

The Savage Family and Great Malvern Priory

Great Malvern Priory contains three significant features which involve members of the Savage family.

1. The Magnificat window (1501-2)
2. The Knotsford Monument (c. 1589)
3. The Inscription on the 7th bell (1611)

1. The Magnificat Window

The Magnificat window in the north wall of the north transept was given by Henry VII and was installed in 1501-2. In addition to Henry himself, the lowest panes contained images of some of his closest associates: Queen Elizabeth (of York) [lost], Prince Arthur, Sir Reginald Bray, Sir John Savage [lost] and Sir Thomas Lovell.

Sir John Savage (d. 1492) commanded the left wing of Henry Tudor's army at the battle of Bosworth Field (22/8/1485), the decisive engagement of the Wars of the Roses. He was the eldest son of Sir John Savage (d. 1495) and Catherine Stanley, a sister of Thomas, Lord Stanley (1st Earl of Derby) and Sir William Stanley. Their intervention on 22nd August 1485 led to the downfall of Richard III and began the Tudor era. Moreover, Thomas Stanley was the 3rd husband of Margaret Beaufort, the mother of Henry Tudor. She was descended from John of Gaunt, 3rd son of Edward III, through his mistress and wife Katherine Swynford.

The Savages were a long-established Cheshire family, and are commemorated by the Savage chapel in the church of St Michael and All Angels, Macclesfield. This was built between 1502 and 1507 by Thomas Savage (Archbishop of York) (d. 1508), a younger brother of Sir John Savage (d. 1492).

Sir John Savage (d. 1492) was appointed constable of Hanley Castle and keeper of Hanley Park in 1478, and in 1485 he became steward of the manor of Hanley and master of the game of Malvern Chase. By 1501, his son, Sir John Savage (d. 1527) was Sheriff of Worcestershire and steward of the manor of Hanley. He became sheriff in 1492, following the death of his father during the siege of Boulogne. The chronicler Leland had the following to say about Hanley and the Savages in the 1530s:

"Hanley ... a mile above Upton, and a slite shotte from Severne. It is an uplandisch towne. The castelle standit in a park at the west parte of the town. Syr John Savage and his father and graunt-father lay much aboute Hanley and Theokesbyri as kepers of Hanley. The erles of Gloucester were owners of this castle, and lay much there. Mr. Cometon clene defaced it yn his tyme beyng keeper of it after Savage."

2. The Knotsford Monument

This ornate Elizabethan tomb on the south side of the high altar contains the remains of John Knotsford (d. 1589) of Hanley Castle and Great Malvern, and his wife Jane (nee Knightley) (d. 1582). He acquired the site of the Priory and its demesne lands on 19th May 1545, four years after the Priory church was saved from demolition by John Pope and the parishioners.

An effigy of their eldest daughter Anne (d. 1624) kneels at a prie dieu at their feet and images of their four other daughters decorate the sides of the tomb. Anne married William Savage of Elmley Castle on 5th June 1575, after which they played host to Queen Elizabeth I on 20th August 1575. William Savage (d. 1616) was related to Sir John Savage (d. 1492) as follows:

Sir John's brother, Christopher, the 7th son of Sir John Savage (d. 1495) and Catherine Stanley, married Anne Stanley, daughter of John Stanley of Elford, near Lichfield, and was killed on 9th September 1513 at the Battle of Flodden. Their son Christopher (of Upton St Leonards, Glos) (d. 1546) married Susanne (Anne) Lygon (b. 1511), a daughter of Sir Richard Lygon (d. 1556) of

Madresfield. He was the eldest son of Richard Lygon (d.1512) and Anne Beauchamp (d.1534), the second daughter and co-heiress of Sir Richard Beauchamp, second Lord Beauchamp of Powyck.

Earlier in the Middle Ages, the castle at Elmley was the chief seat of the Beauchamp family, but by the 15th century it had been superceded by Warwick. Richard de Beauchamp (1382 – 1439) was, amongst other things, the tutor of the young Henry VI. He was also Lord of the Chase and Manor of Malvern, through his second marriage to Isabel le Despenser (1400 – 1439), the daughter of Thomas le Despenser, 1st Earl of Gloucester. The Beauchamp family was, almost certainly, heavily involved in the rebuilding of the Quire of Great Malvern Priory after 1435.

In 1478, Elmley castle was in the hands of Edward IV, since Edward, Earl of Warwick (1475 – 1499) was a minor. By 1488, Sir John Savage “the younger” had been appointed constable of Elmley castle and keeper of the park and warren by Henry VII. Sir John Savage and his son John Savage were appointed keepers of the park and warren again in 1512.

The manor of Elmley Castle was sold to Christopher and Susanne Savage in 1544, and their family became the successors of the Beauchamps at Elmley. Their son Francis (d. 1557) married Anne Sheldon (d. 1619), daughter of William Sheldon of Beoley, and their eldest son was William Savage (d. 1616).

3. The 7th Bell

The Jacobean 7th bell at Great Malvern Priory is inscribed

+ AN (stop) SAVEG (stop) IOHN (stop) SAVEG (stop) I H (stop) E H 1611

[Photo of part of inscription band]



On the death of John Knotsford in 1589, the former Great Malvern Priory estate passed to Anne Savage (d. 1624) and her husband William (d. 1616). They had five children: John, George, Giles, Mary and Thomas, and today there are two striking monuments to members of the family in Elmley Castle church. The first shows the recumbent effigies of William Savage (d. 1616), Giles Savage (d. 1631) and Giles' wife Catherine (nee Daston; d. 1674). The second monument is to the first Earl of Coventry (d. 1699). It was erected by his widow, the countess dowager, who married Thomas Savage of Elmley Castle in 1700.

The Jacobean tenor bell at Elmley Castle (cast in 1620 by Henry Farmer of Gloucester) carries the name "Sir John Savage". Assuming that this is the same John Savage as the one whose name appears in the inscription on the Great Malvern 7th bell, he had become Lord of the Manor of Elmley after the death of his father William in 1616. John married Dorothy Poole, daughter of Sir Henry Poole of Saperton, but died without issue on 2nd April 1623. The 2nd bell at Elmley, inscribed "GOD SAVE OVR KING ANNO 1619 MARCH THE 16" was also cast by Henry Farmer during Sir John Savage's tenure.

St Eadburgha's church just outside Broadway contains two bells carrying the name Walter Savage. He was the second son of Francis (d. 1557) and Anne Savage (nee Sheldon) (d. 1619) of Elmley, and was a brother of William Savage (d. 1616). After the death of Francis Savage, Anne (d. 1619) married Anthony Daston (d. 1572), who was the owner of various properties in Broadway. When she was widowed for a second time, she settled her Broadway property on two of her younger sons by Francis Savage: Anthony (d. 1587) and Walter (d. 1622). In June 1644, Charles I spent the night at Mr Savage's house in Broadway. This Mr Savage was presumably Walter (b. c1627), Anne Savage (nee Sheldon)'s great, great grandson.

[photo of the Broadway clappers]



The Broadway bells (numbers 3 and 4) were again cast by Henry Farmer of Gloucester (in 1603, when James I came to the throne, and in 1609). As at Great Malvern Priory, a set of redundant clappers is mounted on a plaque on the wall of the church.

[photo of the Priory clappers]



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