1. Families Associated with Marbury Hall

The word ‘Marbury’ derives from two Old English words: ‘mere’ (lake) and ‘birig’ (house); hence, the house by the lake.

The Merburie (Marbury) Family

During the 13th century, the Merburie family owned a lot of property and land in mid Cheshire. Members of the Merburie family were Sheriffs of Cheshire and in 1413 and 1414 Sir Lawrence de Merburie presided over the court in Northwich. Their first house, made of timber and thatch, remained as the family home until a more substantial house was built early in the 16th century.

Richard Savage, 4th Earl Rivers of Rocksavage (ca1660-1712)

When the last male heir of the Marbury family died, the manor and lands were sold by his sisters to Richard Savage, 4th Earl Rivers of Rocksavage in 1684. He was a local, rich nobleman who served as a soldier, diplomat and statesman. Richard Savage died in 1712.

James Barry, 4th Earl of Barrymore (1667-1748)

The extensive Marbury estate was bought three years later for £21,000 by his son in law, James Barry, 4th Earl of Barrymore, who also had extensive land and property in southern Ireland near Cork. He was very fond of horse racing and a confirmed secret Jacobite follower. His family eventually moved into the hall twenty years later. The 1754 inventory shows the mansion had been encased in brick, had additional wings and more than fifty rooms.

This full length portrait of the 4th Earl of Barrymore hangs on the staircase landing in Tatton Hall. Dated 1720, it is one of ten paintings of Cheshire gentlemen who met at Ashley Hall to decide which side to support in the first Jacobite Rebellion. Fortunately for themselves and their estates they chose in favour of King George. The portraits, commissioned to commemorate their resolve, hung in Ashley Hall until their transfer to Tatton in 1860.
This Hall continued to be the home to Earl Barrymore’s descendants until the major changes and remodelling in the middle of the 19th century.

**Richard Barry (1721-1787)**

Upon his father’s death, Richard Barry, his second son, inherited Marbury. He married Jane Hyde from Cork. Two years after the wedding, both she and their young son died of smallpox. Richard never recovered remaining a widower until his death in 1787.

**James Hugh Smith Barry (1748-1801)**

John Smith Barry (the fourth son of James Barry, 4th Earl of Barrymore) did not inherit the estate himself, but his second son, James Hugh Smith Barry inherited the estate in 1787, following the death of Richard Barry. As a young man on the Grand Tour, between 1771-6, James Hugh Smith Barry had travelled widely in Europe and the Middle East, borrowing large amounts of money and amassing a huge collection of ancient statuary, vases and paintings, mostly by Italian masters. The collection was initially housed in Belmont Hall (now Cransley School) where James lived. He spent little time at Marbury but clearly intended to make changes to the Hall. In his 28 page will of July 1799, eventually found in a trunk at Belmont Hall, he directed his executors to catalogue his collection and remove it to Marbury, providing it with a gallery and custodian. He also willed that all his five children, whose mother was Ann Tanner, be made legitimate and known as Smith Barry.

---

---

---
The left hand portrait of James Hugh Smith Barry by Pompeo Batoni was painted against a backcloth of the city of Rome, with James posing in the uniform of the Tarporley Hunt Club. The right hand portrait by Angelica Kaufmann was painted in Rome in 1780.

The Achievement of Arms of Smith Barry of Belmont
(based upon the personal seal of James Hugh Smith Barry)

James Hugh Smith Barry died in 1801, two years after making his will. His wishes were not carried out in full although the valuable collection was moved from Belmont Hall to Marbury Hall.
John Smith Barry (1793-1837)

James Hugh Smith Barry’s eldest son, John Smith Barry, became heir in 1814. He preferred to live on the family estates in Ireland (Fota House). However he contributed an important early engraving of the Georgian Marbury Hall to George Ormerod for his tome ‘History of Cheshire’, published in 1819. It shows the hall as remodelled by the 4th Earl of Barrymore on the edge of the mere. A large sculpture, surely from Smith Barry’s collection, is under the portico on the engraving.

James Hugh Smith Barry (1816-1856)

When John Smith Barry died in 1837, his eldest son, another James Hugh, inherited the estate. It was James Hugh Smith Barry’s decision to carry out the extensive changes to the buildings and parkland in the 1840s, using the services of Anthony Salvin as architect and James Nesfield as landscape gardener. Both men were highly regarded nationally in their respective fields and were prolific in their work in England.

The extended 18th century house was transformed in the style of a French chateau, cost £7,700 and housed his grandfather’s 1770s valuable and grand collection. The house had elegant, spacious rooms, an impressive staircase and intricate plaster work.

Arthur Hugh Smith Barry, Baron Barrymore (1843-1925)

The coming of age of James Hugh’s son, Arthur Hugh Smith Barry, as the heir to Marbury in 1864, was celebrated in Comberbach village and the churches of Witton and Great Budworth rang their bells in celebration. Festivities lasted for three days and included dinners, processions and a grand ball. Arthur and his family continued to live some of their time in Marbury Hall and he had a prestigious public and political career, including becoming a Privy Councillor in 1896 and a Baron in 1902.

Arthur Hornby Lewis (1843-1914)

In 1891 Arthur Hugh Smith Barry leased Marbury Hall to Liverpool born Arthur Hornby Lewis, who was a JP in Cheshire and High Sheriff of Cheshire in 1905/6. He was also a member of the Cheshire Hunt, President of the Northwich Division of the Conservative Association, Chairman of the Glasgow Iron and Steel Company and Chairman of the Liverpool Silver and Copper Company. He and his wife were kind and hospitable and ran many events for different sections of the community. The local children from the villages had parties at Christmas and were each given a present. As many as 140 children attended. When Arthur Hornby Lewis died in 1914, Arthur Hugh Smith Barry returned to live at Marbury.

Robert Raymond Smith Barry (1886-1949)

Having no sons, Arthur Hugh Smith Barry bequeathed the estate to his nephew Robert Raymond Smith Barry. Robert was not very interested in Marbury. He was more interested in aircraft and flew his aeroplane over the estate. He served in World War I and afterwards was very influential in changing the training of pilots for military duty. His training schedules were adopted by training schools throughout the world.

Mr T Place and Mr George Smith

Robert Raymond Smith Barry was the last of the family to own the Marbury Hall and estate. It was sold firstly to Mr T Place and then in the same year, 1932, to Mr George Smith who ran it as a Country Club during the next six years prior to its requisition as a military camp at the start of World War II.
No chapel was ever built at Marbury in spite of the codicil in James Hugh Smith Barry’s will of 1799, requesting his trustees to provide a ‘plain, neat chapel with vault or burial place at Marbury’.

It is not known when the first church was built in Great Budworth, although in 1086 the Domesday Book recorded a priest and in about 1130, the church became the property of Norton Priory.

The Lady Chapel and the adjoining aisle were built in the 14th century and survived the later rebuilding of the rest of the church. It became the burial place of the Dutton family, the Smith Barrys of Marbury and Belmont Halls and the Leycesters of Tabley House.

Some 23 members of the Smith Barry family are buried in a vault in the Lady Chapel. A memorial tablet on the wall of the Lady Chapel lists their names and ages at death.

Memorial Tablet to the Smith Barry Family
(Lady Chapel in Great Budworth Church)