

SHORTER CONTRIBUTION

A DRAWING OF A FIFTEENTH-CENTURY RECTOR OF HALESWORTH

by Colin Richmond

Walter Annable does not feature in the index of Colin Richmond, *John Hopton: a Fifteenth-Century Suffolk Gentleman* (Richmond 1981). He ought to have done. It is almost certainly Walter who is sketched on folio fifty-six of Nicholas Greenhagh's rough account book (Pl. LXII) and not Nicholas himself.¹ I had overlooked or, because I had not come upon anyone of the name, ignored 'syr water anabill' written in Nicholas's hand beside the head of the figure.

Now, in composing a paper on Halesworth church in the 15th century, I have encountered him. Walter was rector of Halesworth when he died in 1465; he had been rector there only since 1463; before that he had been rector of Spexhall.² The sketch was presumably made, perhaps by Walter himself, sometime between 1444 and 1456, the period covered by Nicholas's account book, possibly in 1451 when Walter became rector of Spexhall: the drawing is on a page adjoining that where Nicholas has begun a list of Blythburgh rents for the accounting year 1450–51 and it seems to have been drawn *over* the jottings of the page it adorns.

Walter's portrait, perhaps self-portrait, is a rarity. For that reason alone it is worth reproducing. Of what other identifiable 15th-century Suffolk rector is there a likeness? Formalized picture though it is, it at least portrays Walter in prayer and is unlikely, therefore, to be a caricature, unless Walter praying was a caricature of the Walter Nicholas Greenhagh knew. Evidently, they were good enough friends for such an exercise in friendship to have occurred. Walter made a brief will on 22 March 1465.³ It reveals little. It does, however, show that another gentleman of the region (besides John Hopton) thought well of him, as Mary Allington, daughter of John Allington esquire of Halesworth and Horseheath, Cambridgeshire, was among the rector's godchildren. John Allington was Walter's principal executor.⁴ Walter also enjoyed company: he left a great spit apiece to the two fraternities of Halesworth church, that of St John the Baptist and that of Saints Loy and Anthony, to improve their annual feasting. He also made a bequest to the parish clerk, Richard Wurlyson. He wished to be buried in the chancel of Halesworth church. He does not remember Spexhall, nor mention Nicholas Greenhagh.

Notes

- ¹ 'Nicholas Greenhagh, the Blythburgh bailiff, drew a sketch of himself in his rough account book: "noverint universi per presentes me"' (Richmond 1981, 149). I was sufficiently doubtful of the identification to ask, 'Or is it someone else whom he has drawn?', but my doubt was relegated to a footnote. For the account book, which (so far as I can make out) is complete as well as in perfect condition, see Richmond 1981, 33–34. A recent examination has reminded me of how ingeniously functional a pocket (or purse) book it is. Whoever made it was a craftsman. Nicholas may, I suppose, have made it himself. I would like to thank the Branch Archivist, Mr David Jones, for his enthusiastic aid when I visited the Ipswich Branch of the Suffolk Record Office to re-examine Nicholas's book, whose call number is HA 30: 369/46.
- ² The paper, 'Halesworth Church, Suffolk, and its Fifteenth-Century Benefactors', has made its appearance in a *festschrift* honouring Edmund Fryde since this article was written (Richmond and Harvey 1996, 243–66).
- ³ Norfolk Record Office, N.C.C., 96 Betyns.
- ⁴ For the Allingtons, see Roskell 1983, chs 15 and 19. John Allington esquire (d. 1480) was at home when John Paston III called at Halesworth one day in June, probably 1464; John Paston wrote a letter to his father from the Allington house; it relates the interesting conversation he had with its owner (Davis 1971, no. 322).

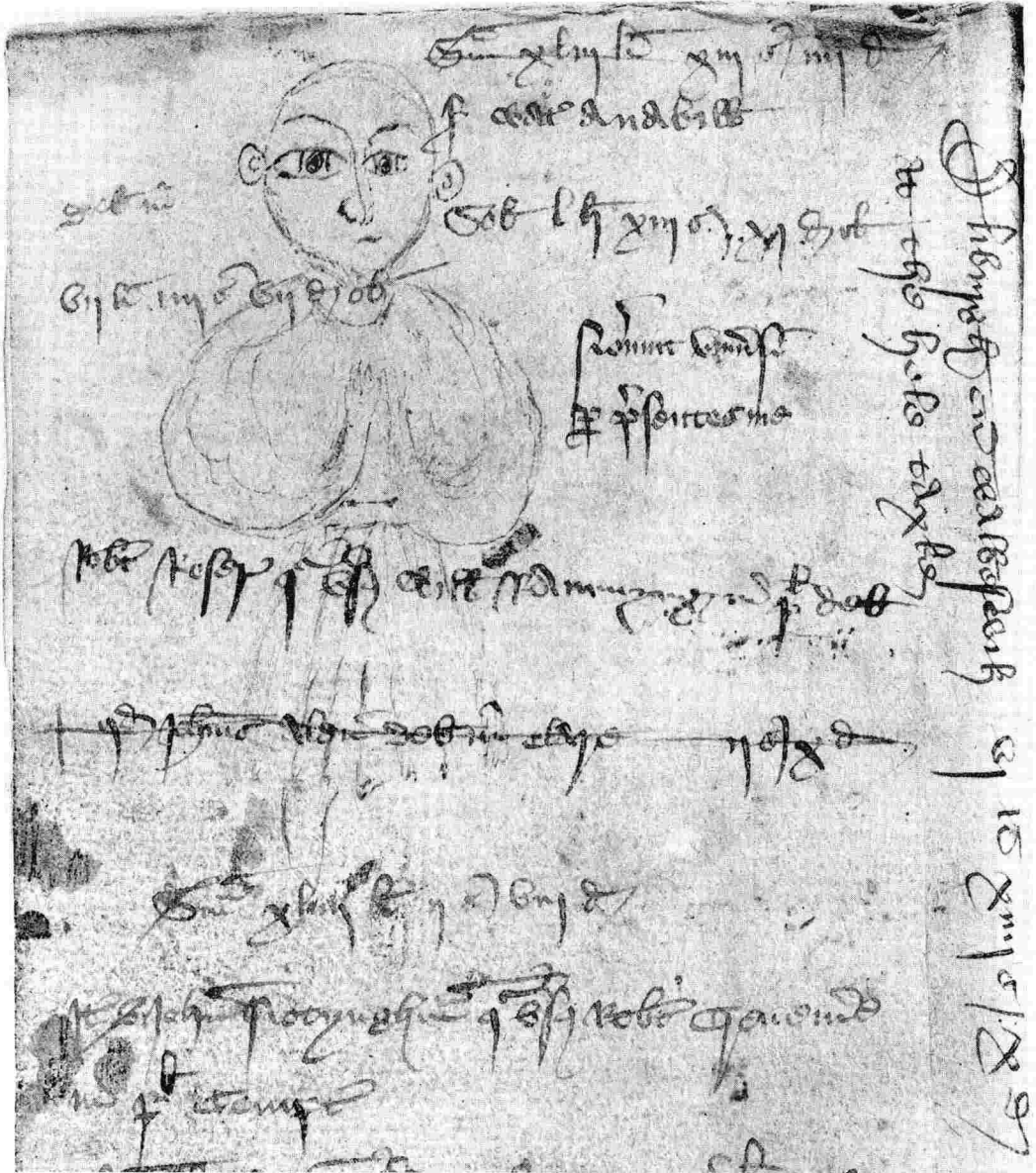


PLATE LXII – Walter Annable, rector of Spexhall and Halesworth, as depicted in Nicholas Greenhagh’s account book sometime between 1444 and 1456 (by permission of the Suffolk Record Office).

References

- Davis, N. (ed.), 1971. *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, Part 1. Oxford.
- Richmond, C., 1981. *John Hopton: a Fifteenth-Century Suffolk Gentleman*. Cambridge.
- Richmond, C. and Harvey, I. (eds), 1996. *Recognitions*. Aberystwyth.
- Roskell, J.S., 1983. *Parliament and Politics in Late Medieval England*, III. London.