

# SWINNERTON

## Family History



Maurice and Rosemary Swinnerton  
at our 21st Birthday Service 1955

JOURNAL OF THE SWINNERTON SOCIETY

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# The Swinnerton Society

A non-profit making organisation devoted to the welfare of Swynnerton Church and the research and publication of Swinnerton Family Records

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## SWINNERTON FAMILY HISTORY

Volume 10. No.5

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*Editor - Iain Spencer Swynnerton*

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## FOREWORD

### *The Chairman*

After all these years you would think we would know most of the Swinnertons but two recent events have proved otherwise. A contact on the Internet made by Bill Swinarton revealed that there was a Mrs Flora SWINARTON in this country. Of course, Bill was very delighted as he thought that spelling was restricted to Canada so he both telephoned and wrote to her. At the same time we heard from Mr Robin Wade, who was tracing his ancestry and had discovered his grandmother was Winifred Margaret Swinarton.

Subsequent research has proved that there has been a family in London and Essex using this spelling since the early 1800s although it was originally Swinerton. Just when the change took place, or why, I have not been able to pin down but it certainly escaped our net and was not included as a variation when we extracted all the family births, marriages and deaths from the indexes at the General register Office. Other variations such as Swinerton, Swynnerton, Swinnington and Swenerton were included.

Mr Wade has now joined our Society and research is continuing: so far he is back to 1780 but it is only an outline tree at present and there is still a great deal of information to be found.

Also via the Internet, I received from Bill a copy of a list of all the Swinnertons in the UK telephone directory. This has been extracted from what is called a phonedisk - a computer disk on to which has been put all the contents of the UK telephone directories. A similar disk is available in this country at a price of several hundred pounds although that is much less than the £2500 or so it cost when it first appeared.

However, it is not what it purports to be because it is not a complete listing - neither my son or I are on it and we have both paid our telephone bills! However it is very interesting as it lists 177 Swinnertons, 12 Swynnertons, 10 Swenartons but no Swinartons.

Considering we only have 72 members who bear the name of Swinnerton world-wide, out of our current membership of 177, it is fairly obvious that we have only just scratched the surface although, no doubt, some of the others will be related to our members. However, if they did all join we would need full-time officers to cope!

I hope to meet many of you at the various events listed during the coming year.

*Iain Swinnerton*

## FROM OUR CHAPLAIN

During the 1950s, many of our towns and cities were being re-built following the 'Blitzkrieg' of the recent war.

It is reported that during a meeting of the Planning and Re-development Committee of one of our large cities, a heated discussion ensued concerning the architectural merits, or otherwise, of some 'high-rise' accommodation and office blocks which were already blighting the city skyline. Suggestions that the policy of the City Architect to build more should continue met with considerable opposition. "What then should we, as city leaders, leave to posterity?" was asked - to which came the caustic reply "Perhaps a letter of apology would be appropriate".

This observation could be applied to our present age. What will future generations say of the people who lived at the end of this millennium?

In spite of the great advances we have made in unravelling the mysteries of God's Creation, we seem to be a generation which is becoming and more confused and losing its way. Our moral and spiritual fibre is in danger of total disintegration. The evidence for this is to be found in the quality of life which, for many, is not improving but deteriorating. The present-day Baal is the god known as efficiency. Unless a commodity or service can be shown to show a profit then it is a dispensable item. Vocations, trades, skills and arts are becoming lost because they are considered to be of little or no value in this computerised age. It would appear that little or no consideration is given to the moral and social deprivation which results from such a selfish and short-sighted philosophy. Is it not the destiny of of humanity to "Love God and our neighbour"?

Our Swynnerton family has created communities which have survived over many generations, each in their own unique way, contributing to them with albeit sometimes faltering and uncertain steps. We give thanks for their example and draw inspiration for the future.

May our generation, in spite of present trends, be an encouragement to those who follow. Heaven forbid that we should ever need to leave our 'letter of apology'.

God bless you all.

*Edward Swinnerton*

*People who take no pride in the noble achievements of remote ancestors will never achieve anything worthy to be remembered by remote descendants. Macaulay*



## GEORGE MAURICE SWINNERTON

Maurice, as he was always known, was born in Fenton on the 20th December 1924, the only child of George Cyril Swinnerton and Elsie, neé Turner. As a small child he lived in Dresden for a while. He went to Florence Infants School and then to Queensbury Road School.

From there he went on to Burslem Technical College where he studied for his O.N.C. in Mechanical Engineering.

He started his working life as an apprentice pattern-maker at Cooke-Bailey in Hanley where the interest in woodwork which he had developed at Queensbury Road School was to stand him in good stead. He later moved to Wedgwoods in Barlaston where he entered the drawing office as a Draughtsman.

Towards the end of the war, he was called up for National Service in the Royal Air Force and during his service, was able to go to Coventry Technical College where he gained his H.N.C. in Mechanical Engineering.

When he came out of the Forces, he returned to Wedgwoods and eventually became Project Engineer for the company. He also taught Engineering Drawing at an evening class during the 50s and 60s.

In 1959, at Stafford, he married Rosemary Gilbert and they had one daughter, Claire Elizabeth.

Sadly, in August 1979, at the very young age of 55, he suffered a severe stroke. His subsequent illness forced him to retire and he was never able to work again.

As a young man he was a keen photographer and was much in demand at weddings of his family and friends. This interest remained with him all his life; he progressed to cine films and, just before his death, was experimenting with video films.

He was also a keen stamp and coin collector, an interest he took up during his illness. Despite his handicap, he always enjoyed travelling and got as far as Malaysia and Singapore. He was also a keen swimmer and regularly took the plunge twice a week. He was the Treasurer of Stoke Stroke Club which he and Rosemary helped to run.

Maurice had always been a staunch supporter of our society and he and Rosemary, often with Claire, were very regular attenders at our meetings.

He died in September 1995 and we shall miss his quiet and always cheerful presence at our meetings.



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

On the 27th April, there will be a *Churchyard Clearing Morning* at St. Mary's Church, Swynnerton. If you are in the vicinity and would like to help, it starts at 9.00am! In the evening, for relaxation after a hard day's toil, there is the *Spring Concert* at 7.30pm.

I am sorry that I cannot be at either because we shall be visiting our elder daughter in Mauritius where we shall, no doubt, be brought thoroughly up-to-date with the progress of the Pink Pigeon, Echo Parakeet and Mauritian Kestrel Projects on which she works.

Neither can we be at the next event which is the *Restoration Ramble* round Swynnerton in aid of the Church Restoration Fund. Unfortunately, it clashes with the date of the AGM of a society at which I have to preside and speak!

However, Angela and I and the Secretary and Treasurer will be taking part in the *Swynnerton Treasure Hunt* on Saturday the 18th of May - why not come and join us?

A *Family History Fair*, the third of these highly successful events, will be held at the Royal Horticultural Society New Hall and Conference Centre, Greycoat Street, Westminster, London SW1 on the 4th and 5th May 1996 from 10.00am to 5.00pm.

If any of you are campers or caravanners, Swynnerton Church is holding a *Family Camping Weekend* at Shugborough Hall, Staffordshire on the 7th/8th/9th June. This is the home of the Queen's cousin, the Earl of Lichfield and the site of the Staffordshire County Museum - a fascinating place.

On the 22nd June at Swynnerton, it is the *Annual St. Mary's Summer Fayre* in the grounds of the Old Rectory, Swynnerton at which I hope to see many of you. It starts at 2.00pm and, although we provisionally fixed to hold our *Annual General Meeting* this year on the 2nd of June, now we know the date of the Fayre, it would be both sensible and convenient to hold it on the same day. Further details later but book 22nd June now for a good day out!

On the following day, Sunday the 24th June, the *Reverend Brian Swynnerton* has been invited to preach and celebrate Holy Communion at St. Mary's at 10.30am and will conduct a guided tour of the church afterwards for anyone interested. Do come and join us.

Finally 'A Taste of Yorkshire' - the Autumn Conference of the Federation of Family History Societies is being hosted by the Doncaster and District Family History Society and is being held in High Melton College, Doncaster from 30th August to 1st September 1996



## MURDER MOST FOUL

Source: *The Times* - 15 November 1862

**THE COSELY MURDER.** - The adjourned inquest upon the body of Henry Swinnerton, a shingler, aged 33, was yesterday concluded near Cosely, a small town in the "black country", near to Wolverhampton. By a reference to the evidence given upon a previous occasion it is shown that the deceased, on Tuesday night, the 4th inst., went away from a publichouse near to Cosely in company with four persons, two men and two women, the latter prostitutes. They proceeded to a lonely spot on the bank of a canal in the neighbourhood. There the deceased was attacked and robbed by one or more of his companions. After beating him with a large gutta-percha stick, and trying to throttle him, they finally threw him over some rails into an adjacent field, after which they ran away. The man sustained injuries which resulted in his death early on the following Monday morning. Before he died, however, he identified four persons as his assailants. Their names are respectively William Henshaw, Jesse Watts, Hannah Simms, and Mary Downing. Yesterday the statements of the accused were taken. They were all of the same nature, and tended to show that Swinnerton had, while at the publichouse, threatened to fight Henshaw and Watts. The latter, accompanied by a man named Kelsey, went away, but were followed by him along the canal bank. Watts knocked down the deceased two or three times. The latter still continued to follow them. Kelsey then suggested that he should be thrown into the canal. After some deliberation the jury returned a verdict of "Manslaughter" against Henshaw and Watts, who were then committed for trial to Stafford.

\* \* \* \* \*

## ALLEGED ATTEMPTED MURDER. -

Source: *The Times* - 29 September 1881

At Wellington, Salop, yesterday, a shoemaker named Henry Swinnerton, attempted to murder his father, between 70 and 80 years of age, by stabbing him with a knife. The young man, who is said to be of weak intellect, has escaped.

## Attempted Murder

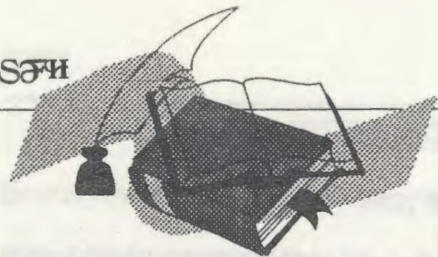
Source: *The Times* - 10 November 1881

At Stafford on Tuesday [8 November 1881], before Lord Justice Cotton, James Swinnerton was indicted for feloniously wounding his father, with intent to murder him, at Wellington, in Shropshire. Mr. Warren prosecuted; Mr. A. Chichele Plowden defended. The prosecutor, an infirm old man of 75, was seated with his son (the prisoner) at breakfast, when the latter, without any provocation whatever, took a razor and proceeded to cut his father's throat. The old man, however, wrestled with him and escaped, after being severely wounded. The prisoner then felt [sic] the house. No witnesses were called for the prisoner, but admissions made by the witnesses for the prosecution, in cross-examination, were relied on to show that at the time the prisoner made the attempt he was not in his right senses. The prosecutor himself affirmed that in his opinion the prisoner was out of his mind, and stated that he had always been of weak intellect, and that at the time there was a proposal to place him in a lunatic asylum. A brother-in-law of the prisoner's gave confirmatory evidence; but on the other hand, the surgeon of the Stafford Gaol, called at the instance of the learned Judge, stated that in his opinion the prisoner was perfectly capable of distinguishing between right and wrong. He had only seen him since he had been in gaol, but he had conversed with him there with a view of forming an opinion, and had found the prisoner perfectly rational. The jury, after some hesitation, said they found the prisoner *Guilty* of the act, but did not consider there was evidence that he knew right from wrong when he did it. The Lord Justice, however, pointed out that the burden of showing this lay upon the defence; whereupon the jury returned a verdict of *Guilty*. The learned Judge in passing sentence, said he agreed with the verdict of the jury, and but for the fact that there was no premeditation about the act, he should have sentenced the prisoner to penal servitude for life. He must, nevertheless, be prepared to undergo a severe punishment - viz., that of penal servitude for 20 years.



A 19th century court-room.





## BOOK REVIEW

In *"The History of a Cheshire Village"* compiled by the Barrow History Group under the leadership of their editor Mr. Latham of Alpraham and published in 1983, there are a number of references to our forebears and a Royal Family Link.

The Manor of Barrow was made over to Sir Roger de Swinnerton when forfeited to the Crown by Hugh le Despencer about 1320. Apparently Robert de Swinnerton was the Vicar of Barrow about 1349 but in that year inherited his father's title and became Sir Robert.

The books goes on to tell us that King Edward II gave Hugh le Despencer's lands in both Staffordshire and Cheshire to Sir Roger de Swinnerton who was a very powerful nobleman and constantly with King Edward II and Edward III. He received many honours from the Crown.

Sir Roger instituted his second son Robert as Rector of Barrow in 1335. After eleven years he resigned in favour of his uncle when he inherited the Swinnerton title because both his father and elder brother were dead.

Sir Robert died in 1349 and was succeeded by his brother Thomas who fought at Crecy and in the siege and capture of Calais in 1347. He married well and became, by marriage, the uncle of King Henry IV.

Sir Thomas de Swinnerton, the book tells, was ordered to guard the person of the King of France in 1357, and whilst he was away his lands in Barrow were seized - a fact about which he complained bitterly on his return. However, by 1359 the Barrow Manor was in order again and the warlike Thomas was off on another overseas campaign with King Edward III.

Now what I find fascinating about this last statement is that the late S. A. H. Burne, the great Staffordshire Historian (who I replaced as Salt Library Trustee), told me that the money given by the French King for his parole whilst held at Swynnerton Castle was used by Thomas Swinnerton to rebuild and extend the Chancel of Eccleshall Parish Church. It is a sure fact that the Chancel is built in the architectural style of that period.

Sir Thomas died in 1361 and his son Robert inherited the title and responsibilities which included the Manor of Barrow, Chester. By 1364 the Manor was in the ownership of Matilda Swinnerton who married Sir

John Savage of Clifton. Interestingly, Sir Thomas de Swinnerton presented the Priests to Barrow until about 1400. The Savage family were to become extremely influential in both local and national affairs and they owned Barrow for 300 years. The Savages, like the Fitzherberts/Staffords/Bridgmans/Bradforfs and Pilkingtons all had powerful Swinnerton roots!

The Savages fought at Bosworth and John Savage of Barrow was knighted by King Henry V at Agincourt.

The Savages took the title of Earls of Rocksavage in 1575 and by marriage in the eighteenth century became the Cholmondeley family of Cholmondeley Castle (well worth a visit), Cheshire. To the present day, the heir to the Marquess of Cholmondeley is styled Earl of Rock-savage.

The Barrow book points out that Matilda was sometimes known in records as Maude de Swynnerton and that it was her husband who was knighted at Agincourt. The family wrangle as to which of them owned the Barrow lands went on as a legal battle until 1554 when the eighth Sir John Savage paid Humphrey Swynnerton a hundred marks for the legal title to the valuable Cheshire lands.

Anyway, I commend both books to your journal readers.

*Brian Swynnerton*

## MENTIONS IN OTHER BOOKS

A book published circa 1993 by B.Hoyle Ph.D. on Gilman, an East African railways constructor and explorer, mentions *Charles Francis Massy Swynnerton*. He says Charles was born in 1877, was a farmer in Southern Rhodesia about 1919 and first Game Warden of Tanganyika (now Tanzania) Appt.1919. Director of Tsetse Research. Killed 1938 Tanganyika.

*(This, of course, was the father of our Patron.)*

### Reader's Digest May 1992

An article entitled 'Eat Smart, Feel Good, Look Great' by Diana Hales mentions nutrition specialist *Helene Swinnerton*.

A Country Life Child of the 1890s by Hilda Franks published by the Book Guild Ltd.

The author says that she was fortunate to study Geology under *Dr.H.H.Swinnerton* at Nottingham University.



## THE CRUSADERS

The Revd.B.T.Swynnerton

The 12th century saw the family of Swynnerton not only firmly established but beginning the acquisition of great wealth, extensive land tenures and titles. During this time England was undergoing vast social and administrative transformation. New faces and an unfamiliar speech were to be found in the villages. Norman dominance was reflected in the building of beautiful stone churches and towering castles.

Robert Fitz Alan who was the grandson of the first Lord of Swynnerton married twice: Margery de Audley of the wealthy Baronial family of Audley (10 miles N.W. of Swynnerton)(may have been one wife). He had two sons Robert and John. The younger son, John, through his marriage to Petronella, the heiress, obtained lands at Sugnall, near Eccleshall. The elder son, Robert, became Lord of Swynnerton and this young knight was established about the same time as Lord as a new King, Richard the Lionheart, ascended the throne of England. Robert's future was to be considerably influenced by the new monarch who was spoken of as Richard the Lionheart..

Robert de Swynnerton sailed with King Richard to the Holy Land in 1190. For nearly a hundred years most European countries had been caught up in the spirit of the Crusades. Saladin the Saracen leader had driven the Christians from Jerusalem in 1187 with the result that a Third Crusade was called for in 1190. It took a whole year to make the journey to the Holy Land and many died during the voyage. The English forces laid siege to Acre. Two out of every three who laid siege to Acre died from dysentery.

Robert and Nicholas de Stafford both died on the Crusade. The survivors were nursed back to health by the Knight Hospitallers. These "Knightly Nurses" were repaid by their patients with grants of land, some of these grants being really sales effected by sick Knights to raise the necessary funds for the journey.

Acre captured, King Richard moved on Jerusalem but before long he was hearing of his troublesome brother at home. He made a truce with Saladin and set out for home. The sudden departure of the King led to much confusion and this may have been why Robert de Swynnerton had to sell his land at Rauceby, in Lincolnshire, to the Knights Hospitallers - the Crusader's "Medical Corps".

Tradition says that Robert de Swynnerton received a grant of Arms<sup>1</sup> from the King for valour "in engaging and overcoming a Saracen Champion in single combat in the Holy Wars". The grant

included a motto in Norman-French which reads "Avauncez et Archez Bien" (Advance and Shoot Well) and sometimes "Advaunturez et Marchez Avaunt" (Advance and March Forward). The emblem - a Cross Flory - can be seen in Boutell's "Heraldry", Chapter 6 - "The Heraldry of the Cross". However, the earliest reference in the College of Arms is of a grant to Roger Swynnerton in the early 1300's.

Early in the reign of Henry II (1155 AD) there is evidence of a dispute between Robert de Swynnerton and the Canons of Stone Priory regarding the patronage of Swynnerton Church. The Rev. B. W. Eyton writing in the "Staffordshire History Collections Vol.II" describes the contents of a Charter of Helyas, the Archdeacon of Stafford, which reveals that the controversy was protracted. Apparently, Robert Fitz-Aelen, the Lord of the village had presented two secular priests, both named Osbert and probably father and son, to the living at Swynnerton.

The quarrel was sparked off by a refusal on the part of the priests to pay an annual pension claimed originally by the Priory of Kenilworth but claimed subsequently by the daughter house of Kenilworth which was the Priory of Stone close to Swynnerton. The Bishops of Coventry, Lichfield and Chester, (Walter Duredent) was eventually drawn into the dispute and the two priests were summoned to "surrender the Church of Swynnerton on the alter of Blessed Mary in the Church of Stone".<sup>2</sup>

The Domesday Survey makes no mention of any Church of Swynnerton in 1086. Probably it did not form a separate parish at all for this deed of settlement between Stone Priory and the priests of Swynnerton indicates that even as late as 1154 it was parochially part of the large parish of Stone. Even so, the architecture of the Church is, in parts, of the period of early twelfth century (i.e. late Norman, early English) so it may have been rebuilt on the site of a Saxon Church built at the time of the founding of the Stone Priory circa 670 AD and destroyed along with the Saxon settlement at the time of the Staffordshire rebellion of 1070 AD.

A Lincolnshire Hundred Roll of 1274 states that the Hospitallers of Maltby held half a Knight's fee in Rauceby (Lincolnshire) by the gift of Robert de Swynnerton one hundred years before. The statement in the Roll need not be interpreted literally. The hundred years would be a rough estimate and so it probably is a reference to the time of King Richard's Crusade. Undoubtedly, Robert would find the money gained from the sale useful for the costly business of crusading.<sup>3</sup>

Hardly had King Richard left for the Holy Land when his brother, John, began to undermine his authority and to commence a



"reign of tyranny". The Staffordshire Rolls indicate the social disturbances which were common throughout the Kingdom. The Pipe Rolls of Michaelmas, 1191, which deal with the events of the previous twelve months, show that large sums had been expended by the Sheriff in the maintenance of men-at-arms "for the preservation of peace". At Newcastle-under-Lyme a strong garrison of Knights was maintained at great expense.

Robert died in 1224 back in England, but without any male issue with the result that his daughter, Margery, inherited the estates, wealth and title of Lady of Swynnerton. She married her cousin, John, son of John and Petronella, who was Lord of Little Sugnall, Dorslow and Pershall (Parishes and lands adjacent to Swynnerton). He was already wealthy, a widower, Crusader and ancestor of all subsequent members of the family.

The most fascinating evidence of this early crusading ancestor of the Swynnertons lies in the Church of Swynnerton. In the south wall of the chancel and adjacent to the sanctuary is an Easter sepulchre containing the effigy - traditionally known as "The Old Crusader".

The effigy is a recumbent figure of a crossed-legged Knight. Carved in a local free-stone (sandstone), it has suffered from age and a great deal of detail has disappeared. The effigy lies close to the present floor level and the chancel position is that usually reserved for the founder of the Church. A fine example of a founder's tomb in excellent preservation is that of Sir Ralph de Botiller at Norbury in Staffordshire. The Botiller effigy is in beautiful condition but was installed in Norbury Church at least a hundred years after of the effigy at Swynnerton. The Botiller tomb is an integral part of the rebuilt "Decorated Style" chancel, whereas, the tomb at Swynnerton has encroached on earlier architecture than itself. It is clear that at least one of the sedilia has been removed to make room for the tomb. The canopy over the tomb is of a later date than the effigy and it seems likely that the tomb of Robert de Swynnerton was installed in its present position when the Mortuary Chapel was built into the Church in the fourteenth century.

The sculptured figure measures 6ft. 2in. and is partly covered on one side. The dress is chain mail and round the head is a rim which indicates a cap under the chain mail about the head. The head rests on a square cushion and the face exposed but the features worn away. The right hand is in the act of drawing a sword of the usual cross-hilted variety and the left hand grasps the scabbard. The legs are crossed at the knee and the feet resting on a crouching lion (Psalm 91 v. 3 - "The

young lion shalt thou tread under thy feet". The heels wear a typical "prick spur" of the period. At the knees is an unusual feature which is a band of leather or metal to protect the knees. It is the last item which enables experts on armour to fix the date of the effigy as about the end of the thirteenth century or the beginning of the fourteenth century. The poleyn or knee protectors appear to have become a normal part of the chain mail uniform in the second half of the thirteenth century.

In Sir James Mann's "An Outline of Arms and Armour in England" there is a reference to this particular feature of the warrior's dress. He writes "In the course of the second half of the thirteenth century small pieces of plate armour were fixed over or inserted into the mail at the shoulders, elbows and knees. Probably also some kind of rigid protection for the body was worn beneath the mail shirt but the latter and the surcoat hide it from view in pictorial representations of the times". There are, however, occasional references in manuscripts to plastrons, either of leather or iron, which were body defences and some such are discernible beneath the surcoat on at least two English thirteenth century effigies, one in Temple church - unfortunately damaged by fire in 1941 - and the other in Pershore Abbey in Worcestershire. More recently the tomb of Sir Roger Corbett at Chaddesley Corbett, Worcestershire, has been examined and this is very similar and dated circa 1290. The hood of mail was separated from the bauberk to form a coif which reached to the chest and shoulders and the sleeves of the mail bauberk were extended from the mittens for the hands. The great helm, which at first had been flat topped, became dome-like towards the end of the century. This was a great advantage because it presented a glancing surface to a downright blow. Later substitutes for the helm were brimmed war-hats (chapel-de-fer) or the simple steel caps.

This information helps one to be more accurate in dating tombs of the period and the examination of brasses and effigies of the English parish churches is deserving of more study and research than it has already received.

Another tomb with a similar effigy is that of Maurice Berkeley de Gaunt in the Mayor's Chapel at Bristol and the date is 1230. Similarly the stone effigy of William Longspee, Earl of Salisbury, is comparable and that is dated 1226.

These facts constitute a mass of accumulative evidence tending to show that a Lord of Swynnerton accompanied Richard Coeur de Lion to the Holy Land in 1191, and those who are experts in tombs, geneal-



ogy or armour, tend to agree that the tomb originally the resting place of Sir Robert de Swynnerton who died about 1224.

In 1856 whilst the last extensive restoration of the church was taking place, the tomb was opened. This occurred during the raising and tiling of the chancel floor. The corpse was wrapped in a lead case which was a quarter of an inch thick and fitting to the form, but it burst open. The wooden coffin in which the lead covered corpse had been placed was reduced to soft powder. The corpse was lying close under the effigy and measured exactly 6ft. 2in. - like the effigy.

The workmen who uncovered the tomb called the Rector, the Reverend W. Taylor and he in turn called Mr. Thomas Fitzherbert, the Lord of the Manor. They were able to inspect the tomb's contents almost immediately it was broken open.

The burial chamber had been carefully constructed and when the leaden case was opened it revealed a perfect skeleton. All the teeth were sound except that the two front ones were missing. There was still a semblance of flesh on the bones and the reddish brown beard was perfectly preserved. Some of the weapons he had used in life lay with him, all much consumed by rust but including a lance-head<sup>3</sup>.

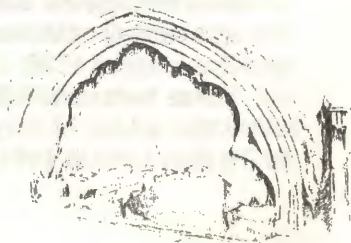
The Reverend Charles Swynnerton, the first Swinnerton Family Historian, met both the Reverend Taylor and Mr. Fitzherbert and wrote as follows:- "The accident which had disturbed him was scarcely one to be regretted since it revealed to us a vision of a mediaeval knight as he really was. He rises before us lofty in stature, ruddy in complexion, with auburn locks and in the vigour of life. Two of his front teeth appeared to have been driven in by a lance trust. His weapons of war lie by his side and if he was a companion of Richard Coeur-de-Lion we are at liberty to imagine the resolution with which he may have used them, whether the storming of Buffavento or on the walls of the long beleaguered Acre".<sup>4</sup>

\* Ref. 1 - Records of the College of Arms, London.

\* Ref. 2 - Victoria County History of Staffordshire Volume III

\* Ref. 3 - Lord Stafford's Family Records.

\* Ref. 4 - Notes of the Reverend Charles Swynnerton.



## DESCENTS

Quite a few of our members do not have the name of Swinnerton as you will have seen from the Directory of Members published in the December Journal and I expect you sometimes wonder how they fit in to the family. Reading our contemporary, *The Palgrave Chronicle*, I saw that they do list the descents of their new members. I thought that was a very good idea and will do so in future: in the meantime I will start to do so for our existing members.

### THE DESCENT OF KEVIN BOWERS OF TORONTO (the year indicates the year of birth)

Katherine SWINNERTON (KS.45) (1587) = John Eldershaw (1578)

|  
George Eldershaw = Ellen

|  
Mary Eldershaw (1661) = Ralph Mills (1658)

|  
Thomas Mills (1686) = Mary Sherratt (1686)

|  
Mary Mills (1713) = James Mayot (1709)

|  
Helen Myott (1742) = James Darby Gaunt (1729)

|  
James Gaunt (1765) = Elizabeth Knight (1768)

|  
Ellen Myatt Gaunt (1790) = John Bowers (1784)

|  
Eli Bowers (1826) = Sarah Ann Meeson (1828)

|  
Richard Meeson Bowers (1844) = Ann Johnson (1846)

|  
Harry Bowers (1886) = Elizabeth May Coward (1893)

|  
Harry Bowers (1928) = Betty Dolores Brown (1931)

|  
KEVIN EARL BOWERS (1955)



## MORE ABOUT NUNEATON

Peter Lee, of [redacted] secretary of the Nuneaton Society says there are monuments to the Swinnerton family in Nuneaton Parish Church. Joe Swinnerton has promised to investigate these. Mr Lee also tells me that he has found a reference to a ladies' musical ensemble known, he believes, as "Swinnerton's Band" which was a small group of female musicians, headed by one or more of the family, which played at soirees and public functions locally in the 19th century. Unfortunately, he says, that is all he knows but he is anxious to trace their history because the musical side of life in old Nuneaton and District is very poorly recorded. Anyone have any knowledge of them?

## NEW NAME FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

Parents and Governors have decided upon a new name for a new school and have looked to a local stream for inspiration.

Attleborough First and Swinnerton Middle schools will be merged to create an "all-through" school on the Swinnerton site, in Avenue Road opening in September.

Parents and the governing bodies of both schools have decided to call the new venture Wembrook Primary School, the name comes from a watercourse which flows near the school. ....

So - a long family connection with the town comes to an end. Sad but that's progress.

(From the Heartland Evening News Friday, February 2, 1996)

## FURTHER PROGRESS WITH THE 1881 CENSUS

Since the last report, we have received the fiche for Yorkshire, Surrey, Norfolk, Durham and Kent. Yorkshire contained, as I expected, quite a few entries for the family but there were only very few, surprisingly, in Surrey and Kent and none at all in Durham or Norfolk.

I am in the process of examining these and will report in the next issue on numbers and any finds of particular interest.

Only two counties still to be released - Lancashire and Middlesex - but I expect these to be very fruitful for our research.

## TO SWYNNERTON'S FOREST

by Ray Borrett

On September 21, 1970 a heavily laden Landrover left sweltering Fort Victoria and moved eastwards towards the Sabi Valley and then up into the eastern Highlands to Swynnerton's country, Gazaland, of which Michael Irwin wrote in his 1907 *Ibis* paper "Patches of virgin forest, consisting of trees, mostly evergreen, of great height and girth, which shade a dense undergrowth of shrubs and saplings, are scattered throughout the district, the most notable being that of Chirinda."

For both Michael Irwin, ornithologist at the National Museum of Rhodesia in Bulawayo, and myself, it was our first visit to the district and, having read Swynnerton's description, we both wondered what effect seventy years of "civilisation" would have had on what must have been truly exciting country for any ornithologist.

At about 11 a.m. on September 22 the truck toiled its way up the escarpment through the dry Miombo woodland of the west facing slope of Mount Selinda. As we surmounted the crest there before us was the edge of the forest standing out impressively against the African farmlands which encroach right up to its limits.

Later, examining an aerial photograph of the forest it was possible to mark patches of forest edge which have been stolen by the ever land-hungry farmers who have no eye for the forest as an irreplaceable piece of Rhodesia's heritage but regard it with greedy eyes as yet more land to put under the plough.

We moved slowly through the forest along the road leading to the Mission, the giant trees and luxuriant foliage contrasting impressively with the dry woodland we had travelled through to reach the forest from Chipinga, 34 km to the north-west. At the forester's home we were given tea and the choice of "anywhere" in the forest to pitch our camp - so we did just this and, after exploring several unmarked tracks, chose a piece of the forest floor well away from the paths used by tourists and there, after removing a few intruding saplings and attendant roots, we made our home for the next two weeks.

It proved to be a spot well chosen, for the song of Swynnerton's Robin *Pogonocichla Swynnertonii* was ever present in the surrounding foliage, a Square-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus edwiggii* spent much of its time watching and screeching at us from a branch 15 m above the camp, and bird parties often passed over us through the lower canopy. Swynnerton's Robin has a call remarkably like that of the Rufoussaped Lark *Mirafraga africana* which occurs commonly on the short grassy



hillsides close to the forest edge.

This tiny bird remains my favourite memory of the Selinda expedition. Happily it is a common species in the forest, one or two pairs usually being found in the vicinity of clumps of *Drocaena* which, as cobwebbed, thickstemmed plants occurring in patches, form an unpleasant obstacle to the ornithologist once the paths are left.

Our campsite had one serious disadvantage - a common one throughout the forest - there was no nearby water and every two days one of us had to venture into the world of sunlight to collect sufficient to keep us going. Michael soon discovered another disadvantage when, on our first morning in camp, he left his skin kaross on top of his camp bed and on returning at mid-morning found that thousands of blow-flies had descended on the skins to lay their eggs. Where they came from and how they found us hidden away so remotely we will never know.

Hunting for birds in forest is a neckbreaking experience. With the observer at ground level and most of the birds at from 30 to 60 m above his head many remain only tentative identifications. I found that by rolling up my jacket and placing it under my head I could comfortably lie in a horizontal position and successfully identify some birds in the forest canopy. What any tourist would have thought if he had found me lying there is open to conjecture but happily the primitive forest is seldom intruded upon by tourists other than on certain well marked routes and in the two weeks of the expedition I never encountered another soul, either Black or White, outside our own party.

Identifying birds flitting amongst the foliage 45 to 60 m above one's head is, as I have said, difficult in the extreme, but I soon was able to pick out species as much by their shape and movement as by colour. Forest-Weavers *Ploceus bicolor* which feed in the middle and upper canopy levels have always been a favourite of mine with their "squeaky wheel" song and quite handsome plumage.



Photo: Peter Steyn  
Swynnerton's Robin on its nest in the Mt. Selinda Forest: note the vast eye of this dark forest dweller.

These birds, along with Collared Sunbirds *Anthreptes collaris*, Yellow-throated Warblers *Seicercus ruficapillus*, White-tailed Flycatchers *Trochocercus albonotatus* and the Black-fronted Bush-Shrike *Malaconotus multicolor*, soon became old hat, although the latter had me fooled for some time with its oriole-like double syllable call note. I eventually collected a bird and only then positively identified it as this bush shrike.

The southern Puff-backed Shrike *Dryoscopus cubla* is another common bird of the forest canopy. It is amazing the number of guises that this bird can assume as it creeps quietly about in the canopy and Michael relates that it is one of the most represented species in the collection of the National Museum for this very reason.

The most frustrating bird of the Chirinda Forest is the Chirinda Apalis *Apalis chirindensis*. McLachlan and Liversidge in their 1970 *Roberts* state "when calling the black inside of mouth is distinctive". Michael and I tried to distinguish bill coloration in these birds for almost the whole of our stay and then only by collecting specimens was it possible to do so.

These five inch long birds which are mostly tail anyway call incessantly from the topmost branches of the tallest trees and seldom, in my experience, move to lower levels. Even with the most powerful binoculars they remain just a shape in the canopy and the birds don't help the identifier as they remain stationary for long periods just out of sight above a clump of leaves, calling loudly, and then they stop calling to move to another sheltered spot out of sight in the sunlight above the canopy leaves. Their constant calling, combined with the knowledge that their position was almost completely inaccessible, became a source of much chagrin and not a little frustration to me.

After two weeks in the forest the slightest movement can usually be given at least a group name but the huge trees and dense vegetation often preclude accurate identification.

One morning a grey flash passed close by amongst the packed giants of the forest. Soon my glasses were trained on at African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro*, the only forest frequenting hawk, perched 12 m above the ground and just about to feed on a small bird clutched tightly in one lethal foot. I moved closer, making as little noise as possible and the hawk did not move. Then all hell broke loose about me as seven Crested Guinea-fowls *Guttera edouardi* flew up into the trees above. The hawk had gone by the time I recovered my composure but 30 m above my head sat the Crested Guinea-fowl in various poses, their crests swaying in agitation as they peered down at



me ready to move on to safer perches should I show undue interest in them from my terrestrial viewpoint.

Soon the end of our fortnight's sojourn in the depths of the forest was in sight yet only a small part had been studied despite the eight hours of daily walking that had been our lot. Some birds had been surprisingly absent even from the edges: African Broadbills *Smithornis capensis* and Green Twinspots *Mandingoa nitidula* and all the cuckoos for instance.

On October 3 the time came for us to pack up our cosy camp in the forest depths. Soon it would become as tangled as the surrounding vegetation and there would be no obvious sign of our recent occupation. Soon the Swynnerton's Robin would return to its favourite log to sing without disturbance. The tiny Buff-spotted Flufftail *Sarothrura elegans* that crossed the track in front of me as I pulled the last rope tight on the laden truck and the mocking Knysna Loerie *Tauraco corythaix* calling its series of "kok" above our heads would remain among the other memories of splendid plants, butterflies and birds.

The forest was alive with song as we slowly rumbled our sad way home intent on returning sometime in the future to enjoy some of the peace that we had found whilst hidden away from the usual rush and bustle of life in a beautiful forest that must not be destroyed as have so many of the smaller patches referred to by Swynnerton in his writings. (Note - Ray Borrett collapsed and died at Fort Victoria on January 6, 1973. At the request of his widow I have completed the above from the three drafts which he left. - Richard Brooke.)

### FAMILY NOTES

The family of our council members Roger and Elizabeth Swynnerton have been doing rather well. Congratulations to their son Michael on obtaining his Bachelor of Engineering degree in Electrical Engineering from North London University and to his brother Richard on gaining his MA in physiotherapy from Regents College.

We must also offer very belated congratulations to our member Charles Iain Swynnerton on his marriage to Stephanie Preston in July 1994 and note his new address as

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