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 SILVESTERS are those in the north of Cheshire in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The trail then goes very cold. Apart from Sir Alexander SILVESTERS 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. (Oxford had a Burford Burgess and a Sergeant.)

The IGI records show that some 24 counties have parish registers with some SILVESTERS 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 records that a previous bishop of Chester, John Bird, had ordained a Dom Guy (Guido) SILVESTERS 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 SILVESTERS was ordained, again by the bishop of Chester, now William Downham.

We next find Sir John SILVESTERS 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.

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

On June 2nd 1577 Sir George SILVESTERS is ordained at Westminster by the bishop of Chester, Wm Downham (who died later that year).

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

On April 12th 1580 George SILVESTERS married Mary LEADLEY at the church of St Peter at Gowts, Lincoln, and just three months later a daughter Ann was baptised there.

Just months later, on February 7th 1580/81 Sir George SILVESTERS became rector of Winceby.

At the same time (1581) Sir John SILVESTERS is listed under the Clerical Subsidy Rolls as now being at Lincln, 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 SILVESTERS and Sir George SILVESTERS 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 SILVESTERS entries is Mottram in Longdendale; but this family does not merit a mention in the Cheshire Visitations of 1580 and 1616.

John SILVESTERS 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.
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 (4 children presumably)
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 (two children noted till 1600)

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 (is this the Elizabeth buried 1582?)
John baptised December 20th 1595 (? to father John - not specified)
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 Hugh 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 13 - see also reference 4.

The IGI records the burials of four Hugo HOLLINGWORHTHS, 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 Hugo marriages, in 1573 to Elizabeth SHAWE and in 1575 to Marion SILVESTER. So perhaps the 1574 burial was Hugo’s first wife Elizabeth. There were two Hugo 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. 14

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 Hugo, 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. 15

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

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

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.

- 3 -
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  
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  
Subsidy of Armour: Winceby: Mr SILVESTER - a Bowe
: Bigbye : Mr SILVESTER - a Qua[rle] - crossbow arrow?

1594  
Wynceby, Sir George SILVESTER Rector
Maringe Chapel, Sir George SILVESTER Curate (very near Mareham on the Hill)
Bigbie. Sir John SILVESTER Rector and Preacher

1590  
Lincoln Consistory Court file naming a George SILVESTER yeoman - related??

1600  
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: Roht. TERWHITE Esq.)

1607  
Winceby, Sir George SILVESTER 16s. (Patron: The Kings Ma[ste]r)
Bigby, Sir John SILVESTER 16s.

1608, June 29th  
Bigby, daughter Marie to father Johen

1608, Oct. 7th  
Bigby, John SLYVESTER Rector buried. (IGI only, but including his position)

1608  
- Lincolnshire Consistory Court papers for him 21 we have copies: George witness

1613, Jan. 16th  
no confirmed connection - John SLYVESTER = Alice OWLIN, Long Bennington

1631, Sep. 2nd  
At Winceby, George SILVESTER Parson is buried. 15 - 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.
1 Sir Alexander SILVESTER of Storeton in the Wirral, and the De SILVESTERs of Kingsley, Runcorn
4 Clergy of the Church of England Database ID: 55263
Interestingly, the Ev. Entitl. entry has ‘Mr Johannes Carington, arm[iger] of Carington’. 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 13.
5 CCED ID: 219534 giving as source the following source.6 [True March 2013: in June ID invalid!]
6 “The State of the Church in the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I, Lincoln Record Society, v. 23 - Foster”
7 CCED ID: 109111
8 “The State of the Church ....” under Liber Cleri.
9 CCED ID: 108638
10 IGI - also copies of the entries seen on the Lincolnshire Archives site.
11 “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
12 - searching all Cheshire IGI registers up to 1640, 22 of which have registers covering this period
13 Kew Archive STAC 3/6/98 (Records of the Star Chamber and of other courts)
14 gs film 2106998 and C04293-1, gs film 424859
15 IGI - also a copy of the entry seen on the Lincolnshire Archives site.
16 IGI - also copy seen on Lincolnshire Archives site, but very faint without UV light.
17 All noted in IGI batch C02701-2; but this register not available on the Lincolnshire Archives site.
19 “The State of the Church ....” Subsidy of Armour
21 Calendars of Administrations 1540 - 1649, The Lincoln Record Soc. Vol. 16 names him ‘clerk’
22 “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!

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