

*The
Swinnerton
Saga*



The original arms of Swynnerton of Swynnerton

THE JOURNAL OF SWINNERTON FAMILY HISTORY

VOLUME 15. NO. 12

AUGUST 2015

Annie Swynnerton's Paintings – No.21



Geoffrey and Christopher Heringham

1889

Oil on canvas
91.5 x 91.5 cms.

Royal Holloway, University of London
Accession No. P1367

THE SWINNERTON SAGA

VOLUME 15 NUMBER 12
AUGUST 2015

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Editor: Col LS Swynnerton,

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Red binders with gold-blocked badge and title for the *Swinnerton Saga* and
back copies may be obtained from Mrs Margaret Antill
(see back cover)

From the Editor

This, as you all know, is my last *Saga*. Having produced a regular newsletter or journal for 40 years, at 83 it is time for me to go. I have to admit that the last few issues have taken me longer and longer to produce – two operations in the last two years on my shoulder have made typing much more difficult..

As I said in my editorial in the last *Saga*, we exchange magazines with several other One-Name Societies and in most of them I frequently see contributions from members telling the story of their own family. Sadly, this is very rare in this society but this now has to change because, as you will read in the Chairman's message, and as I emphasised at the AGM, although my son has volunteered to take over from me as no-one else volunteered, (there was no pressure from me!) he has made it clear that he will not write it as I have done but will put together material sent in and set it up for the printers.

I am in the process of compiling a digital archive of the historical material in my files, much of which has never been published, which he will be able to draw on but we need family stories as well and the emphasis in future will be on accounts of the historical family balanced by the personal stories of members of the present-day family - you, your parents, grand-parents and other relations

Present at the AGM, as I told the assembly, were variously, a member who had fenced for England and communicated with people all over the world as an amateur radio operator, another had preserved a steam railway in America and now worked as a volunteer on a preserved railway in this country. There was also a member who had served for many years as a policeman (I am sure he has lots of stories to tell) and a long association with police football, a couple had served all over the world with the World Health Organisation, a member who had served with the Paras and a former Tax Inspector who must have received some very amusing reasons why tax returns had not been sent in on time just as I did, during my time on the Bench, for why people had been caught speeding- it was very difficult to keep a straight face sometimes.

So - the future of *Saga* is in your hands, if the contributions do not come in it will fold. You all have stories to tell so send them in – by email, typed or hand-written, all will be welcome. I was encouraged when a couple of members came up to me after the meeting and said they had no idea we wanted that sort of material – I shall look forward to reading their stories and, yes, I will contribute some myself.

Thank you to all of you who have supported me over the years.

Iain



THE CHAIRMAN'S PAGE

It was great that 44 members booked to attend the Gathering on 6th June, particularly as this was the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the society. As always it was a great opportunity to catch up with old friends and meet new ones. It proved to be a most enjoyable and successful event and an account of the day is included in this edition of the *Saga*.

We received the excellent news during the AGM that, although Iain is retiring as editor of the *Saga*, the job will be kept in the family as his son Alastair has volunteered to take on the responsibility. We thank Alastair very much for agreeing to accept this role which is so important to the Society.

However, for the *Saga* to grow and develop we would like to receive more articles related to members' interests and activities so it becomes very much a publication of the living history of our extended family. I would encourage everyone, therefore, to keep Alastair updated with events, interests, achievements or activities of your own families, or maybe even items of interest you have found during your own research.

Please also continue to encourage the younger members of your families to join the Society- that is the only way it can survive into the future.

In our fortieth year, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Iain for his leadership of the Society during this time, for all the help he has given others in their research and for bringing so many members of the family together across the world..

Best wishes to everyone for an enjoyable summer as the holiday season approaches.

Julian



Lunch in the village hall at the AGM.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Swinnerton Family Society held on 6th June 2015 at Swynnerton

PRESENT:

Ian and Margaret Antill,, John and Mary Antill, Brian Swinnerton, Mandy Smith, Ray and Shelagh Swinnerton, Iris and Brenda Crouch, Julian and Elaine Hawley, Elizabeth and Keith Livesey, Christine Stones, Peter Swinnerton, Valerie and Hans Dall, Anne and Will Hooley, Denise Bullock,, Alan and Myrna Jones, Mike and Linda Swinnerton, Gail, Rowan and Claire Swinnerton, Joan Jones, Rosalie Price, Tony and Gwen McClure, Geoff and Carole Swinnerton, Brenda and Malcolm Smith, Iain Swinnerton, Rachel Dale.

1 WELCOME

The meeting commenced at 11.25 and all present were welcomed by the Chairman, Julian Hawley. As this was the fortieth anniversary of the society, the President, Iain Swinnerton, was asked to say a few words on his experiences during this time. Geoff Swinnerton formally thanked Iain, on behalf of the society, for all his hard work over the years.

2 APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Angela Swinnerton and Roger and Elizabeth Swinnerton.

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting on 14th June 2014 were approved.

4 MATTERS ARISING

There were none.

5 TREASURER'S REPORT – Margaret Antill

The accounts had been examined by an independent examiner and had been found to be correct and in order. They reflected an excess of expenditure over income of £418. This shortfall had been predicted by our former treasurer at the AGM on 14th June 2014 and hopefully the actions taken at that time, namely the issuing of only three Sagas a year and to keep the number of pages to 24 plus a cover to reduce both printing and postage costs did and will continue to ease the situation. Members had been asked if they wished to receive the Saga electronically but the overwhelming number were against this method. The production costs will reduce a further £200 in 2015 meaning subscriptions will almost cover in full the printing and posting of the Saga. Whilst the Jeremy Swinnerton legacy has kept the society solvent, it will enable research to continue.

The committee will continue to monitor the situation and keep members advised. The Treasurer proposed that £3000 should be allocated for research and this was approved. Alan Jones asked how it was possible to access the research that was

being done and Iain explained that a new digital archive was being prepared which could be made available to members on DVD.

6 MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT – Ray Swinnerton

Current membership totalles 89, made up of UK 59, Australia 11, Canada 7, USA 9, Denmark 2, South Africa 1. This is a reduction of 10 on the previous year as a result of deaths and members not rejoining. The importance of new members joining the society if it is to survive was emphasised.

7 UPDATE ON THE WEBSITE – John Swinnerton

It was confirmed that there was a lot of work to do on the website as there was now only a limited amount available to see on thereat present. John advised on projects to link names with articles in the Saga and where feasible, to link trees together. Brian Swinnerton said he would help work with the website and Alan Jones suggested some of the money allocated for research might be used.

8 UPDATE ON CURRENT RESEARCH – Brian Swinnerton

The most recent research work had covered the family in Ireland. In 1649 Cromwell had been forced to give land in Ireland to his officers in lieu of pay, one of whom was a Captain Swinnerton. There were now six separate Irish trees making things very complicated but, so far, no link had been made to this man. A lot of records had unfortunately been lost during the troubles.

9 VACANCIES FOR SECRETARY AND SAGA EDITOR

Unfortunately no one had volunteered for the position of Secretary so Julian Hawley confirmed he would continue in that role as well as Chairman. Better news was given in respect of the editor of Saga. Iain's son Alastair had agreed to take on the role as long as he received support from members in the form of articles related to their activities, interests and family research. Iain was requested to pass on the Society's thanks to Alastair for his willingness to become involved.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

In recognition of her contribution to the society over many years by herself and, before her, her mother, Marjorie Nightingale, it was approved that Glenda Simpson of Australia be appointed a Vice President of the society

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as June 4th 2016, venue to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 12.20pm.

Swinnerton \Family Society
Summary of Accounts for year ending 31 December 2014

<u>Receipts</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>
Subscriptions received	1231.00	1035.05
Overseas subscriptions	282.65	
Float paid to bank	80.00	
Jeremy's Legacy (Balance)		1232.45
	<u>1573.66</u>	<u>2266.90</u>
<u>Payments</u>		
Saga Printing	881.60	636.46
Saga Postage	295.58	262.33
Research costs	367.41	477.80
Other postage	37.28	
FFHS Subscriptions (2years)	73.72	40.28
Subscriptions to Ancestry	116.65	
AGM donation to St Mary's	25.00	
Conversion of non-UK cheques	12.00	
2015 Gathering deposit	25.00	
	<u>1809.04</u>	<u>1435.87</u>
Receipts	1573.65	
Less expenditure	1809.04	
Excess of expenditure over income	<u>235.39</u>	
Balance at 01.01.2014		
Bank	4646.45	
Add income	1573.65	
	<u>6220.10</u>	
Less expenditure	1809.04	
Bank balance 31.12.2014	<u>4411.06</u>	
Bank 01.01 2015	5108.03	
Less uncleared cheques	462.38	
	<u>4646.45</u>	

THE TRIENNIAL GATHERING

The Fortieth Anniversary Gathering of the Swinnerton Family Society took place in Swynnerton, the village of our ancestors, on 6th June. Forty four members of the Swinnerton family from Great Britain, Denmark and South Africa booked to attend. Our theme for the event was "Swinnertons at War", commemorating the anniversary of the First World War.

We congregated from around 10.00am in the church hall for tea and coffee. This was a great opportunity to meet family we already knew from previous gatherings and also to welcome those attending for the first time. We all then moved to the church of St Mary's for a short service of worship led by our chaplain, the Revd Rachel Livesey. This was a lovely service and we thank Rachel who also had to carry out a wedding ceremony at her own church on the same day!

The service was followed by our Annual General Meeting. Minutes of the last meeting were read and approved and current officers agreed to continue in their roles. The financial position of the society was discussed, and a sum of money allocated for continued family research. As this was the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the Society, Iain Swinnerton was formally thanked for all the work he had done over the years and was asked to give a short summary of the important milestones over that period.

After the AGM we walked across the village to the village hall where information on the family and family trees were available. In addition there was an exhibition of World War One memorabilia and information on members of the family who had served in that war and some who sadly never returned home. There were also displays of family history and Swinnerton pottery by Malcolm and Brenda Smith and Geoff and Carol Swinnerton. John Antill again demonstrated his Swinnerton family tree database which he projected onto a screen so people asking questions could clearly see the results of their enquiries.

Everyone then sat down together to enjoy a delightful two course lunch, served by most attentive catering staff. During lunch we were able to chat and enjoy sharing stories about the family and updates on research people had been doing.

After lunch we were treated to an excellent talk by Alan Rawlings on the history of Swynnerton village. His infectious enthusiasm for, and detailed knowledge of, his subject was wonderful and made his talk most fascinating and informative. Even people who have a detailed knowledge of the family said they had learnt new things.

There was a really friendly atmosphere throughout the day which, as is usual at Swinnerton family gatherings, helped to make our event another happy and enjoyable occasion.

Elaine Hawley

Time Travel: - a talk given by Alan Rawlings, at the Annual General Meeting

We've all read stories or seen movies and TV programmes about it, and many of us fantasise at length on the possibilities (or impossibilities) of travelling either to the past or the future. In a way, twice a year we do a little bit of time travelling when we put the clocks forward or back. And travellers around the world regularly time travel by crossing the International Date Line. I always wanted to travel on Concorde across the Atlantic because if the weather was good one could land in New York almost an hour before one took off at Heathrow.

This afternoon I want to time travel in our imaginations as we look at the history of St Mary's church, the village within which it sits and the people who lived in the village.

We know little of this area before the middle Saxon period, but there are Iron Age camp sites and ancient high status burial mounds in the vicinity of Swynnerton. With its dominating height and focal point for travel routes on high ground the village had significant strategic importance.

But let's engage our time machine: I want to start with a huge leap backwards in time to the 7th century.

Wes thu hal (Hello)

Until the middle of the century the kingdom of Mercia was dominated by its northerly neighbour the kingdom of Northumbria, but following an enormous battle in 654 the dominance of the northern king was broken and Mercia began a century of great power. The first king to enjoy this power was Wulfhere and he built a strongly defended palace on Bury Bank overlooking the navigable River Trent. The local Thanes were the guardians of Wulfhere's northern border and what later became the Swynnerton estates were well-favoured by Wulfhere from his capital at Tamworth.

In about 670 Wulfhere became a Christian and he requested a Bishop for his kingdom. Chad was installed as Bishop of Mercia in 670 and Wulfhere donated land at Lichfield for Chad to establish a monastery. The king was a fickle individual and promptly reverted to being a pagan, making Chad's job very much more difficult! We know from Bede's writings that Chad disliked riding horses and walked everywhere, so it doesn't tax our imagination too much to see Chad visiting Wulfhere's palace at Bury Bank and the local Thanes on the high ground at Swynnerton. There could well have been a wooden chapel built here alongside the path, at which Chad rested, prayed and taught the newly-Christian Mercians.

God the mid sie (Goodbye)

If we nudge our time machine just 200 years later we might well see King Alfred's daughter Ethelfleda visiting this strategically important area from her war capital at Tamworth as she establishes strongholds in preparation for her battles with the Norsemen who have conquered the lands to the north.

Alongside the path on the high ground the wooden Saxon church has gradually been replaced with a stone building. We can only imagine how services would have been conducted in those Saxon days, but Bede tells us that priests taught the Gospels in the language of the local people, probably an early version of the Potteries dialect!

Revvng up our time machine for another 2 century jump forward we come to a stop in 1066 following the invasion of the Normans. King William's armies marched north in their infamous "harrowing of the north", scouring the country of any opposition. Because of its strategic importance to the Saxon kings this area suffered badly with most buildings being destroyed and the population being decimated, which could explain why almost all traces of the Saxon chapel have disappeared.

King William rested at Stafford in 1070 and rewarded many of his Norman followers with land. Robert de Tournay became the first Lord Stafford and Count of Staffordshire with over 100 manors to his name, one of which was Swynnerton. Robert gave manors to most of his relatives and we now read of Aslem or Alan de Swynnerton and his brother Brian de Standon.

Alan de Swynnerton asserted his control over the manor by marrying Stenulf the daughter of the Saxon lord of Tittensor and building a castle just down the hill, with a large keep surrounded by a moat that never dried up. He also built a church dedicated to St Mary. Some of the stonework of that first church can be found in the West doorway, as can also be seen Saxon stonework from that earlier, demolished chapel. Incidentally, Swynnerton Castle was occupied until the 1640s. It was finally demolished in 1760 together with the cottages around Castle Lake and the stone incorporated into the building of the new village. When the lake was drained and dredged in 1938 the substantial foundations of the castle were revealed.

Our time machine now takes us to Old Sarum in Wiltshire in the year 1087. We can peer over William's shoulder as he studies the Domesday Book entry for Swynnerton: "It comprises 2 Hides or 8 Caracutes was held by Broder who was free. It is now held under Robert by Aslem."
[A caracute is about 100 acres, in other words the amount of land that can be tilled by a plough and 8 oxen in a year]. "There is land for 8 ploughs. In demesne is one

plough.”[This is the land that is exclusively for the use of the Lord of the manor and all tenants and workers are obliged to farm the land for the Lord],

“The 10 villeins and 5 boarders have 6 ploughs.”[In other words tenant farmers and workers]“There are 10 acres of meadow, and woodland 1 league long and 1 league wide [about 3 square miles]. It is valued at 40s.”

There is no record of a priest or a church but we can explain why that is so.

Let’s skip a few years in our time machine to the new Norman church of the 1150s. You wouldn’t be sitting in “comfortable” pews – you would be standing as the priest chanted the service. We even know the priest’s name: Osbert, and there was another Osbert who assisted him. The church would be dark, with small, shuttered, unglazed windows, and stone cold. In the gloom we can see that the internal walls are painted with suitably terrifying visions of Hell and delightful visions of Heaven. The priest would be chanting in Latin and would only be understood by the lord of the manor and his family, whose usual language would have been French. The chant would be metered and some parts of it might be even be familiar today, through tunes such as GUADETE (although the words and music that we now know weren’t published until the 1590s).

Let’s stick with the Swynnertons for a while: Robert de Swynnerton accompanied King Richard I to the Holy land in 1190 and had to sell much of his estates in Lincolnshire to pay for his return when Richard abandoned the crusade. Robert died in 1224 and was succeeded by his son John who also went as a crusader to the Holy Land. On his safe return from crusade a grateful John de Swynnerton undertook the rebuilding of the church. When he died in 1254 his wife, the lady Margaret, erected John’s tomb that can still be seen towards the East end of the church.

Still shivering with the cold of 1150, let’s pause in the church of the 1250s. This is the church that John built: John de Swynnerton that is. It’s larger, full of light now that full-size windows have been added, and the walls and pillars are brightly painted with bible scenes, to reinforce the stories that the priest tells. John’s son Roger and his son Stephen weren’t of the same character: their neighbours (the de Meres, the Hattons, the Whytmores and the Chorletons) spent the next 30 years trying to grab parcels of land from the de Swynnertons, albeit unsuccessfully. Then in the 1280s was born one of the two most memorable de Swynnertons: Roger.

Roger de Swynnerton became a favourite of King Edward I during the war against the Scots and in 1306, for his loyalty, a Charter was granted for the village of Swynnerton.

Roger’s status grew steadily: in 1308 he was Governor of Stafford, in 1311 Governor of Harlech castle, in 1322 Constable of the Tower of London. He fought in the

Scottish wars in the 1330s and in 1337 was raised to the peerage as the first Baron Swynnerton just before his death in 1338.

Let’s time jump again, just a few years to 1349. William de Blorton is the presbyter supervising the church; but not for long. He dies before 1350, most likely of the Black Death as it passes through Staffordshire on its way north. Imagine the fear that the villagers feel as they pray in this church for salvation from the pestilence, and all the time the fleas that carry the plague hop from one member of the congregation to another.

Another time jump, but this time forwards and sideways to the town of Poitiers in France in September 1356. The Hundred Years War is raging and Sir Roger Swynnerton’s son, Sir Thomas, is fighting alongside his brother-in-law the Black Prince. After fighting together at the Battle of Crecy and the siege of Calais, Sir Thomas is one of the Prince’s closest friends. During the Battle of Poitiers the French King John is captured and is put in the care of Sir Thomas.

We follow Sir Thomas back to England where King John is imprisoned in the Tower of London. However, he is soon released as a guest of Sir Thomas and comes to live at Eccleshall castle and Swynnerton Castle. Although King John’s ransom is never paid, before he leaves Swynnerton he donates a large sum of money to St Mary’s and the Church of the Holy Trinity in Eccleshall. With this money Sir Thomas builds a chapel on the south side of the church.

By the 1350s the services held in the church have become more structured but are still held in Latin. But King Edward III has ended the use of French at the Court and English has become the language of both the rich and the poor. Songs were becoming popular, spread by travelling players. Incidentally, we know that the more refined the audience, the more obscene was the language used by the players, much to their audience’s delight. Poor people would have learned folk songs although they would have a religious flavour.

Having left one war let’s take a hundred year time jump forward to the opening stages of another war. It’s a damp Sunday morning, the 23rd of September 1459. James Touchet, Lord Audley, has gathered his forces some 10 miles from here at Blore Heath in support of the ailing Lancastrian King Henry VI and his wife Queen Margaret of Anjou. Audley is hoping to ambush a Yorkist force, but the Yorkists, although heavily outnumbered, inflict a defeat on Audley’s men. Although we have no knowledge of Baron Swynnerton’s political leanings, it is likely that a local muster had been called and local men might well have been involved in the battle. The Wars of the Roses then continued intermittently for the next 26 years.

With a shudder, let's set the time machine for another jump this time, to the 16th century. If we hop through the century we'll stop at 1530, just before King Henry severed his links with Rome. The church building has changed little since John de Swynnerton's build of 1250 (other than the chapel sponsored by the French King John and built by Sir Thomas) but the interior has changed enormously. The wealth brought to this area and to the Swynnertons by the wool trade has enabled the decoration to become even brighter and more elaborate: there are statues, wall hangings, valuable plate ware. Sir John Nowell, the parson, has no idea of the changes to come in his time at St Mary's.

If we nip forward a mere 20 years to 1550 we notice a huge change: gone are the wall paintings and the images that to King Henry VIII and King Edward VI reeked of Rome. Poor Sir John Nowell: no sooner has he introduced the new Prayer Book and removed all the images when Queen Mary ascends the throne and he's forced to put them back and burn the Prayer Book. Sir John died an exhausted man 2 years later. His successor, William Cureton, lasted less than a year in the post, probably dying from the flu epidemic that swept through Staffordshire in 1555. His successor in post, William Rydware, had a similar problem to that of Sir John Nowell: he had to oversee the ending of Roman Catholic worship and the introduction of the Book of Common Prayer following Queen Elizabeth's accession to the throne and the Act of Uniformity in 1559.

Change in the village also came about with the marriage of Elizabeth Swynnerton to William Fitzherbert. The surname might have changed but the Baronacy of Swynnerton remained in the family.

Jumping forward another few years to 1585 we find that the church tower with its 4 bells has doubled in height and the oak screen has been installed (without embellishment you'll notice). The tower, by the way, has only just been made secure. John Mason and Nicholas Mason have recently been sued for installing poor foundations, thus causing some of the tower to collapse.

The biggest visible change in the church is the presence of benches and pews. In addition to the services in the Book of Common Prayer, priests were encouraged to read out religious tracts and to discuss themes from the bible. The result was that the length of services multiplied significantly. Moreover, for the first time families were encouraged to worship together. Seating became essential. Our time machine is impatient to move on and so we jump forward almost 60 years to 1643 in the early days of the English Civil War. The Fitzherbert family is loyal to the Crown and a small force of poorly armed men is gathered to defend the village against Parliamentary troops led by Colonel Stone. After a brief skirmish at Bury

Bank the Parliamentarians are successful and they descend on Swynnerton intent of punishing those who oppose them. The manor house and Swynnerton Castle are burned and reduced to rubble, most of which is probably taken by locals for building purposes.

In a quick hop of only 8 years we appear in 1651. King Charles I has been executed, Parliament has won 2 rounds of the Civil War and now a Royalist Scottish army has invaded. In early August the Scots were at Congleton and passed within a hair's breadth of Swynnerton on their way south to defeat at the Battle of Worcester. The villagers are all gathered in the sanctuary of the church hoping and praying that the armies will pass by. The rector, Thomas Pickin, is calming his flock, but at least they've now got benches to sit on! Let's leave their cries of relief as they discover that the Scots have bypassed Swynnerton.

The coming of non-conformism provided numerous opportunities for different styles of worship. Even ale-houses provided a venue for people to gather and sing their praises.

In recent months I've done some of my own time-travelling by looking through the Swynnerton parish records held at Stafford covering the years 1558 to 1837. With some missing chunks in the 17th century, all the baptisms, marriages and burials at St Mary's have been noted. The first baptism to be recorded is that of Ales, the daughter of Richard and Elisabeth Heathe on 4th August 1558 (in the closing months of Queen Mary's reign). Sadly, on 12th December 1558, in the first month of Queen Elizabeth's reign, the burial of little Ales is recorded. On a happier note, the second baptism to be recorded, on 1st September 1558 was that of Isobell, the daughter of Thomas and Isobell Beardmore. A couple of pages further on in the records is noted the marriage on 6 September 1576 of the same Isobell to Richard Eliat, just a few days after her 18th birthday.

There were some mysteries in the parish records: the annual number of burials varies between 16 and 21, but in 1728 that number soars to 28. The Rector, Edmund Ryves signed the record for the month of October 1728, and sadly his name is noted as the next burial on 4th November. In 1729 there were 34 burials recorded, including that of William Jarvis, the new Rector who had only been in post for less than a year. Whatever this epidemic was, it ends in 1730 when there were only 16 burials recorded.

The number of baptisms is also interesting: the number steadily rises from 1738 when there were 18 baptisms, to 1785 when there were 29 to 1797 when there were 32. This increase in baptisms comes at a time when the demand for food is growing in the cities in which the industrial revolution is beginning. To produce this food there is an

agricultural revolution that brings in the use of machinery, transport and the mass-production of food on enclosed private estates. Large numbers of agricultural labourers are required but, to maximise profits, landowners pay appallingly low wages.

But not everyone dies young from overwork. In January 1830 Elizabeth Lees of Swynnerton dies at the ripe old age of 98! In the final year of records held at Stafford there were 4 baptisms. One of those was of Henrietta, the daughter of a labourer Thomas and his wife Elizabeth Challinor, a name familiar to villagers today.

Back in our time machine we'll skip to 1853. Other than the recasting of the original 4 church bells in 1812 and the purchase of 2 more by the Fitzherbert family, little has changed in the church. The poverty of the countryside over the past century has led to the fabric of the church being in very poor repair. Thomas Fitzherbert, however, is about to stump up the cash that will lead to enormous changes inside and outside the church. Pews will be installed, the damaged brick and stone work will be repaired, the huge window at the east end of the church will be installed in 1864 and significant design changes will take place. The rector, Reverend William Taylor, has just assumed the post that he will hold for 38 years, and in that time he'll not only see his church remodelled, but also the Chapel of Our lady of The Assumption built across the road in 1868.

Under the floor of the Lady Chapel are buried the remains of 16 members of the Fitzherbert family from 1612 to 1865, the last being the grand-daughter of the good Thomas who worked so hard to improve the church after 1856. But during the restoration work for which he had paid, an extraordinary discovery was made under the floor of the Lady Chapel. A seated figure of Christ some 8 feet high was found buried. The foreshortening of the body indicates that it was designed to be viewed from below. We do not know from where this 13th century figure came, perhaps Lichfield Cathedral, or why it was buried, perhaps to keep it safe during the years of the zealous church inspectors in the mid-16th century.

Also in the Lady Chapel against the far wall is the huge marble slab that was from the ancient altar. We have no idea how old this is. Could it even have come from the Saxon chapel that preceded the church that John built?

Our time machine speeds ahead to the 20th century only stopping briefly to watch the villagers celebrate the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897, and then to mourn her death less than 4 years later. But the smooth running of our time machine is deeply affected by the tumult that began 100 years ago last summer. The names of those from this parish who fell in the Great War are recorded on the tablet beside the south door of the church and on a window in the south aisle. Those names, and some others, are also recorded on the war memorial beside the road outside the church: as it

says "Their name liveth for evermore".

Our time machine stumbles again only 25 years later as a further conflict sweeps much of the world. After the British Army's retreat and extraordinary rescue from Dunkirk in May 1940, there was a fear of invasion. Even in Swynnerton, almost as far from the sea as it is possible to be, all those not engaged in the Services were called on to do their bit against a possible invasion.

Of all the sacrifices made by families during the Second World War the loss of family members was the most heart breaking. On a window in the Chancel is recorded the death during the war of the twin sons of the Rector John Brien Frith, one in Africa the other in Burma. Again: Their name liveth for evermore".

The first enormous modern change in the village had been the building of the new Hall in 1760, the demolition of the old castle and the moving of the village from the front of the hall to the rear so as not to spoil the view. The park had been remodelled by Capability Brown and his students and for almost 200 years little change took place in the village.

The second enormous modern change began in 1939: a huge ammunition factory was built at the bottom of the hill and thousands of workers moved in and out of the factory daily. To accommodate workers, a large camp, Frobisher Hall, was built alongside the cricket pitch and sprawled over the fields behind.

The third modern change created the village we see now after the grounds in and around the Hall's cottage garden were sold in the late 1960s and a large estate of houses was built. That process of expansion has continued piecemeal and continues today on the site of the short-lived school beside the cricket pitch.

Our time machine is now keen to return us to the present day and we come to a halt in this early summer of 2015. We have heating, electric lights, an organ, radio microphones: but the church of 1250 is still here. We don't own this place any more than previous generations have owned it. It is in our stewardship for the next and subsequent generations. I hope their time machines reveal us to have been good stewards.

* * * * *

The deadline for the December *Saga* is the 31st October. Articles should be sent to the new editor at

or by post to

All formats are welcome. For any enquiries about the *Saga* he can be contacted on or on his mobile on

THE HISTORY OF OUR FAMILY.

This *Saga* has not turned out to be anything like I had planned it to be, the account of the AGM minutes, accounts etc. took up much more room than I thought they would so there is not space for me to give you an update on where we had got to with the research into the branches of the family as I had intended.

Here, then, is a general introduction to the early family and I will continue the story in future issues (for which, no doubt our new editor will be grateful!).

The original history of our family was written by the Hon and Revd Canon G.T.O.Bridgman and was entitled *An Account of the Family of Swynnerton of Swynnerton and elsewhere in the County of Stafford*. It was published in 1886 as Part II of Volume VII of the *Collections for a History of Staffordshire* edited by the William Salt Archaeological Society.

However, in the list of contents to the volume, it was described as *A History of the family of Swynnerton of Swynnerton, and of the younger branches of the same family settled at Eccleshall, Hilton and Butterton*. To Bridgman's original manuscript were added a further 43 pages on the Swynnertons of Whitmore by the Rev Charles Swynnerton which included, not surprisingly, his own family who had settled at Betley, and further families at Chester, Yew Tree, Macclesfield, and Thurstfield.

George Thomas Orlando Bridgeman JP MA (1823 –1895) was a Church of England clergyman and antiquary, the second son of George Bridgeman, 2nd Earl of Bradford. He was educated at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge, and graduated MA in 1845. The title is misleading, the Bridgmans are a Shropshire family and it refers to the ancient hundred of Bradford in Shropshire and has nothing whatsoever to do with the Yorkshire city of Bradford. Orlando is a name that has been born in the family since at least 1606 and is still in use today.

After being ordained priest in 1850, he became successively Rector of Willey, Shropshire 1850-53; Blymhill, Staffordshire in 1853-64 (and Rural Dean of Brewood in 1863); and of Wigan, Lancashire from 1864 until his death in 1895. While at Wigan he also became an Honorary Canon of Chester Cathedral in 1872, then of Liverpool Cathedral following the creation of the latter diocese in 1880, which incorporated his parish. He was also chaplain to Queen Victoria from 1872. He was an early trustee of the William Salt Library, Stafford. He died at The Hall, Wigan, in 1895, aged seventy-two. The Bridgman family seat was in Weston Park in Staffordshire which accounts for his great interest in the history of the county although why he chose to research our family whose prominence was in the 12th and 13th centuries but not thereafter has always puzzled me.

He attributed the start of our family to Aslen (as spelled in the Staffordshire Domesday Book but variously spelled as Aselen. Eelen and other variations all of which are Norman French versions of Alan) who is listed in the great survey of 1086 as holding two hides of Robert de Stafford. He goes on to say that Aslen had a son Aslen, who died without issue before 1122, and so was succeeded by Robert fitz Aelen and possibly another of the same name but there is some doubt about this - experts say that fitz generally meant 'descendant of' and not necessarily 'son of'.

The first mention of a descendant of Alan named as Swynnerton occurs in 1190 when, according to Bridgman, Robert FitzEhlen above is described as de Swynnerton as a witness in a deed of Hervey Bagot. This Robert had two sons, Robert and John and a daughter. The eldest son Robert married a lady called Mabel: Bridgman says he died without any issue about 1245 and was succeeded by his brother John who married Margery *Heiress of Swynnerton* but this is very odd because John was the heir of Swynnerton and Bridgman does not explain how Margery had inherited..

The Revd Charles Swynnerton had some extra copies of this book printed and had them bound up a separate volume for distribution to members of his family. The first of these were distributed in 1887 for which he wrote a special introduction of six pages signed 'Charles Swynnerton, Oxford and Cambridge Club, 10th of August 1887'. The typeface and paper were identical with the main text and would appear to been produced by Harrison and Sons of London, the society's printer. In the following year he expanded this to 15 pages and signed it 'Charles Swynnerton, Sialkot, India'. From the typeface and paper it would appear that this was printed in India. The first part is virtually unchanged but the remainder sets out, in his own words, "to modify and amplify Canon Bridgman's conclusions".

He maintains that Robert did not die without issue but had a son by a first wife, also Robert de Swynnerton, who had a daughter Margery who married, as his second wife, John de Swynnerton, the son of Robert senior's second wife thus uniting the two branches of the family.

If all that sounds very complicated, this little table should make it clearer.

Aelen

Lord of the manor of Swynnerton in
The Domesday Book 1086, living 1136

Robert fitz Aelen
Occurs 1125-1159

Robert fitz Aelen also de Swynnerton
Occurs 1166-1190, died before 1199

Robert de Swynnerton= Mabel John de Swynnerton= Petronilla
Occurs 1199-1218. died about 1225

Robert de Swynnerton

(2) Margery = John de Swynnerton (1)= Eleanor de Peshale

By his first wife, John had a son Stephen and from him, Bridgman shows a clear descent to Humphrey Swynnerton of Swynnerton and Hilton (whose history I dealt with in the December 2014 issue of the *Saga*) the last of the ancient line who only had two daughters and no son to succeed him.

Swynnerton of Hilton

Another family line had been established by Stephen's grandson Sir John, who had acquired the Manor of Hilton (in which the service station on the M6 now stands). His descendants carried on the name until Thomas Swynnerton died in 1448 leaving only two daughters but the eldest one, Anne, redeemed the situation by marrying her cousin Humphrey who, as you see above, thus became Swynnerton of Swynnerton and Hilton. Roger, a younger son of Humphrey and Ann founded a small line which included a grandson, the notorious Thomas, the radical preacher and denigrator of the Pope, who was eventually forced to flee the country and ended his days in Holland. His younger brother Robert had two sons Thomas and Henry both of whom married but no issue of either has ever been traced.

Swynnerton of Butterson

Sir John's younger brother Richard inherited the manor of Whitmore as his portion and his line eventually settled at Butterson where they remained until Thomas of Butterson, who died at Trentham in 1836, had the same misfortune and only had three daughters so that line came to an end also.

Swinnerton of Shut Lane

However, all was not lost as Hugh Swinnerton, a younger son of Thomas Swinnerton of Butterson and his wife Mary Hollyns, married Fortune Walker and produced children. It was said that she was from Dilvern, Staffordshire but I can find no such place and wonder if it should be Dilhorne which is a small parish near Stoke-on-Trent. They settled at Shut Lane Head which is a small hamlet in Butterson parish but had a daughter, Dorothea, baptized in Dilhorne.

Charles Swynnerton shows them as having had two sons Thomas and John but our research shows that they also had the daughter Dorothea mentioned above and also another son Edward. Charles brings the family down to three sons James, John and Charles - the first two he says were still living when he wrote his chapters so further research needs to be done here.

Swinnerton of Whitmore

Lastly, Charles deals with the Swynnerton of Whitmore who stem from Richard de Swynnerton, younger son of Sir Roger de Swynnerton who occurs as lord of the manor of Swynnerton 1311-1350. He and Bridgman always refer to the earlier Swynntons as 'Lord of Swynnerton' with the result that many people think they were peers. That is not so - only one Swynnerton, Sir Roger de Swynnerton, ever attained Baronial rank by being summoned to Parliament in 1337 but it was not hereditary. Charles naturally gave prominence to his own family which is, of course, well represented today by the Betley family but in a separate tree he shows the Swynntons of Chester who were descendants of his great-grandfather's eldest brother John. This stops in the later 1800s but we have brought it down to the present as we have with the descendants of his great-grandfather's other older brother George.

Swinnerton of Warwickshire.

This branch is not mentioned in the book: the tree was originally compiled by the our founder member, the late Ken Armitstead, and myself and started with the burial of a John Swinnerton at Newcastle under Lyme in 1712.. The story of how this came about is an amusing one and will feature in a future *Saga*. Since then we have taken it back to Richard Swynnerton of Whitmore and thus into the original main line. Interestingly, Richard had a grandson Isaac, the first to be recorded but

a name which was used by the Warwickshire family as late as 1875.

Swinnerton of Adbaston

This branch of the family is not mentioned in the book so I started it. Many years ago, Sir Roger Swynnerton subsequently our President, lent me his grandfather's (the Revd Charles) own copy of the printed history with his introduction for me to take a copy. It had many hand-written amendments and comments in his own hand and I also found a loose sheet of paper listing William of Adbaston and his family but he had made no attempt to research them any further. In his tree of the Swinnertons of Shut Lane he lists the children of Thomas and Hannah as James (1696), Jemima (1698) and Kesia (1702) all baptized at Swynnerton but he missed the entry for the baptism of their eldest child Edward on the 19th November 1694. His grandson, another Edward, married Mary Lowe in 1745 and was the father of William Swinnerton who sits at the head of our Adbaston Tree.

We have other branches, some quite large, which we have not yet succeeded in tying in to the original family but hopefully we will in time.

They are:

Yorkshire and another in Leeds which we know started in Staffordshire but have not yet made the link.

In the Midlands – **Dudley, Sedgeley, West Bromwich and Walsall**

Shropshire and separate families originating in **Bridgnorth and Oswestry.**

Wrexham

London – four unconnected families

Essex

Stoke – two unconnected families

Gloucestershire

Glasgow

Ireland – six separate families, see Brian's report to the AGM.

In **Australia** we have two branches – one from the Yew tree family and one from a Shropshire emigrant.

In **New Zealand** there was a branch (now extinct) which founded by an emigrant from Australia

In **Canada** a branch which started in Ireland

In **South Africa**, a branch with roots in the Betley family

In **America** = four separate families one of which is a direct descent from Job, the original emigrant.

There are also a number of small two or three generation trees which we have been unable, so far, to connect with any others.

SOURCES

Over the years, I have often been asked how I started and where I got all the information from. Home on leave in 1953, I went to see my cousin who was a regular tennis and dancing partner and a chance meeting with her father, who was actually my great-uncle and head of the family and the family agricultural engineering firm, resulted in a very interesting conversation in which he told me the history of my family as he knew it.

Of course, I told my father about this and he admitted he did not know some of this but he was able to add a little. Unusually for his time, my father was an only child. I had no grandparents to turn to, three had died before I was born and the fourth, my mother's father, had emigrated to Australia also before I was born. My mother died when I was three so my sources were fairly limited!

However, these revelations had aroused my interest – my favourite, and best, subject at school had always been History – and I decided to see if I could find out more. I had a look in the local library but there was only one book on the subject *Trace Your Ancestors* by L.G.Pine. (I later discovered that it was the only book published on the subject at the time – today there are hundreds!). I had a browse through it, noted down the principal methods but my leave was short and I did not have time to do any more at the time.

Later, I drew by hand a very rudimentary tree of the information I had acquired from the family which only went back to my great-grandfather James who died in 1910. However, my great aunt Mary, who was born in 1877 and with whom I

lived for a while after my mother died, remembered him and was able to tell me something about him.

Then, taking Pine's advice, I seized the opportunity while in London to visit the old Public Records Office and have a look at the census and found my great – grandfather in Dawley, Shropshire with his father who said he had been born in Newport, *Staffordshire*. Now, I knew Newport was in Shropshire but thinking the census taker may have misunderstood him, in my spare time I started to examine the Shropshire printed registers working out from Newport but found no trace of him but I did find other Swinnertons – I had never met anyone of the same name outside my immediate family, so I started to note them down thinking they may be relatives.

This lead me to re-read Pine and learn about the central registration of all births, marriages and deaths since the 1st July 1837 so, at the first opportunity, off I went to Somerset House in London and began to methodically note down all the Swinnertons. This took several visits but it was some time before I realised that my name was not always spelt the way mine was so I had to start again and note down the variations also. Today, this is all well known and common practice but in those days, genealogy (or family history as it is now called) was the preserve of the few and we were pioneers in a way. There was only that one book to guide us, no evening classes and only one society, the Society of Genealogists in London, to which one had to be elected and certainly no internet on which most of the records we spent many, many hours examining are now available.

I eventually found him in the small village of Adbaston which, of course, is in Staffordshire but the boundary between the two counties runs through the outskirts of Newport so he obviously gave the census taker the name of the nearest town.

After the formation of the society in 1974, John Swinnerton took over the work at Somerset House and was eventually succeeded by Roger Swynnerton. Meanwhile I concentrated on visiting churches in Shropshire and Staffordshire to go through the registers and have many interesting tales to tell about those visits.

Later, Roy Talbot joined our research team and he has been responsible for most of the research on the early family, reading and interpreting very old documents which I could never have done. He also began to collate all our acquired data from all sources into a wonderful set of databases which, being a graduate in computer sciences, he was well equipped to do. Roy is meticulous in his approach and I have to put up a very strong argument for anything to be included!

Last of all, our team was joined by Brian Swinnerton who first of all concentrated on his own Wrexham family origins but proved to be a wizard at rooting out sources on the computer and has now specialized in the Irish families. Here is a summary of the sources we have consulted over the years.

Civil Registrations – Births, Marriages and Deaths 1837 to date
Censuses 1841-1911

Parish Registers

Will index (1383-1857) – administration of wills was then by the church

Will index (1858- to date)- this is a national index

Original Wills themselves (1383) as far as 1840, Monumental Inscriptions

War memorials, Rolls of Honour and the International Genealogical Index

Charter Rolls (1226-1417), Liberate Rolls (1226-1267), Treaty Rolls (1234-1339)

Chancery Warrants (1224-1326), Inquisitions, Book of Feudal Aids, Memoranda

Rolls, Curia Regis Rolls, Ancient Deeds, Calendarium Genealogicum, Black

Prince's Register

Patent Rolls (1216) as far as 1338, Close Rolls (1227) as far as 1338, Fine Rolls (1272) as far as 1446

Pipe Rolls (1189) as far as 1192 (Shropshire Record Office), Complete Peerage,

Burke's Peerage, Knights of Edward I (5 vols.), History of Parliament (3 vols.)

Returns of Owners of Land 1873, Burke's Commoners, Collections for a History

of Staffordshire as far as Vol VIII part 1 series 1, Great Card Index of the Society

of Genealogists, Burke's Landed Gentry, Dugdale's History, Staffs Visitations.

Directories of all types, professional, town, city and county. We have also

searched records of emigrants to Australia, New Zealand, Canada and

America. Numerous newspapers and magazines including the Swinnerton

Society in its various formats. This has been indexed by volume up to Volume 9

but Roy Talbot is producing an on-going index for the whole set but the

Swinnertons are only indexed by their reference numbers.

From the results of our researches, Roy (a descendant of Eliza Swinnerton born 1870, daughter of John and Hannah Swinnerton of the Adbaston branch, who married Stephen Talbot at Perry Bar in 1879) has compiled a wonderful set of databases as I have noted previously. The main one is a record of every Swinnerton we have ever found with, where known, the relevant dates of birth, baptism, marriage, death and burial. There are others which list brides, grooms, in-laws, soldiers, Ellis Island immigrants to America, Freemasons, Graves and some more specialized sources.

There is also a database of all the entries in the Censuses and, of course, all baptisms from Parish Registers and all the entries from the Index to the Births, Marriages and Deaths in the national registers. Research continues all the time.



Meet your new Editor via Wikipedia)

Alastair Swinnerton is a UK writer/producer known mostly for his involvement with Lego Bionicle, which he co-created with Bob Thompson and Martin Andersen of Lego and Christian Faber of Danish advertising agency Advance.

However, he has been writing and creating animation since the late 1980s, and was the co-creator and co-writer of The Baskervilles, Alphanim's 2000 26 half-hour cartoon series set in Hell, or a theme park based on Hell depending on which country it was viewed in. He has many other credits, including the 1998 series of The Wombles, and the second season of the Emmy-nominated Disney Channel/Dorling Kindersley series Amazing Animals. He has been associated with various companies, including Skryptonite, which he co-founded with producers Ken Anderson and Tony Barnes, and Corsham Entertainment, in which he was briefly partnered by Gary Kurtz, producer of Star Wars, and Richard Bazeley, a former Disney animator. In 2002 he went solo again, and was the writer, and co-director & co-producer with Neil Graham of London's Zoo Films, of The Tale of Jack Frost, a half hour CGI Christmas special based on the David Melling^[2] book that first aired on CBBC at Christmas 2004 and which was nominated for a BAFTA in 2005. Since then he has written on numerous series, including Sabrina the Teenage Witch for Los Angeles-based Mike Young Productions, Jungle Book Series 2 for India's DQ Entertainment, Dennis and Gnasher for Red Kite Animation and Wobblyland, created by Cat Little, and produced by Brown Bag Films and HiT Entertainment. He is still writing for other people, as well as developing his own series, such as Fuzzyworld, a cartoon for the 3-6 audience set on a planet made from Fuzzonium, a strange substance that looks almost exactly like felt, in which two boys, a girl and a dog called Argle, Bargle, Dingle and Dave (Dave being the dog) foil their bossy neighbour Sharp Monster's attempts to spoil their fun *and* do their chores. Currently in development by Monster Entertainment in Dublin.

Alastair's first children's/young adult fantasy novel, 'The Multiverse of Max Tovey', will be released on August 31st. On discovering to his delight and alarm that he's a time traveller, Max goes on a journey through ancient Celtic Britain, real and mythological, to find a magical cross that will lift the curse on his family.

Your retiring editor



In 1952 when it all started



And 60+ years on

The Swinnerton Family Society

The objects of the society are:

1. To research and record the history of the Swinnerton Family.
2. To establish links with members of the world-wide Swinnerton Family to promote a sense of kinship and to encourage them to study their own family history and contribute it to the history of the whole family.
3. To publish a magazine - *The Swinnerton Saga* - to record that history.
4. To preserve those records together with associated objects and ephemera.
5. To assist, where possible, in the welfare of St Mary's Church, Swynnerton.

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UK and the rest of the world - see Ray Swinnerton above.

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