**Family Fortunes in Fourteenth-Century Walsham le Willows:**

**The Hawys and the Lenes**

# The survival of 255 manorial rolls for the manors of Walsham and High Hall, present day Walsham le Willows, spanning the years 1303 to 1399, have long been recognised as a valuable source for the study of the peasantry in fourteenth century Suffolk. However, to date, little use has been of them by historians interested in medieval genealogy and prosopography. John Hatcher has come closest by immortalising the inhabitants of Walsham in his semi-fictional work *The Black Death: The Intimate Story of a Village in Crisis 1345-50* published in 2009. This article will draw on the evidence of the rolls to illuminate the lives of two villein families: the Hawys and the Lenes.

# While the reader is directed to Ray Lock’s two volume edition of the rolls for detailed editorial comment, it is necessary to outline a few caveats here.[[1]](#footnote-1) Court officials were concerned only with the recording of the collection of rents and services owed to the lord of the manor as well as fines for the withholding of those services. Where disputes between tenants impacted upon the lord’s prerogative these were also recorded. Therefore men and women who did not hold land belonging to the manor but were hired labourers remain largely invisible. Equally, free tenants appear in the rolls less frequently than those holding in villeinage i.e. bound by customary law. Villein tenants were required to perform autumn works on the lord’s demesne and could be fined for withholding or performing those services badly. A fee had to be paid to the lord for permission to marry and he could fine tenants who married without leave. Women who produced children out of wedlock were fined (childwite) usually at the rate of 2s.8d.

The custom of partible inheritance in Walsham meant that all sons were entitled to a share of their father’s landholdings. Women could also inherit land but in practice this tended to happen only in the absence of sons although, depending on the wealth of the family, a portion of land might be assigned as a dowry. If she had no surviving issue then this would revert back to her family. Wives were routinely examined in court to ensure their agreement to alienation of land in which they held an interest. Widows were entitled to hold half their husband’s property in dower for life, whether or not they remarried. In addition, widows paid a fine for custody of an under-aged heir and could also pay an entry fine to retain a child’s inheritance until they came of age at 16. A high proportion of widows remarried and were often involved with their second husbands in disputes with former in-laws over dower rights or the administration of step-children’s inheritance. Consequently, where women are named in connection with land transactions, or in cases of trespass, it generally denotes a kinship link with one or more of the parties involved. This is an important point when trying to piece together family relationships especially where women were routinely referred to by either their family name or that of their first husband throughout their lives regardless of their marital status. One example, by no means unique, would be Matilda Deneys who was listed as a plague victim in 1349 under the surname of her first husband, Peter Robbes, despite a second marriage to William Deneys lasting 17 years. It is likely that reference to Matilda as ‘Robbes’ was because the Walsham land she held at the time of her death was dower land from her first marriage. It could also explain why Olivia Hawys, throughout her life was referred to by her maiden name ‘Cranmer’. Olivia and her sister Hilary became joint heiresses to the Cranmer lands when all their male relatives died of plague. In an oblique way, such a naming practice would alert the court as to the rightful reversion of lands held by women if they had no surviving offspring.

The Hawys Family

The presence of the Hawys in Walsham can be traced back to 1282 when a Robert Hawys was named as one of 12 jurymen giving evidence at the Inquisition post mortem of Robert de Valognes, who was lord of Walsham manor.[[2]](#footnote-2) Robert Hawys was clearly of some local standing as evidenced by the lay subsidy of 1293 which lists 90 Walsham taxpayers. Robert ‘Hawes’ was one of only 8 who was liable for 4s or more. As we shall see the Hawys maintained their pre-eminence within the village throughout the fourteenth century.

The extant rolls relating to Walsham manor begin on 12 October 1316. At that court ‘Agnes, the daughter of Robert Hawys’ paid ½ mark (6s. 8d.) for leave to marry Ralph Sesare; her mother, Marsilia and brother, William, undertook to seek the lord’s permission. [[3]](#footnote-3) It is suggested that her father was the same Robert mentioned above. Altogether, Robert and Marsilia, nee Terewald, had at least six sons and two daughters who reached adulthood.[[4]](#footnote-4) (See Table 1). As no direct reference to Robert Hawys appears in the rolls, he was probably dead by 1316. Of all his sons, William features the most prominently in the records and so is assumed to have been the eldest. He is also listed as one of 22 Walsham taxpayers in the lay subsidy of 1327 together with an otherwise unknown ‘Milcenc Hawys’.[[5]](#footnote-5) Taken together, their contribution of 7s meant that the Hawys were the highest taxpayers in Walsham, after the lords of Walsham and High Hall. The wealth of the family is still visible years later when we note that William was probably the richest plague victim in Walsham holding 40 acres in 1349.

There is some confusion over how many sons were born to Robert and Marsilia which is not helped by gaps in the rolls during the 1320s and possible scribal errors. In March 1329, five brothers, William, Peter, Ralph, Nicholas and John the chaplain, ‘sons and heirs of William [*recte* Robert] Hawys’ registered a land agreement.[[6]](#footnote-6) At first glance, the wording suggests that the brothers had just come into their inheritance which is unlikely, given what follows. Rather, the purpose was to record a family division of part of the Hawys’ patrimony. William was to hold just over 10 acres in arable land in 7 places and concede the remainder, quantity unknown, to his brothers Ralph and Peter. Ralph remitted his share to Peter in return for an annual rent of 1 cwt of grain payable in equal parts at Michaelmas and Easter. Two other brothers, Nicholas and John the chaplain, relinquished any claims they could have had. Another brother, who is absent from the agreement, was Walter who lived outside the manor. There is no further reference to Nicholas Hawys in the rolls and he does not appear in Lock’s index. Ralph disappears from view until the notice of his death in 1337 leaving 6½ acres of land, ½r. of meadow and a quarter of a messuage to his brothers, William and Walter.[[7]](#footnote-7)

As a widow, Marsilia was entitled to hold half her husband’s estate for life. We cannot be certain as to the extent of her holdings, but it is suggested that her long widowhood must have impacted on the resources of a large family. In 1317, her son, Walter, demised to his brother, Peter, the reversion of 6 acres of land, 1 rod of meadow and a quarter of a messuage from his inheritance that was held in dower by his mother. Walter also agreed to pay 1d chevage (fine for permission to live outside the manor) annually at Michaelmas.[[8]](#footnote-8) We know Peter’s wife was called Agnes and it is possible that her maiden name was Goselyng. In court on 17 March 1329, Walter Goselying surrendered to Peter Hawys and his heirs, 2 rods and 32 perches of arable land. At the next court in June, Walter surrendered a further ½ acre to Peter and Agnes.[[9]](#footnote-9) Incidentally, in the same year Peter and Agnes also received ½ rod of meadow from John Terwald and his wife Amice who was Peter’s niece.[[10]](#footnote-10) All in all, the couple received 4 grants of land in one year which may indicate the date of their marriage. If so, the marriage was short-lived as in 1332 Agnes paid 13s.4d. for leave to marry Thomas William.[[11]](#footnote-11) There is no evidence of children from Agnes’s first marriage and Peter’s heir was his brother, John the chaplain, who had renounced any claim to the 1329 land division discussed above. In 1335, John demised from his share of the Hawys patrimony, the portion held in dower by his mother and sister-in-law, to his eldest brother William and his heirs. This consisted of approximately 11 acres held by his mother and 1 acre with a 12th part of a messuage held by Peter’s widow Agnes.[[12]](#footnote-12) John disappears from the records after 1343.[[13]](#footnote-13)

The disparity in the size of dower held by Marsilia and Agnes is indicative of how thinly the Hawys property had been spread to support a large family. Perhaps, not surprisingly, disputes arose between the Hawys and Agnes over her dower especially after her rapid remarriage in 1332.[[14]](#footnote-14) Resolution between the parties was made in Feb 1337 when Agnes and Thomas relinquished all their holdings in Walsham, ‘held in dower or by purchase’, to William Hawys for the lifetime of Agnes on payment of 8s per annum, payable in two instalments. William was to perform all services except ploughing and if he defaulted then Agnes was to have re-entry. It is possible that Agnes died soon after as in 1339 there was a dispute between the Hawys brothers, William and Walter, over ½ acre of land with a meadow ‘following the death of Agnes the daughter of Peter Hawys’. Either the entry is faulty or Peter had a child from a previous union.[[15]](#footnote-15)

The final reference to Marsilia is dated 1338 when she must have been in her late seventies/early eighties. Her two surviving sons, William and Walter, made arrangements for her care. Walter agreed to relinquish his share in the Hawys tenement in return for which William would provide their mother with 2 bushels of wheat and 2 bushels of barley annually for life at Michaelmas. It would appear that of the six sons of Robert and Marsilia, only William and Walter produced another generation of male heirs. (See Table 1).

As stated above, William occurs in the Walsham rolls from 1316. It is not known when he married but his wife, Massilia, first appears in 1329. They had two sons who survived to adulthood and one, possibly two daughters. In 1335, Joan ‘the daughter of William Hawys’ paid 20s for permission to marry John of Foxley, for which her father was pledged. The relatively heavy fine was because John was a freeman and thereafter Joan disappears from the records. Six years earlier, in 1329, William had stood pledge for the marriage of Amice Hawys to John Terwald.[[16]](#footnote-16) John and Amice do not appear to have had surviving issue and nearly 40 years later, in 1367, the couple drew up a detailed contract by which they demised for their lifetime, a cottage, 2 acres and 1 rod of villein land to their nephew, John Hawys, son of Walter, in return for an annual payment of 6 bushels of wheat and 1 quarter barley at the feast of St Margaret [20 July].[[17]](#footnote-17) William’s sons, Robert and John, married two sisters, Olivia and Hilary Cranmer respectively. In 1338, Robert married the eldest, Olivia, but there were no surviving children and he disappears from the rolls after 1356. John married Hilary Cranmer in 1344 and fathered two children, William and Robert.

By the spring of 1349 the Black Death had reached Walsham killing first William senior and then his son John by 15 June. William left 40 acres to be shared by his eldest son Robert and his two under-aged grandsons by John and Hilary. The double marriage of William’s sons into the Cranmer family proved fortuitous when all the male Cranmers also fell victim to plague leaving Olivia and Hilary as joint heiresses to the Cranmer patrimony. As Olivia and Robert had no surviving issue, the sons of Hilary and John would eventually receive not just the Hawys’ lands of their grandfather, uncle and father, but also the entire Cranmer property. Half the Cranmer inheritance reverted to William and Robert after the death of their mother Hilary in 1366 but they had to wait a little longer for the rest!

Their maternal aunt, Olivia Hawys (nee Cranmer) died sometime between late 1392 and 1395.[[18]](#footnote-18) In 1378 she had made arrangements with her eldest nephew, William, regarding the provision of care in her old age. In return for 2 quarter 4 bushels of wheat and 2 quarters 4 bushels of barley to be provided at Christmas and Easter in equal portions, Olivia demised at farm all her tenements in Walsham during her lifetime to William.[[19]](#footnote-19) William was to maintain all buildings and tenements in good order at his own expense and perform all services. This disposal of her property may account for the relatively low rate of 6d poll tax paid by Olivia in 1381.[[20]](#footnote-20)

A clue to the size of Olivia’s holdings can be drawn from the detailed court entry of the bequest made by her sister, Hilary, of her share of the Cranmer patrimony shortly before her death in 1366. By midsummer 1349, Hilary had been left a widow with two sons, William and Robert, who could not have more than 4 years and 3 years old respectively. At the court of 11 November 1349, Hilary paid 13s.4d. for leave to marry John son of Peter Margery and by her second marriage had two daughters Joan and Alice. At her death in 1366, she left 31 acres, 3 rods of villein land, ½ acre of meadow, 1 rod of wood and half of a messuage in Walsham to her sons by John Hawys. [[21]](#footnote-21) Her daughters by John Margery, received half a messuage called ‘Cranemerys’ consisting of 12½ acres, 2 acres of meadow, 1 acre of woodland, and half of a messuage. In total, Hilary had possessed approximately 43 acres, of which only a small proportion may have been in dower from her first marriage. By 1366, both her sons were of an age to have entered into their paternal inheritance. William had sworn fealty at the first Walsham court of Robert de Ufford, earl of Suffolk on 13 July 1361 and in 1362 he and his brother, Robert, had purchased ½ acre of free woodland by charter without leave.[[22]](#footnote-22) If we therefore assume that most of the land bequeathed by Hillary was from her share of the Cranmer inheritance, this would suggest that Olivia’s portion was of a similar amount.

Although William and Robert feature regularly in the rolls from the 1360s until the end of the run in 1399, very little can be gleaned about their lives. In 1378, Isabella Spileman paid ½ mark fine for marrying Robert without leave but nothing more is known about their household. In the same year, William was fined 3d. for a false claim of trespass against his ex-stepfather, John Margery.[[23]](#footnote-23) An unusual entry for William occurs in the court roll of 29 June 1391 stating that William was in mercy for ½ mark for non-attendance at court without just cause ‘because he was seen with John Hawys’ (his cousin).[[24]](#footnote-24)

The second line of descent from Robert and Marsilia was through their son Walter who, like his brother William, was a plague victim. As mentioned above, Walter had lived away from the manor since 1317 which explains the minimal references to him until the notice of his death in August 1349. The court noted that he had held ‘certain tenements’ and that his son John was his heir.[[25]](#footnote-25) The entries for John begin in 1362 and he appears to have remained in the village as he served as an ale taster from 1370-72 and 1377-80. It is not possible to identify the extent of his inheritance. From an entry in the rolls dated 1367, one might surmise that John’s wife, Agnes, was a member of the Robhood family. In that year John and Agnes demised half a messuage to Robert Robhood for her lifetime without the lord’s permission.[[26]](#footnote-26) In 1396, John alienated 1 acre of villein land which formerly belonged to John Robhood; the absence of reference to Agnes giving permission suggests she was dead.[[27]](#footnote-27)

The Lene Family

While members of the Hawys family can be traced in national taxation records (lay subsidy rolls of 1283 and 1327 and the poll tax of 1381), this is not the case with the Lenes. Their absence from the poll tax return is due to the condition of the roll itself as well as partially blank entries. Gaps in the Walsham rolls 1300-1315 and 1319-1327 coupled with a restrictive pool of names, prevents creation of a watertight genealogy. For instance, there are six Roberts and four Williams. The court roll dated 9 August 1317 refers to four members of the Lene family: John the elder, John the younger, Robert and William but their relationship is uncertain. (See Table 2). Given the pre-eminence of William(1) in the earliest surviving rolls, he would appear to be the head of the family. Between 1316 and 1319, William(1), married to Hilary, appears in the rolls 22 times, mainly in connection with the receiving or purchase of land. The fact that he and his putative brother, Robert(1), acquired land from several members of the Machon family suggests there was a kinship link but it is untraceable.[[28]](#footnote-28) After 1319, the next entry for William(1) is a notice of his death and an inventory of his goods and funeral expenses in the Walsham roll dated 11 December 1329. William(1) left in excess of 37 acres of arable land to his sons William(2) and Robert(3) aged 10 and 6 respectively. Their mother Hilary was to hold half in dower and retain guardianship of the boys and their inheritance until they came of age. At the end of the roll appears a memorandum headed ‘The Inventory of the goods of William Lene, on the day on which he died; viz. Saturday before the feast of All Saints [28 October 1329]’.[[29]](#footnote-29) It is rare to find such a document in manorial records. It would only have been of use to the lord if the property was forfeit due to felony or because no heirs could be found. Lock is surely right when he suggests that the questionable nature of William’s death as a possible suicide (*felo de se*), a felony, might explain its inclusion.[[30]](#footnote-30) A clue as to the cause of William’s demise may be found in the entry: ‘Item 1 cow, trapped in the blaze, pr. 40d.’ suggesting that William(1) could have died in a fire on his property.

William’s inventory reveals much about his life. Along with the amount and value of livestock and grain, the list included barrels and vats for brewing. In 1316, he had been fined for brewing and selling ale in breach of the assize.[[31]](#footnote-31) We even know that William’s shroud cost 13s which was a costly sum given the average labourer in the fourteenth century would earn 3d a day. A rare reference to contemporary events in the outside world is discernible in the allowance (unspecified) made for the expense of someone visiting the shrine of St Thomas of Lancaster. Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, had led an unsuccessful rebellion against his cousin Edward II in 1321 and was subsequently executed at Pontefract Castle in 1322. Rumours of miracles at his tomb quickly resulted in the rise of a local cult. William Lene’s veneration of St Thomas lends credence to Lock’s assertion that he supported the deposition of Edward II in January 1327.[[32]](#footnote-32) What this meant in practice is unknowable.

The inventory also refers to members of William’s family. A younger brother John was to receive 4 bushels of wheat. Apart from William’s under-aged heirs, William(2) and Robert(3), there were two, otherwise unknown daughters Olivia and Catherine, who received a cash payment of £4 each which was presumably intended as a dowry. There is no further evidence for the girls in the rolls. Of particular note, is the reference to an illegitimate son also called William.

By the twelfth century it was firmly established in common law that a child born out of wedlock was *nullius fillius,* the son of no one. He could not inherit land and although he could acquire property by marriage, purchase or lease, it could only pass to heirs of his body. Consequently, the prevalence of illegitimacy is difficult to discern in medieval records especially at the lower end of the social scale. The slim evidence available in the Walsham rolls suggests that landed provision was made for illegitimate offspring through joint purchase by parent and child, or by purchase from the parent (whether symbolic or actual cannot be determined). William Lene’s untimely death and/or the young age of his illegitimate son, seems to have prevented any such arrangements being put in place for him. Thus, while his legitimate sons inherited in excess of 37 acres of arable land, according to William’s inventory William the bastard received only 1 mare valued at 6s 8d. and 3 ewes worth 6s.[[33]](#footnote-33) Consequently, there is no further reference to him in the rolls.

In the case of a bastard born to a man of free status there was clearly more scope for financial security as in the case of Richard of Caldwell, illegitimate son of Bartholomew Patel. Richard features in the Walsham rolls more prominently because he was of free status, holding 2½ acres of villein land purchased jointly with his father, a fact that only came to light when Bartholomew died in 1339. The court ordered that the land to be taken into the lord’s hands. Six years later, Richard regained possession on payment of 10s and the swearing of fealty.[[34]](#footnote-34) It would appear that Richard’s case was complicated not because of his illegitimacy but because he was of free status holding villein land for which fealty had not been sworn.

Another example is that of Matthew, the illegitimate son of Richard Patel. Richard, a plague victim in 1349, had previously purchased land jointly with his son, presumably to ensure he received an inheritance. However, at the time of Richard’s death, Matthew was a felon and so the court ruled that the lord would retain in his hands during Matthew’s lifetime. Presumably this meant that if Matthew subsequently proved his innocence, he could regain possession. As with Richard of Caldwell, Matthew had jointly purchased land with his father and so it was for a reason other than his bastardy that his holding of Walsham land was in dispute.

In several cases a metronymic is used in the manorial rolls to denote illegitimacy, e.g, William son of Letitia and Richard son of Letitia, the offspring of Letitia Stronde. At the court held in January 1334, Letitia was fined 2s for childwite on ‘two occasions’. In 1340, before she died, Letitia surrendered a share in a messuage and 8 acres, to her son William and William the son of William Cranmer. William, died soon after and William Cranmer declined to take possession. Later entries reveal that William ‘purchased’ this land from his mother.[[35]](#footnote-35) In 1348 and 1350, it was noted that the profits of 2 acres of customary land held by Thomas and John, the sons of Richard son of Letitia, remained in the lord’s hands because they failed to take entry.[[36]](#footnote-36)

Returning to the Lene family, after the death of William(1) in 1329, there is no further reference to his widow, Hilary, or his sons for several years. His heirs, William(2) and Robert(3), were 10 and 6 respectively in 1329 and so would be expected to enter into their inheritance in 1335 and 1339 at the earliest . However, in the case of William(2), there is no evidence for him in the rolls before his death in 1361 at the age of 42.[[37]](#footnote-37) This may be explained by an entry dated 11 November 1350 which indicates that he failed to answer a summons for autumn work ‘because in the lady’s service’. If the entries in Lock’s index are correct, he may have been a master shepherd.[[38]](#footnote-38) When William(2) died he left to his son, Robert(4), a messuage and 26 acres of villein land. Robert(4) did not take up his inheritance before 1366 and the delay may mean that, like his father, his life was outside the village. He swore fealty in court on 31 March 1391 but the next, and final entry for him was an essoin of common suit (excuse for non-attendance at court) entered on 11 October 1397.

Unlike his brother, William(2), Robert(3) appears to have made his life in Walsham although the multiple entries make it difficult to distinguish between the several Robert Lenes flourishing after 1349. It is certain, though, that Robert(3) had his share of tragedy and, like his brother, died in his forties. His wife, Emma, may have been a member of the Payn family as their sons, William and John, inherited a messuage and 24 acres on the death of William Payn in 1349.[[39]](#footnote-39) Lock has identified Robert(3) as the son of John(2) but this cannot be correct. John(2) died in 1336 leaving two sons, Robert(2) and Edmund, as heirs to a messuage and 3 acres of customary land.[[40]](#footnote-40) Robert(2) was probably Robert the shepherd who appears regularly in the rolls during the 1330s and early 1340s paying fines for damaging crops with his sheep. At the same court which noted John(2)’s death, it was recorded that Robert the shepherd had previously demised all his tenement to Edmund for six years without leave, concealing the transaction, presumably to avoid paying a fine. It was ordered that the property be taken into the lord’s hands and a report made of its profits. Thereafter, Edmund came and paid a 12d fine for entry.[[41]](#footnote-41) Robert died in late 1343/early 1344 and his holdings of ½a messuage and 2½ acres were inherited by his brother Edmund.[[42]](#footnote-42)

By the time that Robert(3) died, in 1371, aged about 48, he had outlived all his children and his heirs were three under-aged grandchildren: Robert(6) son of his son William(3) and Agnes and Catherine, daughters of his son John(3).[[43]](#footnote-43) William(3) was the William son of Robert Lene who married Alice Rampolye in 1349. His brother, John(3), had married Matilda Springold in 1354 and when he died in 1366 his heir was his son Nicholas aged 1 year. It would seem that Nicholas died young as he is not listed among the beneficiaries of his grandfather, Robert(3) in 1371. His mother, Matilda, retained custody of all the grandchildren’s inheritance until they came of age which suggests that Robert(6) was an orphan before 1371. He appears in the rolls as Robert the fletcher from 1395.

The other branch of the Lene family to address is the line of descent via John(2), specifically, his son Edmund, referred to above. This break from the traditional naming pattern of the Lenes offers a brief respite to the reader! He was presumably named for the local saint of nearby Bury (St Edmunds). Edmund’s first appearance in the rolls is dated 1329 when he was fined 3d. for trespass against William Springold causing loss valued at 6d. Edmund was ordered to pay and his father, John(2), was his pledge. In 1335 Edmund married Amice, daughter of Stephen Cooper, who brought with her a dowry of ½ acre in Marlescroft with the stipulation that on Stephen’s death the couple would receive further land and a cottage in the same place. In 1348, Edmund and Amice were granted a life interest in a messuage and 16 acres of land by Robert Shepherd the chaplain, which after Robert’s death would revert back to his rightful heirs. Edmund and Amice agreed to pay Robert 18s annually at Michaelmas for use of the land and performance of all services. This is the last reference in the rolls to Amice and by November 1349 Edmund had married Agnes Rampolye, without leave.[[44]](#footnote-44) It is not clear whether Amice was a plague victim or not but her father was. The roll of 15 June 1349 names Stephen Cooper’s heir as ‘Robert son of Edmund Lene’.[[45]](#footnote-45) Edmund’s second marriage did not last long as he died in 1354 and there is no reference to issue by Agnes. Edmund left 3 messuages and 24 acres of land ‘by estimation’ to his son Robert(5) by his first wife Amice. No mention is made of arrangements for his widow, Agnes, who would have been entitled to half in dower.

Robert(5) is the final member of the Lene family to consider and he appears regularly in the rolls. As indicated above, by 1354 he was in possession of his maternal grandfather’s lands of unknown size and had inherited his father’s estate of 24 acres. In 1360, he married Agnes, daughter of William Jay and between 1370 and 1389 he appears in the rolls as an ale taster paired first with John Hawys (son of Walter) and in 1388-89 with John Frost. During that time the ale tasters were fined 8 times for failing to carry out their duties.[[46]](#footnote-46) Whether or not this is the Robert described as a butcher from 1395, as favoured by Lock, is impossible to determine.

**Conclusion: The Impact of the Black Death**

Despite the plague having killed an estimated 55% of the Walsham inhabitants between April and August 1349, the rolls suggest that the routine business of running a manor continued as normal. At the height of the epidemic, as court officials itemised the deaths of 99 tenants and attempted to identify heirs, they still enforced the lord’s right to levy fines for childwite and infringement of the assizes of bread and ale against Olivia Cook and John Lester respectively.[[47]](#footnote-47)

For the Hawys family one might say that, fundamentally, little changed during the fourteenth century, in that they retained a prominent position within the village throughout. Hawys individuals can be identified in two lay subsidy rolls (1283 and 1327). Three can be traced in the 1381 poll tax return: Olivia, under her maiden name of Cranmer, William (grandson of William senior) ‘agricol’ and his wife Amya who does not appear elsewhere. If the condition of the poll tax entries were better, one suspects more names could be found, including members of the Lene family. More significant, was the failure of three-quarters of the second generation to produce male heirs and so the family avoided dissipating the patrimony. This was perhaps due to accident rather than design! Given the fecundity of Robert and Marsilia this could have been a real issue. However, there is no doubt that the Black Death greatly enhanced the family fortunes of the post-plague generation. The extinction of the Cranmer male line ensured that their lands descended to the sisters Olivia and Hilary who were married to Hawys men.

Although the Lenes were not as prominent as the Hawys, they were not poor by villein standards. When William(1) died in 1329 he left 37 acres to be divided between two sons. We do not know the wealth of his brother John(2) but his son, Edmund, when he died in 1354, left 3 messuages and 24 acres ‘by estimation’ to his son Robert(5). Like the Hawys, the Lenes, augmented their holdings by inheritance from in-laws who died of the plague. In this case, it was Edmund’s father-in-law, Stephen Cooper. It is interesting to note, that 37 Walsham families suffered at least one plague mortality but the Lenes appear to have escaped unscathed.[[48]](#footnote-48) However, a note of caution is needed here. It is nigh impossible to identify Walsham plague victims in the rolls unless they were tenants holding land of either Walsham or High Hall. The rolls reveal that widows with under-aged heirs or, who were left vulnerable, opted for rapid remarriage. For example, Hilary, widow of John Hawys, left with two sons under 5 years, remarried within six months. Likewise, Agnes Rampolye married Edmund Lene within a similar timescale.

The rolls provide a wealth of evidence, especially before 1350, on the economic activities of both the Lene and Hawys families. The inventory of the goods of William(1) is especially interesting for the itemising of possessions, identification of, and provision for, otherwise unknown daughters. It also raises the issue of illegitimacy and how it was dealt with within the manor. Two members of the Hawys family were involved in making detailed arrangements for the care of elderly relatives and thus securing retention of property within the family. William Hawys administered the lands of his maternal aunt, Olivia Hawys, nee Cranmer, and John Hawys tended to his older cousin, Amice, and her husband John Terwald. No comparable evidence is available for the Lene family.

There is much more that the medieval genealogist can glean from the Walsham rolls than has been presented here but hopefully this is the start of more such studies in the future.

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1. Ray Lock, ed., *The Court Rolls of Walsham Le Willows 1303-50* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1998) and *The Court Rolls of Walsham Le Willows 1351-99* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Edgar Powell, *A Suffolk Hundred in the Year 1283* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1910), p. 92 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Lock (1998) 30-31. There is no further reference to Agnes in the rolls. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Marsilia’s ancestry is revealed in a court entry of 16 Jan 1319 which states that her son William paid 2s for scrutiny of the rolls for evidence of a land exchange between his mother ‘Marsilia the daughter of Richard Terewald’ and Ralph Herirof sometime between Nov 1273 and Nov 1277: Lock, (1998) 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. An error for Marsilia? [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. At the court sitting on 17 March 1329; Lock (1998) 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Registered at the court sitting on 24 Sept 1337; Lock (2002) 215 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Lock (1998) 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Lock (1998) 121 and 123. At the same June court they also received a rod and 12 perches of land from William Miller. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The surrender was made at Walsham court on 28 July 1329; see Lock (1998) 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Lock (1998) 149 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Lock (1998) 185 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The court of 15 April 1342 notes that his brother-in-law, John Terwald, was fined 12d because he gave John Hawys a horse which had been distrained by the lord’s bailiff. John was summoned to answer a plea of debt by the court in April 1342 and again on 3 Nov 1343. Thereafter no further reference is made to him. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See the court entries of 13 January and 3 February 1334; Lock (1998) 167, 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Court roll dated 12 Nov 1339; Lock (1998) 238 and footnote. Ray Lock suggests it refers to Peter’s sister, Agnes, who married Ralph Sesare in 1316. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Given that Amice’s grandmother was a ‘Terewald’, she and her husband were probably distant cousins. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Registered at court on 8 November 1367; Lock (2002) 93 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. In the court roll of 19 Sept 1392 she is referred to in the present but in the past tense on 28 Sept 1395; Lock, (2002) 182, 188. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Recorded by the court on 11 May 1378; Lock (2002) 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Carolyn Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381: Part 2 Lincolnshire to Westmorland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) p. 505. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Noted by the court sitting on 29 January 1366; Lock (2002) 83-84 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Noted by the court sitting on 21 June 1362; Lock (2002) 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Noted by the court sitting on 11 May 1378; Lock (2002) 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Lock (2002) 174 and footnote. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Lock (1998) 326 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Noted by the court on 18 May 1367; Lock (2002) 90 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Noted by the court on 4 Jan 1367 and 25 Sept 1396 respectively; Lock (2002) 89, 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Christina Machon granted ½ acre to William and 1½ rods of land to Robert. William also received land from Simon, Walter and William Machon; Lock (1998) 46, 51 and 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Printed in Lock (1998) 133-135 [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Ibid, 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. William was fined 12d on 12 October 1316: Lock (1998) 37. Reference in the roll of 8 June 1329 to Hilary ‘widow of William Lene’ whose fine for selling in breach of the assize was condoned, is an error for Hilary Cook. Compare the entries in Lock (1998) on pages 124 and 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Lock (1998) 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Lock (1998) 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Court roll dated 13 April 1345; Lock (1998) 279 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Dec 1341, Nov 1343, Dec 1344, Aug and Nov 1347 and Oct 1348; Lock (1998) 253, 266, 276, 303, 313-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. See Walsham roll dated 28 Oct 1348 and 11 Nov 1350; Lock (1998) 312, 336. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. There is an error in Lock’s index which refers to an entry for William son of William in the court roll of 18 Nov 1349. In fact this is William son of Robert. For William son of Robert and his connection with the Rampolyes see: Vanessa King, ‘The Rampolye Family and the Black Death’, *Genealogists’ Magazine,* 31. 9. (2015), p. 332. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Lock (1998) 335. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. See entry in court roll dated 15 Jun 1349; Lock (1998) 320 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See entry in court roll dated 5 Nov 1336; Lock (1998) 205 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Incidentally, his father-in-law, Stephen Cooper, stood as pledge. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. See entry in court roll dated 3 Feb 1344; Lock (1998) 269. Again, Edmund’s father-in-law was pledged. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. See the detailed entry in the roll dated 21 May 1371; Lock (1998) 111-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. See King (2015) 332 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Roll dated 15 June 1349; Lock (1998) 324. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. 21 May 1371, 23 Aug and 26 Sept 1373, 16 Jan and 28 May 1375, 27 Jun 1388; 19 Jan and 16 Sept 1389; Lock (2002) 112, 116, 118, 121, 122, 160, 163 and 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Court roll for 15 June 1349; Lock (1998) 325. For a detailed discussion of the impact of the plague on Walsham see Lock (1998) Introduction [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. It is tempting to suggest that William(2) was a victim of the second bout of plague in 1361-2 but this is cannot be proved either way [↑](#footnote-ref-48)