

THE SILVESTER FAMILIES OF NORTH CHESHIRE  
IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

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## THE SILVESTERS of NORTH CHESHIRE

Among the very earliest English appearances of the surname SILVESTER are those in the north of Cheshire in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup>

The trail then goes very cold. Apart from Sir Alexander SILVESTER of Storeton mentioned in the Visitation of Cheshire, there is scarcely a mention of the name in any of the twenty 16C County Visitations examined.<sup>2</sup> (Oxford had a Burford Burgess and a Sergeant.)

The IGI records show that some 24 counties<sup>3</sup> have parish registers with some SILVESTER entries between 1540 and 1590, with Essex, Hampshire, Staffordshire and Wiltshire having the most; but Cheshire is particularly interesting in that all thirty three of its entries belong to just one parish in the north of the County, Mottram in Longdendale.

At this most turbulent of times, with a catholic Queen Mary on the throne, the young princess Elizabeth had as her personal chaplain the protestant priest William Downham. Elizabeth became queen in 1558 and William Downham was made Bishop of Chester in 1561.

The CCED<sup>4</sup> records that a previous bishop of Chester, John Bird, had ordained a Dom Guy (Guido) SILVESTER in 1542 (*resident in the Cheshire diocese*), priest at the Collegiate Church of St Mary, Manchester - the cathedral. (*This was the year Queen Kathryn Howard was executed.*)

On May 25th 1567 Sir John SILVESTER<sup>5</sup> was ordained, again by the bishop of Chester, now William Downham.

We next find Sir John SILVESTER in 1571, listed as curate in the Clerical Subsidy Rolls (*presumably under the Rector Richard Longworth*) at the Parish of Wold Newton in NE Lincolnshire.<sup>6</sup>

Our next SILVESTER entry<sup>7</sup>, dated March 3rd 1576/7, introduces George SILVESTER, who is Deacon (an order ranking below priest) in the parish of As[t]bury in Cheshire.

On June 2nd 1577 Sir George SILVESTER is ordained at Westminster by the bishop of Chester, Wm Downham (who died later that year).<sup>8</sup>

It would seem he was then that same year appointed priest at the parish of [Church] Mynshull.<sup>9</sup>

On April 12th 1580 George SILVESTER married Mary LEADLEY at the church of **St Peter at Gowts**, Lincoln, and just three months later a daughter Ann was baptised there.<sup>10</sup>

Just months later, on February 7th 1580/81 Sir George SILVESTER became rector of Winceby.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time (1581) Sir John SILVESTER is listed under the Clerical Subsidy Rolls as now being at Lincoln, at St Benedict's - only a few hundred yards from where George had recently married, and similarly close to the church where John himself would marry under four years later.

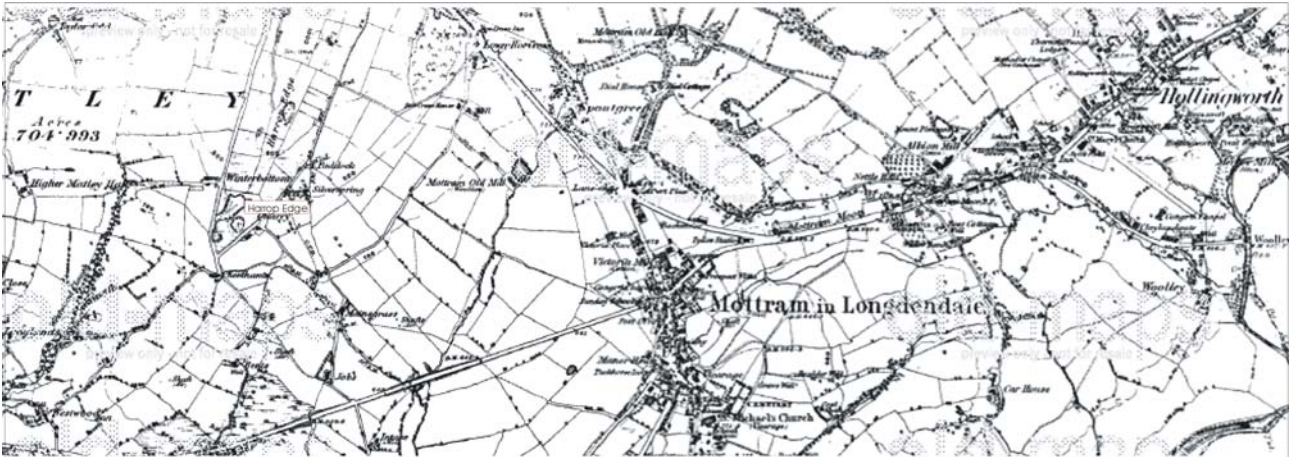
On Oct. 1st 1583 Sir John is still listed as curate at St Benedict's, (6s : 8d due); then on February 21st 1584/5 he marries Anne GRAINGER at **St Peter at the Arches** church.

Before proceeding any further, it may be useful to consider where Sir John SILVESTER and Sir George SILVESTER were born. The CCED records of their ordination by the bishop of Chester William Downham give their place of residence as being within the diocese, and as mentioned above the only parish in the county with any SILVESTER entries is Mottram in Longdendale;<sup>12</sup> but this family does not merit a mention in the Cheshire Visitations of 1580 and 1616.

John SILVESTER must have been born in the late 1540s, George about 10 years later. They were surely brothers or cousins, and the IGI records provide considerable information about the SILVESTERS of Mottram in Longdendale. Their details are reproduced here, and these names must surely include their parents and siblings. It will also be interesting to look at the names of some of the families that members of the family married; because although the SILVESTERS do not get a mention in the Visitations, some of these other families do.

All the dates are from the IGI; but I have still to check whether the dates up to Lady Day have had their years adjusted.

North Cheshire - Longendale, with Harrop, Mottram and Hollingworth.



Hughe	buried February 20th 1559	
Hughe	buried January 21st 1561	
Edward	buried May 14th 1564	
John	buried January 3rd 1564	
George	buried August 17th 1572	
Guy	buried April 23rd 1579	
Alice	buried February 14th 1576 - the day she was baptised	
George	buried August 15th 1579 - the day he was baptised	
Thomas	buried December 18th 1581	
Elizabeth	buried March 6th 1582	
Thomas Spouse	buried March 26th 1583	
Thomas	buried November 27th 1583	
Edward	buried March 3rd 1583	
unknown	buried February 14th 1589 - father Thomas	
Ann	buried October 22nd 1592	
John	buried November 20th 1595	
Thomas	married December 9th 1571	Issabell HARROP ( <i>4 children presumably</i> )
Ellyn	married December 9th 1571	Richard HARROP
Marion	married February 27th 1575	Hughe HOLLINGWORTH
Joane	married December 8th 1577	John TURNER
Ellyn	married May 15th 1586	Raphe STANLEY
Joane	married December 3rd 1587	Raphe HOPWOOD
Alice	married October 31st 1591	Franc[is] CROMPTON
Izabell	married January 27th 1591	John WILSON
John	married February 3rd 1593	Ellyn COLIER ( <i>two children noted till 1600</i> )
Alis	baptised January 10th 1572	
Alice	baptised February 14th 1576 (buried same day)	
George	baptised August 15th 1579 (buried same day)	
Elizabeth	baptised February 26th 1581	( <i>is this the Elizabeth buried 1582?</i> )
John	baptised December 20th 1595	( <i>? to father John - not specified</i> )
George	baptised March 22nd 1597	to father John
Ellyn	baptised August 24th 1600	to father John

Notice how close the manors of Harrop and Hollingworth are to Mottram in Longdendale. Indeed the Hollingworth family at times lived at Mottram Old Hall.

Today the only trace left of Harrop is the road named Harrop Edge Road, but as “House\_of \_Names.com” relates, the surname HARROP was first found in Cheshire where they held a family seat as Lords of the Manor of Harrop, a small hamlet in Cheshire. Interestingly there is a book called “Extent of the Lordship of Longdendale (1359/60)” with the editor named as John HARROP.

The Cheshire Visitations of 1580 and 1616, though, do not mention the HARROP family.

On the other hand, the main lines of the HOLLINGWORTH and STANLEY families are well covered, and there are passing mentions also of CROMPTON and HOPWOOD in 1616.

Looking at the name Hughe HOLLINGWORTH (who married Marion SILVESTER in Feb. 1575), there is a record of Hugh de Holynworth of Mottram Old Hall fighting at Agincourt in 1415.

A later document for 1547-53 notes the ‘Forcible entry, assault on plaintiff’s servants, and destruction of the frame of a house at Hollingworth, Cheshire’, the Plaintiff being one John CARYNGTON, the Defendants Hamnet CARYNGTON, John HOLLAND, and Andrew and Hugh HOLLYNWORTHE <sup>13</sup> - *see also reference* <sup>4</sup>.

The IGI records the burials of four Hughe HOLLINGWORTHS, in 1578, 1579, 1585 and 1597, with Hugonis Spouses buried in 1574 and again on September 1st 1592, presumably Marion’s burial. There were two Hughe marriages, in 1573 to Elizabeth SHAWE and in 1575 to Marion SILVESTER. So perhaps the 1574 burial was Hughe’s first wife Elizabeth.

There were two Hughe baptisms, in 1579 and 1585, with no parents’ names indicated

Looking at the name Richard HARROP, who married Ellyn SILVESTER in 1571, his Spouse was buried on Sep. 25th 1587, then on March 31st 1588 a male son of Richard was buried.

Looking at Raphe HOPWOOD, who married Joane SILVESTER in 1587, the IGI records his burial on Feb. 20th 1596 and also on the same day the baptism of a son Raphe. <sup>14</sup>

Looking at Thomas SILVESTER who married Issabell HARROP in December 1571, it would seem that just ten years later, he, Issabell and their four children were all dead, including a baby George.

So was the George born in the 1550s, (*and who lived to about 76*), Thomas’s brother?

Was the George buried 1572 ‘our’ George’s father? It could equally have been Hughe, Edward, John, Guy or Thomas!

And was Guy who died in 1579 the same Guy SILVESTER who had been ordained in 1542?

George and John SILVESTER both married in Lincoln, George to Mary LEADLEY at St Peter at Gowts, John to Anne GRAINGER at the nearby St Peter at Arches, both local women. We know of a Martin LEADLEY’s family, though not of Mary’s baptism; but Anne GRAINGER we know was baptised at her church on December 10th 1561. <sup>15</sup>

Here now are the families of the two couples, George being priest at Winceby, John the priest about 34 miles north at Bigby.

	<i>(all to father George)</i>	John	1587, Sep. 8th, Bigby to John <sup>17</sup>
Ann	1580, July 16th, St Peter at Gowts	Ann	1590, November, Bigby to John
Anthonie	1583, March, Winceby - not IGI!	Elizabeth	1593, March 16th, Bigby no parent
George	1585, Oct. 21st, Winceby <sup>16</sup>	Mary	1597, Nov. 8th, Bigby to Johis
Barbara	1588, Nov. 30th, Winceby	Mercy	1598, Jan. 3rd, Bigby no parent
Edward	1590, May 5th, Winceby	Robert	1599, Feb. 26th, Bigby no parent
Elizabeth	1592, Nov. 20th, Winceby	Francys (f)	1603, Aug. 1st, Bigby to John
Xopher	1595, Jan. 26th Winceby	Marie	1608, June 29th Bigby to Johen

George would live on as Rector at Winceby till 1631; but John sadly died just months after Marie’s death. George was an Administrator of the estate, Francys and Marie being specially provided for.

Here now are other references to the two priests, both listed as Rector, with Sir John SILVESTER also indicated as being Preacher.

- 1585, July 5th <sup>18</sup> Winceby, Sir George SILVESTER Rector  
St Benedict's Lincoln, Sir John SILVESTER Curate and Preacher (as also 1583)
- 1586 *no known connection* LCC Administrations St Benedict's - Thomas SILVESTER
- 1590 <sup>19</sup> *Subsidy of Armour* : Winceby: Mr SILVESTER - a Bowe  
: Bigby : Mr SILVESTER - a Qua[rrel] - crossbow arrow?
- 1594 <sup>20</sup> Winceby, Sir George SILVESTER Rector  
Maringe Chapel, Sir George SILVESTER Curate (*very near Mareham on the Hill*)  
Bigby. Sir John SILVESTER Rector and Preacher
- 1600 <sup>21</sup> Lincoln Consistory Court file naming a George SILVESTER yeoman - *related??*
- 1601 <sup>22</sup> Light Horse Levy: Winceby, George SILVESTER Rector 10s.  
: Bigby, John SILVESTER Rector 10s.
- 1603 Winceby, George SILVESTER I[ncumbent]  
Bigby, John SILVESTER I[ncumbent] (*Patron: Robt. TERWHITE Esq.*)
- 1607 Winceby, Sir George SILVESTER 16s. (*Patron: The Kings Ma<sup>tie</sup>*)  
Bigby, Sir John SILVESTER 16s.
- 1608, June 29th Bigby, daughter Marie to father Johen
- 1608, Oct. 7th Bigby, John SYLVESTER Rector buried. (*IGI only, but including his position*)
- 1608 - Lincolnshire Consistory Court papers for him <sup>21</sup> *we have copies: George witness*
- 1613, Jan. 16th *no confirmed connection* - John SYLVESTER = Alice OWLIN, Long Bennington
- 1631, Sep. 2nd At Winceby, George SILVESTER Parson is buried. <sup>15</sup> - *we have Inventory*
- 1638 George SILVESTER yeoman Mareham on the HILL - LCC papers - *related??*

How can we summarise?

It seems highly likely that all three SILVESTER priests, Guy (*b.c. 1520*), John (*b.c. 1546*) and George (*b.c. 1556*) were all from the same Cheshire family, centred around Mottram in Longdendale. John and George are styled 'Sir' in a number of documents. While their background is still not clear we do have the names of possible parents and siblings. Interestingly, under the Lincoln City Election of Proctors at this time, no less than eleven of the fourteen parishes had a priest styled 'Sir'; the other three were 'Mr'.

The other families associated with the SILVESTERS at this time, HARROP, STANLEY, HOLLINGWORTH and CARRINGTON, all had manors associated with them, all within a stone's throw of Mottram in Longdendale.

Perhaps it is more than coincidence that the earlier references to the SILVESTER families, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, were also sited in north Cheshire, at Storeton (in the Wirral) and at Kingsley near Runcorn.



- <sup>1</sup> Sir Alexander SILVESTER of Storeton in the Wirral, and the De SILVESTERs of Kingsley, Runcorn
- <sup>2</sup> Bedford, Buckingham, Cambridge, Cheshire, Derby, Dorset, Essex, Gloucester, Hereford, Hertford, Leicester, Lincoln, London, Norfolk, Northampton, Nottingham, Oxford, Stafford, Wiltshire and Yorkshire.
- <sup>3</sup> Berkshire, Buckingham, Cheshire, Derby, Devon, Essex, Gloucester, Hampshire, Hereford, Hertford, Kent, Leicester, Lincoln, London, Middlesex, Norfolk, Somerset, Stafford, Suffolk, Surrey, Sussex, Warwick, Wiltshire and Yorkshire.
- <sup>4</sup> Clergy of the Church of England Database ID: 55263
- Interestingly, the *Ev. Entitl.* entry has ‘Mr Johannes Carrington, arm[iger] of Carrington’.
- The Dunham Massey Papers, ref: GB 133 EGR1/2 give some background: “The manors of Carrington and Hattersley, and lands in Carrington .... Mottram in Longdendale, Godley and Hollingworth .... were held by the Carrington family of Carrington, until the death of John Carrington esq. without male heir in 1577.”
- Is this the John Carynton who was plaintiff against Hughe Hollingworth - see reference <sup>13</sup>.
- <sup>5</sup> CCED ID: 219534 giving as source the following source.<sup>6</sup> [True March 2013: in June ID invalid!]
- <sup>6</sup> “The State of the Church in the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I, Lincoln Record Society, v. 23 - Foster”
- <sup>7</sup> CCED ID: 109111
- <sup>8</sup> “The State of the Church ....” under *Liber Cleri*.
- <sup>9</sup> CCED ID: 108638
- <sup>10</sup> IGI - also copies of the entries seen on the Lincolnshire Archives site.
- <sup>11</sup> “The State of the Church ..” and also *Cooper’s Act Book 1581* from “Lincoln Episcopal Records in the time of Thomas Cooper, AD 1571 - 1584”: Admissions 1580-81
- <sup>12</sup> - searching all Cheshire IGI registers up to 1640, 22 of which have registers covering this period
- <sup>13</sup> Kew Archive STAC 3/6/98 (Records of the Star Chamber and of other courts)
- <sup>14</sup> gs film 2106998 and C04293-1, gs film 424859
- <sup>15</sup> IGI - also a copy of the entry seen on the Lincolnshire Archives site.
- <sup>16</sup> IGI - also copy seen on Lincolnshire Archives site, but very faint without UV light.
- <sup>17</sup> All noted in IGI batch C02701-2; but this register not available on the Lincolnshire Archives site.
- <sup>18</sup> “The State of the Church ....” under *Liber Cleri*.
- <sup>19</sup> “The State of the Church ....” *Subsidy of Armour*
- <sup>20</sup> “The State of the Church ....” under *Liber Cleri*.
- <sup>21</sup> Calendars of Administrations 1540 - 1649, The Lincoln Record Soc. Vol. 16 names him ‘clerk’
- <sup>22</sup> “The State of the Church ....” *The names of the “better sort” of ministers, who were required to contribute for the provision or Light Horse for Ireland AD 1601-2* The levy ranged from 5s - 40s.

The Clergy of the Church of England Daabase (CCED) has conflicting information.

Ref: CCED Ordinary Tenure ID: 349 gives some of the information correctly, as above, quoting *The State of the Church* as the source.

But CCED Ordinary Tenure ID: 352 mistakenly has the Winceby rector as named John (sic) Silvester - from Feb. 2nd 1581, and still in place in 1614!

Note, though, that this document has the ordinations for a John Silvester in 1568 and another John Silvester in 1577!

Very strangely, the CCED listing of Winceby rectors starts with William Parker, followed by John Johnson in 1556 and then skipping to Hugh Maplesden in 1631, without any suggestion of missing entries!