

# *The Swinnerton Saga*



*Thomas Swinnerton of Butterson painted by George Romney (1734-1802)  
Oil on canvas 36" x 28" sold in New York in 1999*

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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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## THE SWINNERTON SAGA

**Volume 13  
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### C O N T E N T S

Who do you think you are?	54
Elizabeth Swinnerton	56
Indian Records	57
The DFC to F/O L.E.Swenerton	58
The Society's Records	60
Our Volunteers	65
Marjorie Swinnerton – Dancer	68
An unusual descent	69
Tribute to Elizabeth Simpson	79
Valete	80

Editor – I.S.Swinnerton

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## Who Do You Think You Are?

The popularity of this television show (culminating in a 3-day 'National History Show' at Olympia May 5-7 sponsored by [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk), incorporating the Society of Genealogists Annual Family History Show and supported by *The Daily Telegraph*) and other similar programmes has given rise to a whole new wave of interest in tracing family history.

Previous surges in interest, which you may remember, were after the showing of Gordon Honeycombe's programme and Alex Haley's *Roots*, both over two decades ago.

There is nothing really new except that so much of the information to help people in their searches is now available on the Internet which hadn't even been invented then.

John Swynnerton from Sheffield, our erstwhile Treasurer, is now retired and renewed his interest in the family history. Recently, we have had quite a lot of correspondence and he has suggested that it would be a good idea if I included a page in each issue of the Saga on how to research your family history.

I did write some articles in this journal about how I had done it a long time ago but we have had a lot of new members since then so perhaps it would be useful.

There are three things to remember before you start looking at records. First - a collection of names and dates with nothing at all about the people concerned is boring in the extreme.

Secondly, you are doing it not just for your personal gratification but for your great-grandchildren and their descendants to come - don't you wish your great-grandparents had written about their lives before they died?

Lastly, you have several families to go at - we all have two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents etc. and if you get stuck on one, which inevitably you will at some time or other, have a rest from that particular line and try one of the others. You can return to it later, refreshed.

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So where do you start? The answer is with yourself! Before you do anything else at all, write down all the facts about your own life so far - when and where you were born, when and where you went to your various schools, what you liked/were good at or conversely what you did not enjoy there, all the while recounting what was going on around you at the time - telling your life story in the context of the times. For many of you it will feature the war - were you bombed, evacuated, had you relatives fighting in it? Did you go on to college or

university: did you serve in the war or were called up for National Service? What interesting people did you meet? Where did you go on holiday? How did you get there? Compare your childhood times with today.

For many years, I taught family history at adult evening classes for the WEA and LEA. In the late 70s, one of my students, in writing his story, said he had been to University, obtained a degree in Geography and then took a job as a forklift truck driver. Naturally, I asked him why on earth he had done that and he said because there were no jobs going in Geography and he needed to earn a living. When asked why there were no jobs he said it was because of the recession of course. I told him that he knew that and I knew that but his descendants would not and would wonder why.

It is important, always, that you put flesh on the bones and tell your story alongside what was going on in the world around you.

You obviously include your siblings in your story, and of your marriage and children and grandchildren and of theirs. You are, after all, writing a *family* history.

When you have done that, you then write as much as you can about your parents and their lives and, if you knew them, about your grandparents. When telling their story, talk to your cousins - they will probably see them from a different perspective which you will find very interesting.

I was unlucky - my mother died when I was three years old and three of my four grandparents had died before I was born. The fourth had emigrated to Australia, also before I was born, so I never knew him. However, on my first visit to Australia in 1988 to lecture at the Bicentenary Conference, I met his daughter-in-law, (my aunt) and her children (my cousins), who had all known him well and were able to tell me about him.

I suggest you write or type it up on loose, punched sheets of paper and keep them in a ring binder (four rings is more secure than two). This will enable you to add or amend them as you remember more or talk to other members of the family. It will also allow you to insert blank sheets on which you can put your postcards and photographs to illustrate your story. Use corner mounts, don't paste them in, this will enable you to remove them and make copies for relatives and re-arrange them when more come to light. Don't forget to label them on the back and not, as so many people do, "Me - Scarborough 1937"! You know who 'me' is but your descendants may not.

In the next Saga we will start to look at records to help you once you get back beyond living memories.



**K**now all Men, By these presents, that We Mary Blunt of the City of Lichfield, in the County of Stafford Spinster and William Hutchinson of the Town Nottingham Victualler do stand and are firmly bounden and obliged unto the Worshipful PETER JOHNSON, Master of Arts, Commissary of the *Exchequer* Court of the most Reverend Father in God ROBERT, by Divine Providence Lord Archbishop of York, Primate of England and Metropolitan lawfully constituted, in the Sum of three hundred Pounds of good and lawful Money of Great Britain to be paid to the said Commisary or his true and lawful Attorney, Executors, Administrators or Assigns, to which Payment well and truly made, We bind us and each of us, jointly and severally, for and in the whole, our and each of our Heirs, Executors and Administrators, and every of them firmly by these Presents, Sealed with our Seals. Dated the nineteenth Day of the Month of April in the Year of our Lord One Thousand, Seven Hundred, and Seventy four.

*The Condition of this Obligation is such, that if the above bound Mary Blunt the sole Executor named in the last Will and Testament of Elizabeth Swinnerton Deceased late of Stafford in the Diocese of Lichfield and Coventry and possessed of divers real and personal Estates in or near Blyth in the County of Nottingham and Diocese of York do well and truly execute and perform the said last Will and Testament of the said Deceased And do pay her Debts and Legacies so far as her Goods will Extend and Law shall bind her if also she do Exhibit into the Exchequer Court at York, a true and perfect Inventory of all and singular the Goods Rights, Credits, Cattles, and Chattles of the said Deceased, and do make a true and just Accompt of the same when she shall be thereunto lawfully called.*

And moreover, if need require enter into further Bond, with more sufficient Sureties for the Performance of the Premises as the Judge of the said Court, for the Time being shall think requisite and Needful. And lastly, do save, defend, and harmless keep the above named Judge, and all his Officers, and Ministers, against all Persons by reason of the Premises. Then this present Obligation to be Void, and of none Effect or else to remain in full Force and Virtue.

Sealed and Delivered )  
In the presence of S.Martin      Mary Blunt      Wm. Hutchinson.

\* \* \* \* \*

Which Elizabeth was this and who were Mary Blunt and William Hutchinson?

## Bombay Baptisms

1893 Volume 70 page 10.

Baptised July 9<sup>th</sup> (born 20 May) St Thomas's Cathedral, Bombay. Frederick Richard Swynerton (*sic*) to Frederick and Louisa of Delhi, artist.

Also:

1918 Volume 119 page 48

Baptised Jan 15 (born Dec 21, 1917)

Noel Reginald to Reginald Poynty Swinedon and Ethel Caroline of Bombay, Inspector Bombay Trust.

Was he one of us?

## Bombay Burials

Sewri Cemetery

1918 Volume 120 page 268

Buried Dec 19 (died Dec 18) Frederick Swynnerton, 51 years, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut, IARO (Indian Army Reserve of Officers) attached Postal Department (Hypertrophy prostate).

Kurduwadi Cemetery

1927 Volume 138 page 272

Buried 23 Nov (died 19 Nov) Charles Swinerton 72 years. (British) Retired Railway Station Master. (Senile decay).

1934 Volume 51 page 245

Buried 21 May (died 20 May) Evline (*sic*) Sarah Swinnerton 72 years (Anglo Indian) Widow of late C.Swinnerton (Glycosuria)

## Madras Marriages

1882 Volume 63 page 79

Vizasafratam Methodist Episcopal Church.

Charles Swinnerton, 25, Bachelor, Army Scripture Reader of Madras (Father William Swinnerton) to Evaline Sarah Hazlewood, 19, Spinster of Madras (Father W.J.Haslewood  
Witnesses: C.N.Burton and W.,J.Haslewood.

(Note the difference in the spelling of her Christian name at her wedding and at her burial and the spelling of her sumame in contrast to her father)



Army Scripture Reader's Cap Badge

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### Royal Canadian Air Force

Honours and Awards - 1939-1949

SWENERTON, F/O Lyman Douglas (J22543) - Distinguished Flying Cross - No.419 Squadron - Award effective 2 October 1944 as per London Gazette dated 17 October 1944 and AFRO 1/45 dated 5 January 1945. Born 1917 in Vancouver; home there; enlisted there 4 July 1941. Trained at No.4 ITS (graduated 19 October 1941), No.4 AOS (graduated 13 April 1942) and No.4 BGS (graduated 23 May 1942).

Commissioned 1942. Award presented 5 March 1949. No citation other than that he had "completed numerous operations against the enemy in the course of which he has invariably displayed the utmost fortitude, courage and devotion to duty."

DHist file 181.009 D.3260 (RG.24 Vol.20637) has recommendation by W/C W.P. Pleasance dated 24 June 1944 when he had flown 30 sorties (202 hours 35 minutes), 23 June 1943 to 27 April 1944.

Flying Officer Swenerton has completed a tour of 28 night operations against the enemy [Sea Search on 23 June 1943 and recalled mission of 22 February 1944 are clearly subtracted]. Throughout his tour of operations he invariably showed remarkable calmness and coolness. Although he thoroughly understood his work, he was invariably searching for ways to improve his knowledge and efficiency. With his devotion to duty and his exceptional knowledge, he was of invaluable help to his captain and crew and constantly instructed his pilot irrespective of defences, to press home his bombing runs in the most effective manner. During his operational tour, he secured no less than eleven plotted photographs within the target area.

I consider that this officer's continuous gallantry, his constant determination to press home his attack to the best advantage and the high example he has shown fully merits the non-immediate award of the Distinguished Flying Cross.

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### The Distinguished Flying Cross

Instituted in 1918 for award to officers and warrant officers of the Air Forces and the Fleet Air Arm recommended for an act or acts of valour, courage and devotion to duty performed whilst flying in active operations against the enemy. Bars are awarded for subsequent acts.





## The Society's Archives.

John Young, Chairman of the Essex Society for Family History, writing recently said that he had been told many times that you do not need a computer to do family history. He said that was undoubtedly true but it really does help enormously. Not only is the organisation of your information so very much easier, the opportunity to access new information increases every day.

He said that it had occurred to him that some family historians who may not have computer skills, may have grandchildren who do and it would be a wonderful opportunity to kindle an interest in family history by getting a grandchild to help you access online information. "You never know" he said "you might even see how easy it is and try it for yourself"

An interesting thought – although I now use a computer pretty well every day, my grandchildren of 14 and 10 are much slicker than I am.

Paul Blake, vice-chairman of the Federation of Family History Societies, put it much more strongly some time ago. He said that new technology with computers, ICT and then the Internet has knocked family history research into a completely new dimension. For those who still long for the days of cycling to the local parish church to inspect parish registers, of carefully preparing and cross-referencing their 3x5 card indexes, laying out their pedigrees on the backs of wallpaper, then he can but suggest that they are misguided. Fondly remember those days certainly but that is no longer the way research is undertaken. *(Ed: a sweeping statement which is not true- the Guild of One-name Studies featured an article some time ago where several members explained that they were still doing just that because it suited their specialist study of every holder of the name where not all with the name are related).*

Mr Blake went on to say that things have changed radically, irreversibly and for the better. Over the last three years, give or take, *(the article was written in 2003)* change had been exponential; and in the last year and even the last few months, even more radical improvements (yes improvements) have been announced or are already happening.

He said that like it or not, the use of the Internet is now an essential part of research: family history, local history, whatever

the discipline. If you do not use what is available and what is about available online, then you will seriously disadvantage your investigations into your roots. He did admit that, yes, there is a lot of garbage on the Internet.

Well I agree with Mr Young but Mr Blake seems to forget that some of us older ones had done all the searches that computers make so much easier – Indexes to Births, Marriages and Deaths; the Censuses; Directories; Parish Registers; Wills – many years ago before home computers were around. I started 54 years ago and extracted all the relevant information for our name so the sources that the majority of family historians use are now of little use to us in our Swinnerton research. What I now use the computer for is finding the more esoteric sources of information about our name, these I agree would be much harder to find without a computer.

I could tell you many stories of the hazards and joys of visiting churches, libraries and record offices, the old Public Record Office in Chancery Lane, Somerset House etc. Yes, it was hard work but much more fun I think.

We do still have my original card index but it has been computerised!

The internet is very deficient in some sources – records of the armed services are minimal as yet although more are being added slowly: Quarter Sessions and Poor Law records have very little coverage and Manorial Court records are very poor.

But – it is marvellous for communications and Email is a godsend but Ezines (on line magazines) are the end as far as I am concerned.

It is most noticeable that many modern authorities when writing articles, never go beyond BMD indexes and Census returns which are easily available (at a price) from the net. Sadly, they seem to think that everyone has access to the internet: they don't realise the problems of the elderly rural communities with limited access to public transport; only mobile libraries and tiny transmitters which give very, very low transmission speeds and 'drop off' every few minutes.

I have recently done a report for Council on our records which is reproduced on the next page.

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## **Swinerton Family Records**

Our main series of records are:

### **1. A series of databases in Microsoft Access format.**

The principal ones are:

- Births, Marriages and Deaths 1837-2000 (index) – 6512 entries
- Born – 3368 entries
- Card Index (my original card index now digitised) – 1783 entries
- Census 1841-1901 – 1393 entries
- Birth, Marriage & Death Certificates we have – c.400 (still being listed)
- Graves - 191
- Parish Register Extracts - 2485
- Swinerton Brides - 994
- Swinerton Grooms - 705
- Unidentified baptisms – 202
- Unidentified marriages - 232
- Unidentified burials – 271
- Archives – 330 items so far. Documents, books, portraits, artefacts etc. More waiting to be catalogued,

We also have a number of smaller indexes

- Allied marriages - 25
- Apprentices - 12
- Boyd's Marriage Index 1781-1837 - 18
- Ellis Island – index of visitors to USA - 38
- Freemasons 1765-1920 - 13
- Killed in Action - 24
- Public Record Office (now The National Archives) – 73
- Scottish Births, Marriages and Deaths - 77
- Soldiers - 93
- Staffordshire Advertiser – extract of entries - 54
- Staffordshire Burial Index - 45
- Wills at Chester - 11
- Wills at Lichfield - 71
- Wills at London - 43

The most important of these is 'Born' which contains details of 3368 Swinertons from the earliest record to the present day. The details listed, where known, are surname (includes all the variations), forename (s), reference number, branch, date and place of birth and death, date and place of baptism, marriage and burial, census entry/entries, occupation, parents, partner(s) and will.

All these indexes are available to family members on CD/DVD but they would need Microsoft Access or Excel to read them. Printouts of the smaller ones could be made available but at only 40 entries to a page, anything much larger would be very costly and time-consuming.

I have many other files and folders of records and correspondence which are awaiting sorting and typing up.

### **2. The Family Trees**

We have a master tree and branch trees for Adbaston, Australia, Beech, Betley, Bridgnorth 1, Bridgnorth 2, Butterson, Canada, Dudley, Essex, Glos, IOM, Ireland, Leeds, London 1, London 2, London 3, Medieval, Oswestry, Queensferry, Scottish, Sedgley, Shropshire, Stoke 1, Stoke 2, Teeside, Walsall, Warwickshire, West Bromwich, Wrexham, Yew Tree, Yorks plus 12 UFOs (unidentified family origins).

These are available in GEDCOM (Genealogical Exchange Data Communication) format and today can be read by the great majority of genealogical computer programs although some programs require the file to be modified. I have recently supplied the Betley tree to a member in this format, the Irish tree to a Canadian member and Warwickshire and Medieval trees to another UK member – all as email attachments.

Again printouts are available but only of the smaller branches – the main branches are far beyond the capacity of our printer: small sections of them can be done but they are very time-consuming to produce.



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### **3. The Journals**

Back copies are held by Liz Yeandle but I understand they are not complete. Liz also holds the masters from which they were printed. We only have masters on computer from 2000. We do have a complete set on microfiche from No.1 (1974) to Vol.11 No.5 (Dec 1999) given to us by the Federation of Family History Societies when they decided to no longer take magazines into their library. (They now only accept them as Ezines (electronic magazine) but I have not supplied any as yet because our journal is not done completely on computer, many of the illustration are pasted in.)

No indexes have been produced since Joe died but I do now have a volunteer working on Vol.9. Progress is slow because, although it is the best indexing program there is, used by professional indexers, which I bought many years ago, it is still a DOS program and they wanted £180 to upgrade it!

### **4. Newspaper Cuttings Archive**

This is, at present, held by the Chairman. We need a volunteer to maintain it i.e. to stick in cuttings which are sent to me from time to time and get the pages photocopied as they are filled. I have a photocopy up to c.1983 but I am concerned that there is no copy after this date. The originals are fading and really need re-filing in acid-free folders. It also needs indexing.

### **5. The Photograph Archive**

This is held by me and consists of several hundred photographs of family members which I have collected over the years. Many were copied for us from old photographic groups by the late Jack Swinnerton. They are not all mounted and there is no index. They really need filing properly in acid-free folders, labelling and indexing. Again – we need a volunteer to do this.

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### **Our volunteers**

This seems an appropriate moment to pay tribute to our volunteers. In particular I would like to thank **Roy Talbot**.

Roy is a former member of council. When second hand copies of the original family history became very scarce and expensive in the early 1990s, Roy lent us the money, interest free, to have a facsimile copy printed. (It was a lot of money in those days).

Today, Roy maintains all our databases and trees. He is continually updating them as new information is acquired. This is either through my research accumulated over the last 50+ years; from items sent to me by friends in the genealogical world or family members, or from his own research. He is a regular visitor to The National Archives, the Family Records Centre in Islington (soon to be moved to Kew), to the William Salt Library in Stafford and, indeed, to any record repository where he thinks there may be useful records – a few weeks ago he went to the North East in search of records of the Teeside family.

Genealogy and Chess (to a National Competition standard) are his life. He renders an invaluable service to the society and we could not have achieved anything like the present-day standard of our records without him. I recommend you read his report in Volume 12, No 7 (August 2004) pp 133-139.

I would also like to record my thanks to Peter King who started our certificate scanning project and to Charles and Marett Jerrett who have carried it on: to Jan Aldhous who is beaver away trying to catch up with the indexing of the journal and, last but not by any means least, to Peter Swinnerton of Manchester who manfully slaves away typing on to disk anything I send him which is either used in this journal or goes into the archives. He even tried his hand recently at some 18<sup>th</sup> century inventories!

Finally there is our webmaster, Malcolm Smith. If you have access to a computer and the internet, do have a look at our website – [www.swinnerton.org](http://www.swinnerton.org)

Malcolm has put an enormous amount of time into this; he has transformed it from the rather dull page it used to be and it is shaping up very nicely.

If you don't have access, have a look next time you go into your local library.



# IN SEARCH OF THE GALLOPING REINDEER

*Santa's reindeer are very special. Not all of them can fly of course, but even the smallest reindeer tries as he waits for Christmas Eve. If you happen to stumble into the right spot and look up, you too, might see a reindeer running across the turf and then galloping through the air. Words & pictures by Carolle Doyle.*

**M**egan Davis of Penrhos was lucky enough to find herself in one of Santa's secret places where some of his reindeer live. There was a little bit of Christmas magic in the air when she met Buttons, the son of Comet, one of Santa's most famous reindeer.

Reindeer man, Steve Swinnerton cares for these reindeer and makes sure that they pass Santa's inspection. Every year Steve travels to Lapland to join the Sami people as they look after their own herds of reindeer.

He always makes sure that he brings back sacks of reindeer moss as a special treat. From November on Steve and his helpers are very busy as Buttons and all the other reindeer visit hospitals and towns, villages and schools up and down the country.

Steve tells me that the reindeer especially like to talk to children. They listen to their questions and wisely nod or shake



their heads in answer. Just remember, if you talk to a reindeer that there is one question you must not ask. Never ask a reindeer if he can fly, only Santa knows the answer to that ■





## Missing

This is the headline of a regular feature in the *Daly Mail* in which readers are given an opportunity to re-establish contacts with long lost relatives or friends.

Roger Swynnerton drew my attention to the following entry: "We like featuring dancing girls in this column and this week's is Marilyn Ramsey of Colchester, Essex with a double-whammy story.

She writes on behalf of her 84-year-old mother, Marjorie Swinnerton née Richards, who belonged to the Betty Hobbs Globe Girls which she joined aged 16 in 1948 and left in 1943. Marjorie is searching for other ex-members of the troupe: Pat Cowland, Pat Shires, Lily Brown, Joan Wilson and Sylvia Stokvis.

"By the way" writes Marilyn, "before joining the Globe Girls, Mum was a Terry's Juvenile and in August 1936 they were performing at the Radiolympia Exhibition in London when the first TV pictures were transmitted to the exhibition from Alexandra Palace.

Mum met my father Charles Swinnerton at the Glasgow Empire during the war when they appeared on the same bill. Dad was leading saxophonist with Billy Cotton's band. As a young girl I went to their Sunday lunchtime radio broadcasts and their Saturday evening TV recordings at Shepherd's Bush. In Summer, Dad appeared in Bournemouth, Margate or Southsea. Happy Days!"

Charles died in 1970 and Marjorie now lives in Cambridge near Marilyn's sister Carole who is married to Stan Foster, Alma Cogan's old musical director and pianist.

"Naturally, they met through Dad" says Marilyn, "It would be great if there are any further Billy Cotton band members around who remember him".

There was a follow-up article the following week containing a precis of the above but going on to say that the paper had managed to reunite some of this family with their friends. John Watson, first trombone player with the Billy Cotton band in the Fifties, remembers Charles well. "I was in the band at The Talk of the Town when Alma Cogan sang and Stan Foster was her pianist" he says.

'I'm 73 now and have hung up my trombone as it's time to give the youngsters a chance, but they'll never have the experiences we had".

Another reunion is with Marilyn's childhood pal Olivia Breeze., daughter of Billy Cotton's vocalist Alan Breeze. Olivia is presenting a show about her father on April 28. For details see [www.bobhopetheatre.co.uk](http://www.bobhopetheatre.co.uk).

Marjorie is, of course, a member of our society and we published an account of her husband Charles's musical career in this journal some time ago.



On the ball: Globe Girl Marjorie is third from left at the back

On the very day I write this piece, I read in the newspaper that Hammersmith Palais, that swinging dance centre of the 50s where I danced away many hours when stationed in the area, is to be demolished.



## A new addition to the family.

Colin Swinnerton tells me that Lisa, the wife of his elder son Neale Warren Swinnerton, presented Pat and he with their first grandchild, a bouncing baby boy, on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007. He weighed in at 7lb 12 ozs (so glad to see it was not given in kilograms!) and is to be called Max. As Colin said – the line continues.



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## An unusual descent.

This rather long series of letters shows how perhaps the most unusual descent in the family was traced.

Mrs. E Swynnerton.

Dear Mrs Swynnerton

I found your email address on the Federation of Family History Societies website. I am researching the Swinnerton family, living at 39 High Street North, Kinver, Staffordshire, in the 1901 Census. The father Samuel Harding Swinnerton born 1868, is a General Shopkeeper, the mother Sarah Swinnerton born 1875 and their son Sidney Harding Swinnerton born 1898. Samuel married Sarah Eliza Camell Bennett in 1895.

Samuel's father is James Harding Swinnerton b1849, Dawley, Shropshire. James' father is James Swinnerton born 1811, Wellington, Shropshire. I am writing to ask if this Swinnerton family coincides with any information that you have?

Yours faithfully

Mrs Geraldine Hutchison. Hampshire, UK

Dear Geraldine

Your email has been passed on to me by Elizabeth Swynnerton who used to be our (Swinnerton Society) secretary but, despite having been told several times, the Federation have never changed it to our present secretary Margaret Swinnerton.

James Harding Swinnerton was my great-grandfather! I lived in the Stourbridge/Kinver area for the greatest part of my life until I moved to Shropshire in 1988 and subsequently to here (Dorset) 10 years ago.

I can give you a very full family tree back to the medieval period. Can you accept a Gedcom file? I shall look forward to hearing from you!

Yours sincerely

Iain Swinnerton

Dear Iain

Thank you so much for your extremely interesting and speedy reply.

Yes, I can accept a Gedcom file, and would appreciate that very much, thank you. I have a mystery that may interest you! I am researching a gentleman, who I believe changed his name, part way through life. I have much on his latter named life and am trying to match it up to his former named life. I am reasonably convinced that there is some connection to the Swinnerton family in Kinver that I mentioned in my first email.

Perhaps you can shed some light on the matter?

I equally look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

Geraldine Hutchison

Dear Geraldine

Thank you for your email but I am the great-grandson of JHS - not grandson as you put. I don't normally reply to emails so quickly but I am *hors de combat* at the moment so have time on my hands.

I had thought you yourself were a Swinnerton descendant but now you have told me you are a professional researcher, I realise you are probably trying to help a client.

The mystery man is Sidney Harding Swinnerton, son of Samuel and Eliza. Both he and his parents were heavy drinkers and had constant arguments so he went to work one morning in 1920 and never came back. He was never heard of again until my great aunt Mary Jane Clark (née Swinnerton), his aunt, died intestate in 1950 and he had to be traced. A private enquiry agent found him in a week!

He had changed his name to Lewis Welsdon Griffith and married Gladys Jefferson in 1931. They had two daughters, Gladys Emily born 1932 and Frances Mary born 1934. I have a copy of the statement made and sworn by him to our family solicitors in 1951. He died sometime before 1972 when my great aunt Maud also died intestate. I never knew him (I was born in 1932) but my father knew him well and used to go and help Samuel at weekends when he could because Samuel was blind.

I attach a Gedcom file showing his descent and if your client is a descendant we would be delighted to hear from him or her. Your original research is not quite accurate – James Harding Swinnerton was the son of another James Harding Swinnerton – James Harding II was a brother of John born Wellington in 1811 as you will see.

Dear Iain

Thank you so very much for "the last piece of the jigsaw". As you ascertain, correctly, I am working for a client. I shall forward your email to him, today, and suggest he contacts you. I am reasonably sure he will. Sorry I forgot the "great". I am suffering from flu currently and should have been in bed at that time last night - however I was keen to progress the contact and hence made the slip.

Yes, I have just today discovered that James Harding's father was also James Harding. In the 1861 Census they are down as Swineston and that slowed my progress. I am so grateful that you have been able to confirm my theories. It has been a very interesting project as all I had to go on was the fact that a child was born in 1898 in Kinver to a Grocer! Thank you again for all your help Geraldine

Iain, cc Geraldine,

Geraldine Hutchinson copied me into some e-mail exchanges which she has had with you on the subject of Lewis Welsford Griffith (LWG) and his



probable previous identity as Sidney Harding Swinnerton (SHS). Thank you for confirming that they are identical.

I am Richard Andrew James Featherstone and the grandson of LWG and Gladys Annie Maud Griffith née Jefferson. My mother is Gladys Emily (aka Emily) Featherstone née Griffith and my father the late Derek William Featherstone. I understand from Geraldine that we are second cousins once removed. Glad to meet you!

LWG died in Jan 1971 when I was 4, but we spent a lot of time together and I remember him; specifically playing with some toy guardsmen and a toy lorry which are kept in my study now. I also recognise the smell of the pipe tobacco he used whenever I encounter it. My own son, Oliver James Lewis Featherstone, has the Lewis in memory of LWG (conveniently, it was also my wife's maiden name).

LWG said little about his past to his new family (born in Kinver and had a brother) and much assumption and conjecture grew up. Part of this indicated that he had served in France during WW1 (not an unreasonable assumption I guess) but he did not speak of this to his wife or daughters. Having a strong interest in military history myself, I had often wondered what he might have told me had we overlapped longer. This started me on the trail of LWG's military records which, of course, do not exist. I was aware of the possibility of a name change but I thought that this was a simple matter of the adoption of "Welsford" (as rendered on his marriage and death certs) and, ever short of time and expertise, I engaged Geraldine's help. On his marriage cert, LWG declared his father as Samuel Harding Griffith (deceased - but now we know he was not), a grocer. Geraldine's work led to SHS and thence to you.

I hope that we can correspond and combine SHS's life with LWG's so that we can all see the full picture. Clearly there are many mysteries here and some may be lost in time. You have LWG leaving Kinver in 1920 and I cannot put him in East Anglia until c1929 so there may be a gap here. In the meantime, if I might be excused some questions, I should be very grateful to know:- Anything you can tell me about SHS's military history, if any. Family rumour had LWG serving in India but that might have been a blanking device for his earlier life. Does anyone on your side survive who knew SHS? Any idea why SHS should abandon his family? I note that they all drank. LWG only drank beer, wine or port, never spirits, and only on major social occasions and at Christmas. Perhaps he had seen drink do harm or was afraid of (re)addiction Why change his name at all, and why to LWG? Did any relative of yours have a cat called Sexy in the 1970s? A bizarre question which I ask because LWG's widow received in the late 70's or early 80 before her own death, a letter from someone unknown to her but who appeared to know her. The only thing we remember is that the writer appeared to be female and have a cat called Sexy - presumably interesting to call in at night! I wonder if the

Most of your questions can be answered by you reading the statement he made on my great-aunt Mary's death. I lived with her quite a lot after my mother died but I was only 3 so the question never arose. So – if you let me have your address I will send you a copy.

There is no-one left alive who knew him – my cousin Mary (actually my father's cousin) is the eldest at 84 and she was not born until after he left home. I do remember her mother (my great-aunt Amy) telling me once back in the 50s that she was still in touch with his daughters.

Did Geraldine send you the Gedcom file of this branch of the family? If you don't have a computer program for genealogy I could send you a printout. I also have pictures of him when young and of his parents.

Finally, we have always wondered why he chose the names he did – none of them have any connection with the Swinnertons. I shall look forward to hearing from you again.

Iain,

Many thanks for your prompt response. I hope that whatever renders you hors de combat at the moment will be rapidly repulsed.

My address is: 6, Nursery Close, Hook, Hants. RG27 9QX. Tel 01256 764619. I'll look forward with great anticipation to receiving the statement. I had assumed it to be a short piece along the lines of "I used to be SHS, now I am LWG" but it must contain more.

My mother recalls a trip to Kinver, presumably that on which LWG made the statement. LWG was accompanied by his wife and daughters. They were driven by Mr. Larry Wyatt, my mother's boyfriend at the time as LWG was not known to drive. Larry is still in occasional contact with my mother and she asked him about the trip on my behalf as part of this enquiry. He knew nothing of the business done there as he, Frances Mary (aka Mary) and Emily toured while LWG saw the solicitor. They made the trip into a short break.

Incidentally, Larry remembers LWG with great affection and gratitude. LWG got him a job at the local Post Office (capacity unspecified) and he rose into regional senior management before retiring early to travel. His son has followed in his footsteps.

While LWG was not known to drive cars, we believe that he had a motorcycle at some point (reportedly bought for him by his father), and toured on it. He retained an interest in motorcycles.

Geraldine has not sent me the Gedcom file as I cannot read it. She will incorporate it in her report and has drawn upon it in producing a (much pruned) Swinnerton family tree which she hand delivered last evening. Geraldine is enthused by this project finding it much more interesting than much of her work. I'd appreciate a full printout. Thank you.

Interesting that your great aunt reported contact with Emily/Mary in the 50s. My mother does not recall this. I have not asked Mary as she



# £35,000 record hope as 'Joan' goes up for sale



**RICHARD BARTON**

A WORLD record price for a painting by Manchester's greatest female artist, Annie Swynnerton, is likely to be set at auction.

Her painting of Joan of Arc is tipped to sell for up to £35,000 at Sotheby's in London on December 14.

This would easily smash the existing record for a Swynnerton picture of £7,170 – paid at Sotheby's in 2002 for her 1883 painting *Oleander*.

It is not clear yet whether Manchester Art Gallery will bid.

It already owns 16 Swynnertons, reckoned to be the finest collection of the artist's work.

Yet despite her importance, only one is on display.

Andrew Loukes, a fine art curator at the gallery, said: "Annie Swynnerton is certainly the most important Mancunian female artist of all time."

Swynnerton, born in Hulme in 1844, became the first woman to be elected as an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1922. And she became only the third woman to become a member of the Royal Academy.

Only 34 women have been elected RAs or ARAs in 238 years.

When her painting of Joan of Arc last came up for sale in 1981, it fetched just £750. It is thought to have been painted in the early 1900s.

**STUDY IN OIL** Annie Swynnerton's Joan of Arc is expected to set a world record when it goes for sale

expressed disapproval of my research, and genealogy in general, when I asked if she could assist. She reported knowing nothing of LWG's military history and considered that he would be untraceable as he had changed his name (Emily did not know this). Mary is not aware that this work has continued. A lovely lady and favourite aunt with some fixed ideas. Alternatively, she may know something which she considers might cause discomfort were it known and be seeking to protect. Such findings must always be a risk in this business. I take the view that nothing changes the person I knew. My mother is very interested, her only negative feelings being disappointment on finding that she had grandparents she never knew and sympathy for them over the loss of their children and grandchildren.

I have pictures of LWG in later life, perhaps we can exchange copies. It looks as if the choice of LWG will remain a mystery. There must be something behind such a distinctive name, or perhaps he just liked the sound of it!

These are a few vignettes prompted by your e-mail, we can complete the picture in a more structured way in due course.

Samuel is interesting. How did he function as a blind grocer? Do you have any idea what work SHS was doing when he left? Look forward to hearing from you again.

best regards,

Richard

Iain,

Would you like any copy documents (eg marriage and death certs, WW2 ARP document etc) or photographs from Sidney's time as Lewis? If you would and can let me know by Thursday I can start to arrange them. We have a sepia photograph of a young Sidney/Lewis in which it is unusually difficult to age him other than c25. Its a singleton shot in what appears to semi-formal clothing for the time (ie jacket, collar and tie but probably not a suit - "Sunday best" of the 1920s? It will be interesting to see if you have the same one. I think it must have been taken in the 1920s yet it seems odd that a man opting out of his previous life should either take a photograph of himself with him or commission one if operating alone in the world. All part of the mystery!

Kind regards, Richard

Iain,

I attach a copy of Sidney/Lewis' death certificate which is the only document I have in soft copy. You will see that his employment is recorded as a railway clerk (rtd). To the best of my knowledge, he worked for BR so that must have been post 1948. I gather that at some point S/L suffered financial difficulty as a result of a failed business



attempt, with an associate, to purchase and sell on used railway sleepers (enough difficulty for the prospect of a part legacy in Kinver to prompt a return?). At the time of his marriage, he describes his employment as a "gardener (domestic)" on the Needham Estate, Friday Bridge, Norfolk (now Cambs.). My grandmother was a nursery nurse there until her marriage, her father was a chauffeur. I think he later worked for a Wisbech company called Osborne's which ran a large furniture and carpet shop. He retained a connection there after retirement - I recall that he arranged a bright red carpet for my bedroom when I was first allowed to choose one. My memory of him seems exceptional given that he died a week before my fourth birthday.

Cause of death was a coronary following on from long term heart weakness - by legend, rather than his own word I believe, caused by repeated attacks of malaria?! Dr Hall-Smith was a prominent Wisbech GP, I remember him treating me for an ear infection when I was a child!

I hope the above adds colour to the document and that we can put the story together in a structured way later. If you let me have your address, I shall be able to send you a couple more items next week. I'll look for photographs too but that will take a little longer.

best regards, Richard

Iain,

Very many thanks for your efforts here.

As you say, the statement answers most of my questions and sits well with everything that we know and have found out. I presume that the white protection card and C3 grading mean that Sidney did not get his medical cat? He must have been disappointed by that. Given my own MoD employment, RAuxAF commission, and interest in matters military, I find that the original target of my research (Sidney's military history) is not there, but the project is interesting and rewarding nonetheless. It is good to know more about my grandfather. Lewis did not make up a military history for himself, he simply indicated his view that war was a terrible thing and did not talk about WW1. Others assumed the rest. I had to look up Varicocele and wonder if its hereditary. If you will pardon the personal detail, I have long suffered from an occasional discomfort which sounds like that which one might imagine would be produced by the dictionary definition but defies any real modern diagnosis. The RAuxAF does not mind!

Richard

Category C3 would have meant he was totally unfit for active service. The protection certificate was for him to produce when required to prove he was exempt from service. Also to protect him from those young ladies who went around distributing white feathers!

Attached is a very rough scan of the only pictures of SHS and family I have. The two of him were obviously taken when he was very young, my father always said he was a very good looking young man and spoiled! The lady is your great-grandmother, sadly I do not have a picture of Samuel. When we get together I will bring the family album - I have lots of photographs of your great-great-uncles and their families. I must also tell you the reason behind the 'Harding'.  
All for now  
Iain

Iain,

Many thanks again. Had to slip plans to see my mother by a day so I can show her a print, which is not too bad on an old ordinary printer, of these photos. I'll e-mail them to a friend who can print them on photo quality paper. The scan looks good. I wonder if he knew he had the medical condition before the examination. It didn't stop him working hard in life but presumably it was one of those things which the military would  
Richard

Iain,

I told my mother (Emily) the full story and showed her the documents and photographs at the weekend. She is impressed with progress. We also selected 4 good photographs of LWG covering the period from the early 30s to 1969 and identified a shop in Wisbech which will scan, print and burn to disk. My mother will have this done and post the disc (I'd better make it 2 in separate postings!) to me idc. I'll download and e-mail to you. We also have what I think might be the photograph of SHS to which he, as LWG, refers in the affidavit. Perhaps his family gave it to him when he went to Kinver/Stourbridge. This will be copied too. Mum will also check back issues of the local paper in the local library (which she headed before mat leave with me, and returned to part time later) in order to find the advertisement which found LWG in 1950.

When I have a little more time, I shall go through the affidavit and comment on it for you.

A correction to my previous comments on LWG's later career - the furniture company for which he worked in Wisbech was Green(h)alls, not Osbornes. He kept their books until well after retirement, working 4 days per week to maintain mental stimulation. I knew him so well because I saw him every day for 4 years. He would walk to my parent's house (Mum is still there) from his own further along the road for 0800 so that my father could drop him off in Wisbech before driving on to his own office (accounts for Coleman's the mustard people at the time) in Peterborough. On Wednesdays (closing day in Wisbech) LWG would collect me and we would walk to his house hand in hand with me



chattering away at him all the time! He would exhort my mother to buy me steak.

Thank you again for getting the paperwork to me in time.  
best regards, Richard

So – a mystery solved, a man's search for his true ancestry completed and we have a new member!

Bad eyesight and even blindness in my branch of the family has been a curse for at least four generations. When Samuel went blind, he had to abandon his grocery shop but moved over to the other side of High Street, Kinver and took over a newsagents and tobacconists! In the 70s it was still referred to by some older inhabitants of the village as 'Swinerton's' although Samuel had been dead for 50 years. He must have been quite a character.

We may never have discovered all this had it not been for the kindness of our family solicitor Colin Clarke, a contemporary of mine at school, who, when having a turnout preparatory to moving to larger premises, found the family deed box and, knowing my interest in family history, passed it on to me instead of disposing of it. I wonder how many families have been so lucky?



*Sydney Harding Swinnerton*

## **Elizabeth Mary Simpson**

Elizabeth died on the 28<sup>th</sup> January aged 83. She was not a member of our family but had very close connections with us as she was the first secretary of the Federation of Family History Societies when it was founded in 1974. I was the first Chairman and we worked very closely together for those first three formative years.

We started with just 11 societies but with her usual enthusiasm she set us a target of establishing a family history society in every county in the UK.

The organisation eventually spread overseas with member societies in America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. When I retired as its President in 1997 it had 237 member societies!

Her capacity for hard graft was incredible, she corresponded with societies and people all over the world as well as holding down a full-time job as secretary to five consultants.

Her letters were notorious, bubbling over with enthusiasm with great long sentences without any punctuation, branching off all over the place as new ideas struck her.

Elizabeth was also very good at personal contacts and had a wonderful way with people who often found themselves doing a job without consciously knowing they had been recruited.

On the podium, she was an equally entertaining and interesting speaker and I shall never forget her fascinating and funny talk on how she traced an ancestor to some Moroccan souk.

There is no doubt in my mind that all of us in the family history world owes a great debt to Elizabeth and that the Federation of Family History Societies has achieved its present eminence as a result of her early efforts. This was rightfully recognised by her election as a Fellow of the Society of Genealogists and a Vice-President of the Federation.

## **Change of Address**

Colonel Jeremy Swynnerton to

### **Family Tree Magazine March 2003**

'In 1961, just as I was about to enter the sixth form, the school (Haberdashers') upped and left "Hampstead" and re-established itself on a spacious green-field site near Elstree in Hertfordshire, a far-from-easy move which was orchestrated with military precision by the senior master "Uncle Bill" Crossman (a dweller by the cross – largely a Somerset surname). At Elstree, the headmaster's father –in-law suddenly became very much in evidence, organising the occasional dig and much else. This was Professor Henry Hurd Swynnerton (1875-1966), formerly of the University of Nottingham, whose surname would become very familiar to me in later years thanks to my friendship with Colonel Iain Swynnerton, former President of the Federation of Family History Societies. Family history coincidences being what they are, I suppose I shouldn't have been surprised when Iain told me that the worthy Professor is his first cousin once removed. Swynnerton is a place-name in Staffordshire: the earliest person known to have borne this surname in its present form is Robert de Swynnerton, who held the manor of Swynnerton from 1190 to 1203, but there is also a reference to a Robert de Sylvereston even earlier in the year 1185'.

**Searching for Surnames** by John Titford was published by |Countryside Books in 2002.



This is the last Journal I shall produce as an officer of the society. Since I founded the society in 1974, I have done every in the organisation, sometimes, particularly in the early years, several together! I have been secretary, treasurer (three times) membership secretary, chairman and president. Now, after 33 years, it is time to step down and hand over to the next generation. I shall continue to edit the journal as long as I can (this is my 147<sup>th</sup>) and hope you will continue to send me articles, extracts from the newspapers, photographs etc. Thank you to all of you who have supported me over the years and I shall look forward to seeing you from time to time at our Gatherings.

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*A Bloor Derby Armorial part service circa 1821 sold for £2280.*

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