries in all were suppressed, each one with its own dependent lay servants and officials. The loss of such large consumers of goods and services, combined with the end of the pilgrim trade, must have seemed catastrophic. The sorrow that the economic hardship (if not perhaps the actual end of the monasteries) must have caused was alluded to in 1570 when the Protestant historian William Lambarde, likening the Canterbury of old to Sodom and Gomorrah, wrote: 'so Canterbury came suddenly from great wealth and multitudes of beautiful buildings to extreme poverty, nakedness and decay'.⁴⁰ The available data confirm a significant fall in the Canterbury population at this time.⁴¹

Secure in her retirement, Margaret Fox remained comfortable for the rest of her life, making a will in 1543 that with regard to the exigencies of the time was entirely traditional. There were benefactions to two of the surviving religious foundations, the customary bequests for masses, and money left to the high altar of St Andrew's Church. The clerk's preamble to the will carried the traditional formula but with the deletion of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and there is a notable absence of any saints' names. The veneration of saints had been strenuously discouraged since 1536 and the burning of tapers before the images of saints was no longer tolerated. It is not clear how much of the religious statuary had been removed from St Andrew's by 1542, but it is recorded that the Archdeacon Edmund

Cranmer himself had furiously attacked the rood screen there.⁴² One of the most interesting aspects of the will is that it shows that her circle included both the conservative Alderman Robert Nayler and the radical John Toftes. The inclusion of Toftes is quite unexpected, and demonstrates that the gulf which divided the Protestant from the traditionalist in the town council was not wide enough to prevent a degree of mutual acceptance and friendship. Margaret could not be buried with her husband, and so was interred within the tiny church of St Andrew. What became of her earthly remains after the church was demolished in 1763 is unknown: perhaps she still lies beneath the Parade, where the church used to stand.

APPENDIX

The Will of William Fox of St Mary Northgate, 1479.⁴³

In the name of God Amen, the third day of August in the year of the Lord 1479. I William Fox of the parish of St Mary Northgate of the city of Canterbury of sound mind and in good memory, the Lord be praised, make this my testament in this manner. First I bequeath and commend my soul to God Almighty, the Blessed Virgin Mary his mother and to all the saints. My body to be buried in cemetery of St Gregory Canterbury. To the high altar of the Blessed Mary (in Northgate Church) 12d. To Dom William Prior of Christ Church Canterbury 66s 8d to be disposed for my soul where to him by his discretion it shall seem most expedient. To Robert Henxsale my servant all my dressing knives with all moulds pertaining to the office of pastry cook. Residue to Margery my wife. I ordain as my executors Margery my wife and Thomas Fox my apprentice. I wish that my feoffees within a competent time after my decease enfeoffe Margery my wife in all my lands and tenements to hold to her for the term of her life. After her decease all my lands in the parishes of Hackington and St Cosmas and St Damian in the Blean to Thomas my son; my tenement in the parish of St Mary Northgate which I lately purchased of Thomas Ramsey to my son Dunstan; my tenement in the same parish of St Mary between the tenement of John Ellis towards the north and the tenement of John Lyon towards the west, the land of the Prior and Convent of Christchurch Canterbury to the North, and the king's street towards the east to descend to my son John. And if it comes to pass that all three of my sons die without heirs lawfully begotten, all my lands and tenements to pass to my offspring, the infant now to come from Margery my wife. If the said offspring dies without heirs lawfully begotten then all shall be sold and the money disposed of for my soul and for the soul of Margery my wife, my children, parents and benefactors and all the faithfull deceased in masses for the office of the dead, marriage portions for poor girls, in improving the foul ways, in alms and other works of charity. Probate 16th November 1479.

The Will of Stephen Fokes of St Martin 1506.⁴⁴

In the name of God Amen the first day of June in the year of our Lord God 1506. I Stephen Fokes of the parish of Saint Martin beside Canterbury being whole of mind thanks be to Jhesu ordain this my testament. First I commend my soul to Almighty God my creator to our Blessed Lady Virgin and to all the saints, my body to be laid before the font in the church. For the repair of the church and for my burial there 20s. To the high altar of the church for my tithes forgotten 20s. At the months-mind and 12 months-mind of my burial a dirge and 30 masses with 6 priests and 3 clerks, and 5s to be given to poor people. To Thomas Fokes the younger son of Thomas Fokes my brother my messuage and garden in Stour Street in the parish of St Mildred the virgin of Canterbury. If the said Thomas Fokes the younger dies before he cometh to the full age of 21 years the said messuage to remain to John Fokes his brother. To John Fokes son of my brother Thomas two messuages and gardens together set in the parish of Saint Mary Breadman of Canterbury. If he dies before the full age of 21 years the same to remain to his brother Thomas. If both Thomas and John die before the age of 21 the premises shall be sold by my executors to be disposed for my soul, the souls of my father and mother, my benefactors and all Christians. The yearly profits of my little messuage in the parish of Saint Martin's where Gregory Bradley now dwelleth to the churchwardens of St Martin for ever for the repair of the church. All my other lands and tenements in the parish of St Martin to remain to Alice my wife, to her heirs and assigns for ever. To John Crosby 20s. To Thomas Crosby the younger 5 marks. To Joan Crosby 40s. To Iden Weldyshe my servant 10s. The residue to Alice my wife, to be my executor with Thomas Fookes my brother and Nicholas Ryder of Bilsington, and to Thomas Fookes my brother for his labour 20s, and to Nicholas 20s.

Will of Thomas Fokys of Canterbury Saint Martin, 1526.⁴⁵

In the name of God, Amen. The 7th day of May in the year of our Lord God 1526. I Thomas Fokys of the Parish of Saint Martin next Canterbury being of whole mind make this my last will and testament in manner and form following: First I bequeath my soul to almighty God, to our Lady Saint Mary and my body to be buried in the parish church of Saint Martin next to the sepulchre of my uncle Stephen Fokys. I bequeath to the church for the breaking of the ground 6s 8d, and to the high altar there for my tithes and forgotten offerings 12d, to Saint Martin's light there 7d, to the cross light there 12d, and to our lady's light 8d. At the day of my burial, my month's day and year's mind a dirge and fifteen trentall masses. I will that my feoffes suffer Anne my wife to have and enjoy my messuage within the parish of Saint Mildred in Canterbury where this will is written for the term of her life, on her decease to remain to my son Stephen Fokys and to the heirs of his body lawfully begotten. If Stephen should decease

without heirs the same tenement to remain to Thomas Fokys my son and his heirs. If he should decease without heirs to Alice Fokes my daughter and to her heirs, and for lack of such issue the tenement to be sold by the wardens of the church of Saint Martin with the issue thereof to be found an honest secular priest to sing in the church of Saint Martin for as long as the money will endure for the souls of Stephen Fokys and Alice his wife, for the soul of Anne my wife, the souls of my father and mother, all my good benefactors and all christian souls. The residue of all my goods to Anne my wife who with my father Thomas Fokys I make my executor. Witness Friar Robert Simson, Oswell Wallis and Dennis Inglise.

Will of Thomas Fokys Alderman of Canterbury, 1535.⁴⁶

In the name of God, Amen the 3rd day of May in the year of our Lord God 1535, the 27th year of the reign of our sovereign lord King Henry VIII. I, Thomas Fokys citizen and Alderman of the city of Canterbury being of whole mind and in good memory make my last will and testament in form following: First, I bequeath my soul to almighty God, our blessed Lady Saint Mary and all the company of heaven my body to be buried in the cemetery of Saint Augustine. I bequeath to the high altar of the church of Saint Andrew Canterbury 20d and to Saint Augustine and Saint James' light there 4s. To Thomas Folks my grandson a great brass pot, a broad chaffer (brazier), two great candlesticks and another great chaffer. To Magdalene my servant my largest brass pot that I had of Addison's widow. To Alice Avan my cousin another great brass pot. To John and Anne Knight each one brass pot on my wife's decease. Touching the disposition of all my lands and tenements within the city of Canterbury and liberties of the same I will that Margaret my wife shall have my principal tenement wherein I dwell, in the parish of Saint Andrew called 'The Boar's Head', also my tenement called 'The Plough' in the parish of Saint Alphege, and my four tenements with a stable in Jewry Lane in the parish of Saint Mary Breadman, to have and to hold, and to her heirs for ever. I will that Alice Avan my cousin shall have my tenement in Stour Street in which John Harrison, pewterer, now dwelleth, and the adjoining garden. The residue of all my goods to Margaret my wife, she to dispose of them for the health of my soul, my friends, and all christian souls as she shall think best to the pleasure of Almighty God. To which Margaret I make my sole executrix. Witness Thomas Gore Alderman, John Ellis (his feoffees), John Costes, and others.
PROBATE 19th June 1535.

Will of Margaret Fokes Widow of Saint Andrew's, 1543.⁴⁷

In the name of God Amen. The 12th day of November in the year of our Lord God 1543, the 33rd year of our sovereign lord King Henry VIII. I Margaret

Fokes widow of the parish of Saint Andrew in the city of Canterbury being of whole mind and in good memory make my last will and testament in form following: First I bequeath my soul to almighty God my creator redeemer and saviour and to all the holy company of heaven, my body to be buried in the church of Saint Andrew. I bequeath for my burial there 6s 8d. To the high altar of the church of Saint Andrew 20d. To Thomas Fokys my grandson my great table in the hall, three latten [like brass] basins, two latten ewers, a basin and ewer of pewter, six cushions of the best sort, a bunker [a chest seat], the feather bed in the chamber next to the street with its tester curtains and the whole hangings of the chamber, a long settle in the hall, a pair of racks, six long spits, my andirons [ornamental fire bars to support burning wood] in the hall, and my cupboard from the hall. I bequeath to Alice Avan my cousin two feather beds, a painted bed, and all the stuff in my own chamber where I lie, three pairs of sheets, a small and a great pot, two long spits, a bird spit, the biggest chafer, half a garnish of pewter vessels (six platters, six dishes, six saucers), my bell candlesticks, a great latten chafer, a brass pan, my counting table in the hall, a spruce table, two joined stools [made by a joiner], the whole hangings in the presse chamber [large clothes cupboard] a long handled chafer, my best girdle, my beads of coral, two little cupboards being in two chambers, my best coverlet with flowers, a great brass pan, a chafer, two brass pans, a two quart pot, a quart pot, a thirdindeal [three pint pot], and two little bumkins of pewter. I also bequeath to Alice Avan ten pounds sterling to be paid at Easter 1544. I bequeath to Thomas Fokis my grandson thirty pounds sterling: £15 to be paid Easter 1545, and £15 the following Easter. To Agnes Savery five marks sterling at the age of eighteen, and if she dies before that age, to Alice Avan. I will that an honest priest shall sing in the church of Saint Andrew for the souls of myself, my husband, our friends and all christian people for one year after my decease, for such a stipend as my executors can agree with him: and for the health of my soul at the funeral a trental of masses [30 requiem masses] with dirge [funeral chanting] in the church aforesaid, and the same at my month's mind, and a half trental of masses with dirge at my year's mind. I bequeath to Sister Joan Julianna of Harbledown 3s 4d, and to Mother Lawrence of Saint Martin's 3s 4d. To the brothers and sisters of Saint John's Hospital without Northgate 3s 4d. The residue of all my goods not bequeathed I wholly commit to the disposition of my brother Anthony Knight, Alderman and to my cousin Thomas Savery of Hensell, whom I make my executors. To each of my executors for their labour 40s. I make Master Robert Naylor Alderman, overseer of this my last will and testament. For his labour an angel and a noble of sterling [approx 20s.] Witness Robert Naylor, Alderman, Paul Richmond, Robert Gilham, John Mascal, John Toftes and others.

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ENDNOTES

¹ William Fox was a freeman of Fordwich from at least 1425 (records survive only from 1424: see Canterbury Cathedral Library [hereafter CCL] U4 2/2, 2/3, 2/4). In 1428 his name appeared on a list of 38 men which perhaps represents the complete list of freemen who were serving as jurymen at that time (U4 2/4ii). Two contemporaries were present in Fordwich who were likely to have been William's brothers, namely John Fox, who acted as a pledge in 1431, and Thomas Fox, who owned land on the north side of Spring Lane leading to the Lady Well (U4 2/6, 2/8). The antecedent of these men was probably John Fox who, with his wife Alice, sold 5½ acres in Fordwich in 1372 (U4 1/19), cited in C. Eveleigh Woodruff, *A history of the town and port of Fordwich* (Canterbury 1895), p. 197. The same John Fox of Fordwich made an appearance in the Canterbury town records in 1378-9 (CCL, JB 178 roll 4 recto, para 14). In 1379 he purchased 12 acres in Bishopsbourne (Kinghamford Hundred) from Thomas Cok, a draper of Canterbury (Kent Records NS vol. 4, pt 5, p. 193), and was probably also known as John Fox of Bishopsbourne (JB 178 roll 7v). In 1381, as constable of Kinghamford Hundred he testified in the trials which followed the Peasant's Revolt (*Archaeologia Cantiana*, III, 88), and the same year he was pardoned for not attending the royal court concerning a debt of 100s. owed to Walter Doget, citizen and vintner of London, being then described as John Fox, mariner of Fordwich (*Calendar of Patent Rolls Richard II*, vol. 1, p. 554). In the tax of c.1394-96 he was listed as a Cinque Ports man with land outside the liberties of the ports (PRO E179 237/57A).

² It was John Fox who in 1431 took up the rental of a shop in Northgate from the Almoner of the Cathedral Priory: by 1440 the rental had been transferred to William Fox, and it changed hands again in 1446, this time to John Fox, who was probably William's son. He rented two properties there until 1452. See CCL DCc/Rentals 80, pp. 17, 22, 31-42.

³ In 1532 John Fox was sworn in for the first time as a jurymen of Fordwich (U4 3/232). His house was beside Spring Lane leading to the Ladywell (U4 3/256), probably the same held by Thomas Fox in 1433, from which John might plausibly be equated with the son of that name mentioned in the will of William Fox of Northgate. He was dead by May 1549 (U4 3/263), and left issue by his wife Alice, the descendants of whom are very numerous today.

⁴ Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the county of Kent* (2nd edn, Canterbury 1797-1801) vol. 11, 114-5 notes q & r.

⁵ Woodruff, *op. cit.* (see note 1), p. 57.

⁶ CCL DCc/MA 27 f 40. The payments continued to be made in his name for two years after his death, presumably by his executors. On 5th January 1476 a Thomas Fox purchased the freedom of Canterbury as a lime-burner for 10s. (CCL CC/FA2 f 171). Here we have a third Thomas Fox, the other two being Thomas the apprentice and Thomas who was William's son, and still a minor in 1479. Thomas the lime-burner was perhaps a younger brother of William. William Fox's father was probably John Fox of Northgate who died in

1504. In March 1504 his widow Beatrice was called to appear before the church authorities in the Poor Priests' Hospital to exhibit John's last will and testament, which has not survived (PRC 3/1 f 183v). It was five weeks before she eventually appeared, she was not fined because of her advanced age. Two cases in the Burghmote relate to John Fox of Northgate. In 1476 his two horses were seized to ensure his payment of a debt, and in 1471 John Marle (aka Marlowe) claimed 10s. from John because he had acted as a surety for a certain Edmund Culling in 1469. He escaped having to pay when it was established that the pledge had been made in North Lane, the route to Hackington from the Westgate, which was outside the city's jurisdiction in the archbishop's manor of Westgate. See JB 276 f 37 & JB 271i f 8. Edmund Culling was also linked to William Fox /Fokys the presumed father of Thomas Fokys, to whom he owed money in 1463 (JB 263, f 2 v).

⁷ CCL JB276 f 46v.

⁸ J. Duncombe and N. Batteley, *The history and antiquities of the three Archiepiscopal Hospitals at and near Canterbury* (1785), p. 271. He may have taken inspiration from an ancestor: a Richard Fox gave 3 rods of land in Hackington to St John's Hospital Northgate in 1329: *Calendar of Patent Rolls Edward III 1327-1330* (London, 1891), 399.

⁹ The family home in St Mary Northgate was located on the west side of Northgate beyond St John's Hospital, sandwiched between the tenement of John Ellis to the north, the tenement of John Lyon to the south-west, and the garden of Christ Church to the west.

¹⁰ He was almost certainly the son of William Fokys/Fox of St Mary Bredman, yet another non-freeman who was able to trade in the city, presumably because he was part of the Fordwich clan.

¹¹ The first use of Fokys in this kinship group was in 1474 in connection with William, who may have wanted to distinguish himself from the other William Fox. Thomas' surname was spelt Fox or Fokys (with variants ranging from Foks, Fokys and Fokes, to Fookes and Fookys), fairly indifferently. Examples of the spelling Fox include 1489-90 when he bailed his brother Stephen Fookys (JB 289 fol 17v); it was used frequently in the Christ Church rentals, and in the accounts of his own parish church of St Andrews; he was referred to as Alderman Fox in 1524-5 and Master Thomas Foxe in 1528.

¹² Joseph M. Cowper, *The roll of freemen of the city of Canterbury 1392-1800* (Canterbury 1903), 120.

¹³ DCc/MA 28+30.

¹⁴ Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts 9th Report (London, 1883), appendix 1: City of Canterbury [hereafter, HMC 9th Report], 149-50.

¹⁵ For the St Andrews parish accounts, see *Archaeologia Cantiana*, XXXII (1917), 222, 224. For the priory accounts see Arthur Hussey's extracts in Bodleian Top Kent C3 f 160.

¹⁶ CCL JQ 309xxvii ; JQ 310xxiv.

¹⁷ DCc/MA 29, 30.

¹⁸ JB289 f 28 and JB287 f 43.

¹⁹ JQ 302 xii for 1502, and for 1498-9, Cyprian Bunce, 'Extracts from the city archives 1393-1790' (MS held at Canterbury Library, letter G on front cover), f 110v.

²⁰ DCc/MA 27, 28, 29, 30.

²¹ In Z. Cozens, *A Tour through the Isle of Thanet and some other parts of East Kent* (London 1793), 148; the date was incorrectly transcribed as 1406, an error which many subsequent historians, including Hasted, have copied. The May date of death on the plaque is clearly incorrect, as Stephen made his will in June 1506, and his wife was a beneficiary. His will is appended above.

²² Duncombe and Batteley, *op cit.*, 356, 360. The Eastbridge records preserve the original gift in 1257 by Christiana, daughter of William Silvester, and widow of William Samuel. Its location was accurately described: 'a shop in the Mercery Lane between the tenement of Thomas the son of Lambin Fleming, the tenement of the heirs of Richard Bigges, the road

leading to the church of Holy Trinity (Christ Church Gate) and the tenement of Henry Le Furmger (pp. 315-6). In other words it was on the east side of Mercery Lane. Duncombe adds that in 1690 the house was occupied by Mr Kingsford the milliner.

²³ Duncombe and Bateley, *op cit.*, 351: John Lynde's three daughters married between 1447 and 1463, carrying the freedom to their husbands.

²⁴ HMC 9th Report, 174-5.

²⁵ HMC 9th Report, 142. The mayor was not named, and the expenses were paid in 1471-2, but this normally occurred a year in arrears. There was no mayor between July 1471 and February 1472.

²⁶ Thomas Propchaunt (for more of whom, see note 31) was another prominent citizen who supported Faunt in this way; see Henry Plomer, 'Names of persons implicated in Falconbridge's Rebellion 1471' (type-script held at Canterbury Library, 1914), 11-12.

²⁷ For a detailed account of events, see C.F. Richmond, 'Fauconberg's Kentish rising of May 1471', *English Historical Review*, 85 (1970), 673-692.

²⁸ Bunce's Extracts, *op cit.*, f 150. The size of the common council was reduced from 36 to 24 by act of Henry VII in 1497, at the same time the number of Aldermen was increased from 6 to 12. The council were appointees of the mayor and aldermen. See Cyprian Bunce (writing anon as 'a citizen'), *Canterbury Charters* (Canterbury, 1791), 73.

²⁹ Bunce's Extracts, *op cit.*, f 152.

³⁰ CCL, JB 282 f 48v. Propchaunt was probably the brother of Thomas Propchaunt, a master grocer who was elected mayor in 1492, and had a son Alan Propchaunt the younger, who became a freeman in 1504. Thomas gives us another example of a mayor who was also a brewer, and kept his business, leaving it to the borough in his will of 1493. Not surprisingly the brewers chose not to mention it in their case against William Crompe. It was perhaps in connection with the brewery that the difference with Thomas and Stephen Fokys occurred.

³¹ JB 289, f 17v.

³² JB 298, f 29.

³³ Wainfleet had also represented the city as a burgess in parliament from 1512-1514: Bunce's extracts, *op cit.*, f 187.

³⁴ HMC 9th Report, p. 150, gives the date, but under the wrong year.

³⁵ Hasted, *op cit.*, vol. 12, 629. Mary was grandmother of Jane Grey, the nine-day queen.

³⁶ The Pageant was at that time a fairly recent tradition having been initiated only in 1503.

³⁷ The sources of these figures are C.E. Woodruff, 'The financial aspect of the cult of St Thomas of Canterbury', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, XLIV (1932), 13-32; and *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, Records Commission (London, 1810), vol. 1, 8. For a useful summary of the pilgrimage trade see Barrie Dobson, 'The monks of Canterbury in the later Middle Ages, 1220-1540', in P. Collinson *et al.* (eds), *A History of Canterbury Cathedral* (Oxford 1995), 136.

³⁸ Erasmus, *Pilgrimages to Saint Mary of Walsingham and Saint Thomas of Canterbury*, trans. by John G. Nichols (London, 1849), 44.

³⁹ Peter Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Religion, politics and society in Kent 1500-1640* (Hassocks, 1977), 39-41.

⁴⁰ William Lambarde, *A Perambulation of Kent* (London 1576, reprinted 1826), 268. Lambarde was an infant in 1538.

⁴¹ The best guides to the late medieval population of the city are the Poll Tax of 1377 which lists 2,574 adults in 742 households. (The Poll taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381 part 1 (ed.) Carolyne Fenwick, *British Academy Records of Social and Economic History*, NS

27, Oxford 1998); and the Military Survey of 1522 which lists 761 resident householders (Dorothy Gardiner, *Canterbury*, London 1923, 69). Both taxes were very comprehensive in their scope, and the similar number of households raises the distinct possibility that the population remained quite static. In the mid sixteenth century the proportion of children was 31 per cent, which if applied to the earlier data gives a total population of 3,730 in 1377, or around 4,000 if the monasteries are included, with little difference in 1522 (see Peter and Jennifer Clark, 'The social economy of the Canterbury suburbs', in A. Detsicas and N. Yates (eds), *Studies in Modern Kentish History* (Maidstone 1975), 65-86. Adams put the population at over 6,000 based on the same data, but is making the assumption of significant under-representation in the returns (the Westgate Hundred was not included, not being technically part of the city), see C. Phythian Adams, *The desolation of a city* (Cambridge 1979) with ref to table 3, p. 12 and note 2, p. 13. There were less than 700 households in the whole city in the 1563 church returns, from which Bower estimated a population of 3,500, and the recovery was already underway by this time, implying an even smaller population in the 1540s; see Adams, *op cit.*, 13, and Jacqueline Bower, 'Kent Towns 1540-1640', in *Early Modern Kent 1540-1640* (ed.) Michael Zell (Woodbridge 2000), 145-6 and 160.

⁴² Michael Zell, 'The coming of religious reform', chapter 6 in *Early Modern Kent 1540-1640* (ed.) M. Zell, 191. The last record of candles for the light of a named saint in this church was in 1538-9, although unfortunately the churchwardens accounts for 1539-45 are no longer extant, see *Archaeologia Cantiana*, XXXIV (1920), 24.

⁴³ PRC 17/3 f 309.

⁴⁴ PRC 32/8 f 144. The date was given as June, 21 Henry VII which was 1506, and the year as 1507. The former date is believed by the writer to be the correct one.

⁴⁵ PRC 32/14 f 215.

⁴⁶ PRC 17/20 f 194.

⁴⁷ PRC 17/22 f 146. The date has been amended by the writer from 1542, as it is not compatible with the regnal year, and 1543 fits more logically with the request to pay legacies in 1544.

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