

HANMER family of Hanmer, Bettisfield, Fens and Halton, Flintshire, and Pentre-pant, Salop

This family is of English origin, tracing its descent to Sir Thomas de Macclesfield, an officer of Edward I who settled in Maelor Saesneg (now a detached portion of Flintshire), he and his successors marrying Welsh heiresses descended from Rhys Sais or **Tudur Trevor** and acquiring estates in the neighbourhood, from one of which the family name was taken.

His great-grandson

Sir DAVID HANMER (died c.1388)

became a justice of the king's bench in 1383 and was knighted in 1387. He married Agnes (or Angharad), daughter of Llywelyn Ddu ap Gruffydd ap Iorwerth, and the Welsh tone of the family appears in the support they gave to **Owain Glyn Dwr**, who married Sir David's daughter Margaret. Her brothers GRIFFITH (who married into the **Tudur family of Penmynydd**) and PHILIP joined in proclaiming him prince of Wales in 1400, the latter being in Paris in quest of aid for the rebellion as late as 1415. Their lands were in consequence forfeit to their brother JOHN, who also married a local heiress; but he too later joined **Glyn Dwr** and acted as his envoy in Paris in 1404; the tradition that he fell in the battle of Shrewsbury (1403) is now discredited. Pardoned in 1411, he divided his estates between his four sons, the eldest succeeding at Hanmer and the others at Halton, Fens, and Bettisfield respectively. The male line of Halton Hanmers ended in the early 16th cent, with the death abroad of Sir EDWARD HANMER, knighted for his services as 'condottiere' to the Medici, that of Bettisfield in 1623, both estates falling to the senior branch. This in turn terminated in 1746, when a family settlement concentrated the whole complex of estates in the Fens branch.

JOHN HANMER (1575 - 1629)

Bishop of St Asaph (1624) and chaplain to James I (1615), was the grandson of Katherine Hanmer of Halton (great-grand-daughter of Sir David Hanmer, above), and of Richard ap David ap Howel Goch of Pentre-pant, Selattyn, near Oswestry - a descendant of the 12th cent, lords of lâl and Ystrad Alun - whose sons took on the surname Hanmer. One of these, MEREDITH HANMER (1543 - 1604), vicar of Hanmer (1574-84), with subsequent English and Irish preferments, acquired some fame as an ecclesiastical historian and a controversialist who entered the lists with the Jesuit Edmund Campion (1540 - 1581) - his life is given in *D.N.B.* Bishop Hanmer was born at Pentre-pant and christened at Selattyn (1 February 1575), inherited the estate from his father, Thomas Hanmer, in 1620, and died there without issue on 23 June 1629; the text of his epitaph on a brass in Selattyn church (now lost) is given in *Browne Willis, A Survey of the Cathedral-Church of St. Asaph* (1801 ed., i, 111). He was educated at Shrewsbury and Oriel College, Oxford, and married Mary, daughter of Arthur Kempe of Hampshire, who after his death married **col. William Owen** of Brogyntyn, the patron of **Huw Morys**. Puritan sympathies are suggested by his commission to **Robert Lloyd**, vicar of Chirk, to translate into Welsh *The Plaine Mans Path-way to Heaven* by Arthur Dent (died 1607), the strongly Puritan vicar of Shoebury, Essex (*Llwybr Hyffordd*, 1630, 'Epistol'). He was a correspondent of William Camden the antiquary. He maintained the connection with the parent house by acting as guardian during the minority of THOMAS HANMER (died 1619), father of the first baronet (v. infra). Details of his career are given in *D.N.B.*

Meanwhile the elder branch had provided two soldiers (Sir THOMAS HANMER, died 1545, and his son Sir THOMAS HANMER, 1526 - 1583), for the French and Scottish wars of the Tudors, and both it and the Fens branch had begun the long succession of Hanmer M.P.'s for Flintshire and its borough, which reached a total of nine (with almost twice as many sheriffs) by the end of the 19th century Sir JOHN HANMER (died 1624), great-grandson of the second Sir Thomas, was made a baronet (1620) and a member of the council of Wales (30 June 1624) by James I. He married into the **Trevor** family of Trefalun, tended towards the Puritan side in Parliament, and devoted part of the Bettisfield tithe to the encouragement of preaching in his parish. His younger brother ROGER HANMER of Gredington, (died 1675) supported Parliament in the Civil War and Commonwealth, but his elder son Sir THOMAS HANMER was a somewhat lukewarm adherent of Charles I, whom he served as cupbearer and who proposed him to prince Rupert as vice-president of Wales. His houses were more than once raided by Roundheads, and he revenged himself on that of his neighbour **John Puleston**, whom he had previously joined in petitioning against Sir J. Milward, chief justice of Wales. In 1644 he obtained leave to go to France with his kinsman WILLIAM HANMER (1622 - 1669) of Fens, but he wrote thence to warn Parliament of the king's intrigues with France and Scotland, a 'signal service to the Commonwealth' which procured his discharge from sequestration on 6 March 1650, and from the decimation tax of 1655. He returned (to live at Halton) after the birth abroad of his third son (the father of the future speaker) (v. infra), in 1651. Both he and William were fined by Parliament (£1,500 and £1,370 respectively), and both were nominated by Charles II for the still-born order of Knights of the Royal Oak. Sir Thomas, a keen gardener and a correspondent of Evelyn, bought up the manorial rights of Maelor Saesneg in 1651. His son Sir JOHN (3rd bart., died 1701) became a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber and Commissioner of the Navy to Charles II, and his Keeper of the Game in North Wales. As Lt. Col. in James II's army he joined in the plot to seize Hull for William III, whom he also served at the Boyne (1690) and as commissioner for taxes for Flintshire. He repeatedly sat for Flintshire or Flint in Parliament and once for Evesham, ending as a member of the Dublin parliament.

On his death in a duel, the estate passed to his nephew -

Sir THOMAS HANMER, 4th bart. (1677 - 1746), speaker, diplomat, and littérateur

Friend of Harley and Prior, who was educated at Westminster and Christ Church and sat in Parliament (variously for Flintshire and its borough, Thetford, and Suffolk) between 1701 and 1727. He was a Hanoverian Tory, supporting the Occasional Conformity Bill, opposing the trade clauses of the draft Treaty of Utrecht, gaining the favour of Louis XIV on a mission to Paris but resisting the blandishments of the duke of Berwick on behalf of the Old Pretender, and helping to secure the Hanoverian succession. He became Speaker in 1714, and on the death of Anne was hastily summoned from service at Hanmer church to preside over the critical session that followed. Losing the speakership to a Whig in George I's first parliament, he was Tory spokesman in debates on the repeal of the Triennial Act, foreign policy, and standing armies (1716), and spoke 'angelically' (according to Prior) when Sunderland was attacked on the South Sea Bubble in 1721. After his speakership he lived entirely on his Norfolk estate, devoting himself after 1727 to the production of his great edition of Shakespeare. Details of his career are given in *D.N.B.* His death without children carried the succession to the great-grandchildren of William Hanmer of Fens (1622 - 1669) of whom the first, WILLIAM (died 1754), pulled down Fens Hall and lived at Hanmer and Bettisfield, while the third (his cousin) Sir WALDEN HANMER (1717 - 1783), initiated the enclosure of the district by Act of Parliament in 1775.

Sir Walden's great-great-grandson - Sir JOHN HANMER (1809 - 1881), 3rd bart., (of the second creation) and 1st baron HANMER of Hanmer and Flint - poet and politician, was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford (never graduating), and succeeded his grandfather in the baronetcy in 1828. He sat as Liberal M.P., first for English constituencies, then for Flint borough from 1841 to his elevation to the peerage in 1872, supporting the repeal of the Corn Laws and of religious disabilities. He published volumes of verse in 1836, 1839, and 1840, and, in 1878, *Memorials of the Parish and Family of Hanmer*. He pulled down Hanmer and lived at Bettisfield. Details of his career are given in *D.N.B.* On his death without children the estate passed to his younger brother (through whom the line continues), but the peerage lapsed.

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Further reading

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ODNB: Hanmer, John, Baron Hanmer (1809–1881)

ODNB: Hanmer, Meredith (1543–1604)

ODNB: Hanmer, Sir Thomas, fourth baronet (1677–1746)

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Images

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