

# OF ARMS AND THE GENTLEMAN: ROBERT FAYRFAX AND HIS FAMILY

Nicholas Sandon, FSA

Nicholas John Sandon, 7 Pond Hill, Halberton, Tiverton, Devon, EX16 7AP, UK. Email: [antiquaries@nicksandon.ndo.co.uk](mailto:antiquaries@nicksandon.ndo.co.uk)

*This paper appraises the current reception of the early Tudor church musician and composer Robert Fayrfax and the information upon which it is based. The first section summarily introduces Robert and traces how the image of him developed. The second assesses this image in the light of armorial and other evidence. The third explores further material about Robert and his family contained in an important document. The fourth relates the findings to a wider context. The fifth investigates the interrelationship of two manuscripts once owned by Robert's father.*

**Keywords:** Robert Fayrfax (1464–1521); musicology; social history; manuscripts

## INTRODUCTION

At the time of his death in 1521 Robert Fayrfax surpassed in reputation all other English musicians of his era.<sup>1</sup> From 1509 he was the senior singer in the royal household chapel. He was uniquely qualified academically with three degrees in music, including doctorates from Cambridge and Oxford, at a time when music degrees were rarely awarded. From 1516 to 1520 he figured among dignitaries and courtiers as donor and recipient in exchanges of New Year's Day gifts between Henry VIII and his subjects. He was buried in the presbytery of St Alban's Abbey among personages whose lineage, position or wealth qualified them for this honour. His repute probably helped to sustain interest in his compositions, copies of which were made throughout the sixteenth century; by contrast, almost no music by other composers of his generation survives in copies made after about 1540.

Posthumous references to Fayrfax were rare before the later nineteenth century. The four earliest, by the Scottish priest and musician Thomas Wode (d. 1592), the composer and poet Thomas Whythorne, the composer and writer on music Thomas Morley, and the poet and literary observer Francis Meres, saw him as a founder of English music:

... and if doctor farfax wer alyve in this cuntry, he wald be contemnit, & perise for layk of mentinance ...<sup>2</sup>

1. For a detailed biography, see Sandon 2024. Except in quotations, modern convention is followed in spelling the composer's surname 'Fayrfax' and that of all namesakes 'Fairfax'.
2. EUL, MS La iii. 483 (a), 177: a part-book from a set copied during the later 16th century by Thomas Wode, vicar at St Andrews. Wode laments that, through the decline of music after the Scottish reformation, even so great a musician as Fayrfax would now be disdained and would die for lack of support and income. Scottish recognition of an Englishman as the doyen of British composers was praise indeed.

Dȝz of aunsient tȝm, wȝr, doktor ... Farfax. doktor Cooper ... Doktor Farfax waz of þe Abbey at S<sup>t</sup> Albȝns ...<sup>3</sup>

... english men who have beene nothing inferior in art to any of the afore named [mid- and later 16<sup>th</sup>-century continental composers], as *Farefax, Taverner, Shepherde, Mundy, White, Persons, M. Birde, and divers others* ...<sup>4</sup>

As Greece had these excellent Musitians; Arion ...: so Englande hath these; *Maister Cooper, Maister Fairfax, Maister Tallis, Master Taverner, Maister Blithman, Maister Bird, Doctor Tie, Doctor Dallis, Doctor Bull, M. Thomas Mud*, sometimes fellow of *Pembrook hal* in Cambridge, *M. Edward Iohnson, Maister Blankes, Maister Randall, Maister Philips, Maister Dowland, and M. Morley*.<sup>5</sup>

Wode invoked Fayrfax as the most eminent British composer known to him. The English writers began their lists with composers of the earliest music still current. Morley and Meres did not give Fayrfax his academic title, but Morley styled him 'D. Farfax' among thirty-nine English practitioners of music; Charles Butler's nomination of 'D. Farfax' first among the English contingent of 'best Autors' in *The Principles of Musik* may have been copied from Morley.<sup>6</sup> Only Whythorne gave further information about him. Robert was distanced from these commentators not only by several generations but also by three cultural chasms: the dissolution of the monasteries, the introduction of a vernacular Protestant liturgy and the closure of the choral foundations whose singers had cultivated the ornate polyphony associated with the late medieval Latin rite. By 1600 almost nobody alive can have known him personally, and even families sharing the surname, whom one might have expected to declare any known kinship, appear to have had no handed-down memory or knowledge of him to pass on. It seems likely that by the early 1600s Fayrfax was remembered only for a few works still in limited circulation.

In his annotated list of Oxford university graduates, *Fasti Oxonienses*, the antiquary Anthony Wood (1632–95) mentioned Fayrfax's Cambridge doctorate of music along with his incorporation for the same degree at Oxford in 1511, and recalled having seen music by him in a manuscript, which can be identified as an early Tudor song-book (now BL, Add. MS 5465) discussed below. Wood was also first to claim in print that Robert was related to the Fairfaxes of Yorkshire. Thomas Tanner, in his register of British writers up to the early eighteenth century, seems to have been first to state as a fact the supposition that Fayrfax died at St Albans, and to repeat the antiquary Charles Fairfax's conjecture of a connection between Robert and the village of Bayford in Hertfordshire. Tanner also referred obliquely to Fayrfax's Oxford degree, and the musical source that he cited is (as the antiquary Ralph Thoresby's catalogue of his own library makes clear) that mentioned by Wood.

3. Bodleian, MS Eng. misc. c. 330, 'musical scrap' after fol 66 written c 1593, listing ancient and recent holders of English music degrees; Osborn 1961, 300.

4. Morley 1597, 151.

5. Meres 1598, 288v. Mention of Cooper, presumably Robert Cooper or Cowper, master of Margaret Beaufort's household chapel, stands out because his music does not seem to have circulated widely. In 1498 Fayrfax resigned his chaplaincy at Snodhill and the king granted it to Cooper; in 1501–2 both Fayrfax and Cooper were awarded doctorates at Cambridge University.

6. Butler 1636, 92.

*June 26 [1511]. Rob. Fairfax Doctor of Musick of Cambridge.* – This Person did afterwards live in *Hertfordshire*, and was buried in the Church at *St. Albans*, near, or under, the seat, where the Mayor of that place usually sits. I have seen some of his Musical compositions of three, or more parts, which shew the Author to be eminent in his faculty in the time he lived. Among the said compositions, which were written in a large book, were mixed with them the compositions of *William Newarke*, *Richard Davyes*, *Edmund Turges*, *Sir Thomas Phelippis*, *William Cornish jun.* and of one *Sheryngham*, *Hampshire*, *Brown*, &c. All which lived in, or near, the time of the said *Dr. Fairfax*, who was of the same family with those of *York-shire*.<sup>7</sup>

FAIRFAX [ROBERTUS] rei musicae peritissimus, et ejusdem facultatis doctor Cantabrigiensis, apud Bayford in agro Hertford. vitam degit. Composuit *Cantus quosdam*, MSS in museo Thoresbiano, p. 517. Claruit A. MDXI. Obiit apud fanum S. Albani, et ibidem sepultus, *Fasti Oxon.* i. 18.<sup>8</sup>

18. A Book of *Musical Compositions* pointed to Tunes in four Parts, by *Robard Fairfax* Doctor in Music (*d*); *Sir Tho. Phelyppis*, *Will. Newarke*, *Gilbert Banastir*, *Will. Cornysh jun.* *Ric. Davy*, *Sherringham*[,] *Browne*, and *Edm. Turges*.<sup>9</sup>

In the later eighteenth century a more rounded image of Fairfax began to form. Sir John Hawkins and Charles Burney included editions of works by him in their histories of music, and John Stafford Smith printed five of his songs in an anthology of fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century vocal music; for the first time, music by Fairfax became available to the wider literate public. These writers, however, added nothing significant to his biography. Hawkins suggested that he was organist or chanter (perhaps meaning choirmaster) at St Alban's Abbey; Burney said little, and part of it was inaccurate; Smith explicitly took his information from Hawkins.

ROBERT FAIRFAX, of the Yorkshire family of that name, was a doctor in music of Cambridge, and was incorporated of Oxford in the year 1511. Bishop Tanner says he was of Bayford in the county of Hertford, and that he died at St. Alban's, which is very probable, for he was either organist or chanter of the abbey church there, and lies buried therein. His coat-armour is depicted over the place of his interment, but has long been hid by the seat of the mayor of that town. Some of his compositions . . . are in the manuscript of Mr. Thoresby above-mentioned.<sup>10</sup>

7. Wood 1691, *Fasti Oxonienses*, col 652, on Fairfax's incorporation at Oxford in 1511. In manuscript notes for biographies of English musicians, Wood amplified what he had said about Fairfax in *Fasti*, remarking that 'he was supposed to be Organist of, or at least belonging to the choir (perhaps in the quality of Chanter or Informator Chori) of the Monastery of S Alban in Hertfordshire'. He also remembered having 'seen several of his church services of 5 parts in the Archives of the publick Musick S[c]hoole at Oxon', including the masses *Albanus* and *Regali ex progenie*, and said that under Henry VII and Henry VIII 'he was in great renowne, & accounted the prime Musitian of the Nation' (Bodleian, MS Wood D. 19 (4), fols 49v–50r).
8. Tanner 1748, 273. Tanner's catalogue raisonné of English conventual houses, *Notitia Monastica* (1695, 2/1744), cites documents owned by Charles Fairfax, about whom see below.
9. Thoresby 1715, 517.
10. Hawkins 1776, 515; a footnote remarks that Thoresby's manuscript (the Fairfax song-book) specifies that the obscuring seat is that of the mayoress.

DR. ROBERT FAIRFAX, an eminent English Composer, during the reigns of Henry the Seventh, and Henry the Eighth . . . was admitted to a Doctor's degree in Music, at Cambridge [*recte* Oxford], 1511 . . .<sup>11</sup>

ROBERT FAYRFAX, of the *Yorkshire* Family of that Name, Sir *J. Hawkins* (to whom I am indebted for this and other Articles) in his *Hist. of Music*, Vol. II. informs us, was a Doctor in Music of *Cambridge*, and was incorporated of *Oxford* in the Year 1511. Bishop *Tanner* says he was of *Bayford* in the Country of *Hertford*, and that he died at *St. Alban's*, where he was either Organist or Chanter in the Abbey Church, and lies buried therein.<sup>12</sup>

During the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries more methodical study and publication of records augmented knowledge of Fayrfax and disseminated it. The evolution of the account of Fayrfax in successive editions of what became known as *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* reflects this. The first edition (1879–89) added little to what was already known or deduced, but corrected the date of his proceeding to the Cambridge MusD to 1504; unfortunately it made an erroneous conjecture – that at St Alban's Abbey on 28 March 1502 Fayrfax received in person a reward from Queen Elizabeth of York – which still blemishes derivative writing about the composer.<sup>13</sup> The second edition (1904–10) added copious information about Fayrfax's career in the household chapel of Henry VIII, but took as fact its predecessor's mistaken surmise about 1502; it also confused the year in which he was permitted to proceed to the Cambridge doctorate (1501–2) with that in which he did so, and failed to supply an accurate death date although this had been known for several years.<sup>14</sup> The article in the third edition (1927) mainly repeated its predecessor but added the date of death and cited the publication in 1899 of John Philipot's 1643 sketch of the brass later lost from Fayrfax's grave-slab (see fig 7).<sup>15</sup> All three editions rehearsed Robert's supposed descent from a Yorkshire family, birth at Bayford and sometime employment at St Alban's Abbey, and the second and third suggested that his music was 'now for the most part of purely antiquarian interest'.

During this period four other writers, C F Abdy Williams (1894), Henry Davey (1895), John Venn (1922) and W H Grattan Flood (1925), continued to assume Fayrfax's descent from a Yorkshire family; Venn said that he was the fourth son of Sir Thomas Fairfax of Walton; and Flood copied Venn.<sup>16</sup> Williams, Davey and Flood respectively estimated his birthdate at 'probably about 1470', 'between 1450–70' and 'circa 1465 or 1466'; Venn made no guess. Venn shared the opinion of earlier writers that he had lived at Bayford; Davey and Flood misreported them as having stated that he had been born there; Williams did not comment. Four different descriptions of Fayrfax's role at St Albans were offered: Williams

11. Burney 1776–89, vol II, 539–40.

12. Stafford Smith 1779, vi.

13. W H H[adow], in *Grove* 1879–90, 510. The remark about the reward in 1502 misconstrued an entry in the queen's book of payments; see Harris Nicolas 1830, 2, and Sandon 2005, v.

14. G E P A[rkwright], in *Maitland* 1904–10, vol ii, 18–19.

15. Arkwright, with additions by Jeffrey Mark, in *Colles* 1927, vol ii, 211–12. Page 1899, 160; Page described Philipot's sketches as being 'among the MSS at the Herald's College', now the College of Arms (p 243).

16. Abdy Williams 1894, 120; Davey 1895, 105–6; Venn 1922–7, vol II, 117; Grattan Flood 1925, 37–8.

saw him as ‘Organist of St. Alban’s Abbey’; Davey preferred ‘Wood states that Fayrfax was either organist or precentor at St. Alban’s Abbey’; Venn described him as ‘organist or sacrist at St Albans Abbey’. Flood repeated the misapprehension that Robert had been at St Albans in March 1502 and thought it ‘very probable’ that he became organist at St Albans Abbey in 1498, but also cited evidence of Fayrfax’s membership of the royal household chapels of Henry VII and Henry VIII and gave his correct death date.

If interest in Fayrfax was stimulated by the commemoration of the quatercentenary of his death in 1921, it lapsed again through his omission from *Tudor Church Music*, a ten-volume edition of music by Taverner, Byrd, Gibbons and others published between 1922 and 1929.<sup>17</sup> In 1952 Anselm Hughes reinvigorated interest in the composer with an influential article that helped to encourage performances, recordings and a complete edition of his music.<sup>18</sup> Having shown that Robert Fairfax of Walton in Yorkshire, previously thought a candidate for identification with the composer, was a namesake with a different death date, he proposed, on evidence that will be described below, to reassign the composer to a Fairfax family living at Deeping Gate in Northamptonshire. This proposal was quickly and widely accepted and is still unchallenged, at least in print. If it seems surprising that Hughes relied on a single piece of evidence, one should remember that in the 1950s information about and access to documents were more limited than they are now. Soon after publishing his article, Hughes learnt of a corroborative document in the Bodleian Library: some leaves of family memoranda from a book of hours that in the mid-fifteenth century had belonged to William Fairfax of Deeping Gate, whose fourth son was named Robert.<sup>19</sup> The memoranda supported Hughes’s idea and enabled him to specify Robert’s birth date (23 April 1464) in his account of the composer in the fifth edition of *Grove’s Dictionary*.<sup>20</sup>

#### DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE FOR ROBERT FAYRFAX’S ARMORIAL STATUS

Anselm Hughes’s suggestion about the parentage of Robert Fayrfax was founded on the opinion of A J Collins, keeper of manuscripts at the British Museum, that an armorial shield drawn on fol 11r of the early Tudor song-book BL, Add. MS 5465 closely resembled that ascribed to ‘ffayreffax of deping gate’ in BL, Harley MS 1550, fol 193v. The shields in Add. MS 5465 and Harley MS 1550 that persuaded Hughes are shown at the left and right of fig 1; in the middle are shown three tiny shields with the same arms squeezed into the initial capitals of the voices of Fayrfax’s song ‘Most clere of colour’ on fols 26v–27r of the song-book, and also the parenthetical comment ‘whose armes is in the Letter, M’ added after the name ‘Robard Fayrfax’ below the second staff on fol 27r. In Harley MS 1550 a tricked sketch of the arms occurs among drawings of arms of Lincolnshire gentry added by the early seventeenth-century arms-painter Richard Mundy to data copied from the heralds’ visitations of that county in 1562–4 and 1592.<sup>21</sup> The paternal arms tricked by Mundy would

17. Buck 1922–9.

18. Anselm Hughes 1952.

19. Bodleian, MS Lat. liturg. e. 10; see *The Fairfax Book of Hours* (Bodleian, MS Lat. liturg. E. 10) section.

20. Blom 1954, vol. III, 50–4.

21. Anselm Hughes 1952, 85. Citation of BL, Harley MS 1550 raises the issue of the reliability of some editions of heraldic visitation records, especially those reliant on the arms-painter Richard



Fig 1. The Fayrfax arms in BL, Add. MS 5465 and Harley MS 1550. *Images*: photographed by the author with the permission of the British Library.

be blazoned *Argent four bars & canton Gules*; in Add. MS 5465 the bars are hatched diagonally but the canton is not hatched. Mundy tricks the maternal arms, unhatched in Add. MS 5465, as *Gules chief Or over all bend Azure*, a blazon not listed in the modern *Dictionary of British Arms*, which blazons arms similarly charged as *Or chief Gules over all bend Azure*; it appears that Mundy transposed *Or* and *Gules*.

The first page of this song-book (fig 2), undoubtedly the book seen by Wood and eighteenth-century historians, carries several inscriptions: at top centre the proverb 'Faveur d'un Roy aut roialle n'est pas faveur'; at top right the signature 'Cha Fairfax' and below it the date 1618; opposite them the ownership declaration of Ralph Thoresby of Leeds (1658–1725); centred below this the name 'Rob<sup>t</sup> Fairfax' and a list of folios containing songs by him; at each side below them the press-marks '5465' and 'Plut IV. C'; above and below the shield the annotations 'Robertus Fayrfax Doctor in Musicis iacet sepultus in Ecclesia Monasteriali S<sup>ci</sup> Albani' and 'The Coate and inscription is covered w<sup>th</sup> the seate of the Mayoress of S<sup>t</sup> Albans'. The presence of the signature of Charles Fairfax (1597–1673) and the date 1618 are significant because Charles became an antiquary with an insatiable appetite for information about anyone named Fairfax whether or not related to himself. It seems likely that some at least of the other writing on this page was added by him; whether he drew the armorial shield is debatable because it differs slightly from two drawings of the shield on Robert Fayrfax's tomb in St Alban's Abbey which undoubtedly were his work.

Mundy. Norfolk Herald Extraordinary G D Squibb (1978) noted the variable quality of ostensibly authoritative published information (pp 4–6), the misrepresentation of miscellaneous collections of pedigrees as records of visitations (p 9) and editions of official records compromised by editorial errors, omissions and additions from documents of dubious provenance and authority (p 10). He described the failings of some early Harleian Society volumes, called Mundy's manuscripts 'unworthy of consideration by any serious student of visitations' and advised users of printed records 'If you find the name of Mundy, beware!'. Despite his fallibility as a source of heraldic and genealogical information, however, Mundy did depend upon heraldry for his living, and did accompany heralds on visitations, so his ideas about coats of arms have some claim to reflect contemporary opinion.

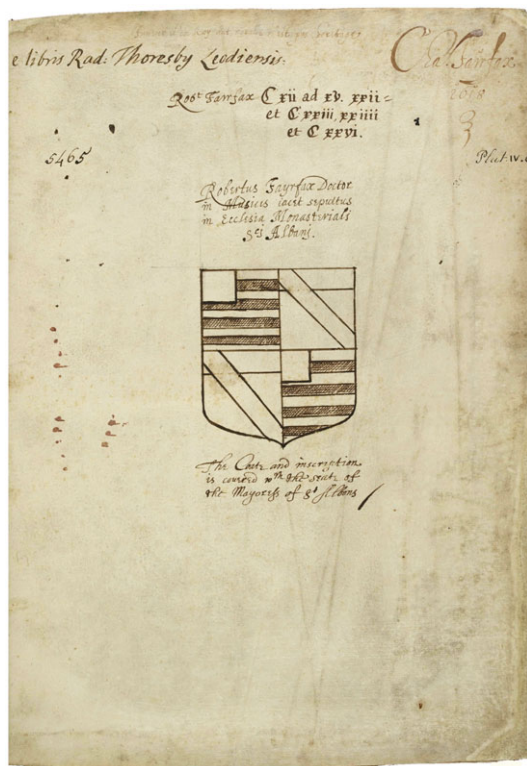


Fig 2. BL, Add. MS 5465, fol 1r. *Image*: photographed by the author with the permission of the British Library.

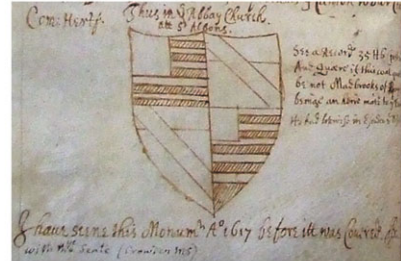
Born into a Yorkshire gentry family that would distinguish itself in the Civil War, Charles made important contributions to the rediscovery of Robert Fayrfax.<sup>22</sup> Trained as a lawyer, but an antiquary by inclination, he accumulated a mass of genealogical, historical and anecdotal material concerning not only his own family, ancestors and in-laws but also numerous other Fairfaxes. During the 1650s he assembled his notes into a volume that he called *Analecta Fairfaxiana* and dated 1660, although he continued to work on it afterwards.<sup>23</sup> His citation of sources shows his debt to fellow antiquaries such as Francis Tate (1560–1616), a member of the Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries, and Roger Dodsworth (1585–1654), a tireless accumulator of data towards histories of Yorkshire, the English monasteries and the English baronage who was a longtime friend, beneficiary and

22. Charles Fairfax was admitted to Trinity College, Cambridge, and to Lincoln's Inn in October 1611, and was called to the bar in March 1618. The youngest of seven sons, he would not have expected prominence within his family, but the death in 1621 of four of his brothers was a cataclysm. Like other family members, he supported Parliament in the Civil War, serving militarily and accepting executive and administrative office. During the war, his nephew, Sir Thomas, commanded the Parliamentarian army and earned widespread respect for integrity, moderation and initiative in saving York and Oxford from looting and ruin.

23. Anselm Hughes would not have known Charles Fairfax's research because it remained private property until 1993, when it was acquired by Leeds University as BLSC, MSS Yks 1–6; *Analecta Fairfaxiana* is BLSC, MS Yks 2.



MS Yks 1 p.137



MS Yks 2 p. 6

Fig 3. Charles Fairfax's copies of Robert Fayrfax's coat of arms in BLSC, MSS Yks 1 and Yks 2. Images: photographed by the author with the permission of the Brotherton Library.

guest of both Charles and his nephew Sir Thomas Fairfax, the Civil War general. Much of the information in *Analecta Fairfaxiana* about the Deeping Gate Fairfaxes appears also in Dodsworth's enormous archive of transcripts of official records.<sup>24</sup>

In 1617, the year before he dated the song-book, Charles visited St Albans, where he saw the remains of a once surpassingly wealthy Benedictine abbey now dilapidated after its dissolution in 1539 and subsequent spoliation; its church had been reduced to parochial status in 1553. One of his notebooks includes a drawing, preceded by a commentary and accompanied by an annotation, of arms that he saw on Robert's grave-slab in the presbytery of the church; he later copied essentially the same commentary and drawing, differently annotated, into *Analecta Fairfaxiana* (fig 3).<sup>25</sup> His copies of Robert's arms have some authority because he captioned the image in *Analecta*<sup>26</sup> 'Thus in y<sup>e</sup> Abbay Church att St Albons', and below it declared 'I have seen this Monum<sup>t</sup> A° 1617 before itt was Covered' (ie, obscured by fixed seating). The drawings are identical except for the extent of the canton relative to the bars in the first and fourth quarters of the shield, and the detail of the bend's overlapping of the chief in the third and fourth quarters; these minor variations

24. Charles Fairfax and Dodsworth were friends for years; together they salvaged documents in York after the siege of July 1644, probably at the behest of Thomas Fairfax, newly appointed governor of the city. Thomas supported Dodsworth while he was preparing *Monasticon Anglicanum* for publication (Dodsworth 1693), and Dodsworth bequeathed his manuscripts to Thomas, who left them to the Bodleian Library. In BLSC, MS Yks 2 *Analecta Fairfaxiana*, Charles cited some of Dodsworth's manuscripts by the press-marks that they still bear.

25. BLSC, MS Yks 1, 137 (notebook) and BLSC, MS Yks 2, 6 (*Analecta*). The annotation to the first drawing reads 'This Fairfax bore Barry of 10 A[rgent] & Gules A Canton of ye second. The other Coat I find not but suppose itt to be Madbrook, v[id]e alio libro 55'. That to the second, not entirely legible, refers to a record copied on p 329 of *Analecta*, probably from Dodsworth's transcript on f. 89v of Bodleian, Dodsworth MS 36, given here in translation from CCR 1454–61, 192: 'Alice late the wife of John Fairfax of Bayford and Richard Fairfax their son, to John Fortescu knight, John Cheyne of Pynner esquire, Thomas Yong, John Gogh, John Nicoll, John West, William Boteler, Robert Hawde and William Germyn, their heirs and assigns. Quitclaim with warranty of all messuages, lands, reversions, rents and services in Bayford and Esysden co. Hertford sometime of John Madbrook, of the said Alice or of John her husband, except a messuage within a mote and 20 acres of land thereto adjacent. Dated 18 February, 35 Henry vi [(1457)]. Memorandum of acknowledgment, 21 February.' A writ of supersedeas in favour of John Fairfax and John Hawe of Bayford was issued on 30 June 1413 (CCR 1413–19, 82); a commission to arrest them and three other Bayford men and produce them in Chancery was issued on 14 May 1414 (CPR 1413–16, 220).

26. BLSC, MS Yks 2, 6.



were probably accidental. In his commentaries he described the arms in the first and fourth quarters as '*Barry of 10 A[rgent] & Gules A Canton of y<sup>e</sup> second*', but although he hatched the bars with the vertical lines indicating gules he did not hatch the canton. He did not recognise the arms in the second and third quarters, describing them as '*a Cheife & Bend sur tou<sup>r</sup>*' without naming the tinctures, which the brass would not have shown; he hazarded that they belonged to Fairfax ancestors living at Bayford.

The chief discrepancy between the arms copied by Charles Fairfax and those in BL, Add. MS 5465 and BL, Harley MS 1550 is that Charles gave the paternal coat five hatched bars, whereas the others gave it four. The former seems more likely to represent the arms of Robert Fayrfax; on an unquartered shield they would indeed be '*Barry of 10*'. For Charles, heraldry was an important genealogical resource: he knew a lot about his own family's heraldry and would seem unlikely to have misrepresented a coat that he thought worth copying. When he visited St Albans in 1617, Robert's grave-slab with its brasses was apparently still fully visible in its original position in the presbytery floor. Belonging to a caste that greatly valued armorial propriety, Charles would have copied his exemplar carefully, just as the brass engraver would have minutely carried out the original commission. Whichever version is more accurate, the discrepancy does not appear to vitiate the conclusion that the arms which Charles Fairfax saw on Robert Fayrfax's tomb were what he claimed them to be. One should note, however, that Charles said only that he had copied them from the brass of Robert Fayrfax, Doctor of Music; he did not explicitly associate them with the Deeping Gate family.

There is, however, evidence from other heraldic sources that these arms were indeed those of the Deeping Gate Fairfaxes. The coats impaled in the copies that Charles made from Robert's grave-slab are shown separately in several armorial rolls produced before 1530. Those in the second and third quarters are depicted in colour and ascribed to 'Feyrefax' in a roll of c 1510; the blazon would be *Or chief Gules over all bend Azure*.<sup>27</sup> Their ascription to Fairfax in this roll may be unique and could have been mistaken, but the compiler must have had evidence for it. In the other sources consulted they are ascribed to Harington or Sir John Harington, variously spelt, who bore them in the fourteenth century (fig 4).<sup>28</sup> Examples of the arms in the first and fourth quarters, blazoned as *Barry of 10 Argent & Gules canton Gules*, match those borne in the thirteenth century by Philip de Paunton or Panton (fig 5).<sup>29</sup> It was by marriage to a Paunton heiress that John de Harington senior acquired the Paunton estate in the late 1200s, and it was also by marriage to a Harington heiress that Hugh Fairfax acquired a share of the combined Paunton and Harington estate some 70 years later.

It seems reasonable to conclude that in their coat of arms the Fairfaxes of Deeping Gate impaled the arms of two families from whom they had inherited much of their landed property and their armigerous status. They owed their prosperity and position to two fortunate marriages. The earlier, between John de Harington senior and Maud, daughter of Philip de Paunton (d. 1303), did not involve the Fairfax family directly, but the later

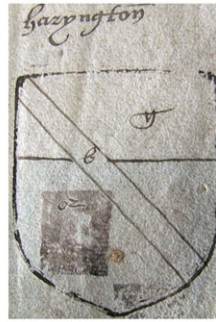
27. BL, Add. MS 62541 (Creswick's Roll), fol 16v (pencil), row 3, shield 2; *Dictionary of British Arms* (SAL 1992–2014, hereafter DBA), vol 3, 26.

28. SAL, MS 0476, 167 (Haryngton), 170 (Haryngton Sir Jehan), 176 (Haryngton Sir John), 235 (Sir John Haryngton), 242 (Haryngton), 253 (Sir Johan Harryngton); MS 0664/1, fol 10v (blazon Sire Johan de haryngtone de or od [ie, avec] le chef de goul[es] e une bende de azur of Sir John de Haryngtone from the Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire section of the early 14th-century Great Roll).

29. BL, Add. MS 62541, fol 51r, row 2, shield 2; DBA, vol 2, 223. Also illustrated are variants with six bars borne by James de Pauntone (SAL, MS 0517, row 12, no. 5; SAL, MS 0664/1, fol 14v; and SAL, MS 0664/5, fol 9r, row 4, no. 3); DBA, vol 2, 223. Some shields on these pages were copied from older exemplars.



British Library  
Add. MS 62541 f. 16<sup>v</sup>



Society of Antiquaries  
MS 0476 p. 167



Society of Antiquaries  
MS 0476 p. 170



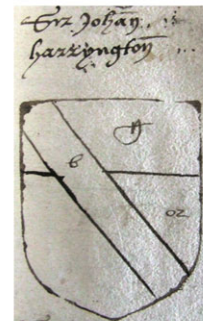
Society of Antiquaries  
MS 0476 p. 176



Society of Antiquaries  
MS 0476 p. 235



Society of Antiquaries  
MS 0476 p. 242



Society of Antiquaries  
MS 0476 p. 253

Fig 4. Coats of arms ascribed to both Fayrfax and Haryngton. *Images:* photographed by the author with the permission of the British Library and the Society of Antiquaries.

marriage, between Hugh Fairfax and Isabella, daughter of John de Harington junior (d. 1376), gave it the proceeds of both. Maud and Isabella were both heraldic heiresses able, since neither father left living sons or the issue of sons, to transmit her father's arms to her own children. Thus the descendants of John de Harington and his wife Maud could inherit not only the Harington arms of their father but also the right to quarter them with the Paunton arms transmitted by their mother. Likewise the descendants of Hugh Fairfax and Isabella could, if Hugh was armigerous, inherit not only the Fairfax arms of their father but also the right to quarter them with the Harington arms transmitted by their mother. If Hugh was not already armigerous, his father-in-law could have granted him the right to bear the Harington arms, or Hugh himself or a descendant could have assumed it.<sup>30</sup>

30. In February 1396 John Fairfax was rejected as coroner for Lincolnshire because he was insufficiently qualified (CCR 1396–9, 35), but the published record lacks detail. Saul 2009, 234–5, describes how in the 14th and 15th centuries land ownership joined military achievement as a qualification for the right to arms, and cites cases of commoners achieving armigerous status by marrying landed heiresses: 'ownership of land, and the exercise of lordship which went with it, brought a man full honourable recognition; it entitled him to use a coat of arms.' Keen 2002, 38–9, gives instances of arms identified with land holdings being granted privately; on p 75 he asserts that 'there was no systematic regulation of the right to arms in the fourteenth century'.

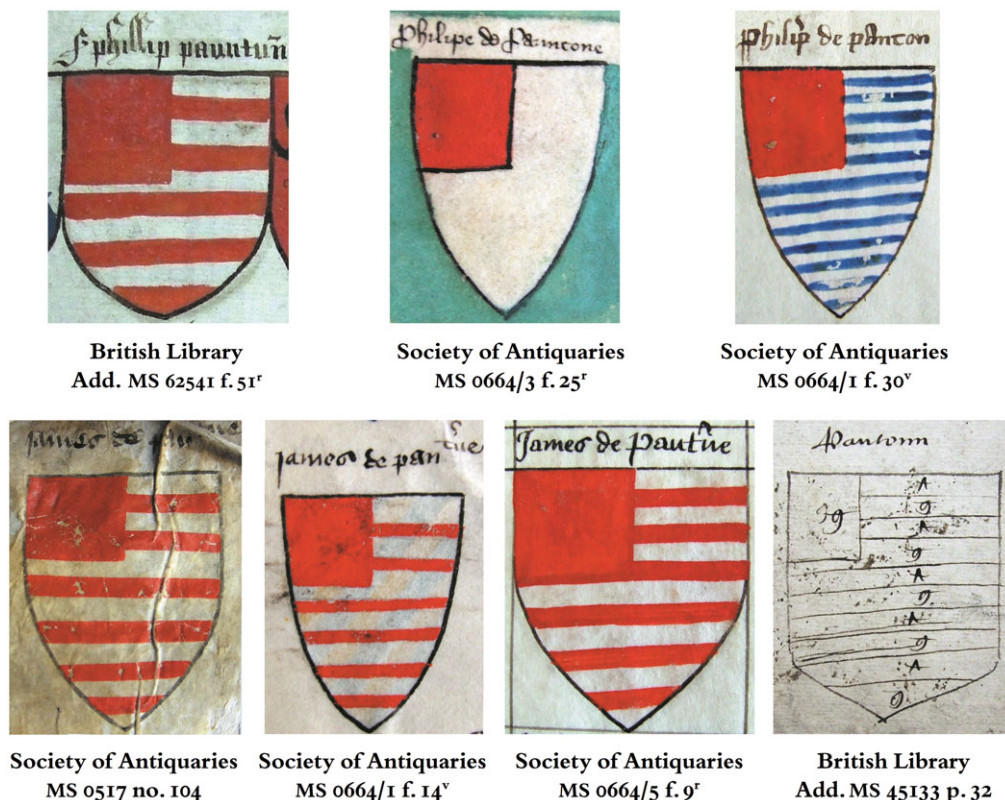


Fig 5. Coats of arms ascribed to Pauntun or Pantone. *Images:* photographed by the author with the permission of the British Library and the Society of Antiquaries.

Both Charles Fairfax and Dodsworth (the latter perhaps at the former's request) showed particular interest in the Deeping Gate family, persistently trying to trace its descent. Conflating Charles's transcripts with extant documents allows the ancestry of Robert Fairfax to be followed through four generations: his father William, compiler of the family memoranda in the book of hours discussed in the next section, was in wardship in October 1435 but old enough to execute a legal document in May 1442; his grandfather, another William, must have died young; his great-grandfather John lived at least until 1428; and his great-great-grandfather Hugh was alive in 1397.<sup>31</sup> Hugh and his son John were named in a list of Lincolnshire gentlemen who in spring 1388 subscribed to an oath taken by the lords appellant, implying that John was born no later than about 1367 and that Hugh was born at least twenty years before.<sup>32</sup> Hugh was by no means the first Fairfax at Deeping Gate: Geoffrey Fairfax of Depyngate was presented to the church of Stratford Tony, Wiltshire,

31. CFR 1430–7, 249; CIPM Henry VII, vol 2, no. 77 (apparently confusing William junior with his father); PRO, Inquisitions and Assessments relating to Feudal Aids, vol IV, 126; TNA, C 241/188/92.

32. Strachey and Blyke 1767–77, vol III, 400–1. Hugh may have been the Hugh Fairefox who in 1361 'for good service in the war of France' was pardoned for killing a fellow-soldier (CPR 1358–61, 522).

on 30 April 1349;<sup>33</sup> and the assessment of Robert Fayrfox of Depyng at 3s 10¼d in the Northamptonshire tax return of 1301 valued his moveable goods at just under £3, indicating relative prosperity.<sup>34</sup>

Charles Fairfax's comments on Robert's arms follow in modernised form:

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BLSC, MS Yks 1, 137

Robert Glover, Somerset Marshal to [William] Flower, Norroy King of Arms, told my grandfather Sir Thomas Fairfax about 1583 that he found our lion and the bars gemel to be several [separate] coats, and that first we gave only argent 3 bars gemel gules, but that after matching with Stapilton (as he conjectured) [we] gave their lion upon our bars. The ground of his mistake was because Robert Fairfax, Doctor of Music, who lies buried in the abbey church at St Albans 1483 has, upon a fair marble stone now covered with Mrs Mayoress's seat, barry of ten pieces with a canton for his paternal coat, quartered with a chief and bend sur tout. But the said doctor gave it so that he might show his descent from the house of Walton to be since the marriage with Etton (Gilling Castle being entailed 23 Edward III upon his ancestors for default of heir male of the said Etton) and he in a possibility to inherit. Note that some of these Ettons did bear barry of ten argent and gules as the doctor here gives it, but Etton's canton was charged with a cross paty. The doctor only retains the canton without the charge. This conjecture was not worth refuting saving that he had the honour and repute of the best herald of his time.

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BLSC, MS Yks 2 (*Analecta Fairfaxiana*), 6

Robert Glover, Somerset Marshall to [William] Flower, Norroy King of Arms, told my grandfather Sir Thomas Fairfax of Denton AD 1584, being then in his visitation for Yorkshire, that he found the lion and the bars gemel that we now give as one coat, to be two several [ie, separate] coats of arms, and that first we gave only argent 3 bars gemel gules, but after matching with Stapilton (as he conjectured) [we] gave their lion upon our bars, in honour of that family. The ground of his mistake was because Robert Fairfax, Doctor of Music, who lieth buried in St Alban's great church AD 1483, has upon a fair marble stone now covered with the Mayoress's seat, barry of ten with a canton for his paternal coat, quartered with a chief and bend sur tout. But he gave it so that he might show his descent from the house of Walton since the marriage with Etton (Gilling Castle being entailed 23 Edward III upon his ancestors for default of heir male of Etton.) Note that some of these Ettons did bear barry of 10 argent and gules as Dr Fairfax here gives it, but Etton's canton was charged with a cross paty which the doctor leaves out, only retaining the canton without cross.

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Charles's purpose is not obvious. He quoted Glover's misapprehension that the lion was not added to the arms of the Yorkshire Fairfaxes until the 'matching with Stapilton' – presumably the marriage of Sir William Fairfax of Gilling and Jane Stapleton in 1571 – only to dismiss it. He was correct, for the lion had been part of the Yorkshire Fairfax arms since at least the fifteenth century, but why mention it at all? His suggestion that Robert's paternal coat signalled descent from a branch of the Fairfax family postdating the marriage (possibly in the

33. CPR 1348–50, 283.

34. TNA, E 179/155/31 46, here cited from <http://www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/subsidies/transcripts/nassaburgh1301.shtml#430> (accessed Nov 2024).



Fig 6. Varied forms of the Yorkshire Fairfax coat of arms. *Images*: photographed by the author with the permission of the British Library and the Brotherton Library.

1330s) of Thomas Fairfax of Walton and Elizabeth de Etton, in hope of an inheritance under the terms of reciprocal entails made by Thomas de Etton and Thomas Fairfax in 1349, whereby property of either family would pass to the other in default of heirs male, is ingenious but hard to assess.<sup>35</sup> Did belief in a link between Robert and the Yorkshire Fairfaxes lead Charles to essay a case? He would have needed to explain features of Robert's arms discrepant with the standard heraldry of the Yorkshire family: the absence of the black lion rampant, and the presence of five bars rather than three pairs of barrulets (fig 6). He would also have had to account for the quartering of this coat with one that he himself, expert on his family, did not recognise (see fig 3). Rehearsing Glover's error may have sought to promote the idea of a Yorkshire Fairfax coat of arms without a lion; and raising the Fairfax–Etton connection may have seized on a coincidental armorial similarity. However, Charles did not claim outright that Robert belonged to a Yorkshire line of Fairfaxes, which (as a Yorkshireman and historian of his own family) he would surely have done if he had any evidence for it. Neither did he describe the arms on Robert's brass as anything other than Robert's own; he never ascribed them to the Deeping Gate family. Elsewhere in *Analecta Fairfaxiana* he stated his own belief that the Yorkshire Fairfaxes had come from Lincolnshire, which tempts one to speculate on the possibility of a connection between the only two English settlements named Etton: one village in Yorkshire's East Riding and another two miles south of Deeping Gate, on the Northamptonshire side of the border with Lincolnshire.<sup>36</sup>

It appears that Charles Fairfax's interest in Robert's grave-slab was confined to the arms shown on it and the mention of Robert's doctorate in the funerary inscription; his papers include no mention or copy of anything else. Fortunately, when John Philipot or Philpot, *Somerset Herald*, visited the abbey in 1643 he sketched other brass plates still attached to the slab.<sup>37</sup> He showed Robert and his wife Agnes half-turned toward each other above a

35. Bilson 1907, 105–92. Charles's interpretation may have engendered the specious claim that Robert's great-great-grandfather was a grandson of Thomas Fairfax and Elizabeth de Etton: no Hugh is recorded among their close descendants, and no grandchild of theirs could have been coeval with Hugh Fairfax.

36. BLSC, MS Yks 2, *Analecta Fairfaxiana*, 17: 'Exacta & accurata Delineatio Stemmatis Antiquae Fairfaxiorum Familiae in Agro Eboracensi (Ut mihi CFx videtur ab Origine Lincolnensium) ...' ('An exact and accurate sketch of the pedigree of the ancient family of Fairfaxes in Yorkshire (as it seems to me, Charles Fairfax, from a Lincolnshire origin) ...').

37. I thank Mr Phillip Bone of the College of Arms for the catalogue number of the sketch: CoA, MS Philipot 20/S.



Fig 7. Robert Fayrfax's funerary brass as sketched by John Philipot in 1643. Image: *Home Counties Mag*, 1 (1899), 160.

rectangular plate bearing the inscription 'Pray for the soules of master Robert Fayerfax doctor of music and Agnes his wife the w<sup>ch</sup> Robert decessed the xx iiij day of October the yeare of our Lord God m<sup>o</sup>. v<sup>o</sup>. I[cancelled?]xxi on whose soules Jh[es]u have mercy amen', but did not depict the arms or children, perhaps because these plates were missing (fig 7). No other representations are known.<sup>38</sup>

To mark the quatercentenary of Robert's death in 1921, new brasses were inserted into the indents of the Portland stone slab thought to cover his grave (fig 8). The figures of Robert and Agnes make a poor fit, as do the figures of two sons and two daughters below the funerary inscription; a commemorative plate was added in a new indent below the inscription, but no armorial shields were supplied because the slab lacked indents for them (fig 9). The discrepancy with what Charles Fairfax saw invites the speculation that during a post-Reformation repaving of the presbytery floor (two occurred in 1787 and 1874, the latter lowering the western half by about nine inches) the original slab, which at its present 1,270 × 920mm is shorter than usual, may have been

38. BL, Add. MS 9064 (Salmon 1728, illustrated by Thomas Baskerfield, 1799) includes on fol 122r sketches of thirty-three grave-slabs headed 'The Pavement New Laid 1787. Stones in the Abbey without their Brass plates'. The last stone in the fourth row slightly resembles Philipot's sketch; it includes indents for two shields at the top but none for children. None of the drawings of grave-slabs in St Alban's Abbey in BL, Add. MS 29935 resembles Philipot's sketch.



Fig 8. Position of Robert Fayrfax's grave-slab in St Alban's Abbey presbytery looking (a) east and (b) west. *Photographs: the author.*



Fig 9. The modern brasses on Robert Fayrfax's grave-slab. *Photograph: the author.*

reduced by removing a strip at the top together with any shield indents placed there. Another possibility is that the present slab was moved to this location from elsewhere to replace the original slab that no longer fitted the available space; if so, its indents would not constitute evidence that Robert and Agnes had children. If they did have children, and ever lived at Bayford, they may have been progenitors of a line of Fairfaxes that appeared at Cheshunt, five miles distant, in the mid-sixteenth century and showed an early preference for the name Robert.

THE FAIRFAX BOOK OF HOURS (BODLEIAN, MS LAT. LITURG. E. 10)

Family memoranda once attached to a book of hours belonging to Robert Fayrfax's father William offer unusually detailed evidence of his priorities as a gentleman and paterfamilias.<sup>39</sup> On fols 23r–26r of Bodleian, MS Lat. liturg. e. 10 William Fairfax noted his two marriages and recorded minutely – name, place, date and time, names of godparents and sponsors – the birth of fourteen children between 1445 and 1472. Many of the births and some other data, including four significant obits, were also added to the book's liturgical calendar, from which July and August are missing. The provenance, precision and detail make this information authoritative.<sup>40</sup> William's acknowledged children are tabulated below: two of his first marriage, to Helen, daughter of Sir William Brereton, and twelve of his second, to Agnes Tanfield, daughter of the lawyer Robert Tanfield MP JP, at the church of St Mary Aldermanbury, London, on 26 June 1455.<sup>41</sup> Both marriages were clearly strategic.

Margaret	Margery	William	Anne	Elizabeth	Thomas	John
21/8/1445	28/10/1447	10/7/1456	23/7/1457	25/1/1459	12/9/1460	18/3/1463
Robert	Charles	Susanna	Hugh	Agnes	Henry	Mary
23/4/1464	30/11/1465	25/10/1466	9/10/1467	7/5/1469	6/8/1470	4/6/1472

In the calendar, two obits in red ink mark the death of contributors to the family's prosperity: Philip de Paunton (19 October 1303), who in 1299 left his estate to his daughter Maud and her husband John de Harington; and William Carnell (8 May 1435), son of John Carnell who shared with William's great-grandfather Hugh Fairfax the Harington estate as husbands of Amy and Isabel, heiresses of the last male Harington (another John). These obits confirm the surmise made by Anselm Hughes on the basis of armorial evidence. It is surprising to find no obit for Hugh's father-in-law John Harington himself, who died on 12 or 13 October 1376.<sup>42</sup> Brown ink was used for two obits of wider

39. Bodleian, MS Lat. liturg. e. 10; only two leaves of the original hours remain. Charles Fairfax may have seen the book in a more complete state but made no use of the genealogical information in it; see *Analecta Fairfaxiana*, the Fairfax Book of Hours and the Fairfax Psalter section.

40. Trees by Charles Fairfax, Dodsworth and Robert Cotton (BL, Add. MS 5812) omit Helen's children and add spurious offspring.

41. The birth years of Elizabeth and John are here converted to modern reckoning; the dominical letters confirm 1459 and 1463.

42. CIPM 1374–7, no. 333; CIPM 1377–84, no. 363.





Fig 10. Deeping Gate, Maxeý and site of Fairfax Hall. *Map*: Ordnance Survey 6-inch map Northamptonshire III NW (1886).

interest but especial importance to the Fairfaxes: those of Edward IV (8 [recte 9] April 1483) and John Beaufort, duke of Somerset (28 May 1444), lord of the manor of Maxeý whose manorial castle lay within two miles of Deeping Gate.

In Deeping Gate, William and his family lived at Fairfax Hall, on the site of the present Fairfax House, next to the bridge spanning the river Welland on the road to Deeping St James (fig 10). He was substantial and influential enough to be appointed sheriff of Northamptonshire by Henry VI's government in 1460 and confirmed as such by Edward IV in 1461.<sup>43</sup> Thereafter he was styled esquire or armiger, a rank between knight and gentleman denoting tenure of an office of trust under the Crown. The contrast with his grandfather John's disqualification from the coronership of Lincolnshire in 1396 is stark. To be trusted by both Lancastrians and Yorkists is testimony to his adroitness and prudence. As head of a substantial gentry family, he cultivated his position through alliances with members of his own and adjacent classes, for example by choosing as godparents for his children members of the nobility, gentry, senior clergy, successful lawyers and merchants. Among these, relatives and clients of his Beaufort landlords were prominent. Margaret Beaufort's inheritance of the Beaufort estates in 1482 and her son Henry Tudor's accession as Henry VII in 1485 vastly increased the value of her

43. CFR 1452–61, 291; CFR 1461–71, 10, 16–17.

patronage.<sup>44</sup> When William died on 5 February 1498 he still owned most of his great-grandfather Hugh's estates in the East Midlands, comprising at least 1,200 acres of arable, meadow, pasture and woodland. Material added to the memorandum pages of William's book of hours after his death shows that the book remained in use for at least two more generations.

If William's eldest son and heir, another William (1456–1504), figures in the record less prominently than his father, he succeeded in handing on his inheritance intact to his daughter Margaret.<sup>45</sup> The Fairfax family then experienced the downside of inheritance as its patrimony passed, through the marriage of a sole heiress, to a family of a different name. Margaret Fairfax was thrice married: first to John Peyton, apparently a retainer of Lady Margaret Beaufort; then to Miles Worsley (d. 25 June 1515), Beaufort's treasurer; and finally to Robert Brudenell the younger (d. 1539), a lawyer and circuit court judge whose father, a justice of the king's bench, had been a senior legal adviser to the countess.<sup>46</sup> Carving on a stone discovered in a garden wall at Maxey vicarage in 1881 was later recognised as a coat of arms impaling the arms of Brudenell with those of Fairfax and Harrington; presumably it had decorated Fairfax Hall when Margaret lived there with her third husband. Brudenell himself was buried in Maxey church, as were several generations of Worsleys.<sup>47</sup> The Fairfax estates went to Margaret's son John Worsley (b. 1508/9) and then to John's descendants. Margaret was still alive in 1543–4 when she conveyed her share of the manor of Paunton to Hugh Grantham, probably a maternal relation.<sup>48</sup> A seventeenth-century copy of Northamptonshire pedigrees recorded during the visitation of 1564 includes the Worsley coat of arms in trick, with comments on Miles and his son John.<sup>49</sup> The first quarter shows Worsley; the third and fourth show the arms of the Deeping Gate Fairfaxes; the fifth shows Bozon or Bosome, for John's wife Mary (c. 1510–72); the second and sixth are unidentified (fig 11).

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR THE WIDER MUSICAL CONTEXT

The material surveyed in this paper refines the perception of Robert Fayrfax and his cultural environment in several ways. It vindicates the proposal of Anselm Hughes to reassign him from a Fairfax family based in Yorkshire to one based in Northamptonshire, and confirms that armorial evidence can contribute as validly as any other to such judgements. It offers an example of a gentry family maintaining and improving in the fifteenth century the armigerous status and social position that it had achieved under the less stringent heraldic conventions of the fourteenth century, only to disappear within three generations of reaching its zenith. It demonstrates ways in which an ambitious family head might seek to create and nurture reciprocally

44. Margaret Beaufort certainly patronised Robert Fayrfax in her final decade, and may well have furthered his earlier career.
45. Bodleian, MS Lat. liturg. e. 10, fol 35v; CIPM Henry VII, vol 2, no. 881. At her father's death, Margaret was said to be sixteen or older.
46. Margaret may have joined Beaufort's household in June 1504, when 3s 5d was paid 'for the expence of Willyam Farfax doghture comyng from hir father unto my ladys grace'; on 6 January 1504 6s 8d was paid to John Peyton (of a gentry family at Isleham, Cambs?) for taking money to the countess: Powell 2022, 358, 332.
47. Sweeting 1899, 117–19.
48. Page 1935, 159, fn 88.
49. BL, Harley MS 1138, 63; Harvey *et al* 1887, 56, 205.

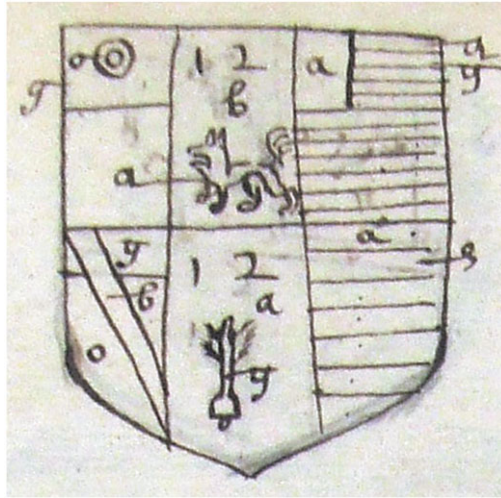


Fig 11. BL, Harley MS 1138, 63, coat of arms ascribed to Worsley. *Image:* photographed by the author with the permission of the British Library.

advantageous networks. It identifies Margaret Beaufort, countess of Richmond and mother of the Tudor dynasty, as a significant patron of the Fairfax family, most visibly Robert himself but also his niece Margaret and perhaps other members: her patronage may have extended to his education and connection with St Alban's Abbey, his introduction to the royal household, the award of his university degrees and the commissioning of some of his music. It shows that by the later fifteenth century a man of gentle rank could without disparagement become a professional ecclesiastical musician: a development that may have had a greater effect upon the culture of early Tudor church music than has sometimes been recognised. In the mid-1570s, reviewing the musical culture of his pre-Reformation childhood, Thomas Whythorne made a remark apposite to the career of Robert Fairfax:

Ye shall understand that in this our realm it was one of the trades and exercises appointed and allowed for such gentlemen to live by as were younger brothers, and neither lands nor fees and goods to maintain them. Ye shall find in the book named *The Accidence of Armoury* that a King of Heralds may give arms to any that is excellently skilled in any of the seven liberal sciences (whereof music is one), although he nor his ancestors might never give any before.<sup>50</sup>

#### ANALECTA FAIRFAXIANA, THE FAIRFAX BOOK OF HOURS AND THE FAIRFAX PSALTER

One of Charles Fairfax's references in *Analecta Fairfaxiana* suggests a connection between the Bodleian manuscript Lat. liturg. e. 10 (the Fairfax book of hours) and the Fairfax psalter, a manuscript unlocated since 1952:

50. Osborn 1962, 203.

In a Manuscript in Quarto In y<sup>c</sup> Minster Library att York neare the Dore itt (Contayninge Psalmes and Prayers in a faire legeble hand) has this Preface writt in Redd letters (viz<sup>l</sup>)

Hunc Librum Scripsit Willielmus Fairfax Armiger apud Depingate Anno Domini MCCCCLXIII Dolens Peccata, Deo reddens Gratias, Et ab eo Misericordiam et Indulgentiam humiliter petens Et post Ejus decessum Suo Filio et heredi istum librum legans, Et sic Ab Herede ad Heredem, Rogans eis Ut ipsi fideliter orant ad Deum Quod ipse de magna sua Misericordia propitiatur Animæ suæ.<sup>51</sup>

*William Fairfax armiger wrote this book at Deeping Gate in the Year of the Lord 1464, lamenting [his] sins, rendering thanks to God and humbly entreating from him mercy and forgiveness, and asking of his son and heir reading this book after his death, and so on from heir to heir, that they faithfully pray to God that he of his great mercy have pity of his soul.*

These words would have been apt in a book of hours intended by the head of a late medieval family to become an heirloom. Could the book seen by Charles have been William Fairfax's book of hours, still containing its original inscription of authorship and implicit ownership? The Fairfax book of hours, which does not include this leaf, is a fragment: only two devotional leaves remain, the calendar is incomplete and the other folios carry memoranda and modern transcripts. Correspondence with York Minster confirmed that the manuscript from which Charles Fairfax copied this inscription is no longer in the library, and revealed more about it and offered reasons to hope that it still survives.<sup>52</sup> The evidence includes fourteen photographic transparencies believed to have been obtained by a former librarian contemplating the reacquisition – sadly unachieved – of a book formerly in the collection. These show portions of pages from a fifteenth-century book containing psalms, canticles and suffrages, and part of the spine of a nineteenth-century binding entitled *The Fairfax Psalter A.D. M.CCCC. LXIV*.<sup>53</sup> One image (fig 12) shows the lower part of a stained and rubbed page that looks as if it once came first or last in the book. It begins with the final words 'de sua magna misericordia propicietur anime sue' of an inscription in red ink, identical with that quoted by Charles Fairfax except that it has 'sua magna' for 'magna sua'; as a writer of humanistic Latin, Charles might unconsciously or deliberately have made the original more stylish. The adage 'Innicium sapiencie · Timor domini' ('Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom') follows, also in red ink. The page ends with a prayer:

*Tibi domine commendamus animas famulorum famularum que tuarum parentum fratrum sororum benefactorum nostrorum et omnium fidelium defunctorum, ut defuncti seculo tibi vivant, et qui per fragilitatem mundane conversacionis peccata admiserunt tu venia misericordissime pietatis absterge, Per Eundem dominum nostrum iesum xistum filium tuum.*

51. BLSC MS Yks 2, 85.

52. I thank Natalie Toy, York Minster collections officer, for her helpful response to questions. Charles Fairfax may have heard about the Fairfax psalter from Matthew Dodsworth (1544–1631), registrar of York Minster and father of Roger Dodsworth.

53. One of the Minster photographs includes suffrages typical of books of hours; in his description, Charles Fairfax mentioned psalms and prayers. The photographs show that the psalter lacked the ancillary items (antiphons etc) found in liturgical psalters.

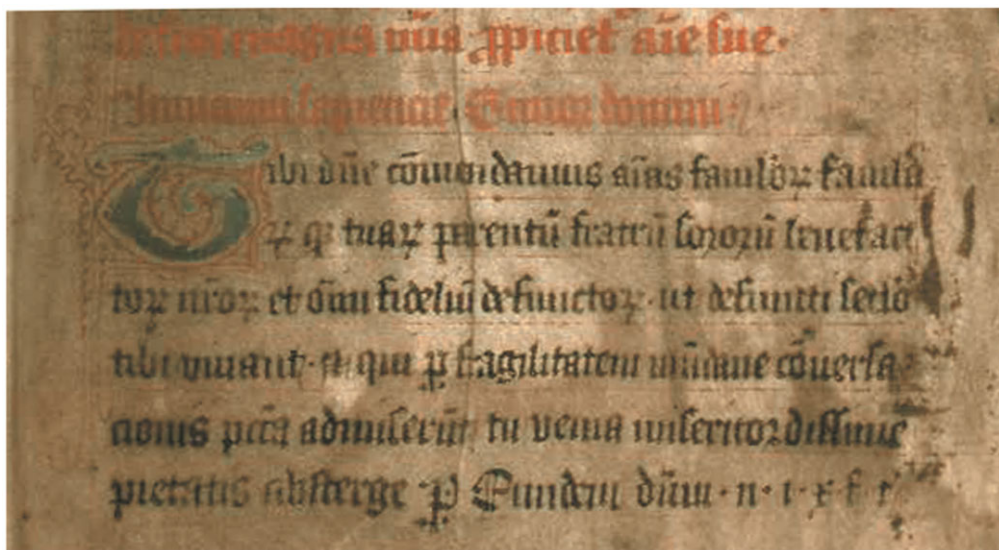


Fig 12. Fairfax psalter image 6 showing part of the prefatory page described by Charles Fairfax. Image: produced by the author from photographic transparency provided by York Minster Library.

*To thee, O Lord, we commend the souls of thy servants our parents, brothers, sisters, benefactors, and all the faithful departed, that dead to the world they may live for thee, and that thou shalt cleanse with the forgiveness of thy most merciful pity those who through frailty have adopted the ways of the world, through the same Jesus Christ thy Son.*

A book known as the Fairfax psalter was offered for sale at least six times between 1798 and 1952. Five listings by London auctioneers are included in the Schoenberg Database of Manuscripts: Arrowsmith and Bowley (21 November 1798); Thomas King (7 July 1800); Puttick and Simpson (31 October 1864); Sotheby (29 July 1930); and Sotheby again (10 November 1952).<sup>54</sup> The sixth is documented in a catalogue issued by the bookseller Henry Wake of Fritchley, Derbyshire, which Walter Sweeting, vicar of Maxey 1881–1901, quoted in 1892:

Fairfax family. MS. on vellum, beautifully written on 115 leaves, 6¾ by 4 inches. It has about 1300 large & small initials, illuminated in gold and colors, and is a Latin Psalter or Book of Devotions as used in England prior to the Reformation. It is imperfect & the Miniature Paintings have been removed. At [the] end is this Inscription in old English characters in red: Hunc libru[m] scripsit Will[iel]m[u]s Fairfax Armiger apud Depingate, Anno d[omi]ni Mill[esi]mo cccc<sup>mo</sup> lxiij, &c. Sm. 4to, in best levant morocco antique style and lettered in gold:– The Fairfax Psalter, A.D. 1464.<sup>55</sup>

54. Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies, University of Pennsylvania Libraries, <https://sdbm.library.upenn.edu>, nos 257925, 190100, 64177, 279756 and 4462 (accessed Nov 2024).

55. Sweeting 1892, no. 620, 148–50.



Fig 13. Bodleian, MS Lat. liturg. e. 10 fol 38r and Fairfax psalter images 9 and 10. *Images:* photographed by the author with the permission of the Bodleian Library and produced by him from photographic transparencies provided by York Minster Library.

In his description of the manuscript, Sweeting observed that the first thirteen leaves were part of a book of devotions in honour of the Virgin Mary, the last sixteen contained biblical extracts, canticles, the Athanasian creed and collects similar to those in books of hours, and the mid-section consisted of the Vulgate psalter. He noted that the book ended with a leaf bearing on its lower verso the inscription quoted by Charles Fairfax and the apophthegm and family prayer shown in the sixth of the York Minster photographs; his copies of these texts correspond in every respect to the versions in the photograph, including the phrase ‘sua magna’ rather than Fairfax’s variant ‘magna sua’. A discrepancy between the descriptions by Wake and Sweeting and that by Fairfax is that the former placed the ownership declaration at the end whereas the latter described it as a preface; perhaps it was originally the recto of the front leaf, but came loose and was reinserted reversed at the end.

In the same communication, Sweeting cited, as further evidence of the status of the Fairfaxes of Deeping Gate, another manuscript of similar date that had been theirs: a calendar including references ‘to the births, baptisms, sponsors, etc., of the children of the very William Fairfax who wrote the psalter’, which was the main subject of his note. This was certainly the Bodleian manuscript Lat. liturg. e. 10, nowadays called the Fairfax book of hours. Hindsight makes it seem odd that Sweeting did not associate it and the Fairfax psalter more explicitly; perhaps he thought that juxtaposing them was enough. The manuscripts share many characteristics. Their dimensions are similar: the folios of the Fairfax book of hours vary slightly, but fols 21 and 38, the two preserving devotional material, measure about 175 × 123mm and 175 × 119mm respectively, while

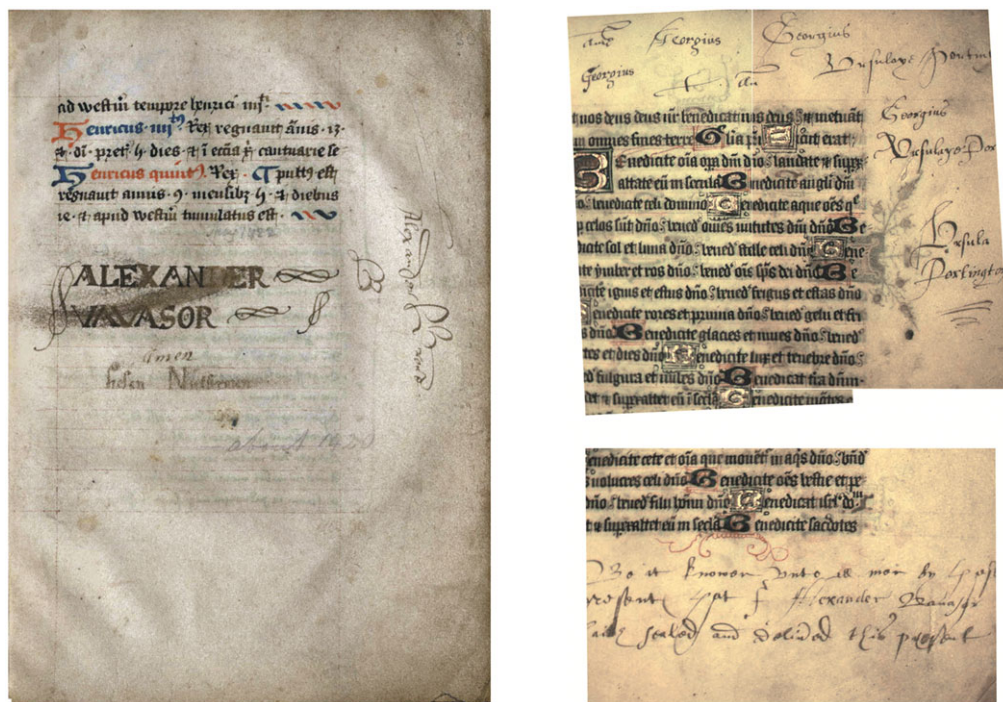


Fig 14. BL, MS Lat. liturg. e. 10 fol 30r and Fairfax psalter images 2 and 7 (joined) and 12. Images: photographed by the author with the permission of the Bodleian Library and produced by him from photographic transparencies provided by York Minster Library.

the pages of the psalter measure about 171 × 124mm (Sweeting) or 170 × 120mm (Sotheby). Their formats are identical: a single column of twenty lines to the page, except where (as in the calendar) more than twenty lines were needed. In both manuscripts initial capitals are decorated in a standard mid-fifteenth-century style; the details are similar, as are some of the letter forms (fig 13). They also share an added name: Alexander Vavasor, whose name is on fol 30r of Bodleian, MS Lat. liturg. e. 10 and the leaf shown in the twelfth psalter photograph, who is probably Alexander Vavasor of Spaldington, Yorkshire, born *c* 1579. Ursula Portington, named on the same page, is likely to be Ursula Portington of Skipwith, Lincolnshire, born *c* 1599, who became Alexander's wife (fig 14). The Vavasors were related by marriage to the Yorkshire Fairfaxes.<sup>56</sup>

The non-devotional material in Bodleian, MS Lat. liturg. e. 10 consists mainly of items often added to a domestic book of hours – a calendar, miscellaneous memoranda and family records – none of which is mentioned in the descriptions and photographs of the Fairfax psalter. All this suggests that the Bodleian leaves and the Fairfax psalter were originally parts of a single manuscript, a compendium of devotional material and memoranda owned in 1464 by William Fairfax of Deeping Gate. It seems likely that William's statement that he had written the book himself applied only to the

56. See pedigrees in the Fairfax Society papers, York Archives, Library Square, York YO1 7DS (<https://explore.york.org.uk>).

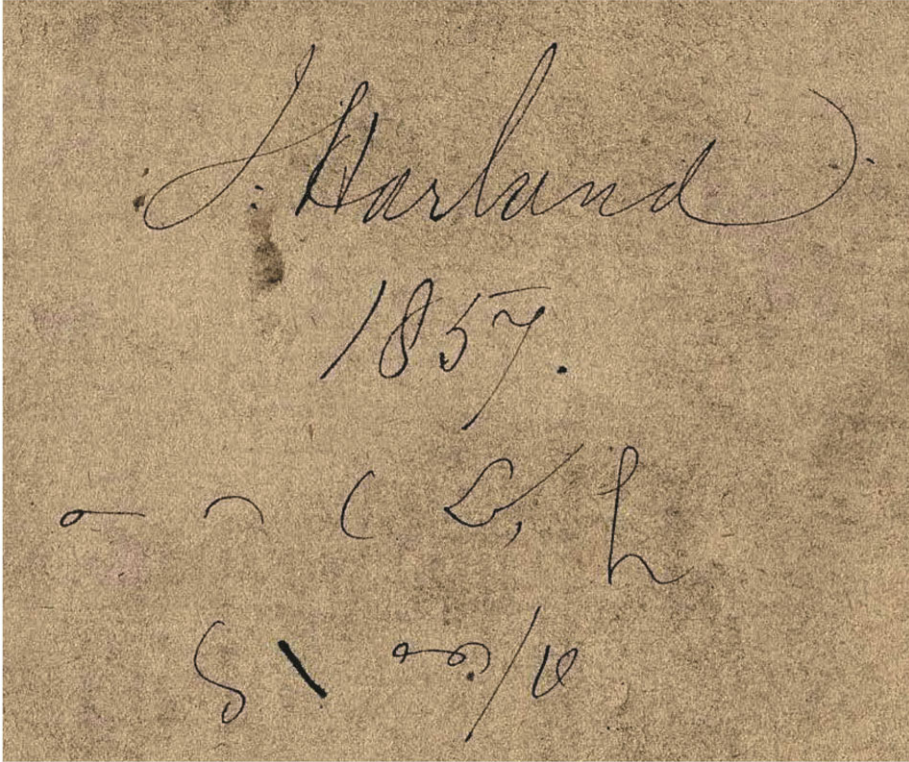


Fig 15. Bodleian, MS Lat. liturg. e. 10 fol iv: inscription in John Harland's shorthand. *Image:* photographed by the author with the permission of the Bodleian Library.

memoranda; the entries that he is likely to have contributed are neatly written, but most of those added after his death are in more untidy hands. Some of the leaves may have been part of an older book: the king-list on fols 19–20 ends with Henry v. The material constituting the book of hours itself appears to be the product of a professional workshop.

The conjecture that these two manuscripts were originally united invites speculation about when they were separated. The presence of Alexander Vavasor's name in both suggests that they remained together at least until he could write in an adult hand, perhaps in the mid-1590s. Unfortunately, although Charles Fairfax stated that he found William Fairfax's ownership declaration in a devotional book in the York Minster Library, he did not say when this happened. Nothing has yet emerged from his work to suggest that he was aware of the memoranda about the Fairfaxes of Deeping Gate preserved in the leaves now in the Bodleian Library. If he had been, he would surely have included extended extracts in *Analecta Fairfaxiana*, and thereby produced a more detailed, accurate and coherent account of William and his family than he achieved by copying unconnected items of information. If the binding that united the two manuscripts had already failed, causing the memoranda and calendar and some leaves of devotional material to come away from the main corpus, Charles could have seen





Fig 16. John Harland after Thomas Charles Wageman lithograph. *Image*: courtesy of © National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG D38545).

William's preface in its original position at the front of the book, or as an detached leaf later replaced at the book's end rather than at its beginning.

No further notice appears to have been taken of these leaves until they reappeared in the mid-nineteenth century. On fol iv are two nineteenth-century inscriptions. The first consists of the name J Harland and the date 1857, followed by two lines of idiosyncratic shorthand that remain undeciphered; the writer was the antiquary and *Manchester Guardian* reporter John Harland FSA (1807–68), renowned in his day as a shorthand virtuoso and inventor of his own system (figs 15 and 16). They imply that he acquired the manuscript in 1857. The second reads 'Lucy Peacock to her dear husband Edward Peacock July 13<sup>th</sup> 1864' (three months before the Fairfax psalter was offered by Puttick and Simpson). Lucy Weatherall (1823–87) and the antiquary and novelist Edward Peacock FSA (1831–1915) married in 1853 and lived at Bottesford Manor in North Lincolnshire (figs 17 and 18). Lucy may have had the manuscript directly from Harland, who still owned it in October 1862 when he described it over his pen name Crux.<sup>57</sup> She may have thought the gift apt because of its provenance, but perhaps she hoped also that the presence on fol 22v of a quatrain sometimes ascribed to bishop Reginald Pecock (*c* 1395–*c* 1461) would appeal personally to her husband.

57. Crux 1862, 310–11.



Fig 17. Edward Peacock FSA around the time of his election in 1857. *Image:* [https://www.thesalamancacorpus.com/galleries/images/dialectologists-gallery/DFCF91AF92E248708C7C7ABE4A59FD5F/EdwardPeacock\\_thumb.jpg](https://www.thesalamancacorpus.com/galleries/images/dialectologists-gallery/DFCF91AF92E248708C7C7ABE4A59FD5F/EdwardPeacock_thumb.jpg) (Salamanca © 2011-DING, The Salamanca Corpus, University of Salamanca).

Wytte hath Wondyr þ<sup>t</sup> Reson tell ne can

Houh A mayde bare a chylde both god & man

Therefore leve Wytte & take to the Wundyr ·

Feyth goth a bove & Reson goth Undyr

Whatever Lucy Peacock's reasoning, it appears that by the 1890s Edward was retrenching. On 23 May 1901 he offered to the Bodleian Library his wife's gift for £10; the transaction was completed a few days later. After surfacing briefly in the 1950s, the leaves were hardly noticed again until the *Dictionary of National Biography* article on Fayrfax in 2000 and an independent study in 2007.<sup>58</sup>

58. Rogers 2007, 167–79.

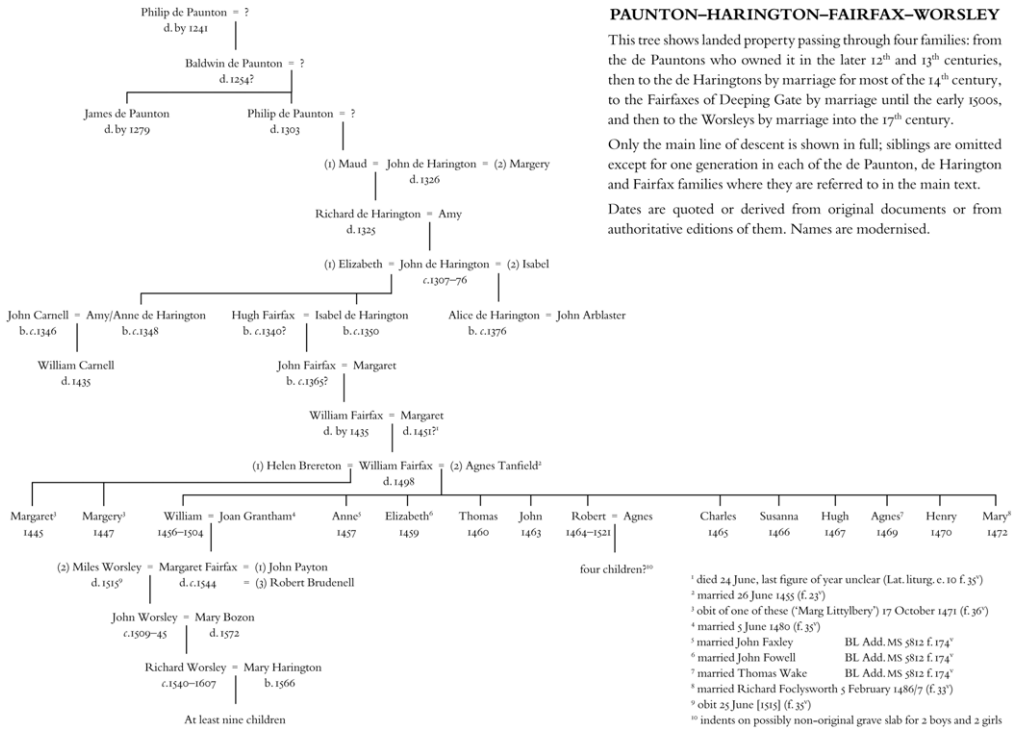


Fig 18. Simplified tree of the Paunton-Harington-Fairfax-Worsley family descent. *Image*: the author.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbreviations

- BL British Library, London
- BLSC Brotherton Library, Special Collections, Leeds University
- Bodleian Bodleian Library, Oxford
- CCR *Calendar of Close Rolls* . . . , preserved in the Public Record Office, London HMSO 1922–31 Issue Rolls Exchequer of Receipt: Issue Rolls and Registers
- CFR *Calendar of the fine rolls* . . . , preserved in the Public Record Office, London
- CIPM *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, preserved in the Public Record Office, London HMSO
- CoA College of Arms, London

CPR	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls . . .</i> , preserved in the Public Record Office, London HMSO 1900
DBA	<i>Dictionary of British Arms</i>
EUL	Edinburgh University Library
PRO	The Public Record Office, London
SAL	Society of Antiquaries of London
TNA	The National Archives, Kew

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 BL, Add. MS 5812  
 BL, Add. MS 9064  
 BL, Add. MS 29935 (Carter, J 1764–1816. *A Collection of Sketches relating to the Antiquities of this Kingdom taken from the real objects in 1797 forming Vol. the Nineteenth*), twenty-six volumes)  
 BL, Add. MS 62541 (Creswick's Roll)  
 BL, Harley MS 1550  
 BL, Harley MS 1138  
 BLSC, MS Yks 1–6  
 BLSC, MS Yks 2 (*Analecta Fairfaxiana*)  
 Bodleian, MS Lat. liturg. e. 10  
 Bodleian, MS Eng. misc. c. 330, c 1593  
 Bodleian, MS Wood D. 19 (4)  
 CCR 1396–9  
 CCR 1413–19  
 CCR 1454–61  
 CFR 1430–7  
 CFR 1452–61  
 CFR 1461–71  
 CIPM 1374–7  
 CIPM 1377–84  
 CIPM Henry VII, vol 2  
 CoA, MS Philipot 20/S  
 CPR 1358–61  
 CPR 1348–50  
 CPR 1413–16  
 EUL, MS La iii. 483 (a)  
 PRO, Inquisitions and Assessments relating to Feudal Aids, vol IV  
 SAL, *Dictionary of British Arms*, 1992–2014  
 SAL, MS 0476  
 SAL, MS 0517  
 SAL, MS 0664/1  
 SAL, MS 0664/5  
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