

Tombs and Monuments

The 1530s were a watershed in English history, when Henry VIII commanded the social and structural changes of the English Reformation. St Mary's started to be used as the mausoleum of the Earls and Dukes of Rutland and their families. However, the oldest of the tombs and effigies in the chancel are of members of the de Roos. This family held Belvoir Castle and its estates from 1247 until, after an interval spanning most of the Wars of the Roses and the reign of Henry VII, they passed, on the death of Edmund 10th Baron Roos in 1508, to Sir George Manners, son of Sir Robert Manners of Etal and his wife the co-heiress Eleanor de Roos.

Sir Robert de Roos, 1st Baron Roos, d.1285.

This Purbeck Marble effigy on the north wall of the Chancel was brought from Croxton Abbey during the Dissolution of the Monastries (1536-1541). It depicts a late 13th century knight wearing a hooded hauberk of chain mail under a loose sleeveless surcoat, mail gauntlets, a sword and belt on the left side together with a shield. It is accompanied by a plaque known as the 'Heart Stone', also from Croxton Abbey, whose inscription records the burial of the heart of Robert de Roos at Croxton. In translation, the inscription reads: 'Here lies the heart of Lord Robert de Roos, whose body is buried at Kirkham, who died on 13th May AD 1285. Isabella Lady de Roos, wife of the said Robert de Roos, was buried at New Place (Newstead) near Stamford, who died AD 1301". She was the last of the Albini line at Belvoir. Her intricately carved sandstone effigy can be seen in St Mary's, Orston, where it was moved to from Newstead (near Stamford).

One of the angel panels of the tomb of Sir John de Roos: there are traces of the original red paint on his left wing.





Sir William de Roos, 7th Baron Roos, d. 1414.

South of the altar is the alabaster tomb and effigy of William de Roos, a supporter of Henry Bolingbroke (Henry IV). This tomb together with that of his eldest son John (below) was brought from Belvoir Priory on the Dissolution of the Monasteries. The effigy and decorated base chest suggest the work of the Chellaston school of sculptors in Derbyshire. The armour is a mixture of mail and plate. A conical bascinet helmet with a jewelled margin is worn while under the head is a tilting-heaume and a peacock. On the front of the helmet is "IHC NASARE" (Jesus of Nazareth) and from the helmet hangs a tippet of chain mail over which is a decorative SS collar (SS stands for 'Souvenir Sovereign' - remember your king, a Lancastrian emblem). The insignia of the Garter is worn on the left leg. Behind the tomb is an Early English piscina.

Sir John de Roos, 8th Baron Roos, d.1421.

North of the altar is the alabaster tomb and effigy, brought from Belvoir Priory, of John, son of Sir William de Roos, who fought at Agincourt but lost his life at the decisive French victory at Baugé in 1421. Lord John also wears a conical bascinet with an orle, his head resting on a tilt-heaume which once bore the de Roos peacock crest. The alabaster is marked by graffiti, some of considerable age.



The descriptions of armour and costume draw on M.P. Dare's guide published in 1950.



Thomas Manners, 1st Earl of Rutland, 12th Baron de Roos (1492–1543) and Countess Eleanor (née Paston) (d.1551).

This is the first of the eight earls' tombs in St Mary's. Earl Thomas is depicted in mail and full plate armour, over which he wears the mantle of The Order of the Garter, while on his left leg is the Garter itself. The coronet is supported by the tilt-heaume complete with the "Cap of Maintenance" and peacock crest. Countess Eleanor Paston, his second wife, wears a gown, a short cape and an ermine-trimmed mantle fastened by a cordon, her feet on a griffon. The chest is decorated with pilasters, swags and "weepers" thought to be children of the family. The tomb was created by Richard Parker of Burton on Trent. The body was embalmed with spices from Nottingham and encased in wax. A plumber then encased it in a close fitting leaden shell. Masons had to strengthen the chancel floor to bear the weight before his extravagant funeral for which the black palls and hangings alone cost £160 (what would that be today?).

The 9th Baron Roos had been attainted by Edward IV in 1461 after the battle of Towton, and was finally captured and beheaded after the Battle of Hexham in 1464. Belvoir was granted to Sir William Hastings who held both the Castle and the manor of Bottesford for about twenty years during which the Castle was allowed to fall into ruins. However, Edmund, 10th Baron Roos, had the confiscation reversed and his lands returned in 1485. He died in 1508, childless. His sister, Eleanor, had married Sir Robert Manners, thus creating the present Manners line. Their grandson was Sir Thomas Manners, 12th Baron de Roos, who received the Order of the Garter and in April 1525 was created 1st Earl of Rutland by Henry VIII. He had been called to Parliament in 1515 and was present when Henry VIII met the French king Charles V at the Field of Cloth of Gold in 1520, then became cupbearer to the King in 1521. He was involved in

The alabaster effigy of Thomas, 1st Earl of Rutland.



The alabaster effigy of Countess Eleanor , wife of the 1st Earl of Rutland.

the hearings regarding the legality of Henry VIII's marriage to Katherine of Aragon. After initially displaying sympathy towards Katherine, he became a close supporter of Henry's actions. He helped Henry with the divorce and was one of the generals who suppressed the Catholic monastic rebellion of 1536 in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, known as the Pilgrimage of Grace.

The 1st Earl of Rutland was present at Henry VIII's marriage to Anne Boleyn in 1533, then took part in her trial three years later. When Anne of Cleves came to England, Rutland was appointed her lord chamberlain. His second wife Eleanor Manners (née Paston, c.1495 - 1551) was lady-in-waiting successively to Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves and Catherine Howard. As senior lady-in-waiting to Anne of Cleves, she knew that the marriage was unconsummated. Anne reportedly praised Henry to her as a good husband saying, "When he comes to bed he kisseth me, and he taketh me by the hand, and biddeth me 'Good night, sweetheart'; and in the morning kisseth me and biddeth 'Farewell, darling'." Lady Rutland responded: "Madam, there must be more than this, or it will be long ere we have a duke of York, which all this realm most desireth."

In 1524, Thomas inherited Elsing Palace, Middlesex, from his great-uncle, Sir Thomas Lovell, and soon afterwards sold it to King Henry. He was then able to commence the re-building of Belvoir Castle. The re-building work was completed by his son, the 2nd Earl of Rutland. At the Dissolution of the Monasteries, Thomas was granted both Belvoir Priory and Croxton Abbey (and other monastic properties and lands), and he ensured that many of the monuments to his family were removed to St Mary's. He was patron of St. Mary's during the Henrician reforms and began the re-shaping of the chancel for its role as the mausoleum of the Earls of Rutland.

'Weepers' on the tomb chest of Earl Thomas and Countess Eleanor. They seem to represent their children, though M.P. Dare tells us that there are perhaps too many for this to be literally true. The panels retain traces of the paint they were originally covered with.

