

## The Herefordshire Hakluyt Houses

by Duncan James

### Abstract

Although Richard Hakluyt the lawyer (1531–91) and Richard Hakluyt the geographer (1552–1616) were cousins, their relationship was made closer by dramatically changing family circumstances in their early lives. This paper discusses the medieval hall house that survives from the time of William Hakluyt, great grandfather to both Richards and, assisted by tax returns of the period, identifies the remarkable early sixteenth century house that Richard the lawyer's father, Thomas Hakluyt, built in the few years before he died in 1544. It also touches on the litigious route by which family inheritance of property and land in the village of Eyton in Herefordshire descended through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

### Introduction

In 2015 the author was commissioned to prepare a detailed record and analysis of Eyton Court, a timber-framed house in Eyton, a small village near Leominster, Herefordshire.<sup>1</sup> As the investigation progressed it was realised that the building had been a house of unusually high status and quality of build, all of which was expressed both inside, in the form of decorative mouldings and carvings, and on the outside by costly close-studded framing and a multitude of elaborate oriel windows. This indicated that someone of considerable wealth and standing within the county must have built the house. It was possible, on structural evidence, to attribute a construction date within the first three decades of the sixteenth century. This raised the question of who, within that period, might have built the house.



Figure 1. Eyton Court, Eyton, Herefordshire. South elevation showing the later brick range abutting the side of the timber-framed crosswing. The original close-studding and oriel window at first-floor level have been replaced with large-panel framing, probably in the 17th century.

---

<sup>1</sup> James, 'Eyton Court'.



kiln. Reference is also made to a ‘porter’s tower or entrance’.<sup>6</sup> On the site are the recently discovered remains of a thirteenth century aisled barn.

If the house came into secular hands this would have been in the years following the Dissolution of 1539. We know that by the early seventeenth century the manor was in the hands of Wallop Brabazon, the Earl of Meath.<sup>7</sup> Thus, had it been a seat of the Hakluyts, their time at Eaton would have extended to little more than a century. To add to the confusion, there is an account by the Revd Jonathan Williams in a local history of Leominster published in 1808, which states that ‘Owen Glendour’...‘despoiled the priory of its richest ornaments, seized its territorial possessions, and appropriated to his own use the revenues of almost every monastic establishment in the district. He next distributed remunerations among those who assisted him in this enterprise ... Eaton, Stretford and Hennor, became the portion of Ap Llhwyt or Hackluit.’<sup>8</sup>

The reliability of this information can be questioned. There is no mention of it in John Price’s slightly earlier and more scholarly account,<sup>9</sup> and Geoffrey Hodges readily dismisses Williams as ‘a master of story-telling’.<sup>10</sup> If Williams’s claim were correct, then Eaton would have been with a branch of the Hakluyt family for more than two centuries from c.1400 to c.1630 when Wallop Brabazon was in possession of the manor.<sup>11</sup>

It seems to be down to local historians that Eaton has gained a mistaken pre-eminence as the centre of Hakluyt activity whilst Eyton has either been misread as Eaton or missed altogether.<sup>12</sup> This conflict was noted and resolved a century ago by Albert Gray in his address to the Hakluyt Society in November of 1916.<sup>13</sup> However, recent publications continue to associate the Hakluyt name exclusively with Eaton.<sup>14</sup> Also, the latest edition of Pevsner’s *Buildings of England* refers to Eaton Hall as ‘A remnant of the c15 house of the Hackluyts’ which, while it might be to some degree factually correct, does tend to suggest that it was the principal house of that family for an extended period.<sup>15</sup>

Eyton, however, has a much clearer pedigree. Important names are explicitly linked with Eyton: William Hakluyt (d.1479)<sup>16</sup> who fought at the battle of Agincourt in 1415, followed by Ralph Hakluyt (d.1526) and his sons, Richard (1496–1557) and Thomas Hakluyt (d.1544); Richard fathering a son, Richard, the geographer (1552–1616) and Thomas fathering a son, Richard, the lawyer (1531–91).<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Price, *Leominster*, pp. 160–1.

<sup>7</sup> Robinson, *Mansions and Manors*, p. 175 & note.

<sup>8</sup> Williams, *Leominster Guide*, p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> Price, *Leominster*.

<sup>10</sup> Hodges, *Owain Glyndwr*, p. 83.

<sup>11</sup> Robinson, *Mansions and Manors*, p. 175 & note.

<sup>12</sup> The confusion may have originated with Thomas Hearne’s 1745 edition of the *Itinerary of John Leland* and a misreading of Eaton for Eyton.

<sup>13</sup> Gray, *Address*, pp. 12–19.

<sup>14</sup> Hillaby, *Leominster Minster*, p. 190, for example.

<sup>15</sup> Brooks & Pevsner, *Herefordshire*, p. 464.

<sup>16</sup> Faraday, *Calendar of Probate*. Ref. 79/32. For ‘William Hakelete (senior) of Eiton’, probate was administered by Edmund his son.



Between 1527 and his death in 1544, Thomas held an important post as Clerk to the Council of the Marches in Wales, which clearly gave him a significant income.<sup>18</sup> The Council of the Marches in Wales had headquarters at Ludlow castle. Although it was formed in 1473, it was only properly established in the 1530s and this is the period when Thomas Hakluyt was Clerk. The Council was a powerful body charged with the governance of Wales and the border counties and the position of Clerk was one of considerable importance. The wording of the commission illustrates this:

Tho. Hakluyt, clerk of the King's council. Commission to order all things belonging to the office of clerk of the King's council in the principality of South and North Wales, and in cos. Salop, Heref., Glouc., Worc., Chester, Flint and the marches, lately held by Henry Knyght.<sup>19</sup>



Figure 3. The Feathers Hotel, Ludlow, Shropshire. Behind the rich embellishment of the 17<sup>th</sup> century façade lies the earlier, two-storey timber-framed town house of Thomas Hakluyt, Clerk to the Council of the Marches in Wales.

<sup>17</sup> Parks, 'Ancestry', pp. 335–7. Although his attribution of Edmond as father to Richard (d.1557) and Thomas (d.1544) is not correct. As argued below, Richard and Thomas were two of the twelve children of Ralph (d.1526) of Burton in Herefordshire.

<sup>18</sup> Williams, *Council in the Marches*, pp. 158–9.

<sup>19</sup> *L.P.F.D.* Henry VIII, Vol. 2, part 2, 3057.

Thomas Hakluyt occupied a town house in Ludlow on the site of the present Feathers Hotel, on the east side of The Bullring.<sup>20</sup> The Hakluyt coat of arms<sup>21</sup> can be seen over the doorway of the King Edward IV Writing Room and much of the original timber-framed fabric of the original, two-storey, early sixteenth century building survives behind the decorative additions of the early seventeenth century that have made this much-photographed building understandably famous. Thomas Hakluyt (d.1544) had established his family at Eyton, on land conveyed to him by his kinsman John Hakluyt of Eyton.<sup>22</sup> The relationship of John to Thomas appears to be that of brothers.

Eyton is a small parish, listed in the Hearth tax return of 1664 as having twenty-five houses.<sup>23</sup> It is sited in northern Herefordshire near the county boundary with Shropshire, 9 miles (14.5 km) south of Ludlow. The River Lugg flows west to east along the southern boundary of Eyton parish. There is a small chapel, now the parish church (All Saints), with a nave and chancel of c.1200 and a roof and screen of c.1500.<sup>24</sup> The question to be asked of this small settlement is where Thomas Hakluyt might have lived.



Figure 4. All Saints Church, Eyton, Herefordshire. South elevation.

Searching in the tax records for the early sixteenth century, we find Eyton listed under the Wolphey Hundred, Subsidy Act of 1523, first payment of 1524. Hakluyt is not mentioned.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Lloyd, *The Feathers*, pp. 5–6.

<sup>21</sup> Three axes in a shield.

<sup>22</sup> Bindoff, *History of Parliament*, p. 273.

<sup>23</sup> Faraday, *Herefordshire Militia*, p. 150.

<sup>24</sup> Brooks, & Pevsner, *Herefordshire*, p. 233.

<sup>25</sup> Faraday, *Herefordshire Taxes*, p. 86.

B = pro-bono; St = stipend; T = in terris (on lands); G = goods; W = wages. The first figure is the valuation on land, goods or wages, followed by the amount of tax due.

John Conop	B	£6	3s. <sup>26</sup>
John Bayley	B	£4	12d. <sup>27</sup>
John P(ar)son	B	40s.	12d.
Wyllyam Whetnall	St	40s.	12d.
John Walton	St	40s.	12d.

The second Eyton payment, in 1525, has the same individuals but slight variations in the charge.<sup>28</sup>

John Conoppe	G	£6	3s.
John Bayly	G	£4	2s.
John P(ar)sons	G	40s.	12d.
William Whethall	W	20s.	4d.
John Walton	W	20s.	4d.

But Thomas was certainly in Eyton in 1539 as he is listed from that village when noted as executor in the will of Elizabeth Green of Kimbolton.<sup>29</sup>

The next tax account for which we have details of individuals in Eyton is that for the 1540 Subsidy – second payment in 1542. This is entered on two separate pages. Only the amount of tax paid is recorded, not the valuations.<sup>30</sup> Thomas Hakluyt (senior) pays 50s whilst Thomas (minor), who was a ward of Watkyns, pays 20s.

Thomas Hakluit	B	50s.
John Conop	B	10s.
Richard Partrige	B	10s.
Richard Watkyns	T	}
Thomas Haklwyt un custod(ia)/ sua		}
rat(ion)e minor(is) etat(is)		} 20s.

From this one can infer that Thomas (senior) was taxed on a valuation of £100.

There was a Forced Loan of 1542 that called for contributions of at least £10 from those with £50 in landed income/fees, and £6 13s 4d from those with £100 in goods. This shows that Thomas Hackluyt is listed along with the landed gentry. In the Hundred of Wolphey, which included Eyton, the list of contributions was as follows:<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> s = shilling, equal to one twentieth of a pound (£).

<sup>27</sup> d = the former penny (*pl.* pence) equal to one twelfth of a shilling (s).

<sup>28</sup> Faraday, *Herefordshire Taxes*, p. 125.

<sup>29</sup> Faraday, *Calendar of Probate*, probate ref. 539/46.

<sup>30</sup> Faraday, *Herefordshire Taxes*, pp. 157–8.

<sup>31</sup> Faraday, *Herefordshire Taxes*, p. 159.

Thomas Phellips	10 mk. <sup>32</sup>
Edward Croft knight	£10
Thomas Hackluyt esquire	£10
Dam(e) Jane Cornewall widowe	£5
John Wigmor gent(leman)	£5
Roger Davis	£5

For the Subsidy Act of 1543 the first payment was due in 1544. The Eyton list included Hakluyt paying 100s, a clear indication of his wealth.<sup>33</sup>

Thomas Hakeluyt	T	£100	100s.
Joh(ann)es Ingle	B	100s.	20d.
Joh(ann)es Ingle jun(ior)	B	£4	8d.
Ph(ilipp)us Walter	B	£4	8d.
Walterus Goulde	B	£4	8d.
Joh(ann)es Connop	B	£11	7s.
Hugo Polle	B	£10	6s. 8d.

Thomas Hakluyt died in 1544 so his name vanishes from the tax account for the second payment of the 1543 Subsidy Act to be replaced by Edmund Foxe (1515–50) who, along with his brother Charles Foxe (1516–90) shared the ‘clerkship of the Signet’ at the Council of the Marches.<sup>34</sup> Edmund Foxe was literally stepping in to Thomas’ shoes. The entry includes a note in the margin that Foxe was assessed in Credenhill on a larger valuation so the Eyton charge was cancelled.<sup>35</sup>

[Ed(mund)us Fox	T	£30	30s.]
Hugo Polle	B	£10	3s. 4d.
Joh(ann)es Conoppe	B	£10	3s. 4d.
Joh(ann)es Ingle	B	£5	10d.
Joh(ann)es Ingle jun(ior)	B	£5	10d.
Ph(elipp)us Walter	B	£5	10d.
Walt(er)us Gould	B	£4	4d.

A further tax, the ‘Benevolence’ of 1545, called for 6s 8d in the pound on land valued at £5 to £20 or on goods of £10 to £20. On land or goods valued at £20 or above, the rate was 12d in the pound. The list for Eyton shows that Foxe was still present.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> mk = mark, a former monetary unit and coin worth two thirds of a pound.

<sup>33</sup> Faraday, *Herefordshire Taxes*, pp. 203–4.

<sup>34</sup> Williams, *Council in the Marches*, p. 159.

<sup>35</sup> Faraday, *Herefordshire Taxes*, p. 237.

<sup>36</sup> Faraday, *Herefordshire Taxes*, p. 238.

Edmond Fox	£6	13s.	4d
John Connopp		9s.	
Hugh Polle		13s.	4d.

There are indications that Foxe was resident in Eyton in 1547 as the details of the second payment of the 1545 Subsidy survive for the township.<sup>37</sup>

Joh(ann)es Connoppe	B	£12	12s.	
Hugo Polle	B	£10	10s.	
Thomas Polle	B	£10	10s.	
Joh(ann)es Yngle sen(ior)	B	£6	4s.	
Joh(ann)es Yngle jun(ior)	B	£5	3s.	4d.
Edmond(us) Burhope	B	£5	3s.	4d.
Ph(elipp)us Walter	B	£6	4s.	
Edmond(us) Foxe	T	exon(er)at(ur) p(er) certifi(c)at(am)		

The appearance of Edmund Foxe in the accounts is because he married Thomas Hakluyt's widow, Katherine, by whom he had a son and a daughter before he died, at Ludford House, Ludlow, in 1550. Three years later Katherine married Nicholas Depden (c.1520–88), although the marriage broke up in 1565.<sup>38</sup>

So, what are we to make of this information? It seems clear that in 1524–5 there was no-one with the Hakluyt name living at Eyton although inheritance suggests that there was land owned by a member or members of the family but that they were paying tax on it elsewhere in the county. In this earlier period (the 1520s) there is only one Hakluyt mentioned in the tax records and this is Ralph Hakluyt, who was one of the Subsidy Commissioners for the years 1514–5 and 1524–6. Ralph is named as from Burton, one of the three Eardisland manors.<sup>39</sup> This is in the Stretford Hundred, some 4 miles (6.5 km) south-west of Eyton. For the first payment of the 1523 Subsidy, paid in 1524, the listing for Ralph is as follows:<sup>40</sup>

Rad(ulph)us Hackeluyt armig(er)	T	100 mk.	5 mk.
---------------------------------	---	---------	-------

This is a little more than £66 and places him as the principal tax payer in Burton, where the next highest is one Thomas Nicols at £4 2s. The membrane recording Burton for the second payment of 1525 is damaged and the majority of the figures are lost although the names, including Ralph, survive.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Faraday, *Herefordshire Taxes*, p. 388.

<sup>38</sup> Bindoff, *History of Parliament*, p. 37.

<sup>39</sup> Faraday, *Herefordshire Taxes*, p. 32.

<sup>40</sup> Faraday, *Herefordshire Taxes*, p. 74.

<sup>41</sup> Faraday, *Herefordshire Taxes*, p. 111.



For the 1540 Subsidy Act, second payment of 1542, only Joh(ann)es Wever paying 12s is listed.<sup>42</sup> Ralph has disappeared from the tax record. This is almost certainly explained by the inscribed stone in Leominster Church recording the death of Ralph Hakluyt and his wife, Elizabeth in 1526. It was noted by John Price in his history of Leominster:<sup>43</sup>

On a flat stone of Alabaster is this inscription.  
 Hic jacent corpora Radulfi Hackluyt et Elizabethæ  
 Uxoris suæ, qui obierunt primo die Mensis  
 Maii. Anno Domini MDXXVI

It is recorded that Ralph (senior) had twelve children including John, Thomas, Richard, William, Ralph (junior), Leonard and Henry.<sup>44</sup> The division of Ralph's property appears to have been contentious, as shown by the Court of Chancery litigation following his death.<sup>45</sup> Thomas is recorded as having land conveyed to him by his kinsman John Hakluyt of Eyton. It seems likely that this was some or all of an inheritance from his father Ralph and that Thomas' brother John was an executor, hence the use of the word 'conveyed'.<sup>46</sup> But the inheritance was only secured following court proceedings dated 1533–8, which suggests that Thomas may have secured land at Eyton only in the decade before he died. This could explain the sudden increase in Thomas' property tax, as set out above, for the 1540s.

This may also be the time when he built a house in the village. In this respect it is relevant to review where such a house would have been sited and to ask whether it may have survived. Generally speaking one would be looking for a house of some considerable status.

As stated in Brooks & Pevsner, 'The two largest houses are rambling brick affairs, Eyton Old Hall ... (and) Eyton Hall ... formerly Eyton Lodge.'<sup>47</sup> These are both of eighteenth and nineteenth century date and sited on raised ground 600 metres west and east respectively from the village centre (i.e. the church). There is no evidence to suggest that they contain early fabric.<sup>48</sup> Also of eighteenth century date is Eyton House, a brick building, remodelled in the nineteenth century, that stands on the opposite side of the road, north of the church. These all post-date the sixteenth century and are therefore not candidates for early Hakluyt connections. The two earliest surviving buildings are Marsh House and Eyton Court, of fifteenth and sixteenth century dates respectively. They are sited about 150 metres south of the church on each side of the north-south road through the village. They both retain substantial timber-framing.

---

<sup>42</sup> Faraday, *Herefordshire Taxes*, p. 154.

<sup>43</sup> Price, *Leominster*, p. 104.

<sup>44</sup> Parks, *Ancestry*, p. 336.

<sup>45</sup> For example, London, National Archives, C 1/821/21-24 and C1/1133/2.

<sup>46</sup> As stated in the notice of litigation, C 1/821/21–24.

<sup>47</sup> Brooks & Pevsner, *Herefordshire*, p. 234.

<sup>48</sup> Personal observation.

## The Marsh

The Marsh is a late medieval four-bay open hall with, at the southern end, a two-bay, two-storey solar crosswing of earlier date.<sup>49</sup> The service bay has been lost. The floor area of the hall, including the crosspassage, is about 500 square feet, which places it well within the size and status of a manorial hall. It is also lofty, measuring over 13 feet to the eaves and 25 feet to the ridge of the roof. On both sides of the roof there is a double tier of cusped windbraces.



Figure 5. The Marsh, Eyton, Herefordshire. South elevation of the 15<sup>th</sup> century late medieval open hall house. The earlier crosswing is on the left. The crosswing on the right, which stands on the site of the lost service wing, is a modern construction.

The crosspassage doorways are 4ft 8in wide with a two-centred arched doorhead over the principal entrance. Between the crosspassage and the hall there is a spere truss (now reconstructed) with arch bracing beneath the tiebeam – possibly originally with cusping. The principal truss over the middle of the hall has a cusped collar and raking struts creating a quatrefoil flanked by trefoils – a form of decoration found particularly in the border area and into Wales. Based on evidence from tree-ring dated examples of similar buildings in the vicinity, the hall probably belongs to the second half of the fifteenth century.<sup>50</sup> However, the crosswing is earlier, possibly of early fifteenth century date.<sup>51</sup> It has a roof truss incorporated in the east sidewall, using the girding beam as a tiebeam. This truss is at a lower level than the existing hall roof and clearly relates to a smaller hall that formerly stood on a slightly narrower footprint than the present hall. It is very likely that this was a cruck-framed hall that was upgraded whilst retaining the crosswing of the earlier structure. This sort of incremental re-fashioning is a common feature in the development of domestic buildings in this period.

<sup>49</sup> *TWNFC*, vol. 63 (2015) pp. 239–41.

<sup>50</sup> Alan Brooks has this as c.1400. See note 44. Probably following the *RCHME* entry, which places it as late 14th or early 15th century. *RCHME*, 62, monument 2.

<sup>51</sup> See note 46.



Figure 6. The Marsh, Eyton, Herefordshire. Interior view of the open hall looking east towards the reconstructed spere truss that separates the hall from the crosspassage.



Figure 7. The Marsh, Eyton, Herefordshire. The interior of the open hall looking west to show the sidewall of the earlier crosswing with its embedded truss that formerly supported the roof of an earlier hall with a lower roof level.



It is possible that this early house was built by the William Hakluyt mentioned by Leland:

One William Hakcluit that was with Kynge Henry the 5. at the batell of Egen Courte [Agincourt] set up a house at this village, [Eyton] and purchasyd lands to it. He had one St. George, a noble-man of Fraunce, to his prisoner. Hakcluit now lyvyng is the third in descent of the house of Eiton.<sup>52</sup>

The battle of Agincourt took place in 1415, so we may assume that William set up house in Eyton after that date using his rewards from the battle. Leland, visiting in the 1540s, gleaned the information from ‘Hakcluit now lyvyng’<sup>53</sup> and this was almost certainly Thomas Hakluyt (d.1544) which must make Leland’s information reliable.

### Eyton Court

The second early house, and the focus of attention in this article, is Eyton Court. The date of this building and the high quality of the construction suggest that it is the house that Thomas Hakluyt built prior to his death in 1544.



Figure 8. Eyton Court, Eyton, Herefordshire. The surviving crosswing of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century house built by Thomas Hakluyt. The close studding continues around the back of the wing.

The early sixteenth century is an interesting period in the construction of vernacular buildings in Herefordshire and the surrounding counties. In the previous century the enduring design and layout for houses was the single storey open hall with a central hearth. Attached to the ‘upper’ end of the hall was a two-storey solar bay or crosswing, which served as (unheated) private accommodation with a two-storey bay or crosswing as service provision at the ‘lower’ end of the hall. A crosspassage, with opposing doors, was arranged to pass through the lower end of the hall, adjacent to the service bay or crosswing. This layout, in which the

<sup>52</sup> Smith, *Itinerary*, p. 75.

<sup>53</sup> Smith, *Itinerary*, p. 74.

only source of heating was the open hearth in the hall, was remarkably enduring throughout the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in spite of the lack of comfort created by the smoky interior and the absence (usually) of glass in the windows. The Marsh, noted above, is a typical example of the design and layout and also shows the way in which the status of a building could be enhanced by the construction of a taller hall with decorative features to mark the social standing of the owner.

Although only the crosswing of the original house survives, Eyton Court illustrates the break with tradition in the abandonment of the open hall and open hearth in the decades before and after 1500. Here, the crosswing is heated, with large fireplaces on both ground and first floors, and there is a generous provision of glazed windows. Almost certainly the hall (which has been rebuilt in brick) was of two storeys and would have had a chimney stack, although it cannot be ruled out that there was an earlier open hall and that the crosswing was an updating of an earlier wing or bay on the site.

Eyton Court stands close to Eyton Common and a T-junction of minor roads. The field to the north of Eyton Court has a deep hollow way and evidence for a number of platforms for lost houses. Adjacent to the house, on the east side of the yard, is a range of brick and timber buildings, probably of seventeenth century origin, and a large brick barn of late eighteenth century date. These relate to the later use of the site as a farm. The barn may be of the same period as the brick wing of the house. In front of the house there is a large pond fed by a stream from the west. Eyton Court is a building of two principal phases, the earliest of which is a sixteenth century timber framed, three-bay, two-storey crosswing that is abutted by a later, two-storey brick range of c.1800 which stands on the site of a two-storey ceiled hall that was coeval with the crosswing, or possibly, as mentioned above, an open hall of earlier date than the crosswing.



Figure 9. Eyton Court, Eyton, Herefordshire. The richly moulded sill on one of the five oriel windows.



In a calculated display of wealth the crosswing has close-studding on all the external walls on both ground and first floors.<sup>54</sup> The fenestration is in the form of wide oriel windows with moulded mullions and elaborately moulded sills. Along the front and side elevations the jetty has a moulded bressumer and there are attached pillars with moulded tops beneath curved and chamfered brackets under the jetty. The gable truss on the front of the wing is also jettied, with a cambered tiebeam that is moulded along its lower edge and supported on the ends of the extended wallplates with plain, chamfered brackets beneath. The truss is similar to that on the other end of the crosswing and is decorated with a herringbone design having six diagonal struts on each side of a central post.

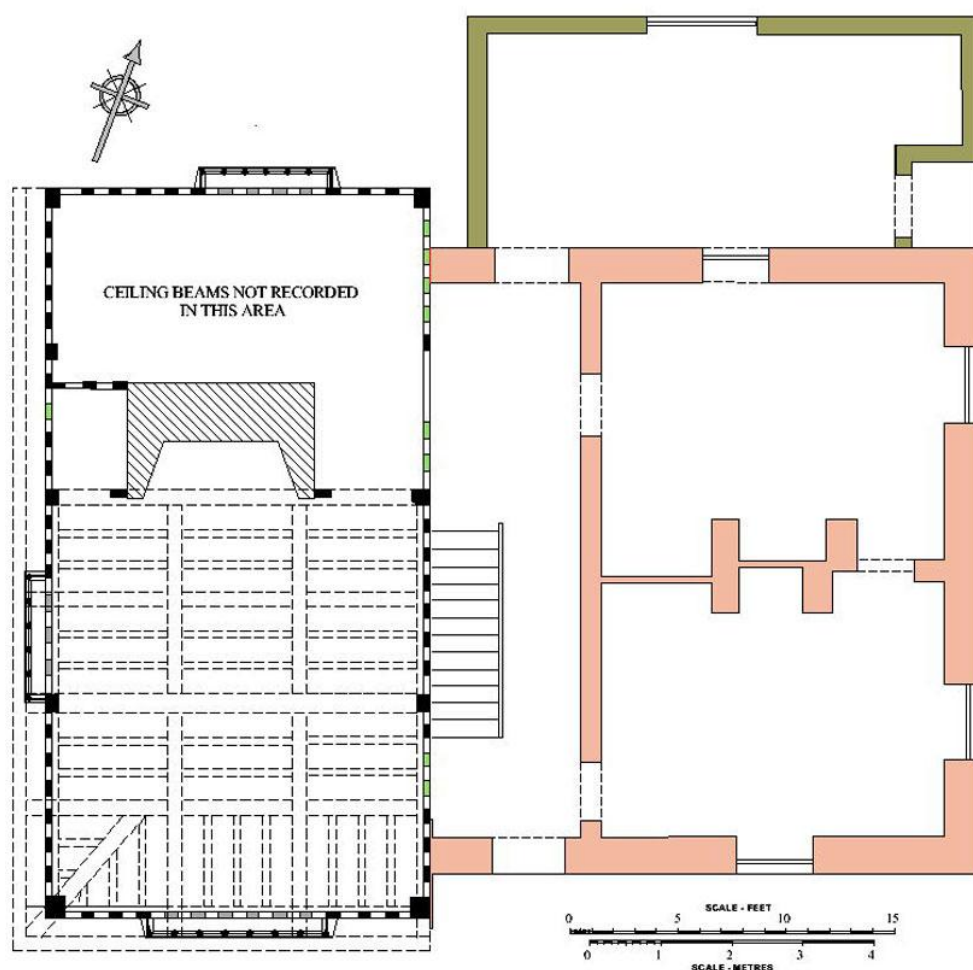


Figure 10. Eyton Court, Eyton, Herefordshire. The ground plan showing the layout of the ground-floor ceiling beams in the crosswing.

Internally, the crosswing is divided on the ground floor to form a large room at the front and a smaller room at the back that originally contained the staircase. Between these rooms is the chimneystack, with a 7 feet (2.13 metres) wide fireplace with moulded lintel between moulded, stone jambs, heating the principal room. On the first floor there is a similar layout but due to the jetty the large upper room has a floor area that is 18% larger than on the

<sup>54</sup> At the time of writing the south gable-end first-floor framing was in the process of being restored to its original configuration.

ground floor. The lower room is very well lit by a five-light oriel window in the west wall and a seven-light oriel in the south gable end. Both windows have shutter grooves cut into the upper edge of the sill beam where it projects on the inside.



Figure 11. Eyton Court, Eyton, Herefordshire. The ground-floor ceiling beams, looking towards the diagonal dragon beam in the south-west corner.

The lower room has a coffered ceiling with richly-moulded beams and joists creating twelve rectangular panels. There is a diagonally-set dragon beam that supports the south-west corner of the building. The beams all have a similar moulding that is a variation of a hollow with roll, one above the other on each side of the beam but with a single half-round roll along the lower edge, creating a sort of triple-roll 'keel'. The use of a profile that contains a hollow-with-roll placed one above the other can be found elsewhere in Herefordshire and can be dated to the first quarter of the sixteenth century.<sup>55</sup> The joists have a single hollow-with-roll moulding on each side with a single half-round roll forming the 'keel'. They have run-out stops, but only where they meet the south and west sidewalls; otherwise the mouldings abut the sides of the beams. Where the beams meet each other there is a form of mason's mitre where the moulding stops against a flat, angled face.

<sup>55</sup> Hollow-with-roll profiles, one above the other, can be seen at on the bressumer beam at No. 1, Church Lane, Ledbury, tree-ring dated to 1510-30. It can also be found on the jetty bressumer of Cradley Village Hall, Herefordshire, tree-ring dated to 1530. Tyers, I., 'Tree-ring analysis of 3 buildings in Ledbury, Herefordshire.' 2014, *Vernacular Architecture*, (forthcoming). Worthington, M.J. & Miles, D.W.H., 'The tree-ring dating of Cradley Village Hall, Cradley, Herefordshire', London, *Historic England, Centre for Archaeology, Report 10/2004*.

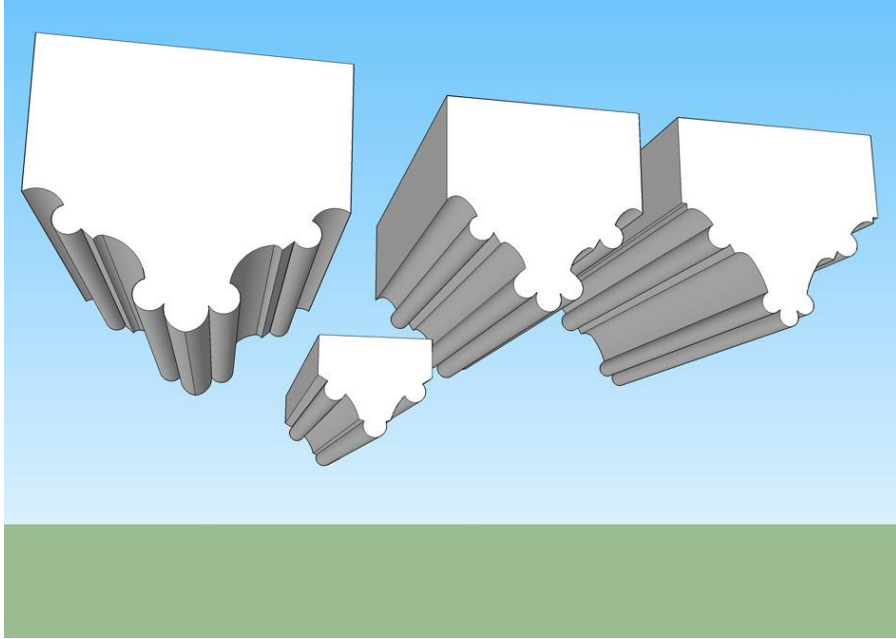


Figure 12. Eyton Court, Eyton, Herefordshire. A drawing illustrating the elaborate profiles on the beams and joists of the ground-floor ceiling in the crosswing.

When the mouldings used in this ceiling and the rest of the crosswing are compared it is clear that they have significant features in common – variations on a theme. The complexity of this suite of mouldings is unusual and serves to indicate the elevated status of the building.

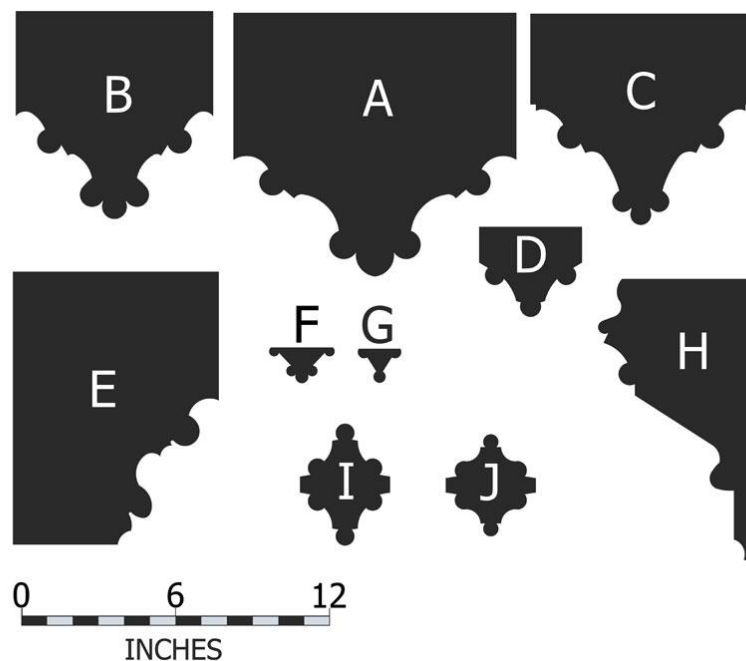


Figure 13. Eyton Court, Eyton, Herefordshire. The moulding profiles compared. A, B and C are ground-floor ceiling beams and D is the joist profile. The jetty bressumer section is E and the window sill, H. The two small profiles F and G are the ribs used on the first-floor panelled ceiling. Two of the window mullion sections are shown at I and J.

The basic motif is the ‘hollow-with-roll’ that is used on the mullion ‘I’ and joist ‘D’. It is also used, one above the other, on the beams ‘A’, ‘B’ and ‘C’ but with the lower motif merged into a half-round ‘keel’ creating the triple lobe that is reproduced on the rib ‘F’. The half round ‘keel’ is also a feature of the small rib ‘G’, the joist ‘D’ and the mullion ‘I’. The bressumer moulding ‘E’ uses a double hollow-with-roll but with the addition of a quarter-round hollow between each motif. This quarter-round is also used along the lower edge of the windowsill profile, above which is a double hollow-with-roll, the lower one having been adjusted to fit the function and shape of the sill. The moulding along the upper edge is somewhat unclear. Only one moulding does not really fit the scheme and that is mullion ‘J’. This is on the ground-floor north window. It uses an ogee profile, which does not occur anywhere else in the building. It may simply be that the mullions were cut by a different craftsman.

The east (internal) wall of the principal room was close studded to match the external framing. The principal room was linked to the small back room and lost staircase via the east side of the chimneystack by a doorway, with (originally) a shaped Tudor arched doorhead. In addition to housing the staircase, the back room was linked to the lost hall by a doorway on the east side. The room is lit by a wide oriel window in the north wall. On the west side of the stack is a small chamber (possibly a garde-robe) also with a shaped doorhead.

On the first floor the large principal room is lit by oriel windows in the south and west walls and has a wide fireplace on the north side with an oak lintel and stone jambs. On the west side of the chimneystack a small door, with its primary Tudor doorhead still in place, gives access to a small chamber alongside the chimneystack. The most remarkable feature of this room is the panelled ceiling.



Figure 14. Eyton Court, Eyton, Herefordshire. Part of the first-floor panelled ceiling showing some of the surviving carved bosses.

The importance of this justifies a detailed description. In each bay, the panelling is supported by a (hidden) central, axial beam about 6 inches (16 cm) wide, the ends of which are tenoned into the tiebeams. These axial beams have lateral joists 5 inches (12.5 cm) wide on each side, spaced at approximately 36in (91.5cm) centres. Like the beams, these joists are hidden from below.

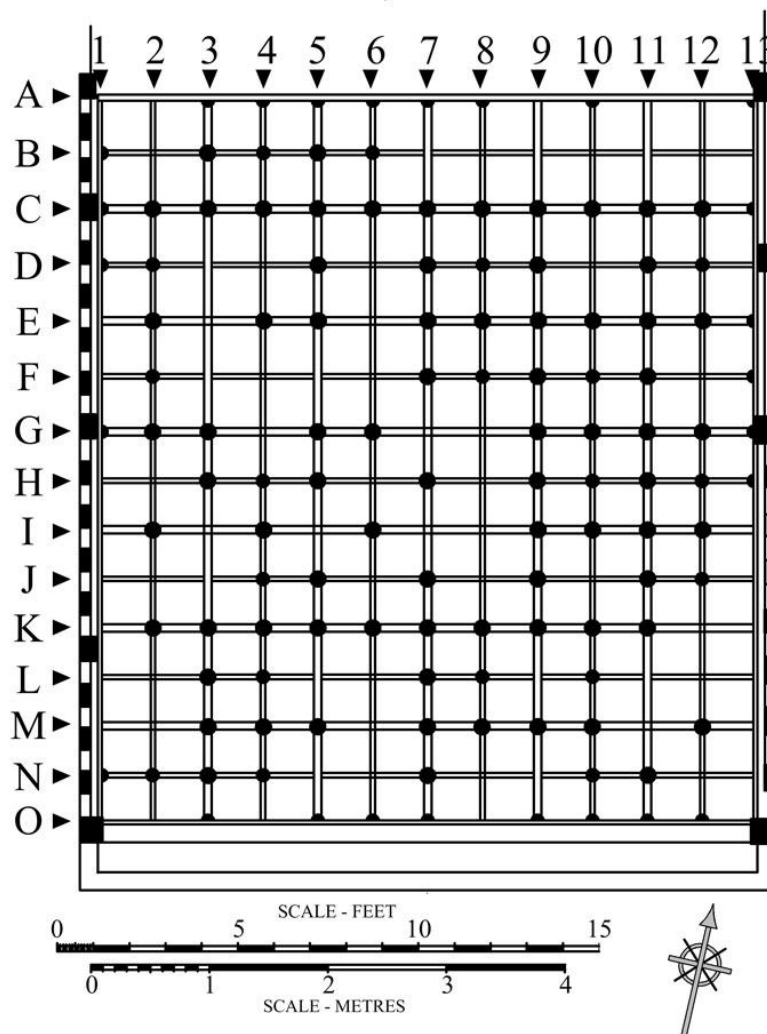


Figure 15. Eyton Court, Eyton, Herefordshire. The layout of the first-floor ceiling with circles and semi-circles showing the positions of the 121 surviving, carved bosses.

The panelling in the ceiling is formed using cleft oak planks, of varying widths about 9 inches (23 cm) and each about 3 feet (91.5 cm) in length, aligned north to south and nailed to the joists. These are then overlaid with ribs of two distinct sizes and profiles. Six of the larger ones, 2½ inches (6.5 cm) wide, are fixed east to west under the joists and the tiebeam, whilst a second set of five are laid north to south to create a ceiling with 42 panels, each approximately 36 inches (91.5 cm) square. Each of these panels, containing four planks, is then subdivided, using the smaller ribs, 1½ inches (4 cm) wide, with a simpler profile, to create four smaller panels, each about 18 inches (45 cm) square. This gives a total of 168 panels. This was originally further decorated with 143 carved oak bosses, each 4–4½ inches (~11 cm) square fixed in place where the ribs intersect and an additional series of (originally)



48 half-bosses fixed where the ribs meet the sidewall of the room. Of these original 191 bosses, approximately 120 survive in situ on the ceiling.



Figure 16. Eyton Court, Eyton, Herefordshire. Six of the surviving carved bosses on the first-floor ceiling. The code on each one relates to its position on the drawing of the ceiling in Figure 15.

The basic shape of all the bosses has been dictated by their function, which is to cover the joint where the ribs cross and, in effect, to fold back into the corner of each panel, clasping the rib junction. They are therefore all essentially square in plan but fixed diagonally at each intersection with, usually, stylized petals or leaves, swept back at the corners. A number of motifs are used, all based on foliage, flowers and the acanthus leaf. About a dozen have interwoven stems and there are over forty squared flower devices one within the other. There are many ingenious variations on a theme. Five of the bosses incorporate a shield but in all of them there are leaves sweeping back at the corners to embrace the junction of the ribs.

Perhaps the most striking thing is that, of the surviving carvings, no two are the same. Some are similar but the overwhelming impression is of great ingenuity and variety in the design of each one, as if the craftsmen were determined (or instructed) not to repeat any of the motifs. As on the ground floor the back room is lit by a large, oriel window. A doorway now links it with the present brick range as it would originally have given access to the adjacent lost hall. As another indication of the quality of the build, it is clear that the crosswing was constructed using good quality, straight-grained oak that has had the sapwood almost completely removed.<sup>56</sup> This attention to detail is a mark of enhanced status. Also, the treatment of the inner face of the external walls either has a sawn finish or has been carefully dressed with a side axe, again an indication of the quality of the build.

The conversion method that has been used throughout the crosswing frame and the roof trusses is that of see-sawing, probably using a large frame-saw. In this method the timber

<sup>56</sup> It was standard practice for the carpenters to remove the sapwood as they were aware of its vulnerability to decay and beetle infestation.

is leaned against a trestle at 45 degrees and sawn down from one end to the half-way point, when it is tipped the other way and sawn from the opposite end. This leaves 45 degree saw marks and a triangular snap-off. A refinement, seen on the timbers at Eyton Court, is to roll the timber 180 degrees before making the second cut. This leaves a neater, less conspicuous, parallel snap-off and is perhaps a mark of higher quality work. This method of conversion was abandoned, in Herefordshire, in the decade of 1530 to 1540, when pit-sawing came into use.<sup>57</sup>

## Discussion

That the crosswing at Eyton Court is a high-status structure is clear from the complexity of the moulding, the jetty on two faces, the close-studding, the six large oriel windows and the elaborate ceilings on the ground floor and especially on the first floor where the carving of 190 oak bosses would have been a work of many months. It is, of course, very possible that the walls of the upper chamber were also panelled in order to fit in with the ceiling. The ground-floor chamber, however, was probably not panelled as there is evidence for a painted decorative scheme on the timbers that would have been applied across the panels. Although this probably post-dates the construction of the building by as much as a century, it does tend to rule out panelling.

The date of the crosswing is indicated by a number of features. The moulding profiles are a valuable indicator and suggest a date in the first third of the sixteenth century.<sup>58</sup> The design of the glazed oriel windows would be appropriate for this period as would the chimney stack, sited within the crosswing with wide fireplaces on both floors. Ceilings on the first floor are also an indicator of modernity and extra comfort. In the previous century upper rooms were open to the ridge; with the transition to ceiled halls came ceiled upper chambers. The conversion sawmarks on the timber indicate a date no later than 1540.<sup>59</sup>

Of course, what is missing is the adjacent ceiled hall and service range that would have stood on the site now occupied by the brick range. As explained above, in the opening years of the sixteenth century the open hall was falling out of favour and more modern, comfortable ways of living were being introduced. So, the building on the site would not have been an open hall with a central hearth and no chimney, but a two-storey ceiled hall. Why this has not survived can only be a matter for speculation. It is of course possible that a medieval hall stood on the site, perhaps a cruck building, and that this was upgraded in the early sixteenth century only by replacing the solar accommodation with a new, jettied crosswing and that this old hall was later taken down and replaced in brick, retaining the best part, the solar crosswing. The possibility that this was an upgrading of an earlier hall on the site gathers some credence when it is observed that the upper end (the solar) is aligned towards the south-west quadrant and the prevailing wind. This is also the case with the medieval hall at The Marsh. It has been demonstrated that such an alignment is a feature of medieval hall houses in Herefordshire.<sup>60</sup>

The association of Eyton Court with Thomas Hakluyt is, in essence, circumstantial. There is no document which states that he built the house. However, the circumstantial

<sup>57</sup> James, 'Saw marks', pp.7–18.

<sup>58</sup> See note 55.

<sup>59</sup> James, 'Saw marks', pp.7–18.

<sup>60</sup> James, 'Orientation' pp. 20–31.

evidence is compelling and it appears to embrace The Marsh as well. It is recorded that William Hakluyt (d.1479) acquired land in Eyton, presumably as a reward for supporting King Henry V at the battle of Agincourt in 1415.<sup>61</sup> It is entirely possible that he built a house in the village and The Marsh is a building of the appropriate date. If we assume that Ralph Hakluyt, who appears to have inherited Eyton, was his son, we might ask why, in the early years of the sixteenth century, he was living at Burton, Eardisland and not Eyton. Could it be that by that time the hall house at The Marsh was in a neglected state and had not been modernised, whereas Burton Court was a more attractive proposition?

Thomas was one of Ralph's sons and inherited land at Eyton following Ralph's death in 1526. This may have taken some time to resolve as Ralph had twelve children and litigation may have been involved. It is possible that Thomas came into his Eyton land only a few years before his own death in 1544. If this was the case then Eyton Court may have been built, by him, somewhere between 1534 and 1544.<sup>62</sup> It is even possible that it was not entirely completed at the time of his death. There is one, admittedly minor, detail concerning the first-floor panelled ceiling that may support this possibility, and that is the fact that although there are five carved bosses that are in the form of escutcheons, none of them are painted with a coat of arms or similar embellishment and there is no indication that they were ever painted.



Figure 17. All Saints Church, Eyton, Herefordshire showing the early 16<sup>th</sup> century screen with carved bosses and ribbing.

It cannot be ruled out that The Marsh was also occupied by the Hakluyts – possibly when the new house was being built. Certainly, Eyton Court has all the indications of a house that was intended to make a clear statement concerning the new-found status of its owner not only as the Clerk to the Council of the Marches in Wales but also a man with a newly

<sup>61</sup> Smith, *Itinerary*, p. 75.

<sup>62</sup> Tree-ring dating of the timbers could resolve this issue.

acquired inheritance. Perhaps Thomas went even further in marking his arrival in Eyton. The early sixteenth century screen in the little All Saints church in Eyton has panelled coving that is decorated with ribs and seven carved bosses at the intersections of the ribbing. Stylistically, these bosses match those on the first floor ceiling in Eyton Court, although they are larger and, as a consequence, more elaborate.<sup>63</sup> It seems almost certain that they are from the same workshop.

Thomas' son Richard, the lawyer (1531–91) would have been 13 years old when his father died so he would have seen the construction of Eyton Court and, for a while, one might assume, he would have lived there. When his uncle Richard (1496–1557) died, Richard (the lawyer) at the age of 26 as overseer of his uncle's will was charged with assisting the widow and children.<sup>64</sup> She died a short time later and his responsibility increased. Richard (the geographer) would have been an infant at the time. This raises the question of how this might have been arranged and where the children might have lived. It also suggests that Richard (the lawyer), although a cousin, may have been more of a father figure or elder brother to Richard (the geographer) and there is every indication that there was a special bond between the two men.

Richard (the lawyer) retained land and property at Eyton but also at Yatton, a small settlement 4.3 miles (7 km) from Eyton on the west side of the river Lugg, adjacent to Aymestrey.<sup>65</sup> The house at Yatton was very probably on the site of the present Yatton Court, a late eighteenth century brick and stone structure that replaced an earlier timber-framed building. Nearby is the single-cell church of St Andrew at Leinthall Starks. It is recorded that 'In the old Church the arms of Hackluyt were to be seen on the beams of the roof.'<sup>66</sup>

---

## Bibliography

Barrow, J., ed., *English Episcopal Acta VII, Hereford 1079–1234*, London, The British Academy, 1993.

Bindoff, S. T., ed., *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1509–1558*, Boydell & Brewer, London, 1982.

Brooks, A. and Pevsner, N., *The Buildings of England – Herefordshire*, London, Yale University Press, 2012.

Faraday, M. A., ed., *Herefordshire Militia Assessments of 1663*, London, Royal Historical Society, Camden Fourth Series, vol. 10, 1972.

---

<sup>63</sup> Wheeler, *Medieval Church Screens*, p. 222, states that the 'boards and bosses have been renewed' but this is not correct. Only one of the bosses is a replacement.

<sup>64</sup> Richard (1496–1557) had six children, Thomas, Oliver, Edmund and Richard (the geographer) and two daughters.

<sup>65</sup> Brooks and Pevsner, *Herefordshire*, pp. 91–3.

<sup>66</sup> Robinson, *Mansions and Manors*, p. 173.

Faraday, M. A., ed., *Herefordshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII*, Hereford, Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club, Herefordshire, 2005.

Faraday, M. A., ed., *Calendar of Probate and Administration Acts 1407–1550*, Hereford, Faraday/Logaston Press, 2008.

Gray, A., *An address on the occasion of the tercentenary of the death of Richard Hakluyt 23 November, 1916, with a note on the Hakluyt family*, London, Hakluyt Society, 1917.

Hillaby, J. & Hillaby, C., *Leominster Minster, Priory and Borough, c660–1539*, Hereford, Logaston Press, 2006.

Hodges, G., *Owain GlynDwr and the War of Independence in the Welsh Borders*, Hereford, Logaston Press, 1995.

James, D., 'An Investigation of the Orientation of Timber-framed Houses in Herefordshire', *Vernacular Architecture*, vol. 34, 2003, pp. 20–31.

James, D., 'Saw marks in vernacular buildings and their wider significance', *Vernacular Architecture*, vol. 43, 2012, pp. 7–18.

James, D., 'Eyton Court, Eyton, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 0AG – a report concerning the historic fabric of the house'. Unpublished report for the owners, 2016.

Kemp, B. R., ed., *Reading Abbey Cartularies*, London, Royal Historical Society, Camden Fourth Series, vol. 31, 1986.

Lloyd, D., Howell, P., & Richards, M., *The Feathers*, Ludlow, Ludlow Research Paper No. 5, 1986.

*L.P.F.D.*, Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII.

Parks, G. B., 'The Ancestry of Richard Hakluyt', London, *Notes & Queries*, May 10, 1924, pp. 335–7.

Price, John., *An historical and topographical account of Leominster and it's vicinity*, Ludlow, 1795.

*RCHME*: Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, England, *An inventory of the historical monuments in Herefordshire, Vol. 3 – North-West*, London, H.M.S.O., 1934.

Robinson, C. J., *A History of the Mansions and Manors of Herefordshire*, Hereford, 1872.

Smith, L. T., *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535-1543*, parts IV and V, London, Bell & Sons, 1908.

Thorn, F. & Thorn, C., eds, *Domesday Book, Herefordshire*, Chichester, Phillimore Press, 1983.

*TWNFC*: *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, Hereford.



Wheeler, R., *The Medieval Church Screens of the Southern Marches*, Hereford, Logaston Press, 2006.

Williams, Revd J., *The Leominster Guide*, Leominster, 1808, (reprinted by Leominster Folk Museum, 2000).

Williams, P., *The Council in the Marches of Wales under Elizabeth I*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1958.