

Bryan Faussett:
Antiquary Extraordinary

David Wright

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Cover illustration: Jewelled brooches from the Faussett collection: Plate II of *Inventorium Sepulchrale* engraved by Frederick William Fairholt. One of the most exquisite illustrations in any English book.
(Courtesy of The Society of Antiquaries, London).

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Bryan Faussett painted in 1758 by Thomas Hudson. The appellation of ‘the handsome commoner’ is easy to see. (Courtesy of National Museums Liverpool (World Museum))

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Abbreviations employed in the text

<i>Arch. Cant.</i>	<i>Archaeologia Cantiana</i>
BAA	British Archaeological Association
CCA/L	Canterbury Cathedral Archives/Library
FRS	Fellow of the Royal Society
FSA	Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries
<i>Inv. Sep.</i>	<i>Inventorium Sepulchrale</i>
KHLC	Kent History and Library Centre
MS(S)	Manuscript(s)
TNA	The National Archives

Foreword

Work on this book started seven years ago and brought the usual predictably unpredictable journey through archives and libraries and meetings with all kinds of people, some tangential, some highly germane to my task. In 2007 I visited the tercentenary exhibition at Burlington House in celebration of the founding of the Society of Antiquaries, and there saw in a glass case a selection of Bryan Faussett's beautiful Anglo-Saxon gold brooches and other artefacts. I needed to look no further for the subject of a biography. However, if you look in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* you will find a rather short entry about him, so short in fact that I immediately wondered whether I would find enough to write about, but, as Cicero said, the beginnings of all things are small. Undaunted, I made a start and enjoyed that pleasurable journey of one setting out to gather whatever he can find from any quarter, no matter where it might lead – in this case to sitting in a draughty barn at Harty on the Isle of Sheppey balancing several of Bryan Faussett's household account books on a rickety table whilst I made notes.

It is my pleasure to record thanks to the following: firstly to Seamus Cullen for his discernment and encouragement in my putting pen to paper. Mr Ashley Cooke made me welcome at the Liverpool World Museum and put his entire corpus of files, knowledge and Faussett artefacts at my disposal. Equally valuable were the continued assistance and hospitality of the library staff of the Society of Antiquaries during my examination of the Faussett manuscripts and a great deal of reading and other investigations. Colleagues at the Canterbury and Maidstone archives extended to me their usual courteous and unstinting help, and Mr Duncan Harrington FSA, Mr Christopher Miller, Mr John Owen FSA, and Mr Michael Rhodes also supplied useful information.

Especial thanks go to Mr David Godfrey-Faussett, Mr Richard Godfrey-Faussett and Mr Tom Godfrey-Faussett, each of whom was invaluable in setting before me portions of the family archives. As far as I know, I am the first to have been accorded this privilege, and the results are amply evidenced throughout the book. All quotations and extracts not specifically acknowledged in the text are taken from this archive.

Finally, I gratefully acknowledge an award by the Allen Grove Local History Fund of the Kent Archaeological Society and a grant from the Canterbury Archaeological Society towards the costs of research and publication.

Introduction

For the biographer a life of Bryan Faussett as a Kentish clergyman would be moderately interesting; as a genealogist and heraldist more so; as an antiquary and pioneering archaeologist almost compelling; but when all three are combined his cup fairly runs over. To this might be added the personal excitement of the writer knowing all the churches that Faussett visited, the lanes and tracks he must have walked, and the parish where he lived. And yet more: to handle some of the artefacts that he excavated, and to turn the pages of his daily account books and sumptuous genealogical manuscripts truly brings the quarry alive – and almost literally, for there are today legion descendants to perpetuate their industrious ancestor's memory.

We are lucky indeed that Charles Roach Smith put into print Faussett's six archaeological notebooks as the *Inventorium Sepulchrale*; no longer did they lie hidden along with the collections of coins, jewels and so many other artefacts in the study at Heppington, but were published for the world to begin to learn something of an extraordinary life and its dedication to investigating the (if only he had known) Anglo-Saxon centuries of English history. The *Inventorium* breathes Faussett as he describes the losses and the disappointments, the excitements and the triumphs of excavating over 770 barrows dotted about the landscape of east Kent; his narrative takes us with him over nearly two decades as he plans his sites, assembles his workforces, personally oversees excavations, and returns home to describe and catalogue the day's findings and the graves from which they were taken.

And amid all this antiquarian panoply let not be forgotten his domestic and very human affairs. Ample correspondence and household accounts survive to make flesh and blood of the Georgian parson in all his varying moods: his concern for his family and children, his frustration as an ill-paid curate, his escapist jaunts to London, his vanity over his ancestors, his gout-ridden enforced stays at home, his unparson-like predilection for litigation, and his perfunctory interest in clerical duties.

Faussett often described his graves as lying under or within tumuli, sometimes under or within mounds or barrows. For the sake of consistency I have adopted 'barrow' throughout, although the three are more or less archaeologically interchangeable. In citing his and others' correspondence I have generally employed modern punctuation, silently expanded such abbreviations as 'yr' and 'wch', and modernised misleading spelling in order not to exasperate the reader – Faussett, a highly educated man, sometimes wrote erratically, even in the form of his own surname. He is not always consistent either in describing certain commonly occurring artefacts such as the *umbo* or shield-boss, and *fibula* or brooch, and here I italicise when preferring the Latin nomenclature.

My text has benefited in part from the watchful eyes of Dr Georgina Musckett of the World Museum in Liverpool, particularly in regard to those parts of the text concerned with artefacts in her care. The much greater task of checking the entire narrative for infelicities and inconsistencies was undertaken by Peter Ewart; but for the complexities of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, burial customs and related matters I am hugely indebted to Dr Andrew Richardson of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust for allowing me to profit from his doctoral thesis (coincidentally dedicated to the memory of Bryan Faussett) and for agreeing to act as a wise and well-informed cicerone on my journey through such a fascinating world. Whatever other errors may remain are mine alone.

David Wright, autumn 2014

Bryan Faussett – A Chronology

1720 October 30	born at Heppington House, Nackington
1720s (late)	sees Heppington House demolished
1730 June	watches Cromwell Mortimer excavating
1733	rebuilding of Heppington House starts
1738 October	goes up to University College, Oxford
1742	receives Bachelor's Degree
1744 June	made Fellow of University College, Oxford
1745	receives Master's Degree
1746 April 28	made Fellow of All Souls, Oxford
1746 May 25	made Deacon at Christ Church, Oxford
1747 June 14	priested at Christ Church, Oxford, by Thomas Secker
1747 November 9	presented to the living of Alberbury, Shropshire
1748 November 15	marries Elizabeth Curtois at Magdalen College
1749 November 18	birth of first son, Henry Godfrey, at Alberbury
1750 September 19	death of father, Bryan Faussett senior
1750 November	leaves Alberbury and returns to Heppington
1750-56	Curate of Kingston
1750s	sells outlying estates for £2850
1753 April 11	birth of second son, Bryan, at Kingston
1754 March 2	birth of third son, Charles, at Bishopsbourne
1756 February 11	birth of only daughter, Elizabeth, at Bishopsbourne
1756-61	Curate of Petham and Waltham
1756-60	visits churches to record monumental inscriptions
1757-1759	excavates at Tremworth Down, Crundale
1758	portrait painted by Thomas Hudson
1759-63	excavates at Gilton Town, Ash
1761 May 23	death of mother, Elizabeth Faussett (formerly Godfrey)
1763 March	elected Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries
1764-73	excavates at Chartham Down, Chartham
1765 May 8	inducted as Rector of Monks Horton
1765-72	Curate of Lower Hardres
1767-75	Curate of Nackington
1767-1773	excavates at Kingston Down, Kingston
1760s	sells outlying estates for £6220
1769 July	draws up his will
c.1769	garden pavilion at Heppington constructed
1770s	sells outlying estates for £4870

1771 July	excavates at Bishopsbourne Down, Bishopsbourne
1772 July-August	excavates at Barfriston Down, Barfriston
1772 October	excavates at Iffin Wood
1772-73	excavates at Sibertswold Down, Sibertswold
1773 May-August	excavates at Adisham Down, Bekesbourne
1776 February 10	dies at Heppington and is buried at Nackington
1776 February 27	will proved by his widow
1787 January 22	death of widow, Elizabeth Faussett formerly Curtois
1793	James Douglas publishes <i>Nenia Britannica</i>
1841	Charles Roach Smith twice visits Heppington
1844	British Archaeological Association Congress at Canterbury
1853	Faussett collections rejected by the British Museum
1854	Joseph Mayer purchases the collections for £700
1856	publication of <i>Inventorium Sepulchrale</i>

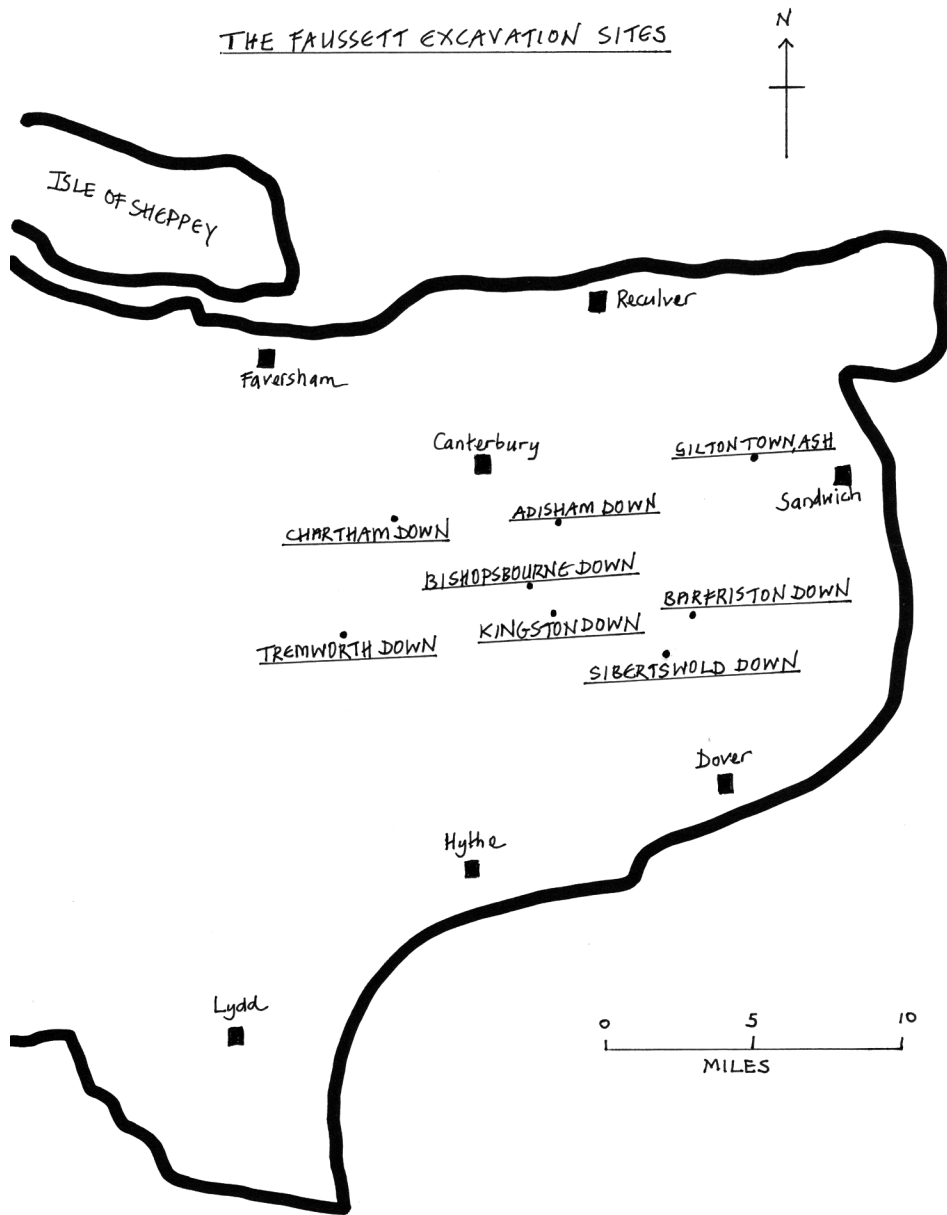


Figure 1. The Faussett Excavation Sites.