

Christopher Marlowe and *Arden of Faversham*

The Kentish Connections



On St Valentine's Day of 1551, Thomas Arden of Faversham in Kent was murdered by his wife, acting with a group of conspirators including her lover, Mosby. The murder was quickly discovered, and the perpetrators rounded up and publicly executed for their parts in the crime. The story shocked the county and the nation, and would be variously told and retold over the next century. Not first, but surely not least amongst the retellings was an anonymous play first printed in 1592, entitled *Arden of Faversham*. This drama contains blank verse of high quality, and is still performed today. It has been variously attributed, in whole or in part, to the well-known Elizabethan dramatists Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, and Thomas Kyd.

Marlowe might seem an obvious choice of author or coauthor, based simply on location: raised in nearby Canterbury, his father was from the village of Ospringe — adjacent to, now part of Faversham. The Canterbury writer was a popular attribution in the first half of the twentieth century, finding support from scholars such as Oliphant (1926) and Bodwell Smith (1940). Marlowe's claim to authorship of the play is by no means assured, however: the drama sticks close to its primary source — Holinshed's *Chronicles* — and has tended to be viewed as containing few, if any additions requiring further local knowledge. Recent studies have preferred Shakespeare or Kyd, over Marlowe, as the play's primary author. Near the end of the play, in a touch suggestive of Lady Macbeth's famous "out, damned spot!", Alice Arden tries in vain to clean her husband's blood from the floor of their house, where the murder has just been committed — but it will not wash away:

But with my nails I'll scrape away the blood;—
The more I strive, the more the blood appears!

In 2016, *Arden of Faversham* was added to the *New Oxford Shakespeare* collected works. An emerging factor in attribution studies, for which this play (amongst others of uncertain parentage from the early 1590s) has become a testing-ground, is the developing field of computer-aided stylometry. Two contrasting methods for analysis have been applied to the play by researchers in this field. Kinney & Craig (2006) used modern statistical methods to look at word frequency distributions of sections of plays attributed to the three authors — a methodology arguably drawing its descent, ultimately, from the seminal word-length distribution analysis of Mendenhall (1887). Kinney & Craig's study chose Shakespeare from the three above-named authors as the most likely to have authored scenes 4-9 of the play.

Vickers (2008) countered with results based on collocations of words — a system derived from software designed to detect plagiarism. Vickers' study favoured Kyd as the play's sole author, over Shakespeare. Jackson (2015) later supported Kinney & Craig's claim for Shakespeare's hand.

Kinney & Craig's approach, like Mendenhall's over a century earlier, offers a broad-brush approach — albeit with a richer dataset and much-improved statistical tools. Great care must be exercised when using such a measure, to avoid broad contamination of the testing data — a genuine concern in a period of publication in which the majority of plays were printed anonymously or else insufficiently or incorrectly attributed, coauthorship is thought to have been common, and many currently-favoured attributions depend on later suggestions by others, or intertextual deduction. In order to assess such studies, an intimate knowledge of the history of attribution scholarship for all comparison works must be allied with a deep understanding of the statistical methodologies and potential biases involved — no mean feat.

Vickers' fine-grained method using collocations goes, perhaps, to the other extreme of detail: powerful in connecting the authorship of short passages in texts, however here the challenges lie in connecting these matches together to identify distinct authors in plays which may be patchworks — again, requiring a high degree of textual knowledge to assess — or, in telling the difference between identical authorship and plagiarism, which this system was originally designed to detect. Many of the dramas used as comparison texts for these studies have their own fraught histories of contested attribution. The authorship of none of these plays may be straightforwardly assumed, and a combination of authors is possible in almost every case. Out of Kyd's few commonly-accepted works, for example, *The Spanish Tragedy's* attribution depends upon a stray comment made by the writer Thomas Heywood over twenty years after the play is thought to have been written, *Soliman and Perseda* has been judged to be Kyd's largely based on textual comparison with *The Spanish Tragedy*, and *Cornelia* is a translation, and thus constrained in its choices of words and phrases. The existence of writing coauthored by Kyd and Marlowe seems likely — we know that the two worked together, and at around the probable time of the writing of *Arden of Faversham*, thanks to a 1593 letter written by Kyd in which he states that papers of theirs were mixed together when they wrote “in one chamber twoe yeares synce”. [Kyd letter - ODNB, Honan, Nicoll?]

Further blurring the boundaries, and potentially muddying the data pool, an earlier stylometric study by Merriam (unusually) reattributes Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* — thought to share similarities with both *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Arden of Faversham* — to Kyd. Merriam's results also suggest that Marlowe coauthored *Titus Andronicus*—the first of Shakespeare's *First Folio* (1623) plays to be printed in quarto (anonymously, in 1594). The latter play was printed by the same man, Edward White, as both *Arden of Faversham* and *The Spanish Tragedy* — as well as a 1592 English translation of the German *Faustbuch*, thought to be a likely source for Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. As well as attributing *Arden of Faversham* to Shakespeare, the *New Oxford Shakespeare* lists *Henry VI Parts I, II and III* (singly attributed in the *First Folio*) as being coauthored with Marlowe. [Cambridge, ODNB, Oxford]

Shakespeare's oeuvre before 1593 is not a great deal better-established than Kyd's. A Shakespeare play (or play segment) confirmed to have been authored prior to that year — when his name first appeared in print with the publication of the lyric poem *Venus and Adonis*, dedicated to Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton — would be of great value. The first quarto versions of canonical Shakespeare plays appeared in 1594, and his name first appeared on a dramatic title page in 1598.[]

To give a sense of the difficulties involved, below are twelve two-line quotations from plays thought to have been written between 1587 and 1593, presented in an arbitrary order. Included are three from each of Marlowe, Shakespeare and Kyd — according to standard

attributions — and three from *Arden of Faversham*. They have been chosen for quality: each displays distinctive emotional drive and lyrical musicality. Ultimately, the aim is to identify the author of each, with or without the help of computers. The originating plays for the twelve excerpts are listed in a footnote:

1. When this eternal substance of my soul
Did live imprison'd in my wanton flesh
2. Oft have I digg'd up dead men from their graves,
And set them upright at their dear friends' doors
3. But, in the harvest of my summer joys,
Death's winter nipp'd the blossoms of my bliss
4. The wrinkles in his foul death-threat'ning face
Gapes open wide, like graves to swallow men
5. If ever day were turn'd to ugly night,
And night made semblance of the hue of hell
6. Could I come near your beauty with my nails,
I'd set my ten commandments in your face
7. A reaching thought will search his deepest wits,
And cast with cunning for the time to come
8. Black night hath hid the pleasures of the day,
And sheeting darkness overhangs the earth
9. Thus must we toil in other men's extremes,
That know not how to remedy our own
10. I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains,
And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about
11. Ah, would it were! Then comes my happy hour:
Till then my bliss is mixed with bitter gall
12. Conscience is but a word that cowards use,
Devis'd at first to keep the strong in awe [Sources, Kyd note]

Drawbacks and challenges aside, the new stylometric methods may offer powerful insights on old debates. One day, perhaps, such approaches might be robust, reproducible and mutually agreeable enough to give us greater certainty than we are already able to achieve, in a period of dramatic attribution so fraught that the finest verses of three men thought to have produced some of the most innovative dramatic poetry of their time — including the youthful works of England's most celebrated playwright, in the short period of the early explosion of great English blank verse drama — seem to be so difficult to tell apart that we are in the position of looking to computers to help find answers. In the meantime, traditional methods of analysis, both textual and historical, may still have clues to provide.

As we shall see, there are in fact several added details in *Arden of Faversham*, suggestive of familiarity with the play's locale. And, whilst interesting links may be found to each of the play's main candidate authors, the predominantly Kentish connections linking Christopher Marlowe to the play's themes, characters and setting go far beyond mere coincidence of proximity. An exploration of these relationships not only provides new evidence in support of Marlowe's involvement in the play's authorship, but may also help to elucidate the networks behind the poet's rise — from a shoemaker's son of Canterbury, to a figure associated with some of the most important names of the Elizabethan Age.

Arden's Murder and the Play

In the play's primary source — Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* — the account of Arden's death provides an unusual diversion from the surrounding stories of kings, queens and nobility. The incongruity is acknowledged in the tale's introduction:

About this time there was at Feversham in Kent a gentleman named Arden, most cruellie murdered and slaine by the procurement of his owne wife. The which murther, for the horriblesse thereof, although otherwise it may seeme to be but a private matter, and therefore as it were impertinent to this historie, I have thought good to set it fourth somewhat at large, having the instructions delivered to me by them, that have used some diligence to gather the true understanding of the circumstances.[Holinshed]

There are a few surviving antecedent accounts of the murder and its aftermath, including that of the Faversham Wardmote Book — the town records for the period. Of most relevance to the account in Holinshed, a manuscript once owned by, and in the handwriting of the historian John Stow (d. 1605) — apparently combining accounts from more than one source — contains, with a few additions and rearrangements, much of the same text as the account in the *Chronicles*, down to such idiosyncratic phrases as “a black swarte man” to describe Mosby. It seems likely that the version in Holinshed’s *Chronicles* — identical in the 1577 and 1587 editions, save for spelling differences and the addition of marginal glosses — was edited together from the information in this manuscript of Stow’s. The *Chronicles*, though attributed singly to Holinshed, was in fact the work of several contributors — and Stow is known to have been among these. He may have been primarily involved in providing the account in “Holinshed”, collated together from the accounts in his manuscript.[Hyde, Holinshed online]

John Stow was a friend of the Kentish judge and Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer, Sir Roger Manwood — to whom, after his death in 1592, Christopher Marlowe wrote an epitaph poem. Stow was also a friend of Sir Roger’s son, Sir Peter Manwood (1567-1625) — a Canterbury contemporary of the playwright. Marlowe may have used Sir Peter’s collection of manuscripts, which included several of Stow’s, whilst writing *The Jew of Malta*: a probable source text for this drama, Richard Knolles’ *General History of the Turks*, was only available at the time as a manuscript — kept by Sir Peter for Knolles, who was then the headmaster of Sir Roger Manwood’s free school in Sandwich.[Stow STBQ]

Stow and the Manwoods were in the circle of Archbishop Matthew Parker (d. 1575) — Stow’s patron, and Sir Roger Manwood’s friend. Parker was a central figure in the Anglican Church as it developed under Queen Elizabeth — overseeing the writing of the *Thirty-nine Articles*, the defining statements of the Church of England. In the progressing era of the printed word, the country was becoming increasingly literate. Several schools were founded under Elizabeth — including Westminster, Merchant Taylors’, Rugby and Harrow. Compendious printing projects such as Holinshed’s *Chronicles* and Foxe’s 1563 *Actes and Monuments* (popularly known as the *Book of Martyrs*) served an educational market need, whilst promoting (under the guidance of Parker and others) a view of English History befitting the “true religion” of Elizabethan Protestantism — as well as supporting other concerns of the Tudor succession. Aside from assisting with the 1563 founding of Sir Roger Manwood’s school in Sandwich, Parker displayed his educational benevolence by establishing in 1569 (augmented in his will of 1575) a set of scholarships under which King’s School, Canterbury students could receive financial assistance to study at Parker’s college — Corpus Christi, Cambridge. In 1581 Marlowe would enrol at the college, in receipt of one of these scholarships.[ODNB]

According to the accounts in both Stow’s manuscript and Holinshed, Arden’s murder was preceded by a number of failed attempts by Alice and Mosby — working with others, including two ne’er-do-wells by the names of Black Will and Shakebag (Loosebag in the Wardmote account). In both versions, a supernatural sign — the lasting imprint of Arden’s body — is taken to imply that Arden’s murder was a moral consequence of his unfair dealings in land in Faversham, especially with a man named Richard Reede and his wife. This claim is repeated in the drama’s epilogue:

Arden lay murdered in that plot of ground
Which he by force and violence held from Reede[Arden]

The politics of land acquisition runs throughout the play as a major theme. Arden was one of many who profited from the dissolution of the monasteries (1536-41) — an enormous redistribution of wealth in which around a quarter of the country's land changed ownership, creating a new gentry class along the way. The play's dynamics largely revolve around the political and personal results of this upheaval. Arden's friend Franklin's opening lines inform us of the play's subject receiving,

By letters patents from his Majesty,
All the lands of the Abbey of Feversham

As Hyde (1996) has shown, contrary to this narrative, in real life Arden did not receive all of the former Abbey's lands. At his death he was in possession of only 28 of around 300 properties which the Abbey had owned in the town — and he wasn't made lord of the Manor, or of the Hundred of Faversham. These titles would pass from the Crown to Sir Dudley Digges in 1630. What is clear from the records, and reflected in the dramatisation, is that by the time of his demise Arden, an outsider, was becoming increasingly unpopular in the town. Two years after becoming mayor, and less than two months before his death, Arden was disenfranchised by the town council. This may have been because he had arranged for the annual town fair, an important source of revenue for the town (celebrated on St Valentine's Day, the day he would be murdered) to be held entirely on his land.[Hyde, Hasted]

Class status is another of the play's recurring themes. Much moment is made of the Ardens' and the conspirators' backgrounds, and of their connections to noble families. Over the course of his career, Thomas Arden worked for two eminent employers: Edward Lord North and Sir Thomas Cheney. As well as being Arden's employer as Clerk of Parliament, Lord North was Alice's stepfather. The Norths were related by marriage to the Cromwell family — Henry VIII's advisor Thomas, and the later Lord Protector Oliver. In the play, accusing Mosby of infidelity with his wife, Arden says,

... all the knights and gentlemen of Kent
Make common table-talk of her and thee[Hyde, Arden]

And the conspirator Greene says to Alice,

Why, all Kent knows your parentage and what you are[Arden]

However, the play masks her background — unchanged in Holinshed — by altering the surname of Alice's stepfather, her husband's previous employer, from North to Clifford.

Also altered in the play is the location of one of the murder attempts — described in Holinshed as a parsonage which Thomas Arden held in London. The real life Arden leased the parsonage of St Michael's, Cornhill, from Dr John Willoughby — Queen Anne Boleyn's physician. In the play the location is changed to a house in Aldersgate owned by Arden's friend and foil (and authorial addition), Franklin.[Hyde]

The parish of St Michael of Cornhill in London connects several names of interest to us — including the historian John Stow, who was born (1525) and lived there until 1570, before moving to the nearby parish of St Andrew Undershaft. Also from St Michael, Cornhill was the playwright Thomas Kyd (1558-94). So was Richard Mulcaster, the headmaster of the Merchant Taylors' School, which Kyd attended from 1565 to c1575, together with several schoolfellows who would be of literary interest, including Edward Blount (1562-1632), the publisher of works by Marlowe and Shakespeare.[ODNB]

Aside from North, whose main estate was in Cambridgeshire, the other identifiable nobility figures in the play — both Kentish — keep their names, as in Holinshed's version. Sir Anthony Ager (Aucher, Awcher) was the employer of the conspirator Greene. He received the Manor of Plumford in Ospringe in 1547 from Edward VI. He is briefly mentioned in the play, as he is in both Holinshed and Stow's manuscript.[Hasted, Hyde]

Thomas Arden's second employer, Sir Thomas Cheney — from whom he received Faversham Abbey land — was a favourite of Queen Anne Boleyn, and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. He was an important landowner in Kent after the dissolution. His Kentish properties included Shurland in Sheppey ("Shorlow" in the play), the Manor of Ospringe, and Barton Court in Canterbury. In the play, Cheney is given the most contrasting treatment to that of the North family: retaining his name, he has a heroic walk-on part — saving Arden from one of the murder attempts.[ODNB, Hasted]

Both North and Cheney had literary connections of interest. Lord North's son, Alice's stepbrother Sir Thomas North was responsible for a widely-read translation of Plutarch's *Lives*, used as a source for several of Shakespeare's plays. Sir Thomas Cheney, like John Stow, was a friend of Sir Roger Manwood — who was named co-executor of, and received money in, Cheney's 1558 will. A Catholic conservative who retained his status through all five Tudor monarchs, Cheney died one month into the reign of the last, Queen Elizabeth. His granddaughter Alice (Kempe) Hales was a patron of Marlowe's "university wit" literary associates, Thomas Nashe and Robert Greene. Alice's father Sir Thomas Kempe was of the Kempe family of Olantigh, near Wye in Kent — thought likely to have included the comic actor Will Kemp.[ODNB]

In one local detail from Holinshed given added colour in the play, the conspirator Michael suggests a plan for a murder attempt:

you may front him well on Rainham Down,
A place well-fitting such a stratagem.[Arden]

Apparently "this spot had a very bad reputation" [Donne]. Kent historian Hasted describes the area as "for the most part low and unpleasant, and from its nearness and exposure to the marshes very unhealthy". Shakebag mentions,

Jack of Feversham,
That sounded for a fillip on the nose,
When he that gave it him holloed in his ear,
And he supposed a cannon-bullet hit him.[Arden]

This Jack was "probably a local coward" [Donne]. Another local addition comes when Black Will is reminiscing to his fellow:

Sirrah Shakebag, canst thou remember since we trolled the bowl at Sittingburgh,
where I broke the tapster's head of the Lion with a cudgel-stick?[Arden]

The Lion Inn in Sittingbourne was built in medieval times and, it is claimed, was visited by Henry V on his return from the Battle of Agincourt. The inn, now known as The Red Lion, still operates at the same location today.

The conspirator Michael mentions a plan to kill his own brother, and take his farm in "Bolton" — the nearby village of Boughton-under-Blean — an authorial addition. The local reference serves no obvious dramatic need, except to illustrate the wickedness of the plotters — it is only mentioned once.

Another detail implying local knowledge is the description of the fog on the Isle of Sheppey. This weather phenomenon still catches people unaware: in 2013, it caused a 130-car pile-up

on the A249 bridge, in morning traffic leaving the island. Absent in Holinshed, this fog becomes a dramatic device in *Arden of Faversham*, and the setting for one scene's murder attempt,

Arden: This mist, my friend, is mystical,
Like to a good companion's smoky brain,
That was half drowned with new ale overnight.

The following lines demonstrate a knowledge of the local fishing trade, and its use as a route to a town in the Netherlands, where Marlowe was caught counterfeiting coins:

Therefore must I in some oyster-boat
At last be fain to go on board some hoy,
And so to Flushing

Marlowe, whose illegal activity in Flushing may have been part of his intelligence work, was free soon after being caught and sent back to Lord Burghley in England, early in 1592. Counterfeiting and stolen plate (required for production of fake coinage at scale) are mentioned several times in the play; these and the town of Flushing are absent in the play's main source. *Arden of Faversham* was entered for publication in the Stationer's Register just two months after Marlowe's deportation from Flushing. In the above-quoted departure speech, Black Will also mentions Sittingbourne and Gad's Hill, near Higham — like Rainham, both on the route between Faversham and London. Neither place appears in the Holinshed version of the story, though Gad's Hill would become a setting in later work by Shakespeare.

Clearly local additions to the play's content are present, and in enough quantity to suggest familiarity with the area. Whilst these additions by themselves do not constitute proof of a contributing author who lived nearby, they must be explainable by access to reliable knowledge of Kent. The gossip of the Kentish gentry, dramatic representation of Sir Thomas Cheney, inclusion of people, place names and geographic features not in the source text seem confident and assured, and would have been put to the test in Kentish performances of the play — any of which must have been received with great interest.

Marlowe's Background

Christopher Marlowe was born in Canterbury in 1564, to parents John and Katherine née Arthur. Neither of his parents' social backgrounds are very well-documented. It appears that the playwright's beginnings were somewhat humble — although members of his extended family network were certainly of the higher gentry class. John Marlowe, despite showing signs of receiving assistance at various stages in his career, was continually in debt. At least two of his landlords, John Nutt and Alexander Norwood, took him to court for defaulting on his rent. We have several records of John's life as a shoemaker in Canterbury, as well as documentation of the Marlowes' relatives, friends and neighbours in the town — largely thanks to the work of Canterbury Cathedral archivist William Urry (d. 1981). We do not know the names of John Marlowe's parents, or when they died — only that (as he testified on several occasions) he was born in Ospringe, near Faversham. In Canterbury, the Marlowes' family circle included the Moores — whose Ursula Moore married Thomas Arthur, Katherine Marlowe's brother, sometime before 1581. Also part of this group were the Auncells: George, and his sister Mary. Mary Auncell married Thomas Moore, Ursula's brother, in 1566. The Moore family were from Ulcombe, near Maidstone. Little is known about their social status — the name was common and is hard to trace — but the Auncells were certainly from a gentry family. From various records in which they are named together, it seems that Mary's brother George Auncell was a close friend of John Marlowe, as well as being his brother-in-law via the above marriages. Auncell was a grocer who had moved to Canterbury from the

village of Mersham, near Ashford, where the Auncell name (Ansell, Anselme etc.) goes back in records as far as 1373. In 1570 George Auncell married Anne Potman. She was the sister of Richard Potman, knighted by King James in 1603. According to Urry, George Auncell's household in Mercery Lane, Canterbury, "would have been well known to Christopher Marlowe".

The master of the Canterbury shoemakers' company, of which John Marlowe was a member (and for a year, treasurer), was Thomas Greenleaf. Greenleaf was also a churchwarden at St Alphege's church in Canterbury — as was George Auncell. He was a close friend of James and Katherine, the parents of John Benchkin, Marlowe's probable schoolfellow at the King's School, Canterbury, and fellow student at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Greenleaf was named executor of the will of Katherine Benchkin, on which document Marlowe's only known signature appears, as a witness. The other witnesses of the will were Christopher Marlowe's father John, and two other relatives — Thomas Arthur and John Moore. All were able to write their names proficiently. Katherine Benchkin left money to members of the Auncell family — a "widow Auncell" and her daughters, Joan and Agnes. Urry was cautious about the relationship between Marlowe and John Benchkin, but Kuriyama (2010) argues persuasively that they must have been close friends. Katherine's will, backed up by other records, suggest a shared Canterbury network, including Christopher Marlowe and his father John, Thomas Greenleaf, and the Marlowe family's neighbouring relatives the Auncells, Moores and Arthurs. Whilst this small community of variously-related tradesfolk were by no means in the ranks of the super-rich, Greenleaf, the Benchkins and the Auncells were all members of gentry families, and as a group they may have had access to significant connections.

Of undoubtedly high social status were some of the names that Christopher Marlowe would later be associated with. His friend, patron and employer Sir Thomas Walsingham was second cousin to Sir Francis Walsingham — Queen Elizabeth's spymaster. The younger Sir Thomas is thought to have employed Marlowe as part of Sir Francis' intelligence network for the Queen. Another lofty later probable patron of the poet was Mary (Sidney) Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke — to whom Marlowe wrote a dedication preceding his friend Thomas Watson's posthumously-printed poem *Amyntas*. *Arden of Faversham* may have been part of the dramatic repertory of The Earl of Pembroke's Men — the acting troupe owned by Mary's husband, Henry Herbert the 2nd Earl of Pembroke. (Wentersdorf). The Pembrokes were keen literary patrons: Thomas Kyd dedicated his *Cornelia* to the Countess, and Shakespeare's *First Folio* is dedicated to her sons William and Philip, the 3rd and 4th Earls Pembroke.

Another high-flier believed to have been associated with Marlowe was the adventurer Sir Walter Raleigh. Raleigh rose to become one of the Queen's favourites, but then fell from favour after secretly marrying, in 1591, one of her ladies-in-waiting — Elizabeth (Bess) Throckmorton. Soon after, and from around the same time that similar claims were building against Marlowe, he began to be accused of atheism. The charge would recur throughout his later troubles with King James, and for the rest of his life. He was rumoured to have led a group of atheists, or free-thinkers, including Marlowe and the mathematician and Native American linguist Thomas Harriot, whose name was mentioned in accusations against both men. As well as being a man of action, Raleigh was a poet and a scholar. According to an attribution first made by Izaak Walton in *The Compleat Angler* (1653), he was the author of *The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd* — the well-known answer poem to Marlowe's *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*. Raleigh's influence on Marlowe may be reflected in themes of colonialism present in the majority of the latter's known plays.

Also in the playwright's likely circle of patronage, we have already met Sir Roger Manwood — to whom Marlowe wrote a Latin epitaph poem. This poem was discovered in the nineteenth century, in the notebook of Henry Oxinden — a seventeenth-century Kentish gentleman who kept a large library of books, as well as diaries, letters and notebook miscellanies. His library

included *Arden of Faversham*, amongst an impressive collection of early plays — 122, including titles attributed to Marlowe, Shakespeare and Kyd. Oxinden had a particular interest in Christopher Marlowe, noting the local poet's background as a “shoemaker's son of Canterbury” — a piece of information which would enable later researchers to uncover the playwright's Canterbury origin (Kuriyama). He also recorded a story that Marlowe had converted a local youth named Fineux to atheism. Oxinden's stated source for his information about Marlowe was a man named Simon Aldrich, who lived with his son-in-law John Swan as a tenant of Oxinden's property in Denton, between Canterbury and Dover.

As we shall see, many of the above surnames, significant in relation to Marlowe's Kentish network, can also be found in connection with Thomas Arden in Faversham, around two generations earlier. For most of these, there is evidence of direct relationships with Marlowe and his contemporaries. These links lead to further relevant names and connections, which together may shine new light — not only on the authorship of the play *Arden of Faversham*, but also on Marlowe's background, career trajectory and legacy.

Auncell and Coldwell

As we have noted, George Auncell — a grocer from a gentry family based in Mersham, near Ashford — was Christopher Marlowe's uncle by marriage, and was also a close friend of Marlowe's father, John.

Of the same surname at the time of Thomas Arden, Simon Auncell (d. 1548) worked as receiver general for Faversham Abbey's land — of which he was also a tenant, preceding the dissolution. Upon it, he received Abbey property in Kingsnorth and Upland — both near Mersham. He was churchwarden (1546-7) and mayor of Faversham from 1547 until his death the same year, directly preceding Thomas Arden in both roles. After Simon's death his widow Elizabeth was a tenant of Arden's land, as detailed in the latter's will, made less than two months before his murder in 1551.

From a trail of wills it appears that Simon Auncell, replaced in the role of mayor of Faversham on his death by Thomas Arden, was the uncle of George Auncell, Christopher Marlowe's uncle by marriage and family friend. It seems that Simon's brother, George's father, was William Auncell of Mersham, whose will of 1558 (made 20 Sep, proved 27 Oct — shortly before the deaths of both Queen Mary I and Sir Thomas Cheney) bequeaths five pounds to George — apparently the youngest of his five sons, not yet twenty-one years old. Under the terms of the will, if George's next eldest brother Robert (also underage in 1558) died without heirs, then George would receive leases of land “in the tenure of Christ Church, Canterbury” — Canterbury Cathedral's Dean and Chapter. George's sister Mary was the youngest of William's three daughters, and received a bequest of ten pounds, to be paid when she married. These facts agree well with the timeline of Marlowe's uncle George Auncell becoming a freeman of Canterbury (1569) and marrying Mary Potman (1570), and his sister Mary Auncell marrying Thomas Moore (sometime between 1576 and 1581). William's will also mentions the widow of his brother Simon — presumably mayor Simon's widow, Elizabeth, who survived her husband until 1575. Under the terms of Simon's 1547 will, on Elizabeth's death the land he bequeathed to her in Mersham would pass to his brother William's (likely eldest) son, Simon — and William's mention of her appears to connect to this bequest. The 1524 will of an earlier William Auncell of Mersham mentions four sons, including William and Simon — presumably the men named above. Wills matching all four brothers (including William and Simon, as above) can be found, and appear to connect together. The 1563 will of Edward Aunsell — probably William's son, George's elder brother — was witnessed by a John Pledger. The widow of John Pledger of Mersham later lived with George Auncell in Canterbury. This was probably the Mildred née Ansell, sister of George and Mary, who married John Pledger in Mersham in 1559 — a John Pleager was buried in

1560 in Mersham. No other Auncell wills (including variant spellings) are on record in Mersham, or indeed the whole Diocese of Canterbury (East Kent), between 1506 and 1589.

Thus it seems reasonable to deduce that Christopher Marlowe's relative — his uncle's uncle — was a gentry figure closely connected to Thomas Arden, in Faversham town politics, land acquisition and the church.

After Arden had replaced Simon Auncell as churchwarden in 1547, a letter from the Privy Council instructed Auncell "to deliver, all excuses sett aparte, in to the handes of Thomas Arderne, warden of the Church of Fevershame, the pixe of silver by him of late taken from the churche". The pyx or pix is a small ornamental box in which the sacramental bread is kept, and was probably part of a substantial, disputed bequest to the church by Auncell's brother-in-law Henry Hatch; the family may have been upset to see it go. Whilst the legal language of the Privy Council's letter does not necessarily imply a personal quarrel between Auncell and Thomas Arden, as the newly-incumbent churchwarden, neither does the situation seem especially suggestive of a bond of amity between the two men.

Christopher Marlowe was not the only Canterbury boy of his generation who had relatives involved in the town life of Faversham at the time of Thomas Arden. Thomas Coldwell — one of Marlowe's fellow scholars at the King's School, Canterbury, who also studied with the playwright at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge — was the grandson of another. Both boys' elder kinsmen were friends: the will of Marlowe's Faversham relative Simon Auncell, made in 1547, was witnessed by Thomas' grandfather, Robert Coldwell — who along with Auncell and Arden had been named as a jurat (alderman) in Henry VIII's 1546 charter of incorporation for Faversham. Coldwell was still a jurat there at the time of Arden taking the mayor's office (1548), and at the time of his disenfranchisement (Dec 1550). As Auncell had done before the dissolution of the monasteries, Coldwell worked in the administration of Faversham Abbey land — for which he was bailiff, or receiver of "farms and rents". His name directly precedes Simon Auncell's in *Valor Ecclesiasticus* — Henry VIII's 1536 survey of English church land as part of the process of dissolution.

Robert Coldwell's son John was chaplain, and possibly personal physician, to Archbishop Matthew Parker. He was educated at St John's College, Cambridge from 1551, gaining a B.A., M.A., and fellowship there. From 1560, he leased land in Ospringe from the college. He became a doctor of medicine in 1564, after which he worked for Archbishop Parker from 1569. After Parker's death in 1575 he became Dean of Rochester (1581). His 1591 appointment as Bishop of Salisbury, supported by Lord Burghley, was instrumental in allowing Sir Walter Raleigh to take possession of his seat at Sherborne — previously owned by the See of Salisbury. Sir John Harington, later addressing King James in his *Nugae Antiquae*, described Coldwell as the "second partie delinquent in this petty larceny". Coldwell complained in a 1596 letter about Raleigh's "man Meeres" — John Meere, a figure who Raleigh would himself come to despise. Meere also worked for Sir Roger Manwood, and was associated with Richard Baines, who played an important role in organising the charges of atheism against Marlowe — which Raleigh would also fall foul of. Coldwell reached the end of his life later the same year, in poverty. According to Harington, "no bishop of Sarum since the conquest dyed so notoriouslie in debt: his friends glad to bury him suddenly and secretly".

Marlowe's fellow student was very likely the Thomas born in Mersham, to father "Mr" John Coldwell, in 1566 — around the same time that several of Marlowe's contemporary Auncell cousins were baptised in the same village church.

Thomas' baptism record there was preceded in 1564 by Anne, to father John, and followed in 1567 and 1568 by John and Robert, to father "Doctor" John Coldwell — probably all the same man, Archbishop Parker's chaplain from 1569. George Auncell's wife Mary née Potman (m. 1570) was from the village of Tunstall near Sittingbourne, where Dr Coldwell was rector from 1572 to 1582.

So it appears that the Auncell family — Marlowe’s relatives — and the family of his fellow school and college student, Thomas Coldwell, were associated with each other over three generations: in Faversham (where both were connected with Thomas Arden), in Mersham, and in Canterbury.

Robert Streynsham

Two other witnesses to Simon Auncell’s will were brothers Thomas and George Streynsham — both named as freemen in Faversham’s 1546 charter of incorporation. Thomas, “probably one of Arden’s chief opponents” (Hyde p.108), replaced Thomas Arden as a jurat when the latter was disenfranchised in 1550, and would go on to be mayor of Faversham in 1554, 1556-7, and 1562. George died in 1575, and in 1580 Thomas, along with George’s eldest son Robert, and Thomas’ father-in-law Richard Dryland (mayor 1531-4 and 1541) — who had also witnessed Auncell’s will — became the owners of the main Faversham Abbey site, including Arden’s house, where he was murdered. Thomas Streynsham died in 1584, followed by Richard Dryland in 1585, and the sole ownership of the property passed to Robert Streynsham.

Thus the owner of Thomas Arden’s house in Faversham, at the time of the writing of the play, was Robert Streynsham — whose father and brother were friends of Christopher Marlowe’s relative Simon Auncell, as well as of Robert Coldwell, the grandfather of Marlowe’s fellow student Thomas Coldwell. Robert’s will, made in Ospringe in 1604, mentions the names of two of Marlowe’s schoolfellows: Thomas Coldwell (“Collwell”), whom Streynsham refers to as “cousin”, and Leonard Sweeting, the son of the vicar of Marlowe’s birth parish of St George, Canterbury. Robert’s uncle Thomas remembered John “Collwell” — likely Thomas’ father — in his will, made in St Dunstan’s, Canterbury in 1584.

Robert Streynsham’s will also remembers William Nutt “of Canterbury” — probably the eldest son of John Marlowe’s landlord, alderman John Nutt. The Nutts, it seems likely, were related by marriage to the Auncells: in 1592 a Richard Nutt (perhaps William’s brother, b. 1565) married Annis Awnsell at St Alphege’s, Canterbury. She may have been the Agnes Auncell mentioned in Katherine Benchkin’s 1585 will as the daughter of “widow Auncell”. An Agnes Auncell was born in 1563 in Mersham to a father named Simon, and a Simon Auncell was buried in Mersham in 1564. This Simon may have been George Auncell’s elder brother.

Another relevant name in Robert’s will is that of Sir Thomas Kempe of Olantigh — whose namesake father was the son-in-law of Sir Thomas Cheney, who appears in the play. Kempe junior was the brother of Alice (Kempe) Hales, the patron of Marlowe’s fellow writers Nashe and Greene, and the comic actor Will Kemp may have been from the same family. A further pertinent name in the will is that of Lord North — a title then held by its third owner, Sir Dudley, the great grandson of Alice Arden’s stepfather and Thomas Arden’s employer, Sir Edward Lord North. The will mentions land Streynsham received in Harrow, in Wiltshire, from his father-in-law William Wightman MP — then leased from Sir Dudley Lord North. Both Sir Dudley and his brother Roger were involved with Sir Walter Raleigh’s last, fateful voyage to Guyana.

Streynsham had further pertinent connections. His brother George (also known under alias as George “Potter” or “Popham”) was a Catholic priest connected with Marlowe’s intelligence activities in Flushing, in the Netherlands — as we have seen, a town mentioned in the play, from which Marlowe had recently returned when the drama was first registered for publication in 1592. Robert was a fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, and worked as secretary to William Herbert, the 1st Earl of Pembroke (d. 1570) — father-in-law of Marlowe’s likely patron Mary (Sidney) Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke. He married Audrey, the daughter and coheir of William Wightman — MP for Wilton in Wiltshire, where the Pembrokes held their main estate. Wightman’s other coheir, Audrey’s sister Elizabeth, was married to George

Brome, a member of a recusant Catholic family in Oxfordshire. Brome was implicated, but went largely unpunished for his part in the Babington Plot. Robert Poley, one of two witnesses to Marlowe's 1593 apparent death by self-defence, was also an important player in this intrigue — working as an *agent provocateur* amongst the Catholic plotters, in the service of Sir Francis Walsingham.

Streynsham was himself related to the Walsinghams, via the Drylands of Faversham. Robert's uncle Thomas Streynsham married Elizabeth, the daughter of Richard Dryland — who witnessed Simon Auncell's will along with Robert Coldwell and the Streynshams, and who owned Arden's house together with the Streynshams. The house may have originally been built by Richard's father, also named Richard, mayor in 1515, 1519 and 1524 — he leased the site from the abbey over the period in which the house was most likely built. The Dryland and Walsingham families were connected via an earlier Sir Thomas Walsingham (1436–1467) and his wife Lady Constance née Dryland (d. 1476) — the closest common ancestors of Sirs Francis (Queen Elizabeth's spymaster) and Thomas (Marlowe's friend, employer and patron) Walsingham. Lady Constance was the daughter and heir of James Dryland of Davington Hall or Court, near Faversham. The Walsingham family occupied this manor — which later briefly belonged to Thomas Arden's son-in-law, John Bradbourne, before passing to the Streynsham family — as well as the family's seat at Scadbury, near Chislehurst. Scadbury passed, by primogeniture, to the later Sir Thomas — who also owned land in Faversham and Ospringe.

The lease of the Arden property was alienated to the Streynshams and Richard Dryland by John Finch — a member of the Finch family of Eastwell, near Ashford. The Finches, too, were related by marriage to the Walsinghams — as well as to the Kempes of Olantigh. They were also related to the families of Wotton and St Leger, who we shall meet shortly. The Finches bought Preston House in Preston-next-Faversham — a village where the Streynshams also held land — from the family of another of Marlowe's fellow students at both the King's School and Corpus Christi, Richard Boyle (b. Preston, 1566). Boyle would go on to become the 1st Earl of Cork, and was a friend of Sir Walter Raleigh, from whom he bought a large amount of land in Ireland, and whose fleet he helped on the way to and from Guyana in 1616–18. He was the father of the famous scientist Robert Boyle.

Robert Streynsham lived in Ospringe Parsonage, and also owned other land in the parish, including a building known as the Maison Dieu — all of which he leased from St John's College, Cambridge. The Maison Dieu's previous owners were Robert Coldwell, followed by Dr John Coldwell, who alienated the lease to Streynsham in 1583.

Thus Robert Streynsham was associated with several of Christopher Marlowe's Canterbury schoolfellows and neighbours, as well as to Faversham gentry names linked to Thomas Arden, including the poet's relative Simon Auncell. Like the Auncells, the Streynshams were connected to three generations of the Coldwell family. Robert was also associated with a number of significant names in Marlowe's patronage and espionage circles. He lived and owned land in Ospringe, where Marlowe's father was from, and also owned the house in Faversham where Thomas Arden lived and died, over the period in which the play was written.

In his 1604 will, Streynsham passed the lease of Ospringe Parsonage to his son-in-law (later Sir) Edward Master, who took over residence there with his wife, Audrey née Streynsham (m. 1602) — Robert's eldest daughter, and coheir. Master erected a monument to his father-in-law's memory, which may be seen in Ospringe church today.

Sir Edward Master's Connections

Sir Edward Master (1575-1648) was the eldest son of James Master (1547-1631) of Sandwich. According to a 1660 letter written by Edward's granddaughter Mary to her brother (soon-to-be Sir) Streynsham Master, stationed in Madras, James was,

a prudent wise man in his old days : in his yuth wilde : spent and lost all most all by Cards and Dise : but hearing people oft saye : "Yunder goes Master had land :" it so struck him, y^t he resouled : as he had, so would he have : & so recalling himselfe : he became a very greate husband, & quickly purchased his lost lands : and added to it
100^s

He lived in East Langdon, near Dover, where he requested in his will to be buried; instead of which, he was buried in Ospringe — where his son Edward's monument to him stands, facing Robert Streynsham's.

Edward, knighted by Charles I in 1631, was closely related to several Kentish gentry families associated with Christopher Marlowe. Both his father James and brother William were married to members of the Manwood family. The widow of another brother, born Elizabeth Bourne in St Michael's, Cornhill, remarried Sir Thomas Walsingham, the namesake son and heir of Marlowe's patron. And Edward's eldest son, Richard, married Margaret Oxenden, a first cousin of Henry Oxinden — the source of Marlowe's Latin epitaph poem to Sir Roger Manwood, copied by Oxinden into one of his notebooks in about 1650.

As well as having further connections to both Marlowe and Arden, Master also had links to Sir Walter Raleigh — as well as to a number of names important in the literary life and legacy of the poet and playwright William Shakespeare.

Whilst living at Ospringe Parsonage Master wrote several letters (c1608-c1624) to his "very good friend" Dr Owen Gwyn — bursar, then master (1612-33) of St John's College, Cambridge. Gwyn's father, like Master's father-in-law Robert Streynsham (whose St John's parsonage lease he had inherited), worked for William Herbert the 1st Earl of Pembroke. Gwyn's mother was from the Salusbury family of Denbighshire in Wales. She was a relative of Sir John Salusbury, the dedicatee of the poem *Loves Martyr* — the 1601 publication of which included the metaphysical Shakespeare poem *The Phoenix and the Turtle*. Salusbury's name is the only known clue to the identity of *Love's Martyr's* mysterious author, Robert Chester.

Gwyn's name appears, granting publication, on the 1605 Stationer's Register entry for *The Return from Parnassus: Or the Scourge of Simony*, and he has been suggested as a contributing author of this work and its two prequels, known collectively as the *Parnassus Plays*. The dramas in this trilogy were performed by and for students as part of the college's annual Christmas festivities, between 1598 and 1602. They are an important source of information regarding contemporary reception of Shakespeare's work, and also contain remarks about, and characterisations of, several other literary figures of the period. Whether or not Dr Gwyn contributed directly to these plays as an author, he was certainly well placed to have had some connection to their subject matter: besides being a fellow of St John's over the period in which they were staged, as well as the signatory for their publication, he had been a student at the college at the same time as Marlowe's friend the writer Thomas Nashe, and Henry Wriothesley the Earl of Southampton, a patron of Shakespeare and Nashe — both thought to be depicted in these plays, as the characters Ingenioso and Gullo. Concurrently during the 1580s, Marlowe studied at nearby Corpus Christi. It is likely that Marlowe and Nashe first met at Cambridge.

Also studying at St John's in the 1580s were two more of Marlowe's fellow King's School scholars, William and Samuel Playfere, as well as their brother, Thomas — who may also

have been a King's School student. Thomas Playfere became a churchman and theologian praised by Nashe for his writing (as "mellifluous Playfere"). His sermons were printed by Andrew Wise, who also printed Nashe's books, and several of Shakespeare's early quartos. Wise's output was mostly dedicated to works by these three writers.

One of Edward Master's (c1624) letters to Owen Gwyn mentions Master's "Aunt Butler", and her lease of land in Higham, between Gravesend and Rochester. This, it appears, was Elizabeth Butler — the daughter-in-law of Master's paternal grandmother, Elizabeth née Tomson, who had remarried Henry Butler (or Boteler) of Eastry. The younger Elizabeth owned a lease of St John's land in Higham, and her will of 1615 matches the description in Master's letter. Gad's Hill, mentioned in *Arden of Faversham*, lies in the parish of Higham — and is also the location of the robbery of Falstaff in Shakespeare's *Henry IV Part I*, as well as the later last residence of the writer Charles Dickens. In the early 1600s, Butler and her husband sold Poulton Manor in Woodnesborough to Christopher Marlowe's friend John Benchkin, who lived there until his death in 1639.

Master's will of 1648 mentions a joint covenant he held with Sir Edward Partridge (Partheriche) of Kent, of land in Ireland worth £300. Partridge and his family had connections to Marlowe and Arden, as well as to Sir Walter Raleigh and William Shakespeare. Sir Edward Partridge was from Bridge, near Canterbury, and was related to another of Marlowe's schoolfellows — also named Edward Partridge. The later Sir Edward's grandfather was William Partridge MP (d. 1598) — probably the man of that name who was one of two co-executors of the 1568 will of Thomas Arden's son-in-law John Bradbourne: the witnesses to the will were all other Kentish MPs. It was Bradbourne to whom Arden's house had originally passed after his death, before passing to the Finch family, and then to Dryland and the Streynshams. Bradbourne's will also left a substantial bequest of £100 to Roger Manwood's newly-founded free school in Sandwich, and mentions a "Master Franklinge" — potentially of interest with regard to Arden's friend Franklin in the play, and perhaps a relative of the Richard Francklyn mentioned in Robert Streynsham's later will. Marlowe's schoolfellow Edward Partridge may have been MP William's nephew, made coheir of the latter's 1598 will along with William's son — also named Edward — who fathered the later Sir Edward.

Sir Edward Partridge was the adoptive father of Mary (Prude) Penington — an important early Quaker writer, and a relative of Henry Oxinden. He was also the nephew by marriage of Sir Walter Raleigh — having married Katherine, the youngest daughter of Sir Arthur Throckmorton, Raleigh's wife's brother.

The Throckmortons originally came from Worcestershire, before moving to their principal seat at Coughton Court in Warwickshire in 1409. They found favour in the courts of the Tudor monarchs, and during the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James were connected to several plots and intrigues, on both the Catholic and Puritan sides of the established order. Seditious activities that members of the Throckmorton family, or their close relatives, were involved with included the Throckmorton Plot, the Martin Marprelate tracts, the Main Plot (which saw Raleigh imprisoned in the Tower of London and stripped of his seat at Sherborne) and the Gunpowder Plot. Sir Nicholas Throckmorton (d. 1571), the father of both Sir Arthur Throckmorton and Bess Raleigh, was the fourth son of Sir George Throckmorton of Coughton. Sir Nicholas worked for Queen Elizabeth as an ambassador to France. In 1560 he was imprisoned by the Duke of Guise (depicted in Marlowe's play *The Massacre at Paris*, based on the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572, and mentioned in the prologue to *The Jew of Malta*), who suspected him of working for the Huguenot Protestants. He became Queen Elizabeth's envoy to her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots, and in 1569 he was imprisoned by Elizabeth on suspicion of working with the Catholics, to help Mary gain the English crown.

Sir Nicholas' son, Sir Edward Partridge's father-in-law Sir Arthur Throckmorton fought in Cádiz in 1596, together with his brother-in-law Sir Walter Raleigh — during which campaign he was knighted. He was heir to his father's estate, and after his death in 1626 his property was divided between his four daughters, including Lady Katherine Partridge. Sir Arthur's diaries are an important source of biographical information about Raleigh — including the existence of the adventurer's short-lived firstborn son, Damerei. They were discovered in Canterbury Cathedral Precincts in 1956 by the archivist William Urry.

Sir Arthur owned the Manor of Alderminster, near Stratford upon Avon, which he leased to Thomas Russell — the overseer of William Shakespeare's 1616 will — who lived there from 1595 until his death in 1634. The freehold of Alderminster, together with the lease to Russell, passed to Sir Arthur's daughter Lady Katherine and her husband, Sir Edward Master's friend Sir Edward Partridge, after her father's death in 1626. The Partridge family seem to have retained a connection to the area. In Alderminster Church there is a mural memorial to Lady Katherine (as "Catherine Partriche", d. 1632), who was buried in Ulcombe, Kent. Further along the same wall is another, to John Partriche (d. 1783) — a later Lord of the Manor of Alderminster, who was buried in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Stratford-upon-Avon. This John Partriche was also the owner of New Place, Stratford — Shakespeare's last home. (Hasted, Bearman)

Shakespeare's overseer Thomas Russell was the stepfather of the ambassador Sir Dudley Digges, and the poet Leonard Digges. Their father, Thomas Digges (d. 1595), was a mathematician and astronomer in the mold of his own father Leonard Digges the elder, and was a student of John Dee. In the same vein as Marlowe and Raleigh's associate Thomas Harriot, both Leonard senior and Thomas Digges made important contributions to early English mathematics, astronomy, optics and pre-classical mechanics — fields readily put to use in navigation and ballistics, by Raleigh and others, for the purpose of colonial conquest. Leonard Digges invented something akin to a telescope, according to his son Thomas' book *Stratitoticus* — a treatise on arithmetic and warfare first printed in 1579 by Henry Bynneman. Bynneman also printed the first edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577). When Bynneman died in 1583, the rights to print both books passed to Richard Field, who printed second editions of each — as well as Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593).

The Digges family were based in the village of Barham, between Canterbury and Dover — near Henry Oxinden's later home at Denton. Thomas Digges was the engineer responsible for designing a new port, the Great Pent at Dover, as a member of a nine-man commission appointed by Queen Elizabeth in 1582. Also on the commission was Sir James Hales, the husband of Alice (Kempe) Hales, and William Partridge, likely the MP, grandfather of Sir Edward and possible uncle of Christopher Marlowe's schoolfellow, Edward Partridge.

Another family member, Christopher Digges, was at school with Marlowe and Partridge, as well as others mentioned. This Christopher's brother Thomas, who may have also attended the King's School, was baptised at St George's Church, Canterbury, in Apr 1564 — just two months after the future playwright was baptised in the same church. Their father, also named Christopher, sold land to two of John Marlowe's best friends— John Gaunt and Lawrence Applegate. He left money in his 1576 will to the above-mentioned Thomas Digges, the mathematician — his cousin.

Said Thomas Digges' eldest son Sir Dudley Digges was a diplomat and a politician, who built himself a stately manor at Chilham Castle, between Canterbury and Ashford. He was involved with both the Virginia and East India Companies. He married Mary Kempe, the brother of Sir Thomas Kempe of Olantigh, who was mentioned in Robert Streynsham's will. As noted, the comic actor Will Kemp is thought likely to have been from this family, and Sir Thomas was the brother of Alice Hales (a patron of Nashe and Greene), as well as a descendant of Thomas Arden's employer Sir Thomas Cheney. Sir Dudley Digges is thought to have been the "D. D." who wrote a commendatory verse preceding his "good friend" Ben

Jonson's play *Volpone*. He became the owner of the Manor and Hundred of Faversham in 1630.

Sir Dudley's brother — Thomas' younger son — was the poet Leonard Digges (1588-1635). Leonard was the author of an elegy to William Shakespeare, printed in the *First Folio* of Shakespeare's plays (the Digges family thus bookending the Bard's print career). In this poem, Digges was the first writer to mention Shakespeare's monument in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Stratford-upon-Avon. It accompanies Ben Jonson's longer dedicatory verses to the Bard, written in part as a response to an elegy by William Basse, which appeared to suggest that the playwright's remains should be relocated to Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey. Jonson's repudiation of this idea, as well as his opinion that Shakespeare "lacked art", and "had little Latin, and less Greek", were both picked up by John Milton, who in his first published work — an elegy printed with Shakespeare's *Second Folio* (1632) — denied the need for any special monument for the playwright, and in his poem *L'Allegro* (printed in 1645) claimed that the Stratford writer "Warble[d] his native wood-notes wild". Leonard Digges also echoed Jonson's latter theme, in another poem printed with a collection of Shakespeare's poems in 1640, in which he wrote,

thou shalt find he doth not borrow
One phrase from Greeks, nor Latins imitate

John Milton was also connected to the network we have met. His father-in-law (and friend of his father) Richard Powell was a personal servant to, and family friend of, George Brome — Robert Streynsham's brother-in-law in Oxfordshire. George Brome was a cousin of Friswith Brome of Canterbury, who married Edward Master's cousin, George Master. Edward Master's grandson William Master became rector of the village of Holton in Oxfordshire, where the Brome family were based, and where John Milton's father was from.

Sir Dudley and Leonard Digges' mother was Anne née St Leger, who after Thomas Digges' death remarried Thomas Russell, Shakespeare's overseer. Anne's aunt Margaret (Neville) Cheney was the daughter-in-law of Arden's employer Sir Thomas Cheney. Anne's nephew Sir Warham St Leger was with Sir Walter Raleigh in Guyana. His father, Anne's brother Sir Anthony St Leger sold Leeds Castle in Kent to the Culpeper family — who were relatives of, and closely connected with, Sir Edward Partridge. Marlowe's schoolfellow Richard Boyle, 1st Earl of Cork was also involved with Raleigh's last expedition to Guyana. His son, the scientist Robert Boyle, along with Sir Cheney Culpeper (who married Sir Edward Partridge's stepsister), were both members of the Hartlip Circle — a correspondence network associated with Boyle's "invisible college", one of the last such secretive sects of scientists prior to the founding of the Royal Society in 1660. Anne and Anthony's grandfather, also named Sir Anthony St Leger, received Faversham Abbey land in the dissolution of the monasteries — in Kingsnorth, near Mersham, where Simon Auncell also received land.

Another name mentioned in Edward Master's letters to Owen Gwyn is that of Daniel Horsmonden — who Master states he is putting his son (the letter's bearer) in the care of, and to whom he asks Gwyn to talk on his behalf. Hosmonden was (at the time — c1624) a fellow at St. John's, Cambridge, under Gwyn. He became rector of Ulcombe, Kent (1627-1639), and married Ursula St Leger, the niece of Anne St Leger — the above-mentioned wife of the mathematician Thomas Digges and of Shakespeare's overseer, Thomas Russell. Daniel's brother Thomas owned books of music by the composer William Byrd — who may also have been a relative of the Horsmondens.

Sir Edward Partridge's sister-in-law Mary Throckmorton, the eldest of Sir Arthur's four coheir daughters, married Sir Thomas Wotton. Sir Thomas was the son of Edward Lord Wotton — a literary patron associated with the poets Sir Philip Sidney (the Countess of Pembroke's brother) and George Chapman (who completed Marlowe's unfinished poem *Hero and Leander*), and with John Florio's translation of Montaigne's *Essais* (used as a

source by Shakespeare). Edward owned the site of St Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury. His half-brother Sir Henry Wotton was a diplomat, and provost of Eton — where he taught the poet John Milton, as well as the scientist Robert Boyle — and was a friend of the writers John Donne (who joined him at the Battle of Cádiz in 1596) and Izaak Walton. Sir Henry was himself a writer and a poet. His translated novella, *A Courtly Controversy of Cupid's Cautels* (1578) is an important source text for *Soliman and Perseda*, and its plot also features as a play-within-a-play in *The Spanish Tragedy* — both dramas attributed to Thomas Kyd. Sir Henry's letters mention his "nephew" Edward Partridge, envoy to Venice. This was presumably MP William's son, Sir Edward's father — who was Sir Henry's nephew by marriage via the Throckmortons. Another of Sir Henry's letters relates how the original Globe Theatre burnt down — during a performance of the Shakespeare and Fletcher play *Henry VIII*. Lord Edward and Sir Henry's father Thomas Wotton was a friend of Sir Roger Manwood, and was on the 1582 commission to build a new port at Dover, together with Thomas Digges, Sir James Hales and MP William Partridge.

Another of Sir Arthur Throckmorton's daughters, Elizabeth, married Richard Lennard, 13th Baron Dacre. He was the grandson of Mary née Gifford. Mary was a cousin of Gilbert Gifford, a spy centrally involved in the Babington Plot. Her mother was Elizabeth née Throckmorton — aunt of Sir Arthur Throckmorton and Bess Raleigh. Mary Gifford is herself thought to have had a youthful affair with Raleigh — as told pseudonymously in the epigrams of Sir John Harington, Queen Elizabeth's godson. She died in May 1609, and is buried in Canterbury Cathedral.

Mary Gifford (referred to in Harington's epigrams as "Galla") married first Sir Richard Baker of Sissinghurst (uncle of the namesake author of the *Chronicle of the Kings of England*), by whom she had two devoted daughters: Grisogone (or Chrysogene, mother of Richard Lennard) and Cicely. Shortly after Sir Richard's death she married the Bishop of London, Richard Fletcher — father of the playwright and Shakespeare coauthor John Fletcher — a scandalous marriage "talked about at least nine days at court" according to Harington, which put the bishop out of favour with the Queen. Never fully regaining it, he died suddenly less than two years later (Harington's doggerel verse reports, "The cause of his death was secret and hid, / He cried out, 'I dye!' — and ev'n so he did."), and she took as her third husband Sir Stephen Thornhurst — lord of the manor of Agney, or Agnes, in Romney Marsh, and keeper of the Archbishop's residence of Ford Palace, in Hoath, near Herne in Kent. Sir Stephen's son Thomas was in Guyana with Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Arthur St Leger. A Stephen Thornhurst — either the same man or his father, also named Stephen — was owed money by Christopher Marlowe's probable paternal grandfather, William Arthur, on his death.

Sir John Harington, whose epigrams are thought to refer to Mary née Gifford and her husband Bishop Fletcher, as well as to Sir Walter Raleigh — and who recorded biographical accounts of Bishop Fletcher and Dr John Coldwell in his *Nugae Antiquae* — is now chiefly remembered for his 1596 book *A New Discourse upon a Stale Subject: The Metamorphosis of Ajax*, in which he presented the invention of the flush toilet. Sadly for this "extraordinary gentleman of the privy chamber", his contribution to sanitation met with the Queen's opprobrium — the book contained coded criticisms of the Earl of Leicester — and he was banished from court. Another person referred to in Harington's epigrams is Sir Maurice Berkeley (d. 1617), who fought in Cádiz with others mentioned, in 1596. Sir Maurice was the half-brother of John Russell, Shakespeare's overseer — whose father-in-law Sir Henry Berkeley (d. 1601) was a friend of Harington's from his home county of Somerset. Harington owned (as Henry Oxinden later would) an extensive collection of early plays — 168, of which he made a list in about 1609 — including *Arden of Faversham* and *The Return from Parnassus: Or the Scourge of Simony*, as well as various titles now attributed to Shakespeare, Kyd and Marlowe. Harington's was "the most extensive list of printed plays known to have been owned by any individual before Sir Edward Dering".

Sir Edward Dering (1598-1644) was a Kentish politician and antiquary. His expense book (1617-28) mentions the names “Master Partherich” (Partridge), Sir Arthur Throckmorton, Sir Thomas and Lady Wotton — along with the first recorded purchase of (two copies of) Shakespeare’s *First Folio*. These were among a large number of playbooks — at least 221 — which Dering bought over the period covered by his expense book. He also owned the earliest known manuscript of a Shakespeare play — known as the *Dering MS* — which combines the plays *Henry IV Part I* and *Henry IV Part II*. Lord Edward and Sir Henry Wotton’s sister Elizabeth was married to Sir Edward Dering’s cousin, John Dering. The Derings were also, like the Walsinghams and the Streynshams, related to the Dryland family — who had previously owned Sir Edward’s estate of Surrenden Manor, near Great Chart, Ashford.

As well as Sir Edward Partridge, Sir Edward Master’s will mentions land purchased from Sir Anthony Aucher — the namesake great grandson of the man mentioned in both *Holinshed* and *Arden of Faversham* as the conspirator Greene’s employer. The later Sir Anthony’s mother was Margaret née Sandys, sister of Sir Edwin Sandys of Northbourne, Kent — treasurer (equivalent to director) of the Virginia Company. Sir Edwin was the lifelong friend of George Cranmer (1564-1601), Marlowe’s Canterbury contemporary, and both were at the Merchant Taylors’ School with Thomas Kyd, Edward Blount and others. Towards the end of his life Sir Edward Master lived in the deanery, within the precincts of Canterbury Cathedral. In 1643 the dean, Isaac Bargrave, had been removed from his residence there by Sir Edwin Sandys’ son — also named Edwin — a Parliamentarian captain. Sir Edwin Sandys’ and Sir Edward Master’s daughters (d. 1639, 1641), who were about the same age (b. c1610), were buried next to each other in the church of Chigwell, in Essex.

Sir Edward Master’s will also mentions his brother-in-law William Cowper, 1st Baronet, “of the parish of St Michael in Cornhill” — whose name also appears in Sir Edward Dering’s expense book along with others already mentioned. Cowper erected a monument to the theologian Richard Hooker — Sir Edwin Sandys’ and George Cranmer’s college tutor and close friend — in Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury. He was the three times great-grandfather of the anti-slavery poet also named William Cowper (1730-1800) — whose *The Negro’s Complaint* was regularly quoted by Martin Luther King in speeches, and who originated the phrase “God moves in mysterious ways”. This later William Cowper was a close friend of John Newton, who wrote the song *Amazing Grace*, and was also a descendant of the family of the poet John Donne.

Another name in Master’s will is “Mr Camden of London gent”. This, it seems likely from common connections, was Richard Camden of London, who was buried in the village of Little Chart near Ashford in 1642. From the heraldry it appears that Richard was a relative of William Camden — Ben Jonson’s teacher at Westminster School, as well as the writer’s friend and patron. An important antiquarian and herald, William Camden was also a friend of the Manwoods, and a neighbour of Sir Thomas Walsingham in Chislehurst, Kent.

Sir Edward Master, although he appears to have been largely forgotten by history, had more literary connections. He was co-executor along with John Milton’s father-in-law, Richard Powell, of the 1634 will of his aunt Elizabeth (Wightman) Brome. He was a neighbour of Horton Drayton, Canterbury Cathedral’s auditor from Atherstone, Warwickshire — a likely relative of the poet Michael Drayton. He died in 1648, and was buried in St Michael’s Chapel in the Cathedral — between monuments to Alice Hales (Sir Thomas Cheney’s granddaughter and patron of Marlowe’s fellow writers Nashe and Greene), and Lady Mary Thornhurst (Sir Walter Raleigh’s cousin and the playwright John Fletcher’s stepmother).

Thus Sir Edward Master, Robert Streynsham’s son-in-law, was also connected to a plethora of names relevant to Christopher Marlowe’s life in Canterbury and beyond, as well as to Thomas Arden in Faversham.

The Aldriches

Omitted by the version of Arden's murder in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, the introductory paragraph of Stow's manuscript account relates a curious story about Thomas Arden's mother:

This Ardene had a mothar dwellynge in Norwiche who went a beggyng, but he assayde all meanes possible to kepe hir from it, whiche wouold not be, notwithstandinge, he gave a stipend delyvered to Mastar Aldriche to hir use, and when Mastar Aldriche was maior of Norwiche she was robbyd, and a princypall chest browght out into hir backe syde and certeyne lynnyn that was in it lefte scateryd abrode to the vallew of forty or fyfty shillyngs. This robbery beinge commytted in the nyght she beyng deaf hard it not, next day whan it was knowne that she was robbed, the maior with others came to hir howse, and serchinge they found Lx£ lyeinge in sondry places tyed up in severall litle clowtes not above ten grotes in one clowte. Than she was restreyned from hir beggyng, and willed to chuse who shuld with hir porcion kepe hir duryng hir lyfe, and to have for his labowr that whiche remainyd of the Lx£ unspent at hir deathe and so it was done, notwithstandinge she never inioyed after she was restreynyd from hir beggyng, and dyed within half a yere aftar, but many yeres aftar the deathe of hir sonne, whereof we have here to speake.

Hyde (1996) discovered further evidence in Norwich's town books to support this description. Given the way she was dealt with in the court, Arden's mother was probably not from a poor background. John Aldrich was mayor of Norwich 1557-8 and 1570-1, and MP for the town in 1555 and 1572. It seems Arden delivered money to Aldrich for his mother's upkeep, and both Aldrich and his friend Thomas Parker (MP 1563, mayor 1568-9) — Archbishop Matthew's brother — oversaw the town court cases around Arden's mother and her begging habit. Hyde (1996) suggests that the story of Arden's mother may have come to Stow via John Aldrich.

The families of Parker and Aldrich were multiply connected — in Norwich, in Canterbury, and at Christopher Marlowe's college, Corpus Christi in Cambridge. Matthew Parker linked all three places — hailing from Norwich, being closely associated with Corpus Christi (matriculated 1522, fellow 1527, master 1544-53), and becoming Archbishop of Canterbury (1559-75). He left significant bequests to his Cambridge college — including a priceless library of books and manuscripts, and funding for the scholarships under which Marlowe studied there.

Arden's friend John Aldrich, the Norwich mayor and MP, was the son of Thomas Aldrich — an alderman of Norwich, who came from Great Yarmouth in Norfolk, and helped found Norwich Grammar School. John's son, the Puritan Thomas Aldrich was master of Corpus Christi 1570-3, appointed on Archbishop Matthew Parker's recommendation. Thomas' brother Henry was also a fellow there, and left £40 to the college in his will. Also of note, likely from the same family, an Edward Aldrich "of Norfolk" and a Richard Aldrich were at Corpus Christi from 1578, concurrently with Marlowe.

Mayor John Aldrich's nephew Francis Aldrich, who studied at Corpus Christi from 1554, was appointed registrar of Canterbury Cathedral's consistory court in 1568 by Archbishop Parker. His live-in apprentice from about 1581 was Leonard Sweeting — Marlowe's schoolfellow and neighbour, remembered in Robert Streyntsham's will. Leonard died in 1608, in possession of a number of books, including his contemporary's poem *Hero and Leander*. He was the son of the vicar of St George's church in Canterbury, John Sweeting — who had married John and Katherine Marlowe, and baptised their son Christopher.

Francis Aldrich's eldest son, also named Francis, was at Clare College, Cambridge concurrently with Edward Master in the early 1590s. He was briefly master of the newly-founded Sidney Sussex College, before his death in 1609.

Registrar Francis' younger son Simon Aldrich was the source of Henry Oxinden's information about Marlowe, written in the latter's books from 1641. He may have also been the source of Marlowe's epitaph poem to Sir Roger Manwood, copied into Oxinden's notebook c1651 — around the same time that Sir Edward Master's son Richard, the husband of Oxinden's cousin, was living at Denton Court, neighbouring Oxinden and Simon Aldrich — who lived in the former's property with his son-in-law John Swan.

John Swan was the grandson of Francis Swan — one of the tenants of Thomas Arden's property, according to the latter's 1551 will, and a jurat of Faversham in 1549 along with Robert Coldwell and George and Thomas Streynsham.

The two main candidates for the man by the name of Fineux who Marlowe converted to atheism, according to Simon Aldrich's statements to Henry Oxinden, were the sons of Thomas Fineux — who the playwright's uncle, George Auncell, had a legal dispute with. Thomas' great-uncle was Sir John Fineux — Chief Justice of the King's Bench, and another important landowner in Faversham at the time of Thomas Arden and Sir Thomas Cheney. Sir John was a member of the commission to inquire into Arden's Murder. His mother was from the Monins family, as were Archbishop Thomas Cranmer's sister-in-law, and Archbishop Matthew Parker's mother. Sir John's daughter married a member of the Digges family.

Both the Canterbury registrar Francis Aldrich, and his son (probably Simon) are mentioned in the (1602-1603) diary of the law student John Manningham — as well as "Streynsham" (perhaps Robert, named as the source of a humorous quasi-anagram). This diary is another important piece of evidence relating to Shakespeare's literary life — recording a performance of *Twelfth Night* (immediately after mention of the name Streynsham), as well as a humorous anecdote about Shakespeare and the actor Richard Burbage. Also mentioned in Manningham's diary are Sir Roger Manwood, John Stow ("I was with Stowe the antiquary ...") and Thomas Playfere (who "hath bin halfe frantike againe, and strangely doted for one Mrs Hammond, a gentlewoman in Kent").

Edward Master's eldest daughter Anne married John Nutt (1605-1668). John was the only child of William Nutt of Canterbury, who died not long after John was born, in 1607, and whose widow Anne remarried Thomas Milles — the customs official for the port of Sandwich, and an important early writer on economics. Milles lived in Davington Hall near Faversham, previously held by the Walsinghams, Drylands and Streynshams. Milles' name is mentioned in Robert Streynsham's 1604 will, as well as William Nutt of Canterbury — presumably the above-named father of John. As noted, William was the eldest son of the Marlowe family's Canterbury landlord and neighbour, also named John Nutt; the Nutts, it seems likely, having also been related by marriage to the Auncells. After Anne (Master) Nutt died, the later John Nutt continued to be associated with his father-in-law, Sir Edward Master — both men representing Canterbury as MPs, from 1640, in the Short and Long Parliaments. In 1628 he remarried Anne Aldrich, "eldest daughter of John Aldrich of Norfolk".

Thus the Aldriches, closely associated with Archbishop Parker and his family in Norwich, Cambridge and Canterbury, were also severally connected to Christopher Marlowe, as well as to Thomas Arden.

Other Connections

A few other names link Marlowe's Canterbury network to Faversham at the time of Thomas Arden.

As noted, Thomas Greenleaf was the master of the shoemakers' company in Canterbury, which John Marlowe was a member of, and was a close friend of the parents of Christopher Marlowe's friend John Benchkin — whose circle also included the Marlowe family's neighbouring relatives the Arthurs, Auncells and Moores. Of the same surname, rare in Kent in the sixteenth century, a John Greenleaf was made freeman of Faversham on the occasion of Thomas Arden's inauguration as mayor in 1548 (along with Richard Reede — presumably the man in the play whose land Arden took, and ended up dead in, in both *Holinshed* and the play). This was likely the same John Greenleaf of Faversham who left £4 to "my lad" John Collyn in his 1568 will — perhaps a relative of the John Collen named as freeman in Faversham's incorporation charter of 1546 — and whose widow Margaret made a Thomas Osborne her executor. John Benchkin's daughters both married members of the Osborne family of nearby Hartlip, and George Auncell's sister Mary (Auncell) Moore remarried a man with the surname Collyn.

John Menfield held a lease of Abbey land, neighbouring Robert Coldwell's, in 1515. He may have been the father of, and was likely some relative of the John Menfield who married Margaret Norwood in 1557 in Whitstable. Margaret was probably from the same family as Alexander Norwood, another landlord of John Marlowe. Margaret and John were the parents of Thomas Menfield (1567-1614), mentioned in Robert Streynsham's will as the tenant of his "dwellinge howse of the late dissolved monastery of ffeversham" — probably Arden's house — and a friend of Sir Edward Master. Thomas was the owner of the gunpowder works at Faversham, which probably used copperas (ferrous sulphate) from nearby Tankerton, in Whitstable, as a source of sulphur. On his death whilst mayor of Faversham, Menfield left his copperas-producing property in Tankerton in trust with Edward Master. It passed to Menfield's widow when she remarried Sir Thomas Harflete — an associate of Marlowe's friend John Benchkin, who wrote down Harflete's will in 1617. Another friend of both Sir Edward Master and Thomas Menfield, Esaie Sprackling, took over the role of Mayor of Faversham on Menfield's death. Sprackling was a relative of Henry Oxinden's mother, Katherine née Sprackling. In 1614 he married Margaret Partridge, a widow from Chartham, near Canterbury. She was likely the widow of Edward Partridge (d. 1613, Chartham), who was probably the same-named man who was headmaster of the school at Chartham in 1608. This may have been Marlowe's fellow scholar of that name at the King's School.

John Castlock was the last Abbot of Faversham before the dissolution. His brother William traded in beer, and William's son John started a brewery on the Faversham Abbey site, sometime by 1550. Their business would become the Kentish brewery Shepherd Neame. The younger John Castlock was probably the man of that name who, along with an earlier Edward Partridge of Lenham, near Maidstone, was named co-executor of the 1551 will of William Sibley. This Edward Partridge was probably a relative of William Partridge MP — who was the son of Thomas Partridge of Lenham and Elizabeth née Sibble, perhaps a relative of the testator. Sibley was a member, as his executors Castlock and Partridge may also have been, of a group of religious dissenters known as conventiclors (or free-willers, owing to their opposition to the doctrine of predestination) which also included Robert Cole, bailiff of Faversham. Cole is named in Stow's manuscript as a source of information regarding the executions of the conspirators in the Arden murder. Together with William Castlock, Cole was engaged in trade with Holland, using "hoys of Flushing" — the same Dutch town, and type of vessel, as mentioned in the play. He is commemorated in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* for his assistance to the Marian exiles — English Protestants who fled to Europe during the Catholic reign of Queen Mary I (1553-8). The younger John Castlock's grandson, also named

John Castlock (d. 1651), inherited the Abbey brew-house, and married Bennet Cole — a likely later relative of Robert. This John Castlock was presumably the man of that name who left land in Faversham to Richard Master, Edward Master's eldest son, and whose widow married Richard's brother, William Master.

Conclusion

We have traversed a great number of links, involving amongst others John Marlowe's close friend and brother-in-law, his employer, two of his landlords, many of his son Christopher's schoolfellows, and several members of the poet's later friendship, patronage and employment circles — all found through investigating Kentish family connections around Thomas Arden of Faversham.

A few names have been brought into particular prominence with regard to the playwright. The families of Auncell, Coldwell, and the many connections around Robert Streynsham and his son-in-law Sir Edward Master are suggestive of a network which may explain much with regards to Marlowe's life and legacy. Amongst the notable names associated with this network, the Pembrokes, the Walsinghams, and the family of Sir Walter Raleigh make repeated appearances — as well as members of the circle of Archbishop Matthew Parker, whose associates the Aldriches reappear throughout this history; as do members of the Partridge family.

These relationships potentially alter the landscape of Marlowe's background. The many links to a Faversham-connected gentry network could, for example, help to explain Marlowe's early education before becoming a scholar at the King's School. A lost bequest from a beneficent family member or friend in this network (such as the poet's paternal grandfather, whose name and date of death are unknown) could even perhaps elucidate the fine clothes in his putative portrait of 1585, "aetatis suae 21" — when Marlowe, an eldest son, became twenty-one years old, the age at which inheritances for males were settled. Soon after his 21st birthday, he took the first of a number of prolonged absences from the college, and the Corpus Christi buttery records show a marked increase in his spending from around the same time — events usually attributed to his initiation in intelligence work, but the coincidence of all of these with his age of majority is striking. One way or another, this Faversham-associated gentry circle seems a likely route via which the poet might have gained links leading to his later high-flying associations, in his work as poet, playwright and intelligence agent for his country.

Above all, the multiple connections to be found between Christopher Marlowe and the gentry names around Thomas Arden, together with evidence of local knowledge displayed in the text, must surely strengthen Marlowe's claim as a contributing author of the play *Arden of Faversham*. Whilst we have met each of the play's main candidate writers in relation to this extended Kentish network, Christopher Marlowe's associations therein are by far the most personal, and numerous. Not only did he have a forebear kinsman closely connected to Thomas Arden, but a whole web of relationships — involving many names in his and his family's personal and professional networks — as well as links to the provenance of the play's main source, and to the murder scene itself: Arden's house in Faversham. With such a mass of connections linking the poet to the people, places and politics depicted in the play, and given his proven ability to write in the style associated with the finest parts of it, his claim to playing a role in its authorship seems strongly supported by the available evidence.