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Grace-cup of John Foche, last Abbot of St. Austin's, Canterbury

ABBOT FOCHE'S GRACE CUP.

BY THE REV. R. U. POTTS, F.S.A.,

BURSAR OF ST. AUGUSTINE'S COLLEGE, CANTERBURY.

Through the generous gift of Mrs. W. C. Randolph of Yate House, Yate, Gloucestershire, the College has become possessed of the Grace Cup of John Foche, or Essex, the last Abbot of this House, who on July 30th, 1538, signed the Deed of Surrender to the King of all the possessions of the Abbey (*per me Johannem Essex, abbatem ibidem*), and was allowed to retire to the Manor of Sturry on a pension of £133 a year, and probably died some time before February 1541, when his name no longer appears on the list of pensioners.

The cup is described in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*, December 14th, 1893, when it was exhibited by Mr. George Payne, F.S.A., being then in the possession of Mrs. Fielding of Rochester:—

“The Cup is made out of a cocoa-nut and is mounted in silver-gilt, with the following inscription round the rim :

‘Velcom ◇ ze be ◇ dryng ◇ for ◇ Charite.’

The base and stem are of plainly turned wood and of modern date. Upon the top of the stem is rivetted a collar of metal, $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch in diameter. This collar spreads out into a frill of feathers bound round by a cable. The frill forms a bed for the cup, which is 3 inches in height and $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, the diameter of the rim of the wooden cup being nearly $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Upon this rim rests a collar of feathers pointing downwards, with a band above, ornamented with a row of four dots in the form of a square with a dot in the centre, the pattern being repeated all round the rim. The mouth of the cup here widens to

a diameter of $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches, the band being an inch in height—in the centre of this band occurs the inscription; the letters are slightly over a quarter of an inch in length. Above and below the inscription are plain bands a quarter of an inch wide; above the upper one is a band with the dot pattern before described, surmounted by a rebated band forming the rim. The band round the rim is united to the collar in base by three elegant foliated straps, each having a cable down the centre.”

The tradition, handed down through several generations of Fagges, is that the cup was the Grace Cup of the last Abbot of St. Augustine's Monastery, Canterbury—John Essex, who was descended from the Foche family. Hasted (*Hist. of Kent*, 8vo ed., xii., 211) says: “This Abbot's family name was Foch, his brother Henry was of Ripple in this County.” The Fagge family is maternally descended from the Foches. A certain Henry Foche, Vicar of Higham, died in 1731, and was buried under the altar in Higham old Church. John Foche, of Upper Delce Farm, was buried at Higham in 1736.

Mrs. Fielding of Rochester, a daughter of Sir John Fagge, 6th Baronet, found the following entry relating to the cup in the manuscript book of her mother, Lady Fagge: “Copy of a memorandum in the handwriting of my father, Daniel Newman, at the bottom of a curious cup belonging to his ancestors: ‘*A description of this cup is to be found in the Gentleman's Magazine, vol. 29, p. 271, 1759, by Samuel Pegge, Vicar of Godmersham in Kent.*’ N.B.—Given by my mother to her grandson, Sir John Fagge; said to be the Grace Cup possessed by the last Abbot of St. Augustine's Monastery, Canterbury.”

This inscription in Mr. Newman's writing is still at the bottom of the cup. The account in the *Gentleman's Magazine* occurs in a letter signed Paul Gemsage, an anagram for Samuel Pegge. The writer, after some fantastic remarks on the derivation of the word “Bumper,” proceeds: “At Mr. Newman's, of Westbere, near Canterbury in Kent,

I saw the Grace Cup of John Foch, alias Essex, the last Abbot of St. Austin's, Canterbury, and my ever valuable friend Dr. George Lynch was pleased afterwards, with Mr. Newman's leave, to make me a present of a very neat drawing of it, which now I have by me. It was mounted with silver-gilt much in the manner as the shells of coconuts commonly are, and was very neat. Foch, the Abbot, was a man of note in his time, as likewise afterwards, as appears from John Twyne's Commentary *de Rebus Albioniciis*,* in which piece he is the principal interlocutor. Mrs. Newman was a Foch of the same family, and by that means the cup came to Mr. Newman This cup is too small to be a vessel employed in the common refectory of that large foundation, and probably was only used in the Abbot's own apartments."

The cup was bequeathed by Miss Eleanor R. F. Fagge in 1912 to her sister Alice Geraldine Randolph, wife of the Rev. William Cater Randolph, and by her presented in 1920 to St. Augustine's College Museum.

* Joannis Twini Bolingdunensis, Angli, De Rebus Albioniciis Commentarium, printed in London in 1590 by Edm. Bollifant, and dedicated to Robert Sackville, eldest son of Thomas Lord Buckhurst. The text, which treats of the mythical history and origins of Britain, takes the form of a dialogue between three persons, Joannes Vocchius (Foch) and Joannes Digonius (Dygon), "quorum ille quidem Abbas dignissimus fuit, hic vero Prior integerrimus cœnobii Augustiniani, uterque summa vitæ Sanctitate senex florentissimus, tertius autem utroque ætate junior Nicholaus Wottonus adolescens illo quidem tempore eruditissimus qui postea juris utriusque doctor consultissimus ac ædium Christi primus post monachorum exclusionem Decanus evasit." (P. 4.)

The discussion is supposed to take place at Sturry: "villula ad mille quidem passus vel paulo amplius a Canturia disjuncta, in qua non ita multo post, excisis. monasteriis, in luctu et squallore reverendus senex contabuit." (P. 6.)