

SIR THOMAS WEBSTER (1676-1751)

Sir Thomas Webster was born in the parish of St.Gabriel, Fenchurch, London October 27, 1676. He was the son of Godfrey Webster and Abigail Jorden and grandson of Thomas Jorden and Katherine Whitlock. In her 1690 Will Katherine (Whitlock) Jorden left her grandson Thomas Webster one hundred pounds at age 21. No small sum on October 27, 1697 when Thomas was 21.

Assuming, following the custom of the day, that Thomas & Katherine (Whitlock) Jorden negotiated the marriages of their children, the marriage of Godfrey Webster to their daughter Abigail was an auspicious one. Godfrey Webster was a fairly wealthy man who lent money to the new King and Queen, William & Mary following the Revolution of 1688. He was rewarded by being given a very lucrative contract to supply all the clothing for the Army. By 1710 he owned so many shares of Bank of England stock that he was able to be a governor or director. Thomas joined his father as a partner and on May 21, 1703 at age 26 Thomas was knighted and created 1st Baron Webster.

Thomas Webster had also made an extremely advantageous marriage, when in 1701 he married Jane Cheek the granddaughter of Henry Whistler. At this time Thomas purchased Copped Hall, Essex from Charles Sackville, the Earl of Dorset. As a young man of 24 Thomas spent considerable sums (likely of his father's money) improving his new estate including in 1706 enclosing part of Waltham Forest to provide easier access.

In 1719 Thomas Webster purchased Battle Abbey in Sussex from Henry Whistler. From 1705 to 1727 Thomas was the member of Parliament for Colchester three times.

Sir Thomas Webster died May 31, 1751 and his estates were inherited by his son Whistler Webster. The Websters were not very good at producing heirs and twice the Baronetcy was inherited by a brother due to no heir. The Baronetcy became extinct in 1923 when the 8th Baron died six years after his only son died at Ypres in the Great War.

Battle Abbey was built on the site of the Battle of Hastings in 1066. It was largely destroyed in 1538 and the property sold. It remained in the Webster family until 1858 and was repurchased in 1901 and has housed a girls school since 1912, finally being sold to the Government in 1976. It is now a British Heritage site.