

John Hertyngton, supplier of saddlery to Richard III

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JOHN HERTYNGTON WAS ONE OF THE LEADING SADDLERS of the City of London in a period centering on the 1480s. He was the main supplier of horse gear to the Great Wardrobe of Richard III in 1483 and his workmanship was conspicuous in the procession from the Tower of London to Westminster on 5 July, the vigil of the coronation.

This work came to him when he was at the height of his career. Nothing is known of his family background or his training in his craft except that he must have been apprenticed to a citizen and saddler of the City in his teens, probably in the 1450s, and, upon issuing from his service he set up his own business, more or less immediately, depending on whether he had ready financial backing from his family or friends. The Saddlers' Company have few surviving records of the fifteenth century but a little is known about it. One of the most ancient of the craft guilds, its members seem to have operated mainly at the west end of Cheapside near to St. Martin le Grand and in Foster Lane where their Hall was situated. The Company had a close relationship both with St. Martin's and its parish church of St. Vedast adjoining its Hall in Foster Lane and familiarly known as St. Foster's in the fifteenth century. The Saddlers had a long history of quarrels with the guilds of Loriners and Joiners who made the bits and saddle bows of their craft but by John Hertyngton's time they all seem to have co-existed in comparative amity. Other craftsmen closely involved in their craft were painters and embroiderers both of whom might decorate their wares. The saddler was an essential and ubiquitous craftsman of medieval London: not only were ornate horse harness status symbols to the wealthy but the saddler might be involved in any task relating to horse drawn vehicles, as the work undertaken by John Hertyngton testifies.¹

The first reference to John occurs in a conveyance of property in the London parish of Holy Trinity the Less in Queenhithe ward. On 5 August 1465 with Thomas Crouche, fishmonger, and Robert Skrayngham, mercer,

he was the recipient of a quitclaim by Thomas Hunt, gentleman, and his wife Margery, and John Hill, tailor.² The property had once belonged to a John Horwode, son of Nicholas Horwode, citizen and cutler of London, and was bounded on the south by a tenement lived in by William Hampton, alderman, and to the north by another belonging to a Robert Shiryngton. The precise benefit to John of this deed is impossible to say as the quitclaim merely meant that Thomas Hunt and his fellows were acknowledging that whatever rights they might have held in the land were now vested in John and his fellows. The fact that John is the first mentioned among the beneficiaries probably indicates that he was the beneficiary and the others were his feoffees (trustees). Of his fellows, Thomas Crouche was a parishioner of St. Martin Orgar and lessee of a large property lying between the River Thames and Thames Street,³ and Robert Skrayngham was a prominent and wealthy mercer who had already served as warden of his company twice (1454-5 and 1460-1). Skrayngham had been one of the common councilmen of the City who had attended on the Chief Butler at the coronation banquet of Edward IV and one of the elected auditors of the City's Chamberlain's accounts for 1461-2 and 1462-3.⁴ In 1465, therefore, John Hertyngton was already associating with men of standing, in itself some indication of his own prosperity. Such an early association with a wealthy mercer is not surprising as the saddler's craft made use of rich silk cloths, velvet, gold thread and fringe, the stock in trade of a mercer.

John Hertyngton was again involved with mercers at the end of the 1460s in a series of Chancery suits. The documentation is not complete but it appears that a William Andrewe, mercer, was in debt for £100 to Dame Alice Wiche, the wealthy widow of Sir Hugh, a mercer and past mayor of London (1461-2) who had died in 1468. John had acted as a surety for this debt and had had to pay on his bond when it fell in. In his own turn he had received obligations from William Andrewe and his brother Thomas, a haberdasher, and another mercer, Roger Abyngdon. Suits resulted in the Mayor's Court and in Chancery as John and his fellows sorted out what was owed to whom.⁵ The details and the rights are obscure, but John is clearly now a man of substance.

In 1470 there are two brief references to a John Hertyngton in the City which may relate to the saddler. In September a John 'Hartyngton' was called, but not sworn, on a jury in the parish of St. Mary le Bow, and in October a John Hertyngton, with Thomas Lute and Ralph Wolseley, received the gift of his goods and chattels from Thomas Conyngham.⁶ Conyngham was either raising a loan or avoiding the future expenses of proving his will. Thomas Lute was probably the lawyer (and later member of parliament) of that name, and Ralph Wolseley was another lawyer and a baron of the Exchequer in 1467-70 and again 1478 to 1484. If this reference is to the saddler, John Hertyngton is again associated with persons of standing.

On 1 February 1475 John is to be discovered in a more personal document, the will of Joan Langton, silkwoman of London, and widow of John Langton, saddler, who had made his own will over twenty years before on 20 March 1452. She was of St. Vedast's parish, probably also John's parish by this date, the parish of the Saddlers' Company and where a substantial

number of saddlers lived and practised their craft. Here John is acting as a member of the tight communities of parish and craft so dominant in the lives of fifteenth century London craftsmen. His fellow witnesses included three other saddlers, John Broughton, John Abell (a warden of the Saddlers' Company in 1463), and John Asshton. Joan Langton left a covered cup of silver gilt chased with roses to her dead husband's Company 'as long as yt wylle endure' and also lands to support a priest in St. Vedast's where her obit and that of her husband was to be kept in the chapel of Our Lady.'

At some time before 16 June 1475 Hertyngton supplied saddlery to Richard, Duke of Gloucester, worth £30. No details of the goods survive but it is known he was only paid in instalments over a period of at least eighteen months.⁸ Hertyngton was now producing goods worthy of a royal duke and would have been in demand by the aristocracy and gentry.

At some date, probably shortly before 1482, John married Alice, the daughter of Geoffrey Dormer, perhaps as his second wife. With her he received from his father in law a garden plot worth about 13s. 4d. a year lying without Aldgate in the London suburbs. It was to involve him in another Chancery suit. Geoffrey Dormer had purchased the land from a John Mitchell and it was held by feoffees (trustees: Hugh Hebbes, Thomas Blake and Richard Quynon) to Geoffrey's use until he passed his title to John and his wife. In 1482-3 a William Brogreve brought an action of trespass against Hertyngton before one of the sheriffs, William White, claiming that Hertyngton's title was not sound and having him arrested. According to Hertyngton the feoffees had never passed to him all the documents relating to the land, his defence failed, and as a consequence a jury in the Sheriff's Court found for Brogreve. Hertyngton then appealed to the Chancellor, John Russell, Bishop of Lincoln, complaining of forgery and begging him to examine the feoffees. The case was heard probably close to Michaelmas 1483 but its result does not survive among the Chancery records.⁹

In 1483, for the second time, John Hertyngton can be seen pursuing his craft for in this year he supplied a remarkable amount of goods and workmanship to the new King, Richard III, through the Great Wardrobe. The only other saddler occurring in this department's accounts for the period 9 April 1483 to 2 February 1484 is William Thomset, yeoman of the King's Stable and a supplier of horse gear to Edward IV since 1462-5, but his quantities in 1483 are very small compared to Hertyngton's. It is not known if Hertyngton held a similar royal post to that of Thomset, nor is the identity of the King's Saddler known for the Yorkist period. It was John who garnished Queen Anne Neville's litter of white cloth of gold with ribbon, gilt nails and fringe of gold and silk, taking 26s. 8d. for his labour. The basic structure of timber had been made by a fellow citizen of London, William Mynte, wheelwright. It was in this litter that the Queen made the journey from the Tower to the Palace of Westminster on the vigil of the coronation. John also covered with white cloth of gold, the saddles, collars, croupers and dosers of the white palfreys which carried the litter. He mended the Queen's principal 'chare' for 3s. 4d., a four wheel vehicle, unlike the more stately litter, which, with her other carriages, carried the noble ladies in the vigil procession. These ladies included the Countess of Richmond, the three Duchesses of Norfolk,

the Duchess of Suffolk and Lady Scrope of Masham. The second 'chare' and the saddles of its horses were covered by Hertyngton with crimson velvet and he also cleaned the copper and gilt 'basins' on the 'chare', changing the coats of arms on them. He similarly covered the third carriage in crimson damask, changed its coats of arms, burnished its 'basins' and did other work on its furnishings. He fringed one of the saddles of estate and he put fringe and decoration on the saddles of various henchmen of the King and Queen (boys of good birth being educated in the royal households), and he even provided white paper for trussing up the harness of Richard III's own horse. Besides these particular works he can be found supplying canvas, thousands of gilt nails of various sizes, and numerous other saddles, bridles, headstalls, bits, reins, girths, snaffles, halters, surcingles, pastrons (hobbles), draughts and peitrels, down to a single horse-comb, to the King's Stable and Master of the Horse, Sir James Tyrell, through the Great Wardrobe. Many of these items were used at the coronation and others were used at the investiture of the Prince of Wales at York in September 1483.¹⁰

John Hertyngton is also known to have supplied horse gear to one of the most important members of Richard III's Council, William Catesby. He figures, surprisingly, in Catesby's will, drawn up after the battle of Bosworth while Catesby was awaiting execution. Catesby directed his wife to see that the 'sadelor Hartlyngtone be paid.'¹¹

The Tudor victory would have had little effect on Hertyngton's trade except perhaps in matters of payment still owing from such as William Catesby. He continued to supply the Great Wardrobe but the few surviving accounts show no contribution of his in any one year to match that of 1483. Between March 1487 and Michaelmas 1488 he only seems to have supplied one foot cloth of black velvet lined with black linen for 6s. 10d. (a horse trapper reaching to the ground).¹² Years later, when Peter Courteys retired from the office of keeper of the Great Wardrobe, a list was made of all his department's creditors up to Michaelmas 1492 and Hertyngton was shown as being owed £27. 14s. 5d.¹³

In the City of London John's eminence in his craft was acknowledged at least once by his fellow saddlers for in 1489-90 he served as a warden of his Company, being sworn into the office in September 1489.¹⁴ He may have served in other years but the lack of the early records of the Company makes it impossible to tell. For one year at least he and the three other wardens elected with him took precedence of their fellows, administered the Company's affairs and carried out the rights of search which maintained the standards of the goods produced by saddlers in London.

On 26 June 1493 John Hertyngton made his will and before 3 July he was dead, his will being proved on that day. It was a brief document perhaps because of the suddenness of his last illness. He was to be buried in the chapel of St. Thomas in his and his Company's parish church of St. Vedast, and he ordered a contribution to the church's tithes and repair. Once his debts were paid his estate was to be divided into three parts according to the custom of London, a third to his wife, unnamed but probably still Alice Dormer, a third to his children, and the last third to be disposed of according to his own wishes. All his surviving children, John, Robert and Johanna were minors

and were most probably all children of Alice Dormer. The childrens' portion was to go, as was customary, into the keeping of the City's Chamberlain at Guildhall with suitable sureties. The Chamberlain, William Melbourne, painter, was to be one of his executors and must have been personally well known to Hertyngton both as a fellow parishioner of St. Vedast (his wife Agnes was to be buried there) and a fellow supplier of the Great Wardrobe. Hertyngton's other executor was William Marshall, a goldsmith, another craft closely associated with the church of St. Vedast. The residue of his estate was to be disposed of in works of mercy at the discretion of Melbourne and Marshall who were to receive for their pains 26s. 8d. and 13s. 4d. respectively.¹⁵

Sureties for his childrens' inheritance of £40 (approximately £4,000 in modern terms), were taken out at Guildhall in March 1494 by William Wystowe, John Auncell, Richard Aubrey and John Haryngton, all haberdashers, and William Lilly, embroiderer. Both the Haberdashers' and the Embroiderers' Halls were near the Saddlers' and it may be that all of these men were neighbours of John. The children were to receive their portions when they came of age or were married. Whether the boys survived is not certain, but Johanna married John Blakwood 'merchant haberdasher' at the end of 1506, and on 10 December her husband acknowledged satisfaction in Guildhall for his wife's patrimony.¹⁶

Not even his will reveals anything of John Hertyngton's personality and only the barest outline of his life can be sketched. His best testimonial, as a craftsman of note in late fifteenth century London, lies in the Great Wardrobe's record of the goods he supplied for the coronation of Richard III and Anne Neville.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. John W. Sherwell, *A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Guild of Saddlers of the City of London* (London 1889), especially pp.2-3 and 27-36 for their elaborate ordinances of 1363. Some description of the actual craft in the middle ages can be found in the *Catalogue of the Exhibition of Saddlery and Harness held at Saddlers' Hall . . . 1892*, introduction by John W. Sherwell (London 1892).
2. Corporation of London Records Office: *Hustings Roll of Deeds and Wills 195* (29).
3. P. E. Jones (ed.), *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London 1458-82* (Cambridge 1961), p.128.

4. Skraynham was probably the son of Richard 'Scraynham' tailor who died 1437, R. R. Sharpe (ed.), *Calendar of Wills in the Court of Husting, London 1258-1688* (London 1890), vol. 2, p.485. He issued from his apprenticeship to William Hall, mercer, referred to in his 'father's' will in 1449-50. Affianced to, and presumably married, Alice, daughter of John Goodson. Warden of Mercers' again in 1467 and prominent in Company affairs, L. Lyell and F. D. Watney (eds.), *The Acts of Court of the Mercers' Company 1453-1527* (Cambridge 1936), *passim*. R. R. Sharpe (ed.), *Calendar of Letter Books of the City of London: L* (London 1912), pp.6, 9, 20 for his 1461 coronation and auditor activities.
5. Public Record Office: Early Chancery Proceedings C1/46/355 and 383, C1/48/3 and 67. Dateable to between 1467 and 1472 and after 1468 when Hugh Wiche died.
6. *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls 1458-82*, *op. cit.*, pp.64, 165. Thomas Conyngham not identified. For Lute, J. Baker, The Attorneys and Officers of the Common Law in 1480, *Journal of Legal History*, vol. 1 (1980), and for Wolseley, R. Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster 1265-1603*, vol. 1 (London 1973), p.543.
7. Guildhall Library: Saddlers' Company Memoranda Book, MS. 5385A (a photocopy of the original), ff. 145-145b John Langton's will, ff. 147-149 testament and will of Joan Langton. For John Abell, Sherwell, *Historical Account op. cit.*, p.50.
8. R. Horrox, Some Expenses of Richard, Duke of Gloucester, 1475-7, *The Ricardian*, vol. 6 no. 83 (1983), p.267.
9. PRO: C1/60/187. One of Hertynghon's pledges on his bill to the Chancellor was John Broughton, saddler, a fellow witness to Joan Langton's will. Geoffrey Dormer has not been further identified.
10. A. F. Sutton and P. W. Hammond (eds.), *The Coronation of Richard III* (Gloucester 1983), pp.114, 121, 123-127, 133. For a biography of William Thomset, see *ibid.*, p.405.
11. Daniel Williams, The Hastily Drawn up Will of William Catesby Esquire, 25 August 1485, *Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society Transactions*, vol. 51 (1975-6), p.48.
12. W. Campbell (ed.) *Materials for a History of the Reign of Henry VII*, Rolls Series, London 1877, vol. 2, p.492.
13. PRO: Accounts Various E101/413/6, dorso.
14. CLRO: Journal 8, f.320b.
15. PRO: Prerogative Court of Canterbury: PROB 11/9, f.195b (PCC: 25 Dogett). For a biography of Melbourne see A. F. Sutton and P. W. Hammond *op. cit.*
16. *Cal. Letter Book L* (*op. cit.* n. 4), p.301 and n. 2.