

Which Henry Sacheverell ordered the tapestries showing his arms ?

The Heraldry

Two examples of this tapestry (480 mm x 460 mm) survive, woven in wool, silk, silver and silver-gilt thread; they match in composition and size, though the arrangement of the flowers differs. They may have formed part of a set, possibly of six, possibly of three when the two would have flanked a longer cushion.¹ The arms of Sacheverell occupy the centre, depicted on a shield; below the frame are the initials H S / P executed in much tarnished silver thread. Both the H and the S have been reworked. The arms were identified in 1914 as quarterly of six:²

1. Silver on a saltire azure five water bougets gold (Sacheverell)
2. Silver, a lion rampant sable crowned gold with a mullet for difference (Morley)
3. Gules, a pale lozengy silver (Statham)
4. Azure, a lion rampant silver (?) Fitzercaud assigned Hopwell
5. Gules, a duck silver ducally gorged gold (Snitterton)
6. Silver, three hares playing bagpipes gules (Hopwell)

Across the chief is a label of three points gules, used to differentiate the arms of the heir from those of the father. It is not absolutely certain that it was included on the original tapestry; it could be a later introduction, for both the tapestries were clearly treasured objects.

The Records

There can be no doubt that the tapestries were made for a member of the Sacheverell family, at some point in the mid-sixteenth century. The family's senior branch owned extensive lands in Derbyshire and Warwickshire, its cadet branches lands in Nottingham and Leicestershire. No provenance is known for the tapestry; it might have provided a useful departure point for the search for its first owner amongst the many Henry Sacheverells found across several generations and in all three branches of the family. Two candidates have been suggested. Clifford Smith offered Henry of Rearsby, some ten miles northeast of Leicester, who died in 1581. Wace, suspicious of the heraldry, proposed a Henry of Morley, Derbyshire, who married in 1638. Neither author supplied the reasons, or the sources, for his opinion. A search for that evidence has led to an extensive examination of documents relating to the family, apparently not previously consulted; the result is to eliminate both previous candidates and propose a third.

The wide selection of Visitation records, manuscript or printed, are muddled, much supplemented by later annotations and hard to reconcile with each other or with

¹ G. Wingfield-Digby, *The Victoria and Albert Museum, Catalogue of Tapestries Medieval and Renaissance*, London, 79-80; no connection between the Winter family and the Sacheverells can now be traced as stated there; the second example is Burrell Collection, Glasgow, 47.17.

² *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London*, 2nd series, xxvi, 1913-14, 236-8. which details the flowers, the arms and suggests Henry of Rearsby. The heraldry was disputed in *Herald and Genealogist* 1872, 531-534 where Jacinth's arms were discussed, a view corrected by W.P.W. Phillimore, (ed), *Visitation of Worcestershire 1569*, Harleian Soc. 27, 1888, 155 where the arms are said to be copied from an old parchment; copy in BL Harleian 1093, fol.82-84.

the evidence of independent documentary sources.³ Of the manuscript Visitations consulted, only four tricked the family arms, each in a different manner. The Leicestershire Visitation in 1682-83, printed by Nichols, the eighteenth century historian of Leicestershire parishes, gives still another version possibly adopted later.⁴ Although these records claim to be contemporary or nearly so, it is clear that even for contemporaries there was already confusion, both over relationships and over the correct generations and even to right to arms. Only to a limited extent therefore can they help illuminate the problem of the original owner of the tapestry.

Much of the Visitations' information has had to be checked against wills or corrected and supplemented by details on surviving tombs or in documents. Much of this information accords more closely with that of the last Visitation, of 1682-83, to which, together with the independent documentation, preference has been given.⁵

The Candidates

The Family at Ratcliffe on Soar



Sacheverell of Ratcliffe ©Hilary L Turner

Two branches of the family can be traced, both descended from John of Morley (k.1485) whose sons Henry and Ralph inherited estates from their uncle Richard (d.1534).⁶ Four members of the cadet branch of the family lie buried at Ratcliffe on Soar, Nottinghamshire.; Ralph, died 1539, his son Henry, died 1558, his son, Henry, whose tomb inscription is undated but who died around 1586,⁷ and his son, Henry, who died in January 1625.⁸ Some relationships are confirmed by *Inquisitions post mortem* which name the widow and the heir. However, the arms carved on their tombs, near contemporary

³ G.W. Marshall, (ed), *Visitation of Nottinghamshire 1569 and 1614*, Harleian Soc, iv, 1871; G.D. Squibb, (ed), *Visitation of Nottinghamshire 1662-64*, Harleian Society new series 5, 1986. The account in J. Fetherston, (ed), *Visitation of Warwickshire*, 1619, Harleian Soc,12, 1877, 393, is even more inaccurate. Mss consulted are BL, Harleian Mss 1555,1600 (Ratcliffe, Notts 1569, 1614, arms tricked); Harleian 1093 (Derbys.1569, 1611, arms tricked) & Egerton 996 (Derbys.1611, arms tricked); Harleian 6060 (Warks.1569).

⁴ J. Nichols, *J. A History and Antiquities of the county of Leicestershire*, 4 vols, London 1811, based his account of Sacheverell of Sadington, III(i), 220 on a manuscript at the College of Arms, Pedigrees of Founders' Kin, a.D.14.175; 2 L.43.

⁵ The identification in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London*, 1913-14, not footnoted, seems to rest on information in Nichols 1811; according to *Herald and Genealogist*, 1872, 531-4, Nichols has confused both generations and branches of the family in addition to misnaming quarterings. He has also taken the 1682-83 Visitation quarterings as applying to 1581 when they are not identical and added information to his printed tables not included in the ms from sources not now verifiable and not identified. The parish registers for Rearsby are only partially extant, Leicestershire Record Office.

⁶ S.O. Addy, (ed), *Derbyshire wills*, *Derbyshire Archaeological Society*, 45, 1923, 63-66; TNA PROB 11/25.

⁷ Dates for Ralph and Henry are on the tombs at Ratcliffe. An *Inquisition post mortem* ordered on 17 December 1586 indicates the date of his death, TNA C 142/236/28.

⁸ TNA, C 142/444/89 and C 142/706/17, for Henry died 1625.

constructions, do not correspond to those of the tapestry, showing only argent on a saltire azure five water bougets or, a chief gules. On the tomb latest in date, the motto, *En Bon Foy*, appears above. These arms were noted in the Nottinghamshire Visitations of 1569/1614.⁹ Since they do not correspond to those on the tapestry, none of this branch can be considered as the original owner.

Henry of Rearsby

Henry of Rearsby, the first candidate to be proposed as the tapestry's original owner, was closely related to this family. The arms on his tombstone, no longer extant, were recorded by William Wyrley, herald, who in 1608 made a peregrination of Leicestershire churches.¹⁰ His untinctured trick, with no cadency mark, showed a saltire with five water bougets impaling a bend between six lions faces. Wyrley noted the inscription 'Henrie Cheverelle and Gertrude His Wyfe... this Gertrude was the daughter of John Hunt of Newton'. John Nichols noted a partly defaced inscription, later swept away in the nineteenth century restoration of the church.¹¹

What Clifford Smith did not observe and what Wace never clearly stated, was that this tomb shows the arms of the cadet branch, not those of the tapestry. This Henry was almost certainly the son of a Ralph Sacheverell who described himself in his will made in 1559 as of Barrow on Soar, Leicestershire.¹² Amongst his debtors he listed the executors of Henry Sacheverell of Morley. He placed his son Henry in the guardianship of John Hunt of Lyndon, Rutland whose daughter Gertrude Henry subsequently married. She and her brother Remigius were later the administrators of Henry's will, no longer extant; the administration, almost illegible, appears to be dated 18 December 1581.¹³ An *Inquisition post mortem* states that he died on 2 June 1581, seised of land in Rearsby to which his eldest son, Francis, was heir.¹⁴ Because Henry's father's will indicates that Henry was a minor in 1559, this Henry cannot be the tapestry's first owner not only because he did not use the same arms, but because he was not the heir but the head of the family, even though a minor, so that the label across the arms would not have been needed. Nor did his wife's name begin with 'P'.

⁹ Marshall, *op cit.*, *Vis Notts 1569 and 1614*, Harleian Soc, iv 1871, based on BL Mss Harleian 1555 and 1600, the latter describes only the arms used on the Ratcliffe tombs.

¹⁰ Ms Vincent 197, fo. 44v, consulted by kind permission of the College of Arms; see also R. Yorke, (ed), *A Catalogue of Manuscripts in the College of Arms*, with L. Campbell and F. Steer, College of Arms, London, 1988, 420-421.

¹¹ Nichols, *op cit.*, iii, part i, 391, 395. Oddly, in 1682 the arms of Sacheverell of Rearsby were entered as four of the six quarterings seen on the tapestry (Snitterton and Fitzercaud assigned Hopwell were omitted).

¹² TNA PROB 11/42B.

¹³ Noted in *Leicestershire Wills and Administrations 1495-1649*, British Record Society, 27, 1900, 161 of 1580 for Henrie of Rearsbie, original in Leicestershire Record Office, Probate Records, Administrations and Inventories 1573-85; The Visitation records of 1569/1614 (Marshall *op cit.*) identify him as the grandson of the youngest son, Ralph Sacheverell of Rearsby, of the cadet branch. The later Visitation does not include him, nor that branch of the family.

¹⁴ TNA C 142/ 208/235 orders for Inq p.m. *Cal Pat R 1580-82*, no.1808; a second ordered on 4 July 1584 *Cal Pat R 1583-4*, no. 910, (TNA C 66/1246, m.8d); received in Chancery in 1586. Nichols 1811 is splendidly adrift here, III, pt I, 395 note 2 says that 'Henry made his will 25 May 1581 & dying in that year was buried in Rearsby; but p.421 gives Francis' age as 10 from an escheat at Leicester of 21 August 27 Eliz = 1585; p.390a says he died 2 June 1585, almost certainly a misprint for 1581 which agrees with the Inq p.m.

The Sacheverells of Morley

Wace rejected Henry of Rearsby as a claimant, observing correctly if obscurely, that ‘there is no evidence the cadet branch used the Snitterton quartering’; following the rules of heraldry, he therefore excluded this branch as candidates.¹⁵ His



Henry d. 1558 ©Hilary L Turner

suspicions were correct, for it is the more complex form of the arms that are seen on the tapestry, as they are also on the brass on a tomb in Morley church, that of the older nephew of Sir Richard Sacheverell (d.1534), Sir Henry I, who died in 1558, aged 82.¹⁶ By his first wife, Isabella Montgomery of Cubley, buried on 23 March 1547/48,¹⁷ he had at least six sons and three daughters. The fifth son, Henry, a possible claimant to be the tapestry’s first owner consistent with its dating by style, married Dorothy, daughter of William Danvers of Culworth; none of their children was called Henry, and so this branch of the family can be ruled out.¹⁸

Two of Sir Henry of Morley’s other sons, his eldest, John, and his youngest, Robert and at least one daughter, Katherine, predeceased him.¹⁹ His grandson, another John, fled the realm in 1559, presumably for religious reasons. He does not seem to have been irretrievably in disgrace for in March 1573 he wrote to Lord Burghley requesting him to obtain the Queen’s favour on his behalf and thanking Burghley ‘for the kindness shown to my wife and son’. The subject of his appeal was presumably his lands, for a time forfeit to the Crown; his son, another Henry, Sir Henry’s great grandson, received his inheritance on a lease from the Crown in 1576.²⁰ John died in Brussels on 23 October 1593.²¹ Henry must have remained in England; he was suspended from St John’s College, Oxford in 1568 and enrolled at Gray’s Inn immediately afterwards.²² When his father died in 1593, the *Inquisition post mortem*

¹⁵ E.A.B. Barnard and A.J.B.Wace, ‘The Sheldon tapestry weavers and their work’, 255-314, *Archaeologia*, 78, 1928, 255-314 (p.298).

¹⁶ S. Fox, *The History and Antiquities of the parish hurch of St Matthew, Morley, Derby*, 1879, plate xvb, Henry d.1558; his will, almost illegible, and very clear inventory suggest a background of good taste and costly possessions, *Lichfield Wills and Administrations 1508-1652*, The Index Library, vii, 1892, 1560/7 (at Lichfield Record Office).

¹⁷ C. Kerry, C (ed), ‘Morley Parish Registers’, *Journal of Derbyshire Archaeological & Natural History Soc*, I, 1879, 81-91.

¹⁸ College of Arms, 2 D.14 fol. 175; 2 L.2 page 43 cited Nichols 1811, III (ii), 220; John was not mentioned by Visitation of 1569/1614, Marshall, *op cit*, 1871.

¹⁹ John’s death is mentioned in his father’s will, *Lichfield Wills, op cit*, 1892, 1560/7 (at Lichfield Record Office); Robert’s is published D.G.Edwards, (ed), *Derbyshire Wills 1393-1574, Derbyshire Record Society*, 26, 1998, 98-9; Katherine is buried at Morley (tomb).

²⁰ The earliest account of the proceedings against the ‘fugitive’ John are in Edmund Lodge, *Illustrations of British History*, vol. 2, (1791 London); at p 67 the earl of Shrewsbury gives an account of the hearing in Derbyshire, at pp 73-74 he receives Cecil’s reply 16 August and 7 September 1572 respectively. The outcome is at *Cal State P Dom 1547-1580*, p.458; *CPR 1572-75*, no.151 and *Cal Pat R 1575-78*, no. 654.

²¹ Nichols 1811, iii, part i, 509; BLib Harleian Ms 756 Cole’s Escheats, I, 243; TNA C 142/706/17, C 142/239/122’ C 142/245/76.

²² J. Foster, (ed), *Alumni Oxonienses, 1500-1714*, Oxford, 1892; he had possibly been unwilling to take the Oath of Supremacy demanded on matriculation, and J. Foster, (ed), *The Register of Admissions to Gray’s Inn*, London, 1889.

stated that the heir was 40 years old and more; the phrase is rather more than formulaic because his age, very exactly expressed as 72 years four months and twelve days on his tomb, makes it clear that this Henry was born in 1548. Thus until 1593 the label of three points gules now seen on the tapestry, the difference denoting that the arms belonged to the heir, would, if it were original, have applied certainly to this Henry. Since these arms belonged to the senior branch of the family, this limits the identification of the tapestry's first owner to descendants of Sir Henry I.

The second, obvious, clue to identification lies in the initials H S /P. Wace suggested that the letter 'P' stood for Primogenitus; in a family where Henrys were commonly found, the idea is tempting. It is, however, unlikely, and there are no known parallels in a heraldic context. Initials were, however, frequently used, in various placings of the letters to denote ownership of anything from a house or a chair to damask and tapestries.²³ Their placing was not standardized, but where they commemorated both husband and wife, the husband's surname almost always came first. Clearly this is not the case here, and while on any identifiable example P should be the name of a wife, the obvious claimant, Henry son of John, who married twice, did not on either occasion marry a lady whose name begins with 'P'.

His first wife was Jane, daughter of Sir Humphrey Bradbourne of Bradbourne and Lea, Derbys., a gentleman of Catholic sympathies, by whom he had four children, the eldest, Jacinth, his heir.²⁴ For some reason, referred to but not detailed in Henry's will, the marriage broke down and the pair separated; whether the death of Bradbourne in mysterious circumstances had anything to do with the matter is not recorded. After imprisonment in the Fleet in 1593 because he refused to repay the dowry, Henry found himself a mistress, Elizabeth Kayes or Keyes, and settled at Old Hayes in the parish of Ratby, five miles west of Leicester. When he died in 1620 he was buried at Ratby church; his will ordered that if it had not already been built, a tomb should be made for him by his executors.²⁵ Recently restored, it was not completed until 1632. It bears strong resemblances to the tombs at Ratcliffe and was probably the work of local craftsmen working stone quarried at Tupton near Chesterfield.²⁶ The inscription states that the body was that of Henry, son of John, of Morley, armiger, placing it beyond doubt that this is 'old Henry' whose death, but not his burial, was recorded also in Morley parish registers on June 15 1620. Nevertheless, above the tomb was placed the same coat of arms as was used by his son, Jacinth, seen also at Morley, not the simpler version found on the tapestry.

Jacinth's son was another Henry and, though Wace does not seem to have explored the family inter-relationships, it was this Henry's claims to ownership that he advanced. Though he cited no source, Wace knew that a Henry of Morley married in 1638 and supposed, without examining the supporting evidence then in print, that

²³ D.M.Mitchell, 'By your leave, my Masters': British Taste in Table Linen in C15 and C16', *Textile History*, 20, no.2,1969, 48-77. The present Herald Rouge Croix consulted on this point, said it was an incorrect interpretation, letter to the author 6 December 2003.

²⁴ Jacinth matriculated at Oxford, January 1594, Foster 1892; the other children, Jonathas, Victorine and Abigail were mentioned in the will, TNA PROB 11/135. For Bradbourne, Hasler, *House of Commons*, 1982; TNA STAC 5/S53/28, C 3/475/5.

²⁵ TNA PROB 11/135.

²⁶ Report on the tomb made in 2001-2 by Skillington Workshops, Grantham, shown to me by kindness of the incumbent, Rev. Richard Worsfeld.

he was born around the turn of the century. For Wace this explained the label across the arms which Henry would have borne until the death of his father, Jacinth, in 1656. Wace never discovered that his candidate was baptised on 22 August 1619,²⁷ nor that



Henry d. 1638 ©Hilary L Turner

his tomb, at Morley, some five miles northeast of Derby, bears the inscription 'Here lieth ye body of Henry Sacheverall, ye eldest son of Jacinth Sacheverell lord of the towne by Elizabeth his wife who died in London ye 30th day of December 1638 being aged 19 yeeres and five months having beene marryed but 5 weekes before'.²⁸ In the same church, however, his father Jacinth's arms are displayed both on and above his tomb, with augmented quarterings to which he was entitled and which would therefore also have belonged to his heir; they include the arms of Massey, Rysley and de la Laund, not shown on the tapestry.²⁹ This Henry is therefore excluded.

The Family at Barton in Fabis

However, there are still other possibilities, all grandsons of Sir Henry of Morley through his other sons, Richard, Thomas and William.

Little is known about them and none seems to have been particularly wealthy, certainly not wealthy enough to afford an elaborate tomb. The first claimant is Henry, the son of Richard, who died in 1598; his memorial, restored, at Barton in Fabis, Nottinghamshire, now displays the blazons of the tapestry arms on either side the simple tablet, above which is a shield showing only the Sacheverell saltire – a fine confusion.³⁰ All that is known about him is that he had been imprisoned in the Fleet in London.³¹



Henry, d. 1598, Barton in Fabis, ©Hilary L Turner

His cousin Henry, son of Thomas, was described in the Nottinghamshire Visitation 1569/1614 as a Vintner of London,³² and their cousin Henry the son of William,

²⁷ C. Kerry, (ed), 'Morley Parish Registers', *Journall of Derbyshire Archaeological & Natural History Soc*, I, 1879, 81-91, Henry's baptism 22 August 1619, p.84, burial 4 January 1638, p.86.

²⁸ According to the Visitation of Nottinghamshire 1662-64 (Squibb *op. cit*), he married Anne, daughter of John Coke.

²⁹ *Memorial Inscriptions of St Matthew's Church, Morley*, Derbyshire Family History Society, typescript deposited in Derby Local Studies Library, 1987, CH 29; Jacinth's burial 1656, Kerry, *op cit*, 87.

³⁰ R. Thoroton, *Antiquities of Nottinghamshire*, 3 vols, Nottingham, 1790-96, i, 100-101.

³¹ *Cal Pat R* 1569-72, no.2875, *Cal Pat R* 1585-86, no. 702, (TNA C 66/1278).

³² Marshall, *Vis Notts 1569 and 1614*, Harleian Soc, iv and BLib Ms Harleian 1555, 1400.

noted as ‘having divers children in ‘com’ Leicester’, had almost certainly been confused with the Henry who died in 1620, described above.³³

The Owner - Henry the Vintner

A search for Henry ‘the Vintner’ in the records of the Vintners’ Company however revealed that a Henry Sacheverell was apprenticed on 13 October 1568 and completed his indentures in July 1574. From 1578 until at least 1598 he was never without an apprentice, one of them his own son, another Henry Sacheverell.³⁴ Henry the elder died late in 1611, Henry the younger is not mentioned in the Vintners’ records after 1616.

Even though Henry the elder’s background does not immediately suggest that he should be regarded as the tapestry’s first owner, another factor does; his marriage would explain the presence of the letter ‘P’. On 12 December 1577 Henry married Petronill Wheler in the church of St Dunstan in the East.³⁵ As a merchant, her father was unlikely to have borne arms, hence perhaps the need for initials. When Henry died late in 1611, a deed of gift from his widow to their son reveals that his shop was at ‘the sign of the Still’ in Bishopsgate Without. He died in debt, owing £79 to four people; the total value of his household goods was only £31 19s. 8d.³⁶

Henry’s father, recorded as ‘notarius’ in one of the Visitation manuscripts, may not have had land enough to support himself in the manner to which he had been accustomed. Henry’s own life was lived in London rather than on the Derbyshire/Leicestershire borders, but he would have probably known of the family’s tombs, both those at Morley and the more recent ones of his cousins at Ratcliffe. The style of the tapestry suggests a date rather earlier than that of 1600 suggested by Wace and it seems probable that the tapestries were woven on the occasion of his marriage, a display of status on an auspicious occasion. Set against the background of the numerous stranger weavers settled in the metropolis, a commission to one of their number does not seem implausible. Sacheverell was not alone in wishing to show off his status – William Gryce, MP for Great Yarmouth and a royal clerk also had his arms woven while Walter Jones, son of a Witney clothier, received a grant of arms and appropriated a coat for his wife, the daughter of an émigré goldsmith without her own entitlement.

³³ His name is not found in the Visitation of Nottinghamshire 1662-64 where, as also in 1569/1614, his elder brother Ralph (d.1605) and Ralph’s son William (d.1616) are mentioned; yet Ralph’s tomb displays only the saltire and five water bougets.

³⁴ Guildhall Library, London, Records of the Vintners’ Company, Apprentice Bindings Books, Ms 15211/1,2 and indexes.

³⁵ A.W.H. Clarke, (ed) *Registers of St Dunstan in the East*, Harleian Soc, 69, 1939, 100.

³⁶ Guildhall Library London, Commissary Court Register, Ms 9171, 22.95.