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Chapter Title: Nicholas Alwyn, mayor of London: a man of two loyalties, London and Spalding

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Book Title: Medieval Londoners: essays to mark the eightieth birthday of Caroline M. Barron

Book Editor(s): Elizabeth A. New and Christian Steer

Published by: University of London Press; Institute of Historical Research

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvc16qcm.18>

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## 9. Nicholas Alwyn, mayor of London: a man of two loyalties, London and Spalding\*

*Anne F. Sutton*

Nicholas Alwyn<sup>1</sup> was a mercer and merchant adventurer who achieved the mayoralty of London at the age of sixty-four in 1499. The elaborate month's mind he ordered in his home town of Spalding (Lincs.) and his benefactions, which favoured the close-knit area of Spalding, Cowbit, Pinchbeck, Moulton and Weston<sup>2</sup> in his lifetime and in his remarkable testament of 1505,<sup>3</sup> were enough to ensure him a place in local memory for at least a generation. His house in Spalding – later called Ayscoughfee Hall – was built for his relaxation and for his heirs. After much alteration, it is now the local museum and has elevated him to the status of local legend. A recitation of his real career and a disposal of the legends are secondary purposes of this chapter; its most important purpose is to bring to life this immigrant Londoner who, despite his success in the capital city, remained a man of the Fens.

\* I am most grateful for Lincolnshire details from Nicholas Bennett; for advice about peasants and manorial accounts from Chris Briggs; for Surrey details from Graham Dawson; for copies of wills from Christian Steer; and for a tour of churches round Spalding from Shaun Tyas; and also to the Spalding Gentlemen's Society (hereafter SGS) and its librarian for their courtesy and permission to consult their manuscripts.

<sup>1</sup> His name is spelled here in the way consistently used in his will and city of London sources, rather than the affectation of Aldwyn adopted in Spalding certainly by the time of John Grundy, who drew a plan of the town in 1732, now in the care of the SGS.

<sup>2</sup> Bound by their communal dykes, intercommoning and long traditions of co-operation over maintenance of the fens and subject to one main manorial court, that of the priory of Spalding (H. E. Hallam, *Settlement and Society: a Study of the Early Agrarian History of South Lincolnshire* (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 24–7, 215–23). For Hallam's assertion that the area was economically depressed in Alwyn's lifetime, see H. E. Hallam, 'The agrarian economy of South Lincolnshire in the mid-fifteenth century', *Nottingham Medieval Stud.*, xi (1967), 86–95.

<sup>3</sup> This testament is referred to frequently throughout this article (TNA, PROB 11/15, fos. 9–12); it should not be confused with his will.

A. F. Sutton, 'Nicholas Alwyn, mayor of London: a man of two loyalties, London and Spalding', in *Medieval Londoners: essays to mark the eightieth birthday of Caroline M. Barron*, ed. E. A. New and C. Steer (London, 2019), pp. 189–219. License: CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0.

***Origins, trade and the creation of a fortune, 1436–1506***

Nicholas was born in Spalding to Richard and Margaret Alwyn, probably in 1436.<sup>4</sup> The emphasis on Cowbit in his testament may suggest they were of that hamlet or had strong ties there.<sup>5</sup> They were not among the villein (*nativi*) tenants of Spalding priory, which held two of the three manors of Spalding, and have not been found among the tenants of the third manor there held by Crowland abbey, of which two contemporary accounts survive.<sup>6</sup> His parents can be assumed to have been a prosperous couple of the town of Spalding, its harbour sharing in the trade of the east coast. They had enough wealth to apprentice him in 1452 (aged about sixteen) to John Brodesworth, a mercer of London and merchant adventurer.<sup>7</sup> Brodesworth appears to have been a maverick, for he had bought entry to the Mercers, owned property in Essex and Yorkshire, was regularly fined by his new company and took a great many apprentices (at least sixteen). He was in debt by the late 1440s, when he was declared to have no shop in the city and even arrested and sent to the Tower of London. He recovered, however, and continued to take apprentices, such as Alwyn in 1452. This erratic career may suggest that the Alwyns had limited funds and could not afford the high premium demanded by a more eminent and respected mercer, or that they had a business connection with Brodesworth through the port of Spalding – but, as has been said, the background of the family has not been discovered. Brodesworth failed or died, leaving no will, probably in the later 1450s.<sup>8</sup> Alwyn was transferred to

<sup>4</sup> Alwyn's testament provides the names of his parents, their tombstone and his chantry in Spalding parish church. The determined local legend which made Richard 'Alwyn' a stapler and the first builder of Ascoughfee hall (c.1420–c.1450) was publicized but not initiated by Richard Gough in *Britannia, or a Chorographical Description of the Flourishing Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland* by William Camden, enlarged by R. Gough (3 vols., London, 1789), ii, 289. No confirmation of this has been found.

<sup>5</sup> Cowbit chapel (a dependency of Spalding priory) appeared several times in his will: his gift of £10; 20s to its Trinity guild; its priests were to attend his month mind; it received 2 torches after the exequies; its poor shared in gowns and money with Spalding (see n. 110).

<sup>6</sup> A John 'Haldyn' paid rent on 2 acres of meadow in 1478–9 to Crowland abbey in the area (Lincoln Archives Office (hereafter LAO), 6 Anc 5/1, m. 1). No Alwyns have been found in SGS, Myntling Register of Spalding Priory, which recorded pedigrees of the priory's *nativi*. Neither SGS, Wrest Park Cartulary (for Crowland abbey) nor Cambridge University Library, Additional MS. 4400, survey made for Crowland, c.1476–7, refers to them.

<sup>7</sup> For the minutiae of trade, administration and career structure of the Mercers' and the Merchant Adventurers' Companies, see A. F. Sutton, *The Mercery of London: Trade, Goods and People 1130–1578* (Aldershot, 2005). Dates of admittances to the Mercers before 1464 are derived from the author's notes from the Mercers' Company of London (hereafter MC), wardens' accounts, 1348, 1390–1463 (hereafter WA) and the register of members.

<sup>8</sup> Brodesworth (also Brod, Brodeworth, Brodiseworth, Brodysworth) can be found between 1431 and 1446 trading in linen, worsted, woollen cloth, some scarlet and madder in

finish his apprenticeship with the eminently respectable Richard Rich of Ironmonger Lane. He was admitted to the Company in 1463,<sup>9</sup> after completing a ten-year apprenticeship which demanded several years abroad learning the trade of mercer and merchant adventurer (the overseas company which had its headquarters in the Low Countries and was dominated by the London Mercers); he learnt to sell English cloth at the Brabant fairs and buy the finest linens. He had to master French and Dutch, with some Latin for account keeping. Alwyn's recorded trade overseas started in 1456–7 and he continued to appear in the customs accounts, exporting English cloth, importing linen and general merceries, until 1502.<sup>10</sup> He was not in the wool trade of Calais: neither Brodesworth nor Richard Rich was a stapler and Alwyn could not learn that trade from them. It is clear that Alwyn only added the wool trade to his business in the late 1470s, probably as a result of the interests of his son-in-law, Henry, a member of the prestigious and wealthy Cantelowe family.<sup>11</sup> He was included in the pardon of 4 May 1480 as both a mercer and stapler (implying a trade in wool a little earlier); and he appears frequently to have traded in wool with Cantelowe until Henry's death in 1491 and thereafter he continued to trade in wool until at least 1502.<sup>12</sup> He was never one of the high-

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the surviving London customs accounts. There is no sign of him as a stapler in the London wool accounts. He paid to enter the livery of the Mercers 1435–7 (MC, WA 1435–6 and 1436–7, fos. 123v, 124). In 1436 he was found to have land assessed at £16 (S. L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1948), p. 379; *CPMR 1437–57*, p. 114). Of his apprentices, Alwyn, Nicholas Hagar, Richard Pope and Nicholas Glover had to be transferred to new masters.

<sup>9</sup> MC, WA 1463, and register of members. For the Rich Family, see A. F. Sutton, *Wives and Widows of Medieval London* (Donington, 2016), pp. 124–5 and *passim*; their wills do not refer to Alwyn.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. TNA, E 122/194/11, petty custom, Mich. 1461–20 May 1462 (35 cloths, m. 10d); E 122/194/16, tonnage and poundage 2 Feb.–Mich. 1463 (paper, painted glass, linen, brushes, mm. 2–4d); E 122/194/15, petty custom Mich. 1463–27 Jan. 1464 (10 cloths, m. 7d); E 122/128/15, Sandwich customs accounts 1474–5 (17 May 1475, gold thread, buckram and brigandine nails); E 122/194/23, petty customs Mich. 1477–Mich. 1478 (117 cloths, mm. 8d, 9, 12–12d, 15d); *The Overseas Trade of London: Exchequer Customs Accounts 1480–I*, ed. H. S. Cobb (London Rec. Soc., xxvii, 1990), petty custom Mich. 1480–Mich. 1481 (115 cloths), nos. 309, 452, 465, 498, 571; E 122/129/13, Sandwich customs account Mich. 1486–Mich. 1487 (linen, lawn, cotton, sheets and laces of thread, 5 Nov., 23 July); E 122/78/9, petty custom 1490–1 (43 cloths, mm. 9d, 11d); *CPR 1494–1509*, pp. 282–4, pardon to adventurers, 16 June 1502.

<sup>11</sup> This contradicts the Spalding legend which makes him and his father staplers (and knights). Alwyn was not in the 1472 list of staplers (TNA, SC 1/57/111). I am indebted to a new transcript of this damaged manuscript given to me by Alan Rogers and David Grummitt.

<sup>12</sup> *CPR 1476–85*, p. 244, Pardon, 4 May 1480 (alias Halewyne, Alewyne); and see Sutton, *Mercery*, pp. 312–3. He appears in the following accounts: 1480–1, in *Overseas Trade of London*, nos. 600–2 (no individual amounts given); TNA, E 122/78/2, Wool Customs accounts, 19 June–27 Sept. 1483 (with Henry Cantelowe); E 122/78/5, Mich. 1487–Mich. 1488 (over 81

flyers, but he made his fortune.

In 1463 Alwyn had been accorded the status of a shop-keeper, the same year as his admittance to the Mercers' Company, which meant his capital had been assessed as £100. This was the first step up the hierarchy and suggests he had indulged in personal trade as an apprentice (as does his appearance in customs accounts before 1463), an activity which was forbidden without the permission of his master – or alternatively that he now had family money behind him.<sup>13</sup> Ambition marks his entire career: apart from the formalities of admission in the wardens' accounts, the first reference to him was a fine of 6s 8d for his uncourteous language to the wardens in the accounting year of 1463–4. From 1466 to his death he indentured regular apprentices, some of whom came from his home county or town (see below).<sup>14</sup> His business ability and languages meant that he was chosen to advise on the arguments to be presented by the Adventurers appointed to the embassy negotiating about the ban on English cloth imposed by the duke of Burgundy, the lord of the Low Countries, in 1468.<sup>15</sup> Almost ten years later he was appointed to assess the wealth of his fellow mercers for a benevolence for Edward IV before his invasion of France, but he failed to record his own liability and had to be entered later among those worth £10 a year or having £100 worth of goods. At this time he was living in the central ward of Cheap, but not yet in his final house (see below). Despite his peccadillo over the tax assessment, he was involved in the choice of men to ride to meet Edward IV on his return from France and the purchase of livery cloth for the occasion.<sup>16</sup> He was increasingly on committees, deputed to discuss the payment of the king's customs; to control the worsted men of Norwich who were intruding on the mercers' trade in worsted goods in London; to prevent young men of the Company attending fairs and selling their

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sacks and 15,600 fells with Henry Cantelowe); E 122/78/8, Mich. 1489–Mich. 1490 (with Henry Cantelowe; account damaged); E 122/78/10, Mich. 1490–Mich. 1491 (over 34 sacks); E 122/79/3, Mich. 1491–Mich. 1492 (over 11 sacks and nearly 6,000 fells); E 122/73/4, Mich. 1493–Mich. 1494; E 122/79/9, Mich. 1501–Mich. 1502 (800 fells).

<sup>13</sup> Sutton, *Mercery*, pp. 210–11.

<sup>14</sup> No dates for apprentices entering their service are known after the end of the wardens' accounts in 1464 and the only source is MC, register of members: after a ten-year apprenticeship the following men were admitted to the Company as Alwyn's past apprentices: 1476 Thomas Blenche; 1481 Henry Brooke; 1483 Robert Jackson; 1489 Richard Jones; 1491 Richard Alwyn [his son]; 1495 Michael English; 1497 John Knight; 1509 Hugh Smith and Nicholas Tickhill; 1512 William Butler and Robert Smith; 1525 John Fayrey and William Tales. For the Smiths see below.

<sup>15</sup> *Acts of Court of the Mercers' Company 1454–1527*, ed. L. Lyell and F. D. Watney (Cambridge, 1936) (hereafter *AC*), pp. 61–2. The date of his elevation to the livery is unknown.

<sup>16</sup> *AC*, pp. 7, 8–9, 80, 88, 91; Sutton, *Mercery*, pp. 190–2.

goods outside the city; and to advise on the reform of the English currency in relation to those circulating across the Channel.<sup>17</sup> He was one of many mercers fined in 1479–80 for their dishonesty over the king's customs and took part in the lengthy negotiations with Edward IV over the heavy fine that was the consequence.<sup>18</sup>

In 1481 he was a warden, third of the four, so he had missed the lowest rank of renterwarden; the master was Robert Tate, of the wealthy stapler family. This was a significant career point for Alwyn.<sup>19</sup> Prestigious tasks continued: he was involved in the Adventurers' restraint of trade, aimed in particular at the fair towns of Brabant in 1483: his apprentice, Richard Jones, and another of Henry Cantelowe infringed the terms of the restraint in order to make a handsome profit, probably with their masters' connivance, and one of the Adventurers' ambassadors, Hugh Clopton, did the same. They all had to face proceedings before the Mercers.<sup>20</sup> He represented the Mercers among the Adventurers at a diet in Calais in 1486, took part in the formulation of answers to complaints against London mercers by merchants of Bristol, and in 1487–8, when he was the second warden of the Mercers (Hugh Clopton being master), he represented them again when they were harangued by the chancellor over their trade with the Low Countries. Alwyn was master of the Mercers in 1495 to 1496 and he was now an alderman, the office of master usually being held by an alderman. From 1488, however, his profile in Mercer and Adventurer matters was becoming less pronounced, although he appears to have remained involved in negotiations over the injuries endured by Adventurers in Calais when Henry VII forced them to conduct their trade through that town: as he was one of the mercers who was both an adventurer and a stapler, he had certain advantages.<sup>21</sup> Easier matters in which he was concerned were the assessment of the possibilities of Crosby hall for Mercer assemblies – he might have considered whether its hall would be necessary for his own mayoral feast – and the arrangements to welcome the mercer Hugh Clopton, absent in his home town of Stratford-

<sup>17</sup> *AC*, pp. 92, 100.

<sup>18</sup> *CPR 1476–85*, p. 244 (specified as a stapler for the first time, see above); Sutton, *Mercery*, pp. 312–3.

<sup>19</sup> *AC*, p. 285; Sutton, *Mercery*, p. 556 (list of wardens).

<sup>20</sup> *AC*, pp. 157, 161–2, 163–4ff.; *The Book of Privileges of the Merchant Adventurers, 1296–1483*, ed. A. F. Sutton and L. Visser-Fuchs (London and Oxford, 2009), pp. 18–28 (misbehaviour, at pp. 25–8).

<sup>21</sup> *AC*, pp. 294–5, 300, 198–9 (the pages of the *AC* are not always in chronological sequence); Sutton, *Mercery*, ch. 11, for Henry VII's fear of merchant adventurers conspiring with his rebels in the Low Countries, which led him to hinder their trade, e.g., by forcing them to leave the Low Countries and trade through Calais, much disliked by both adventurers and staplers.

upon-Avon (Warwickshire), to take up his position as mayor of London in 1491.<sup>22</sup>

Alwyn undoubtedly had his eye on the highest civic office, but his city career had been late in starting. He was a common councilman by the late 1470s, but it took him a long while to advance beyond this. In February 1481 he had been elected for Cordwainer Street ward (where his last great house was located, in St. Mary le Bow churchyard) to manage the collection of the benevolence of 5,000 marks granted to Edward IV for the war against the Scots and appoint the ward collectors; and in 1482 and 1483 he was one of the two commoners elected city auditors during the mayoralties of Sir William Heryot and Sir Edmund Shaa.<sup>23</sup> In 1491 he represented the city in parliament, served as sheriff from 1494 to 1495 and from July 1496 was elected alderman, first for Coleman Street ward and then for Bassishaw. The election as alderman gave him the opportunity to acquire arms: *argent, a fess engrailed azure, between three lions rampant sable*. In 1499 he was elected mayor at the age of sixty-four, the high point of his London career.<sup>24</sup>

He took his oath in the Guildhall on 28 October 1499<sup>25</sup> and on the following day travelled by water to Westminster to take his oath before the barons of the exchequer, accompanied by all the livery companies in their barges, that of the Mercers taking pride of place with minstrelsy, trumpets and banners flying. He returned to his mayoral feast and in the evening he went to St. Paul's to pray at the tomb of the parents of St. Thomas Becket and returned home by torchlight – was he to transfer something of this impressive ceremony to his own parents' grave?<sup>26</sup> All mayors needed a large house for their mayoral festivities and duties throughout the year, but especially for their mayoral feast. It is likely Alwyn was able to hold this in his great house in St. Mary le Bow parish. Since 1483 he had been busy buying (a process finalized by the time of his mayoralty<sup>27</sup>) a substantial property

<sup>22</sup> *AC*, pp. 213, 220–1.

<sup>23</sup> *Cal. Letter Bks. L*, pp. 175–6, 195, 210. These appointments allow us to suppose he was on the common council by the end of the 1470s.

<sup>24</sup> A. B. Beaven, *The Aldermen of the City of London* (2 vols., London, 1908 and 1913), i. 273 (MP); ii. 19. It is significant that Beaven accords him no knighthood. On the arms, see E. H. Gooch, *A History of Spalding* (Spalding, 1940), p. 250.

<sup>25</sup> He left £73 6s 8d for a 'hankyng of tapecery' to serve for the high dais in the Guildhall, or other things to serve in the same hall.

<sup>26</sup> C. M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and the People 1200–1500* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 152–4.

<sup>27</sup> His feoffees in 1483 were his two sons-in-law, Henry Cantelowe and William Heryot junior, and John Haw, the lawyer. Haw quitclaimed his interest in the property in 1502 (Cantelowe and Heryot were dead). Alwyn's last feoffees were John Pickton (see below), Richard Golofer (once his fellow apprentice) and William Carkeke, his all-important



on the cemetery of that church, once owned by the famous mercer family of William Coventry (d. 1406) and his sons, in the ward of Cordwainer Street. The house had the essential large hall over twenty feet wide (length not known) with a dais for a high table, a parlour and entry and a chapel.<sup>28</sup> His year as mayor saw no great event: it was rumoured that Katherine of Aragon would be arriving for her marriage to the prince of Wales and the city planned for her reception, but this was delayed for another year and this delay probably ensured that Alwyn did not attract a knighthood, a fact not aided by the death of the king's son, Edmund, whose requiem he and the aldermen attended.<sup>29</sup>

It was his parish church of St. Mary le Bow where Alwyn chose to be buried: in the choir, at his executors' discretion, under the 'sepulchre that John Worsip did make', with a marble stone over his grave (40s to be divided between the parson and the churchwardens). He made many carefully costed depositions for his funeral, which would have had the additional panoply laid on by the city and his company for a past mayor.<sup>30</sup> He, unusually, wanted four priests to carry his body to burial, the livery men of his company 'to go by them' (20d to each of the eight) – the Mercers' Company was to have a 'jewel' (£13 6s 8d).<sup>31</sup> There were to be twenty-four torches of 20 lbs wax at both his burial and month's mind (total cost £6 13s 4d), and John Ash, waxchandler (who was also an overseer of his testament and so may be presumed a friend), was to make an 'honest hearse' and find all the wax and workmanship for 10 marks. The twenty-four bearers at both

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scrivener friend (D. Keene and V. Harding, *Historical Gazetteer of London before the Great Fire*, i. *Cheapside* (Cambridge, 1987), 104/11, p. 245).

<sup>28</sup> His testament provides a basic description (TNA, PROB 11/15, fo. 10r–v): *In the hall*: a long table for the 'high deyes' of 6 'verges' long by 1 'verge' wide [fo. 10v], with a chair and 7 high joined stools and 2 trestles. Also 2 side tables with 4 trestles and 2 long forms with the benches and a standing cupboard. *In the entry before the parlour*: a laver with 3 spouts. *In the parlour*: 2 tables and 4 trestles with 2 forms and a dozen joined stools and a standing cupboard. *Buttery*: all the shelves with 'almery to the same', bins. *The Great Chamber*: a standing bed with boards, a long table and 2 trestles, a cupboard. *Chapel*: an altar of alabaster of the Passion of Our Lord, with desks belonging to the chapel. *Compter*: a comptor board with all the shelves and aumbreys belonging. All the standing beds in each chamber. *Outside the Kitchen*: a cistern. Another cistern in *the coming in*. *The Yard*: 2 cisterns ('sestrons'). *Stable*: a coop for poultry.

<sup>29</sup> R. R. Sharpe, *London and the Kingdom* (3 vols., London, 1894–5) i. 334–5. Angel Don was involved in the 1499 preparations (Sutton, *Wives*, p. 206).

<sup>30</sup> Testament, see n. 3. Cf. the funeral of Thomas Bradbury (although he died in office as mayor) (Sutton, *Wives*, pp. 307–9).

<sup>31</sup> He remembered the Company's under-beadle, the master, fellows, clerks and poor men of Whittington College and almshouse, as well as St. Thomas of Acre (£6 13s 4d for repairs), where lay the Mercers' hall, master, brethren and children of the choir.



ceremonies were to have 4*d* each time (total 16*s*) and a black gown and hood made from black 'lining' (total £6 13*s* 4*d*). Most important were the distributions of 12*d* each to 3,000 poor of London (£150), with £4 for the labour of distribution; and a further 1*d* each to 6,000 poor at his month's mind, when the distributors were to receive a total of 20*s* for their work and 'for the place that the dole shal be made'. The preacher of the sermon at his month's mind was to be Simon Foderby, newly a doctor of theology and parson of St. Peter's Cornhill since 1503 (10*s*).<sup>32</sup> Alwyn valued him, perhaps as a fellow Lincolnshireman, and left him an additional bequest of a pair of coral beads of ten *aves* with two square paternosters of silver gilt. It was essential to have his name remembered before the higher ranks of the city who assembled at the sermons at St. Paul's Cross and the Easter sermons at St. Mary's hospital Bishopsgate (40*s* 4*d* to each priest). In St. Mary le Bow, apart from the month's mind, there were to be further services to care for his soul and carry his name before the parishioners: a daily *Dirige* and mass of requiem by note by ten priests and two clerks (each to receive 10*s*), with two tapers of 4lbs burning at his grave during divine service for a month (40*s*), and the sexton was to have 3*s* 4*d* for their lighting and quenching. After the formal exequies were over, he provided for the parish priest to pray for his soul from the pulpit every Sunday for twenty years (total 40*s*); for a ten-year chantry at the altar of St. Nicholas (at 10 marks per annum and a vestment of red worsted with all its apparel, which he had lately had made); and, third, a further twenty-year obit for the souls of himself, 'my late wif' and children, with priest, clerk, bells, bread and payments to the poor (13*s* 4*d* yearly). Finally, the steeple of St. Mary le Bow was to have 100 marks for its making and repair and for no other matter. The only other city church to be mentioned was St. Magnus, when the north side was taken down to widen the street (£6 13*s* 4*d*).

His London 'great place', mayoralty and funeral displayed his achievements to all. Alwyn had, however, achieved the mayoralty and aldermanry comparatively late, and a reason for this can be suggested: an alderman had to be worth £1,000 in moveable goods before his nomination could be accepted, for it was a laborious and expensive office, requiring leisure away from business, and he had had the heavy expense of providing for adult children.<sup>33</sup> The cost of property acquired in the 1480s in the city and in his home town, where he was also building – for his own pleasure and for his family – may have been another reason.

<sup>32</sup> Simon Foderby alias Grene, from Helpringham, Lincs., canon of Lincoln from 1509, rector of St. Peter's from 1503 to his death; known for his learning; died 1536, buried Lincoln Cathedral (*BRUO (to A.D. 1500)*, ii. 702–3).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Richard Rich (Sutton, *Wives*, pp. 65–6, 124–5).

### *Alwyn's family and London circle*

Alwyn married twice, and of the children who survived to adulthood, his eldest son and two daughters seem to have been generously provided for. His first marriage, to Joan,<sup>34</sup> took place soon after his emergence from apprenticeship, and his first surviving son, Richard, was born about 1465 (Figure 9.1). Richard was apprenticed to Nicholas himself and was admitted to the Mercers in 1491 at the usual age of twenty-six. Richard traded briefly as an adventurer in cloth in 1490–1 and as a stapler from 1489–90 and 1491–2.<sup>35</sup> He married Margaret Thomas, sister of the mercer John Thomas,<sup>36</sup> and had a son, born in 1495 and called Nicholas.<sup>37</sup> Richard can be assumed to have died soon after.

Alwyn never names his daughters and the name of only one has been discovered despite their good marriages, undoubtedly supported by large dowries. Margaret married Henry, a younger son of Sir William Cantelowe, one of the richest and best known of mercer families.<sup>38</sup> Alwyn's bequest to an Ellen Pypyn, once living with William Cantelowe (6s 8d), his bequest to repair a road near Dunstable (Bedfordshire) (the Cantelowe's home area) and his taking of John Fayrey of Dunstable as his apprentice<sup>39</sup> all suggest affection

<sup>34</sup> No surname has been discovered for her; the sole reference to her Christian name is in Alwyn's husting will.

<sup>35</sup> TNA, E 122/78/9, Mich. 1490–Mich. 1491 (60 cloths, mm. 7d, 11d); E 122/78/8, wool accounts 1489–90 (over 18 sacks, account damaged); E 122/79/3, 1491–2 (over 6,000 fells). He may have traded before admittance to his company; the dates in the Mercers' register cannot always be taken too precisely.

<sup>36</sup> John Thomas, mercer, left his deceased sister's son, Nicholas Alwyn, a dozen silver spoons with 'knoppes' in 1506 (TNA, PROB 11/15, fo. 114v).

<sup>37</sup> Aged 11 in 1506 at the death of his grandfather (*Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem of the Reign of Henry VII* (3 vols., London, 1898–1959), iii, no. 1135).

<sup>38</sup> Sir William Cantelowe had been mayor in 1461 (d. 1464). Henry married three times (his first wife, Elizabeth, had left no issue alive) and he referred to neither of his dead wives in his will. His third wife, Joan, widow of Thomas Fabian and Stephen Gibson, both mercers, brought with her 2 Fabian children and 6 Gibson children to join Henry's 2 children by Margaret Alwyn. Henry died in Dec. 1490 aged 43 and his widow Joan was executor with Nicholas Alwyn and William Heryot. The children's portions were left to the care of their grandfather and William Heryot (TNA, PROB 11/8, fos. 210v–13). Henry's widow Joan died in 1492 and her executors were the same as her husband's (TNA, PROB 11/9, fos. 105v–1077v) (Sutton, *Wives*, pp. 79–82 and nn. 40–52). Henry left his brother-in-law Richard Alwyn, stapler, £20 and his wife 40s (fo. 212); and Margaret, wife of William Heryot, £3 6s 8d; he referred to his 'place' at Tooting and made bequests to Tooting and Streatham (fo. 211v); and his priest William 'Jely' for his exhibition at Cambridge (fo. 211v). Alwyn acted as Henry's feoffee for property in Bedfordshire, the county where the Canteloves originated (*A Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient Deeds*, ed. H. C. Maxwell Lyte (6 vols., London, 1890–1915), vi. C5099).

<sup>39</sup> On Fayrey, see Sutton, *Wives*, pp. 208 n. 145, 209 n. 149.

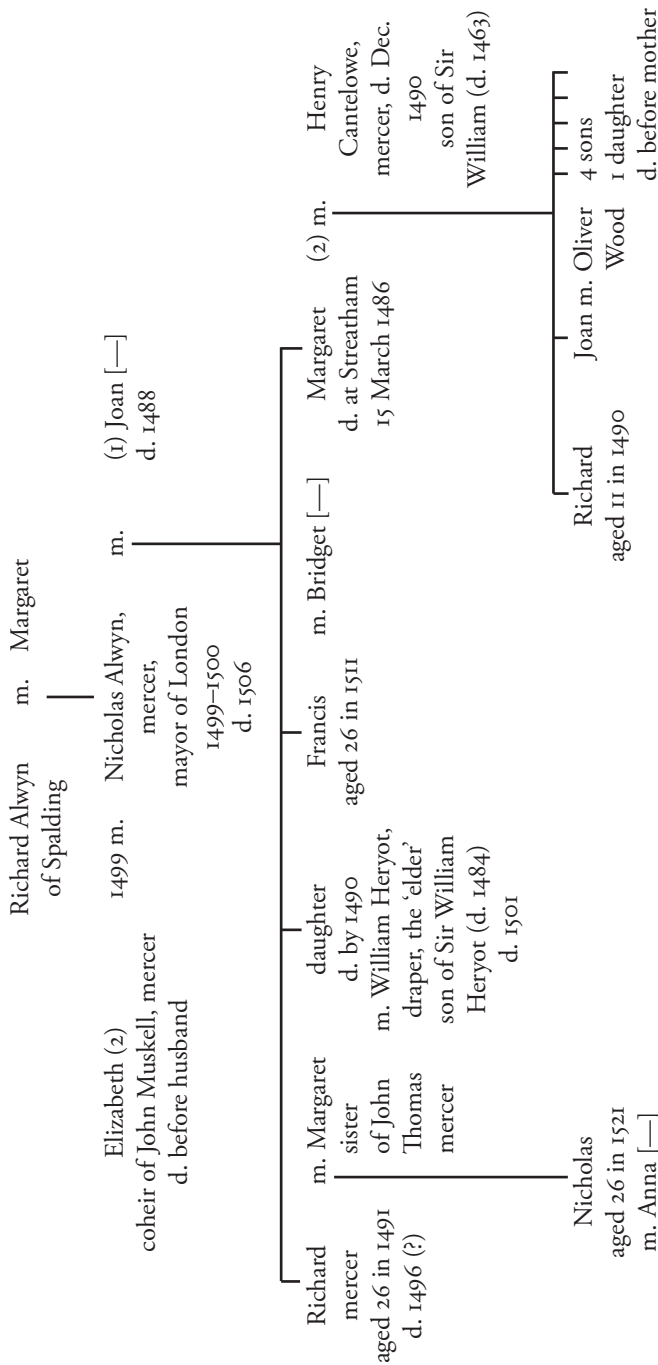


Figure 9.1. Alwyn family tree (A. F. Surton)

for the whole family and its concerns, as does his personal relationship with Thomas Cantelowe (see below). Margaret Alwyn-Cantelowe died young on 5 March 1486 and was buried at Streatham (Surrey) under a brass showing her with five sons and two daughters and recording the names of her father and husband in an epitaph-prayer to the Virgin Mary. Henry Cantelowe's own country place was at nearby Tooting – and her father was to leave bequests in his testament to repair the church's nave, to provide candles to burn on her grave during Easter and for the repair of the roads between Streatham and Tooting Beck and Croydon.<sup>40</sup> The Cantelowe marriage produced Richard, who was left a gold ring by Alwyn, and Joan, who was left a primer by her grandfather, by which time she was already married to Oliver Wood and had a daughter of her own, who was left a jewelled *Agnus Dei* by her grandfather.<sup>41</sup> Richard Cantelowe and Joan Wood were to be the heirs to Alwyn's estate after the death of his direct male heirs; in the event there was to be nothing to inherit. The Cantelowes' fortune was, however, to survive to the next generation and was a highly complex estate, including the inheritances of children in the care of Henry Cantelowe's last wife Joan (d. 1493): two step-children from her first husband, Thomas Fabian, and her own six by her second husband, Stephen Gibson.<sup>42</sup> Alwyn served as executor of Henry and of his widow, Joan, and was one of the sureties for Henry's children's estate in October 1494 with his old associate John Pikton,<sup>43</sup> John Mille, mercer, and William Heryot, draper, for over £590.<sup>44</sup> Alwyn's other

<sup>40</sup> M. Stephenson, *A List of Monumental Brasses in Surrey* (new edn., Bath, 1970), pp. 492–3. It is worth noting that the church of Blechingley, Surrey, benefited from a vestment embroidered with flowers and his mark because his apprentice Nicholas Tickhill came from there.

<sup>41</sup> For a pedigree of 2 generations of Woods, including Oliver and his 5 brothers (and sister, wife of Sir Robert Tate, mayor of London 1488–9), children of Richard Wood, mayor of Coventry (1454, 1467) and Margaret, whose 2nd husband was Sir William Taillour, mayor of London 1468–9, and who died in 1483 (her considerable wealth made her a valuable associate and mother), see A. F. Sutton, *A Merchant Family of Coventry, London and Calais: the Tates c.1450–1515* (London, 1998), esp. p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> William Ilam, mercer, died 1493 and left 6s 8d to William Porter, servant of 'master Alwyn', and the same to Nicholas Tickhill, apprentice of Alwyn; to Alwyn he left all the money 'my masters' Thomas Fabian and Henry Cantelowe and Joan Cantelowe (their widow) left to him under their testaments (TNA, PROB 11/9, fo. 186).

<sup>43</sup> John Pikton, mercer, came from Dursbury; his marriage to the twice-widowed Margaret (born Dey, see n. 58) financed his rise to adventurer-status and wardenship of the Mercers; he died in 1505 (TNA, PROB 11/14, fos. 229v–30; Sutton, *Wives*, pp. 62, 63, 76, 92).

<sup>44</sup> *Cal. Letter Bks. L*, pp. 303–4, n. 1: on 13 July 1497 Oliver Wood received Joan's estate as her husband. The inquisition *post mortem* of Henry Cantelowe, Dec. 1490, shows Alwyn and Heryot among his feoffees and that Richard was 11 at his father's death (*CIPM HVII*, i., no. 629). Alwyn was careful to demand in his testament acquittances from all the children of the persons to whom he had acted as executor.

daughter (name unknown) had married this William Heryot II, draper, the elder of two sons, both called William, of Sir William Heryot, draper, whose trade stretched from Iceland to Italy, who had been entertained by Edward IV himself and who died in 1484.<sup>45</sup> Alwyn's daughter was dead by 1490 and her husband had married again to a Margaret (surname unknown); he had a daughter (unnamed) who was left £6 13s 4d by Alwyn, but she was probably her father's illegitimate daughter, Elizabeth. William Heryot died in 1501, leaving his widow, Margaret, to be his executrix with Nicholas Alwyn his 'lovyng fader in lawe'.<sup>46</sup>

Alwyn had another son: Francis, born in 1485, perhaps the last in a sequence of children born to Joan, who died in 1488.<sup>47</sup> He was apprenticed to the mercer Richard Berne by his father in 1501. Meanwhile, Alwyn decided belatedly to enlarge his family after the death of his eldest son and two daughters and married his last wife in March 1500, while he was mayor. She was Elizabeth, one of the two surviving daughters and heiresses of John Mustell, mercer. She also died before Alwyn, possibly in childbirth.<sup>48</sup>

When, in early 1505, he composed the will (dated 22 February 1505) concerning his lands, which was to be proved in the husting court (not to be confused with his long testament), Nicholas Alwyn had a choice between two male heirs and grandchildren by his daughter Margaret Cantelowe. He provided for his grandson (by his eldest son Richard) and his own son, Francis, while minors, from the rent of his properties and £400 (and any surpluses) was to be divided between them when of age. He chose to ignore strict male primogeniture and to leave all his landed property, save one block, to his youngest son, Francis.<sup>49</sup> Francis, at the age of twenty-six, would receive four messuages in St. Mary le Bow and two in the parish of St. Mary Magdalen Milk Street, the rents to be collected by

<sup>45</sup> The sequence of daughters, both unnamed, is taken from the depositions in Alwyn's testament and will. Sir William Heryot died in 1484; Sir William's widow, Joan, is mentioned with her fellow executors and son William Heryot (*CPR 1494-1509*, pp. 27-8). William Heryot II or 'the elder' continued his father's trade; for death of his Alwyn wife before 1490, see n. 38.

<sup>46</sup> William Heryot, II (TNA, PROB 11/12, fos. 84-85v).

<sup>47</sup> *The Bede Roll of the Fraternity of St Nicholas*, ed. N. W. and V. A. James (London Rec. Soc., xxxix, 2004): Nicholas and Joan were admitted in 1485 (nos. 262-3); her death was recorded in 1488 and his in 1506 (nos. 293, 454).

<sup>48</sup> Alwyn married Elizabeth in March 1500 (*Cal. Letter Bks. L*, p. 245 and n.). Mustell's will is at TNA, PROB 11/7, fos. 144-5. For Mustell, see Sutton, *Wives*, pp. 206, 232-3.

<sup>49</sup> *Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting 1258-1688*, ed. R. R. Sharpe (2 vols., London, 1889-90), ii. 625-6. The calendar reads ambiguously and has omissions, so the original has been checked. It is not clear why this will was only brought into court in 1518 by Alderman Robert Aldernes and John Wilford, scrivener; it was annotated as examined by Nicholas Rutland, clerk.

the executors, who would provide for Francis's keeping and save any surplus for him (or Nicholas if Francis should die).<sup>50</sup> Further remainders went to Joan Wood and then to Richard Cantelowe, her brother. In default of all heirs, the St. Mary le Bow property was to be added to the endowment of the Coventry chantry in the parish church and the names of Nicholas and his wife Joan were to join those prayed for there, while the messuages in St. Mary Magdalen were to go to the Mercers' Company to ensure that the livery of the company attend the services of the chantry. His property in Spalding was to be occupied by his executors for one year and then the issues were to support Francis, who was to inherit, with remainder to Nicholas; if there were no heirs it was to be sold to benefit the poor of Spalding and Cowbit and to repair local roads and bridges. Nicholas was to receive the nine messuages and ten gardens on Bermondsey Street in St. Olave's Southwark, held from the abbot of Bermondsey, the income to support Nicholas until he was twenty-six; the remainders went to Francis, Joan Wood and Richard Cantelowe and in default of heirs were to be sold to benefit several standard charities in London, Spalding and Cowbit. Alwyn also had an interest in a 'great newe place in Milkestrete' once belonging to Henry Cantelowe and entailed on Richard, his son, with remainder to his sister, Joan Wood, and thereafter to Thomas Cantelowe, son of Sir William Cantelowe and brother of Henry. Alwyn had been granted his interest by Thomas Cantelowe and now Alwyn wished that this interest should benefit his own grandson, Nicholas, if the Cantelowe heirs failed. Last, but not least, was a bequest of a messuage and garden in St. Giles Cripplegate to Alice Hedge, identifiable as his housekeeper.

Nicholas's wishes concerning his lands were not repeated in detail in his long testament of 2 October 1505, with its long codicil of 18 January 1506 (eleven days before he died on 29 January), proved at Lambeth on 11 February 1506, but they were endorsed. This has to be stated, for the inquisition *post mortem* of 11 June 1506 into his estate, as presented by four feoffees (not the executors of the Lambeth testament), reversed the two male heirs and declared the inheritance should pass by strict rules of primogeniture to the grandson, Nicholas, then aged eleven, when he was twenty-six. Francis received the remainder, followed by Joan Cantelowe-Wood and her brother Richard Cantelowe and in default of heirs the properties were to be sold to benefit charities in London and Spalding.<sup>51</sup> In the event, the wishes of Nicholas Alwyn, as presented in his husting court

<sup>50</sup> The first year's issues went to the executors who occupied all his property.

<sup>51</sup> His feoffees in the inquisition *post mortem* were John Hawe, Thomas Rich, William Jeffrey and John Gare (all living). The inquisition is dated 11 June 1506 (*CIPM Henry VII*, iii, no. 1135, recording his death as 29 Jan. 1506).

will – its contents clearly known despite its late passage through that court – prevailed. Francis became formally of age in 1511 and received £200 and half of all the profits accrued by Alwyn's executors from their management of the estate since his death, plus the major part of the property. Francis's good fortune apparently went to his head. By 1513–6 he owed £140 to Philip Meredith, mercer of London, and another £20 to two mercers of Norwich, Hamund Lynstead and Alderman Robert James. He managed to avoid arrest but an inquest into his property was held<sup>52</sup> and he had to extricate himself with letters of protection of July 1515 and March 1516.<sup>53</sup> He can be found listed as an adventurer in January 1516, so it can be assumed he survived these problems.<sup>54</sup> In 1518, when he was referring to himself as a gentleman and was apparently married to a woman called Bridget (surname unknown), Francis divided the property in St. Mary le Bow and sold three messuages along Bow Lane to John Sedley, an auditor of the exchequer, to pay off part of a debt, the rest to be paid back from the rent of Francis's great place in the churchyard, which he and his wife then granted to feoffees to hold to their use. By 1522, the great place where Nicholas Alwyn had held his mayoralty was in the hands of John Gostwyke and William Carkeke junior and both Francis and his nephew (now aged twenty-six) were called to warrant the transaction.<sup>55</sup> The only satisfactory element in this sorry story was that the great place in St. Mary le Bow was acquired by William Carkeke, the scrivener son of the scrivener who had been a long-term friend of the elder Nicholas and writer of his testament and will. The property in Southwark, left by Nicholas Alwyn to his grandson and namesake, was also sold, conveyed by him and his wife, Anna, to a Francis Lovell in 1522.<sup>56</sup> No further details have been found about the careers of Francis or the younger Nicholas. It cannot be doubted that the Spalding property was also disposed of between 1511 and 1522 by Francis. As will be seen, this date fits well with the few facts known from the Spalding end.

Alwyn's associations and property in both London and Spalding were recorded in his elaborate testament and can be recreated – his disastrous evaluation of his male heir did not extend to his appreciation of friends

<sup>52</sup> TNA, C 131/101/7, C 131/107/4.

<sup>53</sup> Protection as a member of the retinue of Sir Richard Wingfield, deputy of Calais (*Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, 1509–30*, ed. J. S. Brewer (4 vols., London, 1864–1920), ii. 744, 1651.

<sup>54</sup> List of Jan. 1516 (*AC*, p. 433).

<sup>55</sup> Keene and Harding, *Historical Gazetteer of London*, 104/11, pp. 245–6, 247; also see n. 27.

<sup>56</sup> By a collusive recovery to Richard Heigham and Robert Spring, presumably Lovell's trustees (TNA, CP 40/1036), £334. This detail has been kindly supplied by Graham Dawson.



and associates. To take London first. His earliest acquaintances as a young immigrant from the Fens would have been his fellow apprentices in the somewhat fraught household of John Brodesworth. Richard Golofer can be picked out: both he and Alwyn had to be transferred to new masters; both traded before formally admitted to the Mercers; both reached a personal evaluation of £100 in 1475; and both achieved a wardenship of the Mercers within a year of each other. Alwyn included Golofer among his feoffees for his main dwelling in the city and took Nicholas Golofer as his godson (to whom he left a bequest of 6s 8d).<sup>57</sup> Alwyn undoubtedly developed loyalties: he stood surety with three other mercers for the estate of the two sons of John Dey, a cutler of St. Laurence Old Jewry, in 1475, and the tie was sufficient for him to leave forty poor men of the Cutlers' Company 12d each.<sup>58</sup> But other tasks were routine and there is no suggestion of closer ties than civic rank: he was a feoffee for Sir Henry Colet (who acted in the same capacity for him)<sup>59</sup> and helped to set up obits for the goldsmith Sir Edmund Shaa and for Thomas Wyndout and Thomas Northland, both aldermen and mercers.<sup>60</sup> He made a notable gift to Alderman Roger Acherley, draper, whose son was his godson: his horse litter 'complete' and his best purse of black velvet 'pyrled' with gold with double rings of silver-gilt that he wore when he was mayor, items which prove friendship but also suggest the infirmity of age.<sup>61</sup>

Many men and women received black cloth so that they might walk in his funeral procession, attend his exequies, see him into the ground and eat and drink afterwards at his great house at both funeral and month's mind (total cost £133 6s 8d); and surely these were regarded with friendship by the testator? Among them was Peter Waterbearer, who presumably kept the several cisterns in his great place full, so there was gratitude, too. The total cost of the cloth was to be 100 marks and it was to be suited to the rank of each recipient. There were no aldermen or civic officials in Alwyn's list of sixty-two persons (apart from those receiving gifts) – they would

<sup>57</sup> He outlived Alwyn and died in 1517 (Sutton, *Mercery*, pp. 533–4, 558). For Alwyn's feoffees, see n. 27.

<sup>58</sup> *Cal. Letter Bks. L*, p. 143. Margaret, daughter of John Dey cutler, married John Pikton mercer, who was one of his executors (d. 1475) (TNA, PROB 11/6, fos. 154–155v). His widow, Margaret Dey, died in 1494 with 5 living children and leading mercers as her executors (TNA, PROB 11/10, fos. 82v–83). See above for Pikton.

<sup>59</sup> *CIPM Henry VII*, iii, nos. 52, 57, 61.

<sup>60</sup> Obits for Sir Edmund and Hugh Shaa at St. Thomas of Acre (Keene and Harding, *Hist. Gazetteer London*, 145/17, p. 185); *CWH*, ii. 611 (Wyndout and Northland)).

<sup>61</sup> Roger Acherley's will (written 1515) shows links to John Warner (see below) and refers to a Mrs. 'Alwey' (TNA, PROB 11/21, fo. 103r–v); declared intestate in 1524 because of the lapse of time.

have automatically been expected to attend the funeral and month's mind of a past mayor. The sixty-two included all his household and family (the Canteloves and Henry Cantelowe's step-sons John, Thomas, William and Stephen Gibson) and Mrs. Wood, who must be assumed to be Alwyn's granddaughter. The wives of many of the men were listed with their husbands and also many wives with no husbands, all presumably widows.<sup>62</sup> His leading overseers were William Paver, a lawyer who was to give long service as common clerk of London between 1511 and 1533;<sup>63</sup> Richard Berne, a mercer, to whom he had entrusted his son Francis as apprentice; and John Ash, waxchandler.<sup>64</sup> Each of them was to have £10 for his labours and was accompanied by his wife. Most important was William Carkeke, the local scrivener who had made his wills and drawn up his deeds over the years, 'for especial love that I owe unto hym' – his fees and reward of £26 13s 4d were to be paid promptly. No doubt of long acquaintance and use were William Melborne, still chamberlain of the city at this date (£10), whose wife, 'Mrs. Chamberlain', received another £10; and his servant, Maud of the Isle, 6s 8d.<sup>65</sup> Monetary rewards also went, along with the black cloth, to Mr. John Rede, notary of the diocese of Lincoln and procurator of the court of Arches (£3 6s 8d).<sup>66</sup> Londoners who had probably originated in Spalding were Thomas Maison and his wife<sup>67</sup> and Margaret Swan, possibly a relative of the merchant adventurer and skinner, Richard Swan, born in Spalding and long dead, who had acted as a feoffee for Alwyn's property in Spalding.<sup>68</sup> Also given cloth and expected to attend were the several young men he had

<sup>62</sup> Wives of William Bereman, Henry Worley, Gray of Richmond, Richard Hawkyins draper, Richard Hawkyins leatherseller [*sic*], Symond Pratt – none immediately identifiable. Do these reoccur later in the will as Mercy Gray (£3 6s 8d), Agnes Pratt, once wife of Thomas Hardy (£3 6s 8d) and Helen Hawkins (£3 6s 8d)?

<sup>63</sup> For Paver, see J. Baker, *The Men of Court 1440–1550: a Prosopography of the Inns of Court and Chancery and the Courts of Law* (Selden Soc., supp. ser., xviii, 2 vols., London, 2012), p. 1208; he committed suicide.

<sup>64</sup> On Berne: his will refers to wives, Margaret and Marion (his widow); parish of St. Magnus (see Alwyn's gift above); property in Bedfordshire; no references to Alwyn; he died in 1525 (TNA, PROB 11/21, fos. 309v–310v). See *Bedfordshire Wills Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury 1383–1548*, ed. M. McGregor (Bedfordshire Hist. Rec. Soc., lviii, Bedford, 1979), no. 100, pp. 125–7. Ash: no will survives for him.

<sup>65</sup> Melborne/Milbourne/Mylborne, a painter who transferred to the Drapers' Company; chamberlain 1492–1505 (not re-elected 1506), d. 1511, *pace* Beaven, *The Coronation of Richard III*, ed. A. F. Sutton and P. W. Hammond (Gloucester, 1983), pp. 372–3.

<sup>66</sup> For Rede, see A. F. Sutton and L. Visser-Fuchs, 'VeRus celluy je suis (True I am): a study of John Russell, bishop of Lincoln and chancellor of England for Richard III', *Ricardian*, xxvii (2017), 1–75, at p. 44 and n. 58.

<sup>67</sup> See also n. 99 for John Maison.

<sup>68</sup> See n. 98 for Swan.

supported at Cambridge: William Jely/Joly, previously supported by Henry Cantelowe; a Christopher Joly (26s 8d yearly for five years); and a Thomas Joly (£13 6s 8d over five years).<sup>69</sup> Richard Wall, a fellow of Catherine Hall, Cambridge (26s 8d), who was similarly expected to attend, may have been connected to these young men. Alwyn's godchildren were recipients of 6s 8d each, but not expected to attend.<sup>70</sup>

Female servants were as conspicuous in his testament as his apprentices: Margaret with one hand (6s 8d); Margaret Deill (£6 13s 4d and a hoop of silver-gilt); Alice Sharp, possibly wife of John Sharp, another of his servants (£3 6s 8d and a flat hoop of base gold enamelled). Alice Hedge occupied the most conspicuous but unspecified position in his household, probably housekeeper in the largest sense.<sup>71</sup> He left her a property in St. Giles Cripplegate, as well as the option of managing his house in Spalding until the heir was of age and £50 for her personal use (she also benefited under remainders if they fell in). She was expected to attend all his exequies. The level of his trust was explicit in his charge to her of £40 to be dispensed in halfpenny bread to poor prisoners at the eight prisons of London and Westminster; she received the 'advantage' of this task for her labour, which he reckoned as 1d in each shilling. In his codicil, he left her a ring of fine gold with a ruby and a pointed diamond; a cupboard with an 'almery' and a 'rennyng tille theryn, my lawe bedde that I am wont to lye upon with the canope, the coverlit of tapestry of the iij kynges of Coleyn', with all things belonging; a goblet of silver with cover half-gilt, weight 10 oz 'swaged'; 'also the hanging beam in my chamber' with five candlesticks, an old square silver salt weight 9 oz and three silver spoons with round knobs, weight 3 oz. It may be significant that although the London friaries were expected to attend his funeral (20s each), it was female religious houses which were singled out with sums, directed to both the head of the house and to the nuns: Stratford-at-Bow, Clerkenwell, the Minories, Kilburn, Halliwell, St. Helen's Bishopsgate and Heigham, as well as the sisters of St. Bartholomew's and St. Thomas's hospitals. He also remembered one hundred poor maidens with two pewter quart pots each for their marriages (£10).

In the codicil of his testament he noticed special relationships. All his relatives received an item of jewellery. Francis received his great hoop ring of base gold set with a diamond and a ruby 'that I was wont to were'.

<sup>69</sup> For Christopher and William Joly (but no Thomas), see *BRUC*, p. 332. Alwyn specified that remainders should benefit university education.

<sup>70</sup> Nicholas Golofer, Nicholas Statham, Nicholas Jones, Nicholas Acherley, Nicholas Brown and the daughter of William Haddon, shearman, 20s. On Wall, see *BRUC*, p. 611.

<sup>71</sup> Not identified. She is also mentioned as the mother of 'William Hossy' in Alwyn's testament.

The Woods were favoured: Oliver Wood received his crimson gown lined with damask and three yards of black velvet; his wife Joan a primer on parchment with silver clasps covered with black damask; and their daughter (unnamed) an *Agnus Dei* of gold with a ruby and three orient pearls with spangles pendant. Joan's brother Richard Cantelowe received a gold ring braided or wreathed; and his wife a ring of base gold with a seal therein like a strawberry. Outside the family circle, the mercer Edward Crosfield and his wife Joan received not only £6 13s 4d each, but a gold ring with a sapphire for her and a gold ring with a counterfeit diamond for their daughter Margaret. The wife of Eustace Knyll, a well-established mercer and adventurer, was given Alwyn's ring of fine gold with a table diamond. John Gare, girdler and his long-term feoffee, received a broad, coarse girdle of red damask with harness and bars of silver gilt and his wife Joan £20. Robert Jones, gentleman, was left £6 13s 4d and his wife Alice was given a pair of coral beads with four silver-gilt gauds and another £6 13s 4d; the Joneses were perhaps the parents of his apprentice Richard Jones.

If his apprentices are considered generally, it has to be concluded that he ran a household where loyalty to the master was easy, natural and rewarded. His many apprentices, called 'servants' if they were now in his service, are readily identifiable from the Mercers' records (see above). Many were involved in the work of his testament, funeral and month's mind in London and Spalding, headed by the senior Nicholas Tickhill and Hugh Smith, down to William Tales, who was barely indentured<sup>72</sup> – unfortunately few of them have left wills. Chief among them was his main executor, Michael English, his faithful servant, 'whom I have ever founde true'.<sup>73</sup> It was English who shouldered most of the burden after his main colleague, Angel Don, died: he had the care of the £400 which was to go to the two heirs

<sup>72</sup> Nicholas Tickhill came from Blechingley, Surrey (as Alwyn tells us) but neither he nor Hugh Smith left surviving wills. Tales was admitted to the Mercers in 1515 and no will survives. Both Smith and Tales were to be made free of the Staple at Alwyn's cost. Tickhill was well rewarded: a ring of base gold set with an amethyst, a standing nut of 180 z., a pair of leg harness, a pair of vambraces and a 'bycocket', which suggest he was of soldierly leanings.

<sup>73</sup> Michael English, mercer, married first a daughter of Thomas Wood, goldsmith and alderman, a contemporary of Nicholas Alwyn (not of the Coventry Wood family) (T. F. Reddaway and L. E. M. Walker, *The Early History of the Goldsmiths' Company 1327–1509* (London, 1975), pp. 315–6). English's will of 1537 refers to his wife Anne and her brother, James Wylford; Anne and his eldest son, James, were executors and his overseer was James Wylford; he left 10 children. His will also refers to his being bound to Anne Don, widow of Angel Don, and to William Bretton, executors of Angel, in £200 in case of trouble over the will of Nicholas Alwyn for a 7-year period ending in 1513; and that he had still not received the obligation back; he refers his executors to the 'box of my quittances for my said Master Alwyns business' (TNA, PROB 11/27, fos. 193v–194; proved 30 Jan. 1539).

(with no surety expected); he oversaw the disposal of Alwyn's wool at Calais with Tickhill and Smith; he and his wife Margaret attended the funeral in black gowns; she received Alwyn's great hoop of gold; and he attended the month's mind in Spalding. He was rewarded with £100, a sum which he certainly earned, and Alwyn's wagon.

Alwyn's other executor was Angel Don, a grocer who had married into a family with Lincolnshire origins. Angel Don's mother, Mistress Bretton, may have been the initial connection here. Angel was the son of John Don, mayor of Southampton, and his wife Agnes, who remarried the London ironmonger William Bretton (d. 1485). His mother's remarriage took Angel to London, and her career as a stapler after her second husband's death took him into that trade; he married Anne, daughter of John Sparrow, a grocer of London and Lincolnshire, and there was an active Sparrow family in Spalding known to Alwyn (see below). These were some of the connections that drew Angel and Alwyn together, quite apart from their civic roles. Alwyn's respect and affection for Mrs. Bretton took the form of black cloth and a gold sovereign; Angel's wife had another sovereign.<sup>74</sup> The grocer connection can be extended: John Warner, past armourer, grocer and alderman (since 1503), was left a black gown, with his wife, and 'a house for a saddle of light tawney velvet and the harness belonging sett with gilt bolyons'.<sup>75</sup> Did the grocer link in fact go back to Alwyn's earliest days in London as a raw sixteen-year-old in 1452? Had he been pointed towards Robert Gayton, grocer of London, who had come from Spalding and prospered and who might welcome a boy from the Fens?

### *Alwyn's friends in Spalding and the early history of Ayscoughfee Hall*

Nicholas Alwyn's love for and commitment to Spalding are witnessed by his testament. His London success made him an impressive example for those who had remained at home. He planned an elaborate funeral and remembrance in London, but he was equally determined that his month's mind at Spalding would have pious fireworks which involved everyone he knew there and benefited every poor person in the district, so that his name would be carried throughout the hundred of Elloe.

For modern Spalding, Alwyn's most interesting act was to acquire a large property on the River Welland near the parish church and to build a large house, now known as Ayscoughfee Hall. This was facilitated by his close

<sup>74</sup> Sutton, *Wives*, esp. pp. 180, 202 n., 206–9; minor mistakes will be found in the notes there regarding Alwyn's children.

<sup>75</sup> William Warner died in 1511 (TNA, PROB 11/16, fos. 297v–298). For his family ties to Roger Acherley see above.

connection to the Gayton family, a fact underlined by his inclusion of Master Robert Gayton in the obit of his parents and himself in the parish church. The Gaytons have not proved easy to trace or interrelate as no wills survive for them and they seem to have had a predilection for variants of Reynold and Reginald.<sup>76</sup> A tentative pedigree has been devised, using the descent of their property and known dates as guides (Figure 9.2).

A Robert Gayton became a grocer of London in 1424–8.<sup>77</sup> It was usual for a younger son to be so apprenticed, leaving the elder son at home to inherit, but the unpredictability of survival might bring the inheritance to the former apprentice in due course. It is known this Robert had a brother, 'Reynold' (the elder?), and that both were alive in 1468 and well known among the leaders of the Spalding community.<sup>78</sup> Robert's reliability is suggested by regular gifts of goods and chattels to him and his engagement as a feoffee for the eminent John Welles, grocer, alongside Sir John Fastolf and Sir William Estfeld.<sup>79</sup> He and his wife Isabel were permitted in 1445–6 to have a private altar and choose their own confessor.<sup>80</sup> His career progressed steadily and probably included a regular trade in Italian raw materials for the cloth industry, until he became a warden of the Grocers in 1458, when he stood surety for Genoese merchants with many other Londoners, including the future mayor, William Heryot, in 1459.<sup>81</sup> In 1461 he was living in Dowgate ward, but he had property in the more central area of St. Mary le Bow,<sup>82</sup> where Nicholas Alwyn was to become prominent; in the same year he made

<sup>76</sup> No useful Gaytons/Geytons can be found in *BRUO* or *BRUC*. A Thomas and a William Gayton had been apprenticed mercers in 1435, but no subsequent careers have been found for them. A Robert Gayton was a conspicuous acquirer of properties at Shillington (Beds.), an estate of Ramsey abbey, 1414–5, but no further connection can be made (*The Liber Gersumarum of Ramsey Abbey: a Calendar and Index of BL, Harley MS. 445*, ed. E. Brezette DeWindt (Toronto, 1976), nos. 1286–4234 *passim*; with grateful thanks to A. DeWindt for her advice).

<sup>77</sup> London, Guildhall Library, Grocers' Company, Register of Admissions, 19th century index, MS. 11592A under 1428 and 1432, noted as warden 1444 and 1457; the original register (MS. 11592) starts in 1484.

<sup>78</sup> 6 July 1468 a gift of goods and chattels from Thomas Hoby of Spalding, yeoman, to John Davison, master of the hanaper, Robert Gayton, and Reynold Gayton, his brother, and their executors, etc. Witnesses: John Terald, William Mayson, Robert Smith, John Fell and John Carter (*CCR 1468–76*, no. 103). Teralds/Torolds and Maisons rented land from Crowland in the area (CUL, Additional MS. 4400, fos. 54, 56). See nn. 105, 106.

<sup>79</sup> *CCR 1435–41*, pp. 48, 226, 231.

<sup>80</sup> *Calendar of Papal Registers: Papal Letters*, viii, 1427–47, ed. J. A. Twemlow (London, 1909), p. 305.

<sup>81</sup> *CPMR 1413–37*, pp. 250–1 (goods from Bolognese merchant, 1430); *CPMR 1437–57*, pp. 95, 173; *CCR 1454–61*, p. 333 (surety).

<sup>82</sup> *Cal. Letter Bks. K*, p. 397; *CCR 1454–61*, pp. 393–4.

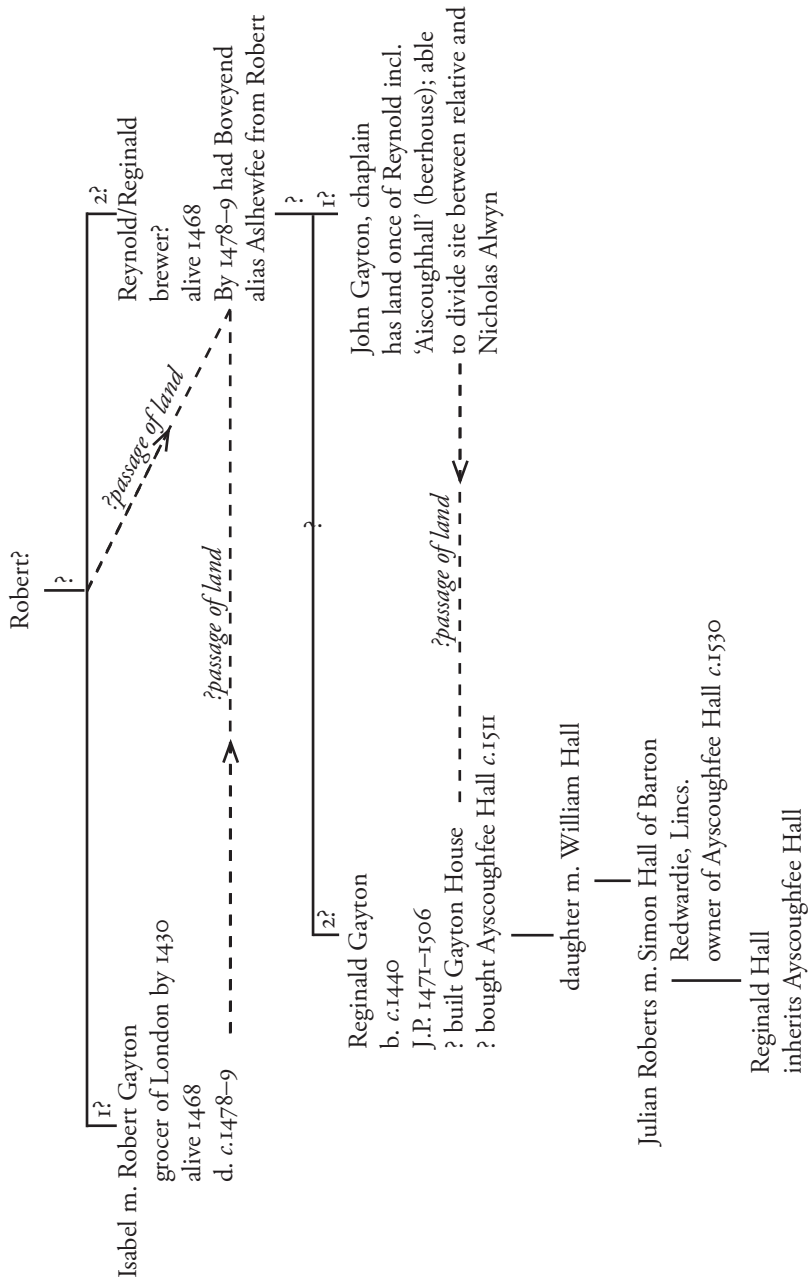


Figure 9.2. Gayton family tree (A. F. Sutton)



two gifts of his goods and chattels, purpose unknown. He was alive in 1468 and involved with his brother and other men of Spalding.<sup>83</sup> He died in the 1470s and certainly before 1478.<sup>84</sup>

The date of death of Robert Gayton, grocer of London, is suggested by a surviving account by John Clony, member of a local family, given black cloth to attend his month's mind by Alwyn and lessor of land from Crowland abbey.<sup>85</sup> Clony was collector of rents and farmer of Spalding, Gosberton, Pickall and Pinchbeck for the abbot of Crowland. His account, covering the year from Michaelmas 1478 to Michaelmas 1479,<sup>86</sup> provides a key reference to the site that Nicholas Alwyn was to buy: '*feod*' Boueyend alias Ashlewfee nuper in tenura hereditaria Nicholi Steynton, modo in manibus <Roberti; deleted> Reginaldi Geyton hoc anno – xij d. [the fee<sup>87</sup> Boueyend alias Ashlewfee late in the tenure of the heir(s) of Nicholas Steynton, now in the hands of <Robert> Reginald Geyton, this year – 12d]. Gayton's fullp. or no.? amount owed is recorded at the end of the account, '*Sup*: Reginaldu' Gayton – iiij li. iij s. ob'. The Steynton family has not been identified.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>83</sup> CPMR 1458–82, pp. 1, 158; CPR 1467–77, p. 80; see also n. 78 above.

<sup>84</sup> Among the many puzzles about this family is the existence of another Robert Gayton in London, who is only known because he joined the Fraternity of the Parish Clerks in London in 1480 and was recorded as dead by them in 1507 under the title 'Master' Robert Gayton. He was therefore not the grocer (born c.1400) and is unlikely to have been the 'master' in Alwyn's obit as he survived Alwyn by at least a year (*Bede Roll of the Fraternity of St. Nicholas*, nos. 217, 467).

<sup>85</sup> John Clony himself held several blocks of *nativi* land (CUL, Add. MS. 4400, fos. 55, 56); a William Clony paid an increment rent for a place of land *cum lez poles*, 4d, which implies *nativus* status *temp*. Henry VI (SGS, Wrest Park Cartulary, fo. 205v). Old 'Clone's wife' and John 'Clone' junior both received black cloth from Alwyn. The family appears to have been *nativi* in origin (E. D. Jones, 'The Spalding priory merchant evidence from the 1250s to the 1470s', *Jour. Med. Stud.*, xxiv (1998), 155–75, at p. 161, n. 46, for a 'Cluny' in the early 1300s), but the family is not among the Myntling pedigrees (there is a Cony family, fo. 67v).

<sup>86</sup> LAO, 6 Anc 5/1, mm. 1r, 2r; the author is indebted to Hallam, 'Agrarian economy', p. 86 for the reference to this account. Few account or court rolls exist for Crowland abbey in this period (F. M. Page, *The Estates of Crowland Abbey* (Cambridge, 1934), pp. 1–8, esp. at p. 3).

<sup>87</sup> The term 'fee' has created problems for commentators and is best translated as 'property' or 'free tenure'. There is no reason to assume this was ever a knightly 'fee', as asserted by Gooch, who tried to link it to the Askew/Ascough family (Gooch, *Spalding*, pp. 251–2) and developed by R. Davies, *Ascoughfee Hall: the Early History* (Spalding, 2012), pp. 29–32. The ambitious presentation of it as a knightly fee could have started in the time of the Gaytons and Alwyns and was sufficiently well known by the 1530s for it to be included as a fee held by Crowland in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, ed. J. Caley and J. Hunter (6 vols., London, 1810–34), iv. 86: '*feod*' de Askehughe pro terra in Spaldyng, xij d. The alternative name of Boveyend is an all-important splash of cold water on any assertion of knightly status.

<sup>88</sup> The alternative name of Boveyend and the previous owners called Steynton have not been located by the present author. Another place is accorded its own name of 'Collys' just

The Gaytons also included a John Gayton, chaplain, recorded in a 1470s survey of Crowland abbey's *libere tenentes* and *native tenentes/terrae* in Pinchbeck, Spalding, Cowbit and 'Pykale':<sup>89</sup>

*Johanne Gayton, capellano, pro feodo de Browne,<sup>90</sup> nuper in tenura Reynold[i] Gayton iacenti in pynchebek et Spaldyng in diversis parcellis, quarum parcellarum principalis placea illius feodi, vocata Aiscoughhall, nuper existens a Berehouse, que quidem Berehouse iacet iuxta aquam de Welland ex parte occidentali et iuxta newgate ex parte orientali et iuxta tenementum domini prioris et conventus de Spaldyng ex parte australi, et reddit per annum – vij s. vij d.*<sup>91</sup>

[John Gayton chaplain, for the fee *de Browne* late in tenure of Reynold Gayton lying in Pinchbeck and Spalding in divers parcels, of which parcels the principal place of this fee is called 'Aiscoughhall', lately being a 'Berehowse', which said beer house lies next to the water of the Welland on the west part and next to Newgate on the east part, and next to a tenement of the lord prior and convent of Spalding on the south part, and pays by the year – 7s 7d]

John Gayton also held a messuage in Holbeach from Crowland abbey in 1476.<sup>92</sup> It is likely that John the chaplain was an intermediary owner and one who would not have heirs of his body and might therefore be willing to divide his large property among relatives or sell part to a wealthy purchaser.<sup>93</sup> No commentator has emphasized the sheer size of the property, of which only one part was a great brew house (called Aiscoughhall in the survey, replacing the misleading 'fee' with the catch-all 'hall') and which abutted on the parish church and a tenement to the south owned by the

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before the entry for Boveyend in this account; and a garden place called 'Dormo'pyte' is another not far from the abbot's court house on the Spalding side of the Welland (CUL, Add. MS. 4400, fo. 57r-v). It was increasingly common for a family to confer a name on their house once they had collected enough parcels together (see, e.g., the discussion of the Custs below).

<sup>89</sup> CUL, Add. MS. 4400, fos. 53-9. This survey is not dated and is inserted within a longer survey of Edward I's time. It can be compared to a rental of Holbeach of 16 Edward IV, fos. 82-8, another insertion (and see n. 92). The lack of overlap of names between this survey and the Clony account of 1478-9 is worrying.

<sup>90</sup> Bruen = to brew; also breu, browe; ppl. browen, bronw, bru(w)en [O.E. breowan; breaw, bruwon; browen], in *Middle English Dictionary*. Bre-ern (n) brow(h)ern (OE breaw-ern) = brewhouse, brewery (MED).

<sup>91</sup> CUL, Add. MS. 4400, fo. 54.

<sup>92</sup> The property in Holbeach from Crowland in 1476: John 'Geyton' a messuage lying between land of John Fisher on east, a small way and land of Thomas Kydale and Richard Welby on west and its north abutting on Washgat (CUL, Add. MS. 4400, fo. 85).

<sup>93</sup> Hallam was inclined to make John the son of Reginald (Hallam, 'Agrarian economy', p. 86 n. 2), but that may make things far too complicated, given the uncertain date of the survey.

prior of Spalding. Of this large site, several people could have been tenants, and subtenants, of Crowland abbey, including the Steyntons and Gaytons.<sup>94</sup>

In the 1470s it is unlikely Nicholas Alwyn had sufficient resources to think of buying property in his home town. The lawyer Reginald Gayton, however, was at the very beginning of his career in Lincolnshire.<sup>95</sup> He had received a legal education and can be found as a justice of the peace on the quorum for Holland from 1471. He was to continue to be appointed to commissions until and including that of 1506; he also undertook other useful local legal tasks.<sup>96</sup> He was to succeed to part of John Gayton's very large property, west and south of the church, and to build his own Gayton House of brick (or enlarge that of John the chaplain) at some date after 1480.<sup>97</sup>

On 13 May 1489 Alwyn was rich enough to acquire sufficient of this large property on which to build and create a spacious surround of orchards and gardens: John, son of Thomas Toft of Spalding, conveyed to Nicholas Alwyn and Henry Cantelowe, merchants of staple, Sir Henry Colet, William Heryot draper, Richard Swan skinner,<sup>98</sup> John Maison grocer<sup>99</sup> and

<sup>94</sup> A comparison with John Grundy's map of the messuages near the church of Spalding shows the extent of the rest of the property between the church and the river and the triangular site extending up the Welland. Davies shows ancient walls revealed by excavation, not yet explained (*Ayscoughfee Hall*, pp. 2, 6).

<sup>95</sup> Reginald has in the past been assumed to have been the son of Robert the grocer and Isabel Gayton (e.g., R. Purslove, *History of Ayscoughfee Hall* (South Holland Museum Service, Oct. 1994), pp. 2–3). However, no source is cited. Making Robert the grocer the father of the lawyer Reginald creates too many unanswered questions over the property.

<sup>96</sup> Baker, *Men of Court*, i. 741 and see n. 107.

<sup>97</sup> Gayton House, later called Holyrood House, was studied at the time of its demolition by T. W. Townsend, 'Holyrood House Spalding', a typescript of 1959 (I am grateful to the Spalding Gentlemen's Society for sight of this typescript). He dated the oldest part of the house to c.1500; the inclusion of elements of widely different dates taken from a supposed guildhall he ascribed to alterations carried out by Sir William Rigden (d. 1610) (pp. 6–8); and found the use of the word 'guildhall' to be late (p. 10). This 'guildhall' is misleadingly assumed to be the original part of Gayton House in the 1480s, with further confusions about Cowbit chapel (D. L. Roberts, 'Ayscoughfee Hall: the building of a great merchant's house', *Lincolnshire Hist. Archaeol.*, x (1975), 37–47, at p. 39, citing Townsend). Photographs of Holyrood House can be found in Davies, *Ayscoughfee Hall*, pp. 27–8.

<sup>98</sup> Richard Swan came from Spalding and had property there (Sutton and Hammond, *Coronation of Richard III*, pp. 402–3).

<sup>99</sup> John Maison, grocer of London, was certainly of Spalding with property there; he died in 1498 providing for souls who included John Lambe, grocer of London, and his wife Emma (once of Spalding and whose executor he was) in St. Pancras church, London, in his will (TNA, PROB 11/11, fo. 208). Emma Lambe died in 1473 and left land in Spalding (TNA, PROB 11/6, fos. 96v–98). A John Mayson had been a tenant in Spalding holding from Crowland abbey, before 1476 (CUL, Add. MS. 4400, fo. 54v.; see also n. 78).

Thomas Blenche,<sup>100</sup> all citizens of London, ‘a site of land with edifices upon it between the vicarage and Newgate Street, Spalding’ (now Love Lane). The sole grantor, John Toft, was, or was to become, the vicar of Pinchbeck. Of Alwyn’s feoffees, both Swan and Maison had land and connections in Spalding, while the role of his sons-in-law and the useful weight of Colet, recently mayor of London, are self-evident. The witnesses were all described as men of Spalding: Robert Scarborough,<sup>101</sup> William Hode, Philip ‘Sparowgh’,<sup>102</sup> Robert Smith<sup>103</sup> and William Reynoldson. Scarborough was a chaplain of Spalding parish church and therefore a monk of the priory. Both Hode<sup>104</sup> and Robert Smith were to be remembered in Alwyn’s will, along with John Toft (by then vicar of Pinchbeck). Alwyn made certain the transaction was recorded on the close roll of chancery.<sup>105</sup> Unfortunately invisible are the processes whereby Alwyn reached this point, the network of previous conveyances and agreements and the consent of the abbot of Crowland, as well as the good will of the prior of Spalding and the chaplains and churchwardens of the adjacent parish church.

The little evidence that survives for his place or house comes from Alwyn’s will – he did not give it a name or call it great. Like Gayton House, it was built of the fashionable brick. He left £5 to Whitehead of Stanground for carrying his timber to Spalding; and as Stanground is near Peterborough and on the Welland it may have travelled down river. Important craftsmen

<sup>100</sup> Blenche was one of Alwyn’s first apprentices, admitted 1476 and in 1495 nominated but not elected silkweaver (*AC*, p. 241); he was probably dead before Alwyn.

<sup>101</sup> Scarborough was a chaplain of the church in 1500 (M. Brassington, P. Case and R. Seal, *The Parish of St. Mary and St. Nicholas Spalding: the History of a Fenland Parish* (Spalding, rev. edn., 1997), p. 57; another chaplain of that date was John Sparrow. Reynaldson has not been identified).

<sup>102</sup> The Sparrows were relatives of Angel Don, one of Alwyn’s executors (see above). In Spalding they were well-to-do tenants of Crowland abbey and probably of Spalding priory, taking leading roles in disputes and local affairs with the Teralds/Torolds, such as the fight with the men of Deeping finally adjudicated by Bishop Alnwick c.1450 (T. Allen, *The History of the County of Lincoln* (2 vols. in 1, Lincoln, 1833–4), ii. 286; J. Mackman, “‘To theire grete hurte and finall destruction’: Lord Welles’s attacks on Spalding and Pinchbeck, 1449–50”, in *Foundations of Medieval Scholarship: Records Edited in Honour of David Crook*, ed. P. Brand and S. Cunningham (York, 2008), pp. 183–95, at pp. 184, 187, 189).

<sup>103</sup> Robert Smith and his wife attended Alwyn’s month’s mind in Spalding. Robert Smith ‘the elder’ received £3 6s 8d and it seems probable that both Robert and Hugh Smith, apprentices and servants of Alwyn who benefited under remainders of his will, were the elder Robert’s sons. Robert Smith, apprentice, received a bequest of £10, while Hugh had considerable responsibilities under the testament and was an overseer (and received £6 13s 4d, a broken ring of gold enamelled, bed and bedding).

<sup>104</sup> His ancestors were *nativi* (see below).

<sup>105</sup> *CCR 1485–1500*, no. 659.

involved may be: Stephen of 'Tangham', a carpenter, left £5, and Bunting, a carpenter, late of Needham Market, Suffolk. Alwyn gave £5 to be spent on the latter's soul by the advice of Bunting's son, who was now abbot of Bury St. Edmunds. It is self-evident that Alwyn would have re-used any timber already in the buildings on site: the great brewery, for example, may have had a sizeable roof.<sup>106</sup> Once established there, he had 'hustilments in my place' which were included in the bequest of the place to his son Francis (but not detailed), and Alwyn's care for it was shown by his wish that his trusted Alice Hedge should take charge of the house, if she would, until the heir was twenty-six, a possible total of sixteen years if Nicholas proved to be the survivor. She or another custodian was to have 20s a year to undertake repairs. If both boys died, the money from the sale of the property was to benefit the poor of Spalding and London.

Francis's improvident career leads to the supposition that he sold the Spalding house, probably on his inheritance in 1511 or soon after and during the lifetime of Reginald Gayton, justice of the peace for Holland. We have no date of death nor will for Reginald, only his last appointment as a justice in 1506<sup>107</sup> – as a lawyer, he might well have had the money to add Alwyn's place to his estate in the last years of his life. It is known that Reginald married and left a daughter who married William Hall of Nottinghamshire. Their son, Simon Hall of Burton Pedwardine, Lincolnshire, held Ayscoughfee Hall around 1530 and in due course it passed to Simon's son, Reginald Hall.<sup>108</sup>

Ignorant of this future, Alwyn's elaborate testament recreated his Spalding community in 1505–6. It is an area where few account rolls, no parish registers and few wills (Spalding priory held probate rights over its manors) survive. Although Crowland held a substantial manor which included part of the town and all the property relating to this article, the great priory

<sup>106</sup> The dendrochronology of 34 wood samples in 2003 suggested a date of 1450 (Davies, *Ayscoughfee Hall*, p. 13). The existence of previous buildings on site confuses any attempt to identify any part which Alwyn built. Roberts was happy to place the surviving roof timbers architecturally in the late 15th and early 16th centuries ('Ayscoughfee Hall', pp. 38–9).

<sup>107</sup> Apprentice at law retained by duchy of Lancaster 1498–9 or later; deputy steward of Long Sutton, Lincs., for the duchy, 1489–92 or later (Baker, *Men of Court*, i. 741). The 1490s saw him on commissions and a feoffee of Sir William Hussey, the chief justice (*CIPM Henry VII*, i, nos. 1166, 1209; and *Feet of Fines of the Tudor Period [Yorks]: Part 1: 1486–1571*, ed. F. Collins (Yorkshire Archaeol. and Topograph. Assoc. Rec. Series, 2 vols., Leeds, 1887), ii. 17 (Trinity Term 18 Henry VII, 1503)). In 1490, along with the abbot of Crowland, he and William Paynell, another local lawyer of Fishtoft (Lincs.) and his fellow justice, were detailed to see that the annuity of £40 was paid to the abbess of Syon by the prior of Spalding (*CCR 1485–1500*, no. 491; Baker, *Men of Court*, ii. 1212, for Paynell).

<sup>108</sup> A. R. Maddison, *Lincolnshire Pedigrees* (Harleian Soc. l–lii, lv, 4 vols., London, 1902–6), ii, Hall family, pp. 444–5.

controlled the larger part of Spalding, Moulton, Weston,<sup>109</sup> Pinchbeck, Cowbit and the hamlet of Pickall (Pykhale); held the dominant manorial court and the advowsons of the parish churches of Spalding, Pinchbeck, Moulton and Weston; and oversaw Cowbit, the chapel and cemetery of which were consecrated by the bishop for the ease of the inhabitants on 28 April 1486.<sup>110</sup> By the time he died Alwyn was already a notable benefactor, including local projects of which he was proud: to repair the new bridge on the highway 'that I made' between Spalding and Pinchbeck, £3 6s 8d; to repair the bridge through the park towards Pinchbeck 'that I made', £3 6s 8d; to repair Pinchbeck bridge, £3 6s 8d; and 20s to repair Peterborough bridge. A bequest of £100 was to repair the roads between Spalding and London. The church was to have its rood-loft gilded and garnished, or other ornaments, at discretion, £30. The cornice still bore the arms of Alwyn, the Mercers and the Staple in the early nineteenth century and he may have contributed to the north porch and certainly to some of the glazing.<sup>111</sup> Its guilds of the Trinity and St. John received £3 6s 8d and 40s respectively and

<sup>109</sup> Alwyn paid the vicars of Moulton and Weston (unnamed) for *Dirige* and mass (20s), with 6 assistant chaplains each (who were to receive 12d each); and the poor of each place received £16 13s 4d (4d each). W. E. Foster, 'On the history of All Saints' church, Moulton', *Associated Architectural Societies Reports and Papers*, xx (1889–90), 248–63: the vicar of Moulton at the time of his death was William Bonde (1498–?). G. A. Poole, 'On the churches of SS. Mary and Nicholas, Spalding and Weston St. Mary, and chapel of St. Nicholas Wykeham', *AASRP*, i (1850–51), 347–60: Poole notes the north porch and the adjacent additions as c.1480 (p. 352 and plan opposite p. 353). For Spalding church's status under the priory, see *Visitations of Religious Houses in the Diocese of Lincoln: iii: Records of Visitations held by William Alnwick, Bishop of Lincoln, A.D. 1436 to A.D. 1449*, pt. 2, ed. A. H. Thompson (Lincoln Rec. Soc., xxi, 1929), p. 342, n.

<sup>110</sup> Bishop Russell carried this ceremony out in person while making an extended stay at Crowland abbey from 16 Apr. (LAO, Russell's Register, fos. 74v–84). Gough printed the details precisely: the bishop's certification of 11 May 1486 stated 'that year 13 days before' – i.e., 28 Apr. 1486 – he had consecrated Cowbit chapel and cemetery, granting sacramentals to be performed there for the inhabitants of Cowbit and 'Pykhall' because of the bad roads etc.; the priory had consented to this (endorsed '*composito inter Cubyt et nos pro capella de Cubyt*' (*Britannia*, ii. 240)). Gough went on to note that the Alwyn's arms were in the east window. Gough's attempt to link this event to a consecration of the chapel in Ayscoughfee Hall does not bear examination (*Ayscoughfee Hall*, p. 250), but was repeated in Purslove, *History of Ayscoughfee Hall*, p. 1; and Davies, *Ascoughfee Hall*, p. 28.

<sup>111</sup> The carved oak cornice of the screen had in its centre carvings identifiable as the arms of the Mercers' Company and the wool bags of the Staple (Allen, *History of the County of Lincoln*, i. 289). Alwyn's arms and glass asking for prayers for Sir William 'Hariot' stapler and draper were recorded in *Lincolnshire Church Notes made by Gervase Holles, A.D. 1634 to A.D. 1642*, ed. R. E. G. Cole (Lincoln Rec. Soc., i, Lincoln, 1911), p. 168; the text relating to Heryot is likely to be connected to Alwyn. For the north porch see Allen, *History of the County of Lincoln*, i. 287; and Poole, 'On the churches of SS. Mary and Nicholas', p. 352 and n. 109 above.



the Trinity guild of Cowbit, 20s. Spalding priory's cloister was given £5 for repairs.

In his role as public benefactor Alwyn intended to be seen off in magnificent style and he might have expected to have the local gentry at his month's mind. The knightly class was above him, but the Custs, a hard-working peasant family of this area which had projected members into London, had a mercer connection contemporary to Alwyn and had begun to refer to their own house as the Cross with Hand at Pinchbeck,<sup>112</sup> might have been invited. More pretentious (at least in the minds of their descendants) were the Welbys of Moulton, who also had London connections, held the local offices of bailiff or steward (and even sheriff) and leased extensive property from the monks of Crowland; or the Pinchbecks and Bellers of Pinchbeck.<sup>113</sup> Some of these certainly knew Alwyn or were known to Reginald Gayton. To take one example, it is surely revealing that the Welbys of Moulton, always a village apart as it was not dominated by a grange of the priory, were not in this particular Londoner's will, they did not receive black cloth and were not expected to be at his exequies. Only one scion of an ancient family, who was fast establishing himself among the local gentry at this time, was given black cloth: Master Ogle, who can be identified as Richard Ogle, father of his more famous namesake, the future steward of Crowland abbey.<sup>114</sup> The only other name of consequence dropped by Alwyn was that of the Master Gayton who was to share his chantry's prayers. It can be suggested that Alwyn had not, by the time of his death, forged strong ties to the more important local men. To judge by his support of bridges and the parish church, he regarded himself more as a useful parishioner, one whose financial success could improve local amenities, but one not too far advanced above the status of his parents buried under the flagstones of the church.

His special acquaintances in Spalding were defined by his gifts of black cloth, headed by Mrs Gayton – there is no male Gayton in the list and it may

<sup>112</sup> *The Records of the Cust Family of Pinchbeck, Stamford and Belton in Lincolnshire 1479–1700*, compiled by Lady Elizabeth Cust (London, 1898), p. 12: Stephen Titchmarsh mercer had John Cust as his apprentice and acted as executor of Christina Cust in 1454.

<sup>113</sup> Richard Welby of Moulton had executors who included William Dunthorn, common clerk of London in 1482; his property 'Valentines' in Moulton went to his brother Thomas and the family had lands in Holbeach, Fleet and Wyntorp ('Lincolnshire wills proved in the prerogative court of Canterbury 1471–1490', ed. C. W. Foster, *AASRP*, xli (1935), 179–218, at pp. 216–8). Welbys occur in CUL, Add. 4400. See Maddison, *Pedigrees* for the Bellers, Pinchbeck and Welby; and E. Green, 'The knightly family of Pynchebek of Pinchbeck, Lincoln', *Lincolnshire Notes and Queries*, i (1888), 173–7.

<sup>114</sup> For Moulton, see Hallam, *Settlement*, pp. 207–9; and Maddison, *Pedigrees*, p. 730, for Ogle.



be suggested she was the wife of Reginald Gayton. Officials and neighbours included the Clonys, old and young, rent collectors of Crowland abbey, and 'Adlard Trowthe', who had served as the abbey's clerk of courts.<sup>115</sup> Men who had done him a service can be identified as William Hode (a gown and £3 6s 8d) and Robert Smith, along with John Toft, vicar of Pinchbeck, who both received cloth and gifts. No chaplain of Spalding is identifiable by name, although 'Sir' John Byrde may be one. John Harrison of Moulton and his wife received cloth and Harrison an extra 20s. Harrison and William Hode (Hode witnessed the conveyance to Alwyn of his Spalding property) are the only men in Alwyn's will whose families can be found recorded as *nativi* of Spalding priory in the late 1470s – they may be assumed to have been free by 1506 or the classification had been dropped.<sup>116</sup> Unidentifiable persons receiving black cloth were James Dalton, John Taverner, Nicholas Idom, William Pecoke, Richard Romford and his wife (they also received £3 6s 8d) and Parsle's wife (20s). A John Rous, Aylward's wife of Weston, and Alice, wife of John Burre the elder, all received 6s 8d. Each of the four parish clerks received 6s 8d.

Alwyn died on 29 January 1506. A month later his elaborate month's mind was to take place in Spalding, nearly 100 miles from London.<sup>117</sup> It is a display of piety remarkable for its cost and the sixteen Londoners whom he subsidized to attend. His two executors, his overseers (William Paver and Richard Berne), each accompanied by a servant, his apprentices, headed by Nicholas Tickhill and Hugh Smith, John Fayrey, down to the youngest of them, William Tales, just sixteen, his housekeeper Alice Hedge, his chaplain William Joly, an unidentified John Meryell and his cook, John Haydon. They were to provide their own horses, but he paid for their meat, drink and horsemeat there and back (£33 6s 8d) with another £20, presumably for

<sup>115</sup> For Clonys, see above. Richard Trought/Trouth held land from Crowland in the 1470s (CUL, Add. MS. 4400, fos. 54, 57v). Athelard Trough, 'once clerk of our courts', appeared in a document concerning the office of pittance of Crowland abbey, 4 Nov. 1483 (SGS, Wreth Park Cartulary, fo. 47r-v).

<sup>116</sup> SGS, Myntling register, compiled in the late 1470s: for Hode, alias Oxherde family of three generations, see fo. 62v, supported by references in Myntlyng's Kalendar of past court rolls, fos. 51, 56–7, 60–2. Harrison, alias Illary of Moulton (associated with the Welbys of Moulton), 4 generations, of which the last had no names (fo. 61 and Kalendar, fos. 57, 58, 60–2), with dates as late as 6 Edward IV [1466–7]; and all the entries about Harrisons from 36 Henry VI [1457–8] onwards concern absence without licence. The Harrisons/Illarys and Hode/Oxherds took their oaths to their lord and were absent without leave (31–2 Henry VI [1452–4] to 14 Edward IV [1474–5] fos. 260v–267).

<sup>117</sup> Allen, *History of the County of Lincoln*, i. 277, with an illustration of Spalding church and Ayscoughfee Hall behind a wall across the Welland and ships visible at the quay to the north.

the overall expenses. It was not necessarily an easy a journey in February – many of the roads threaded their way through fens and along causeways over many bridges. Both the parish church and the priory were to perform the month's mind on the same day: the bellman of the town was to call for prayers (20s), the bells of the church were to ring (5s) and those of the priory (5s). Twelve priests of Spalding and nearby Cowbit chapel (if there were twelve) were to attend (12*d* each), the four parish clerks and sexton (8*d* each) – and all seventeen received an additional 2s each. The twenty-four monks of the priory received 6s 8*d* each, the two clerks 12*d* and the prior 20s to say mass. His hearse – empty of his body, already buried in London – was to have fourteen torches of 20 lbs (at a cost of 8s 4*d* each) and the bearers were to be found 'of the xl men of my lyverey' (4*d* each). The torches were to end up on the eight altars of the parish church (which he could name), of Cowbit and the priory.<sup>118</sup> Gowns made from three yards of northern tawny, at 16*d* the yard, were given to forty poor men and women of Spalding and Cowbit and 3,000 men, women, children and servants, rich and poor, of the same places were to have 12*d* each, any surplus going to the poorest (total £150). Poor clerks of Spalding were to have 6s 8*d*.

Remembrance continued past the month's mind in Spalding, as in St. Mary le Bow. The financial complexities were to be handled by his servants and past apprentices, Hugh Smith and Nicholas Tickhill, who were to hold £240 raised from the sale of Alwyn's wools at Calais. First, there was to be a twenty-year obit for the souls of himself and his parents, 'our' children and Master Gayton (at 13s 4*d* per annum). Second, for the same twenty years, every Sunday a priest in his surplice with twenty-eight poor men and women between matins and mass were to say *De Profundis* with versicle and orisons at the gravestone of his parents. Those who could not were to say an *ave*, the paternoster and creed; and one of the men was to say openly, 'God have mercy on the souls of Richard Alwyn and Margaret his wife, of Nicholas their son, Robert Gayton and all Christians' and the rest were to say 'Amen'. Each person of the thirty present was to receive 1*d* (total expense 6s 8*d* each Sunday). At Cowbit and Pickall a priest and nine poor persons were to pray for the same souls each Sunday and receive 1*d* each (10*d* a week). Last, there was to be a priest to sing at the altar of St. John in the parish church of Spalding for the same souls for ten years (8 marks per annum) and have the use of the red worsted vestments from the altar 'in my house' at Spalding. The altar of Our Lady at the North Door in the

<sup>118</sup> The high altar (2), altars of St. John, Corpus Christi, Holy Trinity, St. Thomas, St. Helen, St. George and the altar of Our Lady of the North Door (1 each); both Cowbit chapel and the priory's high altar 2 each.

market place of Spalding – presumably of the priory and accessible by the townspeople – was to receive his vestment of white damask ‘brawdered’ with flowers, on which his mark was to be set.

Nicholas Alwyn’s real memorial is his remarkable testament, flamboyant but modest. He had not collected an estate to support his heir in idleness: he expected him to work at his trade and make money, as he himself had done. The London house and the country house in the Fens were to be the background of a London business and a relaxation among a prosperous, independent-spirited country community where he and his parents had been respected. His wealth, acquired elsewhere, allowed him to repay the community of his birth with bridges, ornaments for the church, aid and clothing for the poor. It seems probable that he expected his heir to continue his chantry at the end of the twenty years. In contrast, his son Francis was calling himself ‘gentleman’ in the 1520s, accrued the debts of a gentleman and apparently sold his father’s place at Spalding as easily as he did that in London. Francis’s carelessness highlights his father’s careful lists of his friends that bring his personality into focus within two different communities. The wider circles of his three trades (mercator, adventurer and stapler) Alwyn ignored. The Spalding connection seems to have been the more permanent attachment, with the gravestone of his parents, a solid object which gave him identity. Alwyn’s great position as mayor over the year when the fifteenth century became the sixteenth did not, apparently, overawe him. He created his own new house in Spalding – his London house had been created by earlier generations – and he created it within a community still ruled by the manorial courts of a prior and an abbot, very unlike the self-governing world of London. Spalding men and women had, however, long traditions of standing up to their lord, making themselves heard, fighting the sea and the waters of the rivers and fighting all those who intruded upon their rights.<sup>119</sup> A discussion of the merits of London versus Spalding and the Fens, over wine and before a fire, could have voted either way in either of Alwyn’s houses.

<sup>119</sup> Compare Hallam, *Settlement*, pp. 198–203, 207–9, 213, 215–6, 218–22 on the period before 1348; and J. Thirsk, *Fenland Farming in the Sixteenth Century* (Leicester, 1953), who both emphasize the prosperity of the Spalding area, the commercial spirit and harbour of the town of Spalding, which recorded tolls on a wide array of goods.

