



ARCHBISHOP ACCEPTED FREWEN OF YORK (1588-1664)

Our area produced an Archbishop of York. His rather unusual name was Accepted Frewen. It is generally believed that he was born by caesarean section at Northiam and baptized there on 26 May 1588. He was the first son of John Frewen (1558–1628) and his first wife Elinor (*d.* 1606) and was the founder of the Frewen's long-lasting association with this part of Sussex.

Accepted's father was a Church of England clergyman, of Puritanical bent, probably born in Worcestershire. He was ordained on 24 June 1582 and 'presented' to the rectory of Northiam by his father, who had leased the advowson rights from Anthony Browne, 1st Viscount Montague, whose father, Sir Anthony Browne, had been granted the Battle Abbey manor in 1538. After taking up the post on 2 November 1583, John Frewen was soon suspended for his refusal to subscribe unconditionally to the three articles of the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, which was an attempt to bring into line nonconformist ministers who were reluctant fully to uphold Royal Supremacy and the Book of Common Prayer promoted by Queen Elizabeth I. But he was soon reinstated after he and other nonconforming Sussex ministers had reached a compromise agreement with Whitgift.

Frewen was keen to baptise his children with 'godly significant' names, such as Repent and Beconstant, and that is why his firstborn son's name was Accepted. His second son was called Thankfull.

Accepted's father remained Calvinistic at heart and managed to write 249 mini-sermons concerning Calvinist teachings in Christian faith and practice. In 1603 John Frewen took a prominent part in organizing petitions for church reform, and was one of four Sussex ministers delegated to present them to the newly crowned King James I at Hampton Court. He was not popular with his parishioners and in the summer of 1611 some of them tried unsuccessfully to have him indicted for nonconformity. He went on to vindicate himself by preaching sermons dedicated to the big wigs of Sussex. He published these and in the preface said that there had been 'as sweet an harmony between minister and people ... as in any other place', but now there was 'no minister in the land ... so contemptible in the eyes of those to whom he ordinarily preacheth the word of God'. But he continued in much the same way as before. John made his will meticulously in 1627 leaving his lands to his second son Thankfull. He died at the end of April 1628, having been married three times, with seven children by his first wife and five by his second. Four of these children died in infancy. His third son John took over as rector.

So that was the home background of Accepted Frewen who was well on his way to high clerical office by the time his father died. Accepted studied at Magdalen College, Oxford where he gained a BA in 1608 and an MA in 1612, when he became a fellow on being appointed divinity reader, then in 1614 he was appointed lecturer in moral philosophy.

In 1617 he was allowed leave of absence from the university to act as chaplain to Sir John Digby, the ambassador to Spain. He travelled to Madrid, where Charles Prince of Wales, (the



future King Charles I) heard a sermon that he preached, was impressed, and appointed him a royal chaplain. In 1625 he was appointed Canon of Canterbury. By 1626 he was President of Magdalen College, Oxford and was elected Vice-Chancellor of Oxford in 1628 and 1629, and again in 1638 and 1639.

Charles, Prince of Wales became King in 1625. There followed turbulent times with fundamental issues concerning regal and parliamentary power and religion and in 1642 the English Civil War broke out. Fought between those loyal to Charles I, and those loyal to Parliament, the wars divided the country at all levels of society. Accepted Frewen used his influence at Oxford University to provide support to the King. Magdalen College loaned the King £500,



with evidence to suggest that this came from Frewen's own pocket. Parliament ordered his arrest but he went into hiding. Oxford was retaken by the royalists after the Battle of Edgehill in 1642 and in 1644 Frewen became Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield and resigned his university appointments. But all was not over – in 1652 Parliament declared his estates forfeited, and Cromwell set a price on his head. The proclamations however mistakenly named him Stephen Frewen, and he was able to slip away into obscurity, possibly to France.

Accepted Frewen (1588–1664), President (1626–1644), Archbishop of York British (English) School

Photo credit: Magdalen College, University of Oxford
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At the Restoration in May 1660 King Charles II resumed the throne and later that year Accepted Frewen was consecrated a somewhat elderly Archbishop of York. He appears to have been a 'careful' archbishop and maybe because of the memory of his father's puritanism took a gentle approach to enforcing the Act of Uniformity of 1662.

He profited from the reordering of leases of ecclesiastical property in the years following the Restoration, as tenants needed to regularize their positions. At York he received over £20,000 by way of 'fines' before his death in 1664 and he also profited from Lichfield where he had retained the bishopric. Accepted used the money as a contribution to the restoration of Lichfield Cathedral, on which he spent £1500, and to restoring the archbishop's palace at Bishopthorpe near York. He also augmented poor livings in his diocese. Even so he ended his life a very wealthy man.



Frewen died at Bishopthorpe palace on 28 March 1664. He had asked to be buried at Northiam, but was interred in York Minster on 3 May beneath the great east window.

After many gifts the balance of his fortune was left to his youngest brother, Stephen, a London merchant and master of the Skinners' Company, London. A very large sum was lent to King Charles II and lost, except for the interest, by the closing of the exchequer, but Stephen Frewen was granted an income of £400 a year by Charles and remained wealthy enough to establish the Frewen family on an extensive estate in and around Bodiam, Ewhurst, Northiam and Brede.

York Minster, Archbishop Frewen memorial

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